

THE ENTREPRENEUR'S GUIDE TO FINDING YOUR FIRST CUSTOMERS

LEARN HOW TO FIND YOUR FIRST CUSTOMERS FROM EXPERIENCED
ENTREPRENEURS, WHO HAVE BEEN THERE AND DONE THAT.



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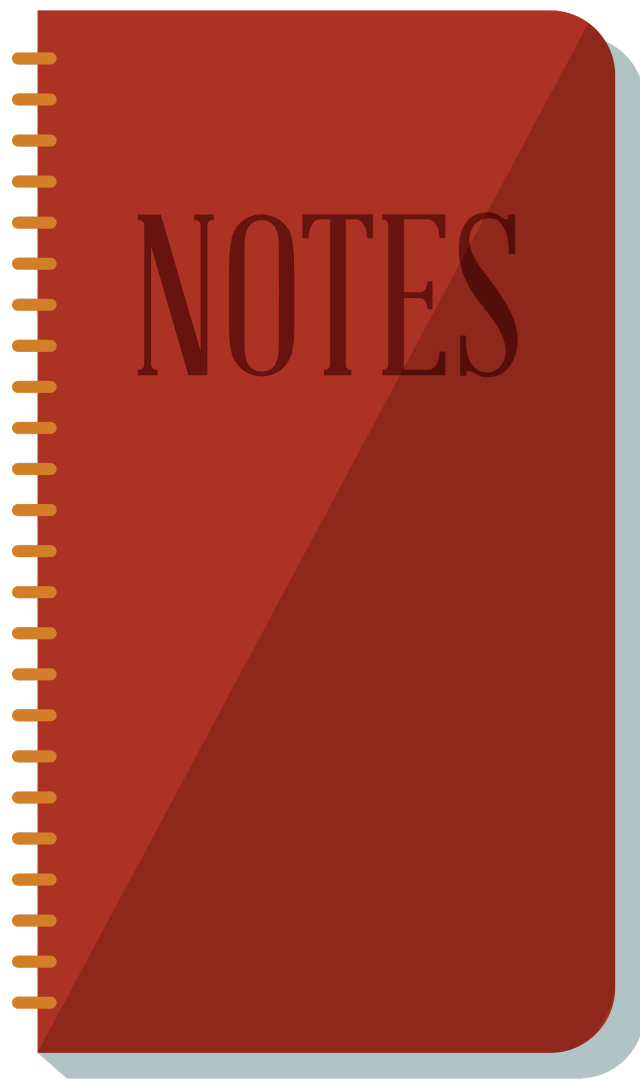
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INTRODUCTION

Sir Richard Branson is one of the most famous and successful entrepreneurs in the world. His company, Virgin, has created amazing products, services, and experiences like Virgin Mobile, Virgin America, and Virgin Atlantic, just to name a few.

Sure, Branson is already highly successful. His businesses are world-class. His companies are outstanding. Majority of the people in the whole world are familiar with his company, with his products or even with his services.

But did you know that for each of the businesses that Virgin creates, Branson still needs to get customers for them?

Yes, someone as confident and wealthy as Branson still has to get customers for the new businesses he creates and builds with Virgin.

Branson started out like you and me - at first, he had to work a lot to get his first customers. One story in particular about Branson shows the challenges that come from getting a business's first customers. This story also shows a little bit of what it takes to start and grow a successful business. It's about how Branson got the first customers for Virgin Airlines and how he started that division of Virgin.*

Richard Branson started Virgin Airlines when he was in his late twenties. He was on his way to visit a woman in the Virgin Islands. Naturally, he didn't want to be late. However, at the airport, the last flight Branson could take to meet this woman before being late was cancelled.

Branson didn't want to be late when meeting this woman, so he commissioned a private plane to take him to the Virgin Islands even though he did not have enough money to pay for the plane all by himself.

So that he could afford his plane trip, he decided to sell the rest of the seats on the plane to the other people whose flights were cancelled. Branson sold these seats for \$29 each. He even marketed the seats by handwriting a sign that said "Virgin Airlines: \$29" on it.

In the end, Branson sold the rest of the tickets for the private plane and he arrived on time to visit his friend. This experience of selling the extra seats on the private plane gave birth to what is known as Virgin Airlines today.

Sir Richard Branson had gotten the first customers for the company - even though it wasn't officially a company yet! Early on, he had already determined that there was a need for a new type of airline.

Yes, it took a lot of risk, courage, and hard work for Branson to start Virgin and get the first customers for it, but it was all worth it. Branson ended up starting what would become an extremely successful and lucrative airline company.

Starting, growing, and running a successful business is very hard, but it can also can be very rewarding. Various factors can affect the potential of your business to succeed, but one factor that may have the biggest impact on your business's success is your ability to get customers for it.

How can you grow and prosper in your business? Simple. Have a steady stream of customers!

Without customers, businesses wither and die. Richard Branson knew that in order for his airline to be successful, he needed to get customers for it. Branson getting the first customers for that private flight was a major milestone. It was the start of something valuable for his company.

We want you to start businesses that succeed.

It doesn't matter how old you are. Always adopt an entrepreneurial mindset.

It doesn't matter what your product or service is. Always make it valuable and significant to your customers.

It doesn't matter how fancy your office is or how advanced your technology is. Always look for ways to get your first customers.

Of course, you'll also need strategies and tactics to effectively market and sell the products or services that your business offers to your customers. In this book, we teach you different strategies you can use to find and validate profitable ideas for products and services that will give tons of value to your customers.

After we teach you how to find these ideas, we'll give you strategies to get leads and convert those leads into customers. With this book, you'll have what you need to start your business and get your first customers.

Throughout the book, we present various techniques and tactics you can use to find profitable product ideas and to effectively market your products and services so that you actually get customers.

You don't have to use all of these strategies, but if you want the best results for finding your business's first customers, use a combination of these strategies related to customer discovery, lead generation, and conversion .

The combination of strategies you use is ultimately up to you.

We hope that you enjoy the book and that you implement its content to start your businesses.

Go ahead. Your first customers are just waiting to be found!

Cheers,
Adii and Jack

** This story was originally told by Branson at an event attended by James Clear.*



PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS, AND PRODUCTS

How will you ensure that people will actually buy your product? Simple. Just make sure it relieves an extreme pain or solves an extreme problem.

Think about this in the context of your customers: what are their problems, how can you solve their problems and how does your product take your customer from Point P (Problem) to Point S (Solution)? Brennan Dunn has an extremely helpful way of thinking about how your products can solve your customer's problems.

A problem or a pain can be anything that makes your life worse, makes you less happy, or makes you less successful. For example, if you dislike rain, then a problem in your life may be rainy days. If rainy days are a problem in your life, then what is the solution to your problem?

According to Brennan, "the solution to any problem is the inverse of that problem." This makes sense. If you're in the rain and you dislike rain, the solution to your problem will be getting out of the rain.

Another example of a problem people might have is doing taxes for their businesses it's complicated and time-consuming. The solution to this problem (the inverse of this problem), is an easier, simpler, and faster way to do taxes.

The solution to a problem is the inverse of that problem, but, this still doesn't tell us what role the product plays in solving the problem. Brennan says the product that solves a problem is **the pathway that takes your customer from the problem to the solution.**

In line with the example above:

Problem = being in the rain

Product = umbrella

Solution = being protected against the rain

There can be many products that solve similar problems. A common problem that most companies and organizations have is proper project management. Now, even though there are already many products that solve this problem, not all existing products are perfect solutions. So, it's okay for one problem to warrant different products. As long as your product can take your customers to the inverse of their problems, you're good!

Case study:

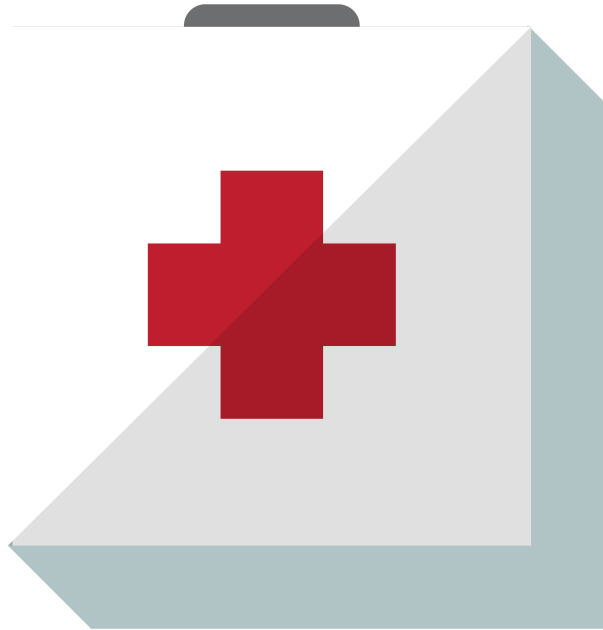
While working on Planscope, Brennan initially Googled about problems people were having with the very popular project management system Basecamp. Brennan then used what he found to determine that there was a need for Planscope. He also used his research as the basis for some of the copywriting he used on his marketing sites and materials. What he did was simple - and yet very effective.

He figured out exactly what was missing from other project management solutions by researching on his target market. Then, he used the gaps in these products to form the basis of Planscope's first version (V1).

Chapter summary

- Problems are pains or issues that make people's lives worse, less happy, or less successful.
- The solution to a problem is the inverse of the problem.
- The product is the pathway that takes your customer from problem to solution.

2



VITAMINS: THE OTHER TYPE OF SUCCESSFUL PRODUCT

As we talked about in the first chapter, one way to build a successful product is to solve an intense pain or problem for your customers. Solving an intense pain (problem) with a product is referred to as building a “painkiller” product. Here, your product relieves “pain”.

But, making “painkillers” isn’t the only way to build a hugely successful product.

You can also create a great and valuable product by building a “vitamin” product!

A vitamin product supercharges a certain aspect of your customers’ lives and/or businesses. “Vitamin” products don’t relieve “pain” for your customers, but they can still provide enormous value for them.

For example, if your customer already has a growing business, then he may not be actively looking for a product to help him with his business growth and expansion. But, if your product can help him increase the growth rate of his business by 10% to 20%, then this is a huge “vitamin” product that he can benefit from! Even though your product can’t solve a pressing problem, it can still provide loads of value to your customers.

To get you acquainted with the concept of “vitamins” as very successful products, let’s talk about the rise of cars and automobiles.

In the past, people travelled just fine to places using horse carriages and trains. They didn’t have an urgent need to go out and look for a faster and more efficient way to get around. Henry Ford described this perfectly when he said, “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.”

Sometimes, people don’t know that they need a vitamin until they experience its benefits firsthand. People didn’t know that cars would make their lives better until they first saw and used cars. But, cars *did* make their lives better! As a result of this, cars became one of the most important and lucrative inventions in the history of entrepreneurship.

Now, when you are talking with potential customers about your “vitamin” product, they’ll inform you whether or not the “vitamin” will actually provide a good amount of value to them. This means you need to connect with your customers.

How?

Here are four steps to come up with a good idea for a “vitamin” product:

Choose the market you want to build a product for. Find out who your ideal customers are in your chosen market. (We’ll go over how to do this in future sections).

Conduct research on what is important to the people in your chosen market. If you’re creating a product for businesses and/or professionals, it should help them:

- Increase the growth rate, revenues, and profits of their products and/or services
- Implement marketing, sales, and product development and business growth that is more effective and profitable
- Decrease the costs and expenses that occur when doing business
- Increase productivity and decrease wasted time during conducting business
- Increase the number of repeat customers for products and services with one-time purchases
- And decrease the churn rate for recurring revenue products.

Come up with innovative ways to enhance and magnify what is important to your chosen market. For example, for a SaaS or recurring revenue business, decreasing churn rate is extremely important. If you come up with a “vitamin” that significantly decreases a SaaS business’s churn rate, then it’ll help you create an awesome and lucrative product.

Converse with people in your chosen market's industry. Learn about what their lives are actually like. From these conversations, if people describe the thing your product is magnifying as being very important to them, probe more. If they also talk about how they'll pay for something that magnifies that thing, then you know you've got a good "vitamin" on your hands. (We'll discuss the topic of having conversations with potential customers comprehensively in the future sections.)

Case study:

A good example of a vitamin product is Jeff Epstein's product, **Ambassador**. Ambassador helps turn your customers into brand ambassadors who refer new customers and leads to your product.

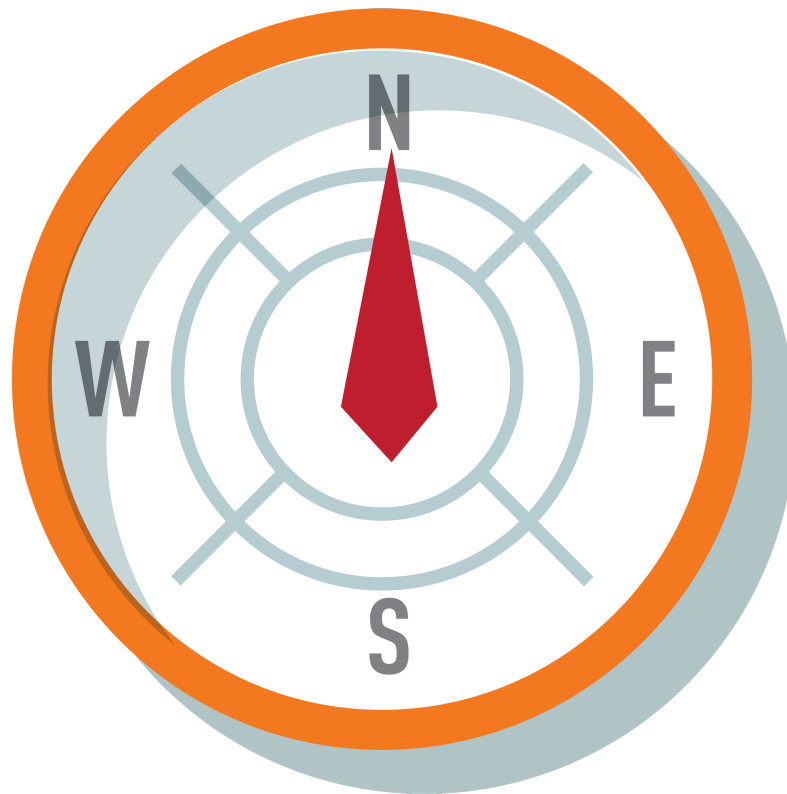
Ambassador is a "vitamin" product. Most businesses don't necessarily need to incorporate referral marketing into their marketing strategies - there are plenty of other good marketing tactics like content marketing, audience building, and advertising. But, referral marketing can be a very profitable way to accelerate the growth of a product and get lots of new customers and leads.

Though many businesses don't necessarily have to use Ambassador, they still sign up for it because Ambassador magnifies something important to them. It increases the growth rate, revenues, and profits of their product, so these businesses get huge value from it. Even though a product doesn't solve an explicit pain for people as a "painkiller", it can still be very successful if it magnifies, intensifies, and/or accelerates something important to people as a "vitamin" product.

Chapter summary

- Vitamin products supercharge a certain aspect of your customers' businesses or lives.
- To build a vitamin product, remember the four Cs:
- Choose the market you want to build a product for.
- Conduct a research on what is important to the people in your chosen market.
- Come up with innovative ways to enhance and magnify what is important to your chosen market.
- Converse with people in your chosen market's industry.

3



PINPOINTING YOUR IDEAL CUSTOMER

After defining what your product's purpose is, whether to solve a problem or to supercharge a certain aspect of your customers' lives, the next thing you should do is to determine who the ideal customer is for your intended product.

Deciding who your ideal customers are is very important. Think about your ideal customer in a few separate ways: 1) figure out who you are going to sell your product to; 2) go talk with them about your product; and 3) tailor your marketing to persuade and convince them to use your product.

3 Factors To Consider In Identifying The First Customers For Your Product And Business:

1. The type of company your ideal customer works in.

Is it a B2B SaaS company, a B2C SaaS company, a marketplace company, a retail company, a small business, a medium-sized business, an ecommerce company, a consulting company or some other type of business? How about if your ideal customer is a freelancer?

Selling a time-tracking product? Consulting companies and freelance businesses may be your ideal customers.

Selling a server status and uptime-tracking product? SaaS companies and online software companies may be your ideal customers.

Selling a generic project management app? Most businesses and organizations may be your ideal customers.

2. The size of your ideal customer.

Your ideal customer may be:

- a 100-person division at a large enterprise,
- a 10-person startup team,

- the CEO of a certain company,
 - the group of C-level executives at a company
- or, just individual designers.

Think about the size of the company you're targeting. If you're not into certain companies, then, think about the size of the group inside of a specific company that you're ideally going to sell to.

The size of the company or group you sell to will influence how you price your product, how you market your product, and how you describe your product's value in its value proposition.

3. The skill or aspect of business or life your product focuses on.

If your product helps people manage and create products more easily, then your product will be immensely useful for product managers.

Let's say your product helps developers learn how to code better and monitor their improvements over time. In this situation, your ideal customer are developers. But, you still need to decide if you want to sell your product to developers working at small companies, at large companies, or at companies of all sizes.

Additionally, determining the skill, task, and/or process your product focuses on will also help you with marketing, pricing, and promoting it.

Case study:

For Planscope, Brennan Dunn applied these three factors in pinpointing the ideal customer:

The type of company or business your ideal customers work in: Brennan did research and knew that he wanted his product to be helpful and valuable for freelancers and consultants.

The size of the company or group your ideal customers work with: Because Brennan created Planscope for both freelancers and consultants, he decided that he wanted his product to be for both smaller businesses (which are often made up of just one professional) and larger businesses like consulting firms (which are often made up of several professionals).

Your ideal customers' skill or aspect of the business/life that your product will relate to.

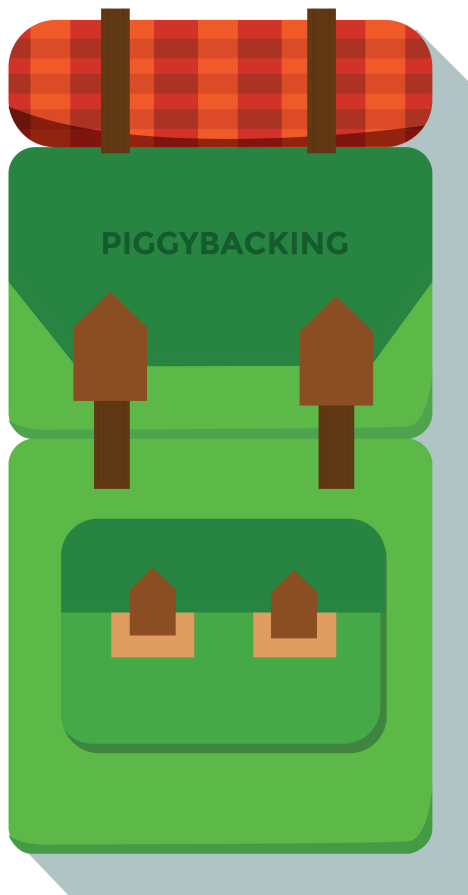
Also, from his research and his experience as the head of a consulting firm, Brennan knew that it was difficult for freelancers and consultants to effectively communicate with clients about the scope of projects. Generally, he wanted to improve their project management skill.

By pinpointing who the ideal customers for Planscope are, Brennan was also able to determine the “pain” that Planscope would solve. As a result, Brennan could then create marketing content and copy to help get leads for Planscope and convert those leads into satisfied and paying customers.

Chapter summary

- Decide and figure out who the ideal customer is for your product before you start validating your product's value.
- To figure out who your product's ideal customer will be, think about your ideal customers':
 - type of company or business they work in,
 - size of the company or group they work with, and,
 - skill or aspect of the business/life that your product will relate to.

4



PIGGYBACKING

Lots of successful businesses are built using a strategy called piggybacking. Piggybacking is building a product on top of a large and/or fast-growing product, platform, or technology that augments its parts for the companies, organizations, and people that use it.

Create products that piggyback on top of almost any big product, platform, or technology (open-sourced or closed source).

Why should you? Well, piggybacking is simply building a business on top of something that already has a captured audience and sizable community in its own right!

Since piggybacking can make your product marketing and your target market researching easier, we'll show you the basics on how to do it:

- **Technology Piggybacking:** Choose open-source technologies. Use sites like NerdyData, meanpath, and BuiltWith to see approximately how many websites and online companies are using a particular technology. Try to piggyback on technologies that meet these criteria:
 - At least 5,000 to 10,000 websites and online companies should use a particular technology for it to have a big enough population that you can build a successful business around.
 - Once you've established that a technology has at least 5,000 to 10,000 users, think about how to actually build a business that can piggyback on this technology.

You can build businesses that piggyback on open source technologies if you create products and tools that:

- Educate people about how to use the technologies more effectively and easily.

- Make a general info product that provides an overview of a technology.
 - Ruby on Rails Tutorial by Michael Hartl
 - Discover Meteor by Sacha Greif and Tom Coleman
- You can also provide a very specific guide to learn an advanced skill in a technology.
 - Scaling PHP Applications by Steve Corona
- Suggest how people can improve the performance or efficiency of the open source technologies they're using.
 - Code Climate provides security and quality analysis for programmers who use Ruby on Rails and Javascript.
- Provide error monitoring and error tracking for specific technologies.
 - Honeybadger provides exception, uptime, and performance monitoring for Ruby and Ruby on Rails.
- Provide uptime monitoring for specific technologies or many technologies such as Pingdom.
- Provide security analysis and updates for specific open source technologies or wide arrays of open source technologies such as SecurityMetrics.
- Give performance analysis for specific technologies such as New Relic.
- Show logging statistics for certain technologies such as Loggly.

- Offer hosting products for certain technologies like WP Engine for WordPress or Heroku for Rails.
- Provide enterprise support and/or addons for open source technologies.
 - For instance, MongoDB.com provides consulting, training, and other services and subscriptions for businesses that use the MongoDB open source database.
- Make deploying code that uses open-source technologies. Updating this code should be very easy.
 - For instance, Dploy.io from Wildbit is one service that makes deploying code written using open source languages and frameworks to online cloud hosting services much easier.
- Make designing applications that use certain open source technologies easier.
 - *WooThemes* has built a large and thriving business by making high-quality themes and plugins for WordPress.
 - *WrapBootstrap* has created a very successful marketplace that sells themes and design elements for the Bootstrap design framework.
 - *RailsThemes* have created design themes for Ruby on Rails.

Product/Platform Piggybacking: Target businesses with products and platforms that already have lots of customers and/or users.

- Sometimes, these businesses will also list an approximate number of their customers. For instance, at the time we're writing this book, Shopify says on its site that it is powering more than 100,000 ecommerce stores. This is a sign that Shopify is an excellent product to piggyback on.
- Generally, use NerdyData, mean path, and BuiltWith to get a sense of how many customers a product or platform has.
- B2B products should have at least 5,000 to 10,000 customers.
- Free B2C social products should have at least 100 million monthly active users.

You can build businesses that piggyback on top of successful and big platforms if you create products and tools such as:

- Analytics applications. You can build analytics applications for almost any business or platform. For example, you can build analytics for payments/ecommerce platforms like Stripe, Braintree, PayPal, Shopify Magento, WooCommerce, and BigCommerce. A few of the many other platforms you could build analytics tools for are Facebook, Twitter, the Apple App Store, Pinterest, online advertising platforms, transactional email services, and SMS and other API-based products like Twilio.
 - Josh Pigford has had tons of success building an analytics tool for SaaS businesses using Stripe in Baremetrics. At the time of writing this book, it's been less than a year since Josh started Baremetrics. Now, he's already doing more than \$14,000 in monthly recurring revenue and \$165,000 in annual recurring revenue.

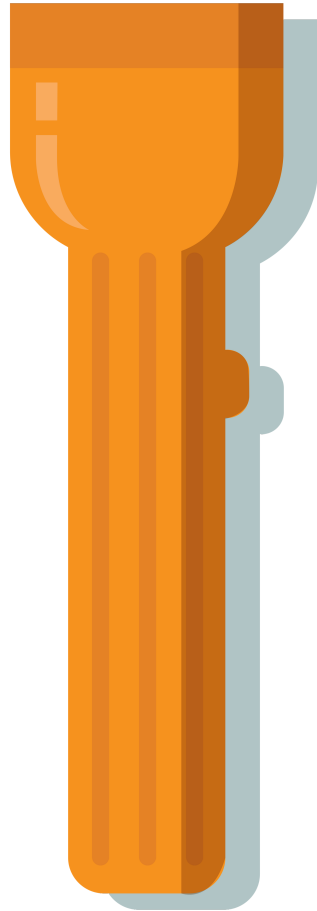
- Testing applications. These can be A/B testing applications for features like payments, site design, site copy, transactional email copy, and many other aspects of different businesses. These can also be A/B testing applications for specific applications like Shopify, Weebly, Squarespace, BigCommerce, and many others.
- Add-ons that make building on top of certain businesses easier.
 - Tons of people have built successful businesses by creating add-ons that help Heroku customers in some way:
 - MongoHQ makes deploying, hosting, and scaling MongoDB databases on Heroku much easier.
- Training products and info products that teach people how to use successful products and platforms better.
 - Pete Keen has had lots of success writing a **book that teaches people how to use Stripe with Rails**.
 - Brett Kelly was extremely successful in writing **Evernote Essentials**, a book that teaches people how to use Evernote more efficiently and effectively.

- Products that make other products more valuable and/or easier to use.
 - Buffer makes using Facebook and Twitter for your business more valuable by making it much easier to always have a queue of posts and Tweets to share with your audiences on social media.
 - Zapier makes hundreds of SaaS applications more valuable by allowing you to connect them and have them work with hundreds of other SaaS apps.
 - Churn Buster helps make Stripe more valuable by helping you reduce your product's churn when people have expired or failed credit cards.

Chapter summary

- Piggybacking is a great way to build a business.
- You can piggyback a product on top of open-source software, a platform like the App Store or a successful product.
- To successfully piggyback, build a product on top of an open-source technology, platform, or product that has 5,000 to 10,000 customers or users.
- If you want to piggyback on top of a free social product, it should have at least 100,000,000 users.
- Use tools like Nerdy Data, mean path, and BuiltWith to get a sense of how many customers/users a product or technology has.
- Free social products will usually publicly display their users statistics, so, do a Google search to see if a social product has enough users for you to piggyback on.

5



**USING LINKEDIN TO FIND
LEADS ONCE YOU HAVE
AN IDEA OF WHO YOUR
IDEAL CUSTOMER IS**

After you've determined who your ideal customers are, use LinkedIn to find tens of thousands of people who fit your ideal customer's description.

For example, if your ideal customer is a product manager, search LinkedIn to find tons of product managers who you can contact and learn more about.

If your ideal customer is a freelance designer, search LinkedIn for freelance designers to find tons of people you can contact and learn from.

Reach out to the people who fit your ideal customer's profile. Ask to have phone or Skype conversations with them about their industries and their business-related problems. Using InMail on LinkedIn or email to connect with these professionals. (You can find people's email addresses using strategies we'll discuss later.)

You can (actually, you must!) go to other places online to find people who are your ideal customers. Use Twitter and Google.

Oftentimes, there will be specific online communities where your ideal customers hang out.

For example, if your ideal customers are designers, Dribbble is a great place to find them. If your ideal customers are developers, a place like Stack Overflow is a good place where you can find developers to contact.

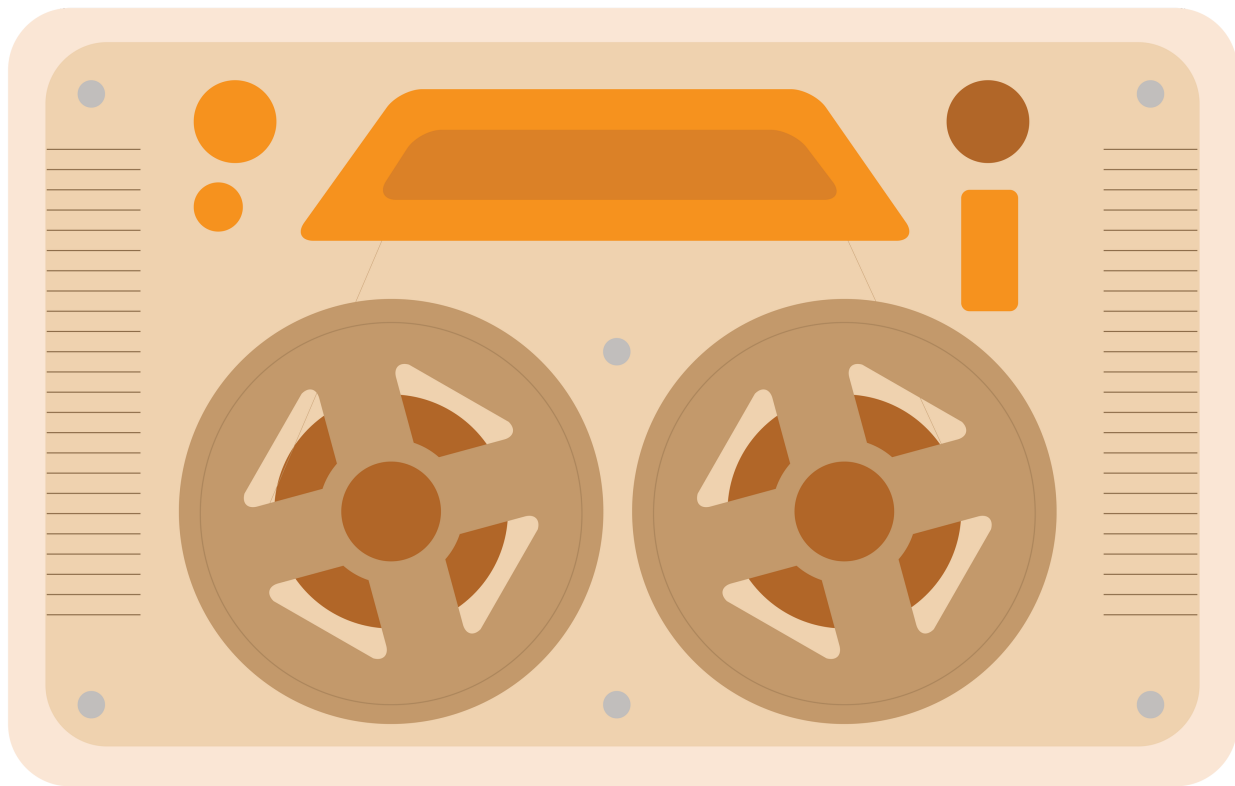
Not all professions have specific online communities, but, for professions that do have their own specific online communities, these places are fantastic resources.

Later on, we'll talk much more about finding customers in niche communities, talking with them, and selling your product to them in Chapter 7.

Chapter summary

- Find professionals and business owners who fit the description of your ideal customers.
- Reach out to these people and ask if you can talk with them over the phone or over Skype.
- Focus the conversation on their professions or industries and the problems and pains that their professions or industries face.

6



**HAVE CONVERSATIONS
WITH PEOPLE WHERE THEY
PHYSICALLY WORK**

Go to where people physically work and ask them to have conversations with you right then and there.

Though more and more businesses are starting to have remote teams and offices, most businesses still have physical locations where they go to work. If your ideal customers are restaurant owners, doctors or artisans, they will most likely have an office or store at which they work. Go to their places of work and ask if you can talk with them for 30 minutes to an hour.

(When you go to someone's office to do customer development, use the strategies and techniques we outlined in the chapters Customer Development 101 and 102.)

To get people to talk with you:

- Ask them to speak with you for free;
- Or offer to pay them what they normally charge for a half hour of their time for their services.

Offices, storefronts, and co-working spaces are all examples of places you can go to and find tons of potential customers.

During the visit, be sure to say that it's no problem at all if they don't want to talk with you. Also, if people ask you to leave their workspace, just leave without any hard feelings. There are tons of other business owners and professionals who will be happy to speak with you for a few minutes.

If you discover that your prospects have a severe problem that you think your product can solve, ask for their email addresses so you can follow up with them when the product is ready.

Now, even if some people have an intense pain that your product can solve, don't push people for their email addresses beyond the initial ask. If you can get 5 to 7 email addresses to follow up with, that's already great.

The key in these conversations is to follow the strategies from Customer Development 101 and 102. Learn as much about the real problems of your ideal customers. At the same time, disprove as much as you think you know about your ideal customers' problems.

Case study:

Patrick McKenzie used this strategy to validate his idea for Appointment Reminder. When he was visiting Chicago, Patrick went and spoke with about 15 different massage therapists and salon owners.

He offered to pay each person he spoke with for 30 minutes of his time, but the majority of people were happy to speak with him for free. When he conversed with these salon owners and massage therapists, he spoke with them about their problems and their jobs.

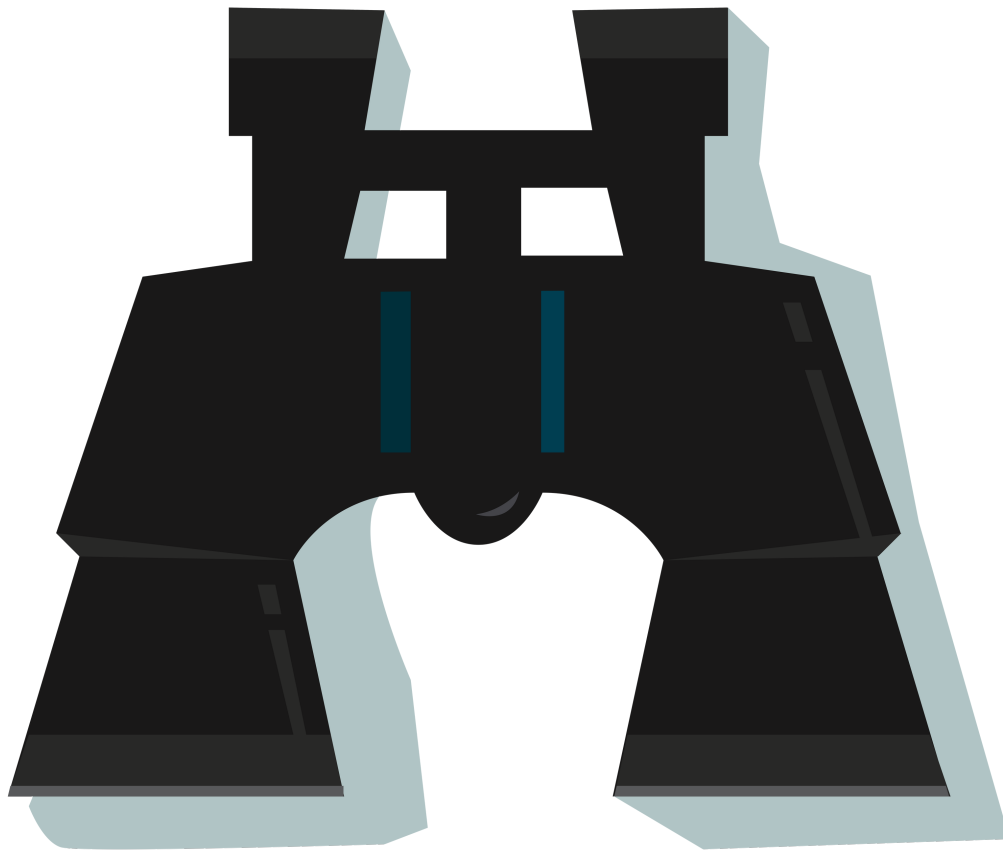
What Patrick discovered is that forgotten appointments cost these business owners a lot of money, but, they don't have the time to call people individually to remind them about their appointments.

As a result, Patrick determined that there was a real need for Appointment Reminder by going in and talking with people who fit the profile of his ideal customers.

Chapter summary

- If you don't want to cold-email people and ask them to take a call with you, go to the places where your ideal customers work.
- Ask your ideal customers if you can have a conversation with them about their jobs and problems in their workspaces.
- You may also offer to pay the people you're visiting for their time, out of respect.
- If your ideal customers ask you to leave or to not follow up, leave and move on. It's no big deal!
- Use the strategies from the chapters titled Customer Development 101 and 102.

7



**GO WHERE YOUR
CUSTOMERS ARE ONLINE
AND TALK WITH THEM**

Great places to find customers for your product are in online forums, communities, and social media sites that your customers visit often. On these sites, people will frequently ask for product recommendations. They will also express problems, pains, and frustrations that they're experiencing - these factors are what your product can solve.

To find these people who may need your product, use the search functionality to look up keywords related to your product.

For example, if you have a project management product, look up "project management" on Twitter, Quora, and many other sites. **You'll find people who are:**

- Dissatisfied with the product they currently use,
- Asking for recommendations for products in your product's market,

Or expressing a "pain" related to the keyword that your product may solve.

Once you find these people, have conversations with them. Additionally, direct them to helpful content. You can even bring up your product at some point during your exchanging messages with them. Subtly mention how your product may assist them even further.

Online communities you should look through to see if people are looking for a recommendation or expressing a pain include:

- [Hacker News](#)
- [Designer News](#)
- [GrowthHackers](#)
- [Inbound.org](#)
- [ProductHunt](#)
- [Dribbble](#)

- **Tavern**
- Any subreddits on Reddit where your potential customers might hang out and talk (For example, if your product is built for freelancers, try researching through **r/freelance** on Reddit to look for people who can benefit from your product.)

Social media sites you should look through to see if people are looking for a recommendation or expressing a pain include:

- Twitter (use Twitter search)
- LinkedIn (searching for posts and comments)

Online forums you should look through to see if people are looking for a recommendation or expressing a pain include:

- Quora
- Stack Exchange sites that relate to your product's market (e.g. If your product is built for developers, do research in a Stack Exchange site related to developers like Stack Overflow)

If someone in one of these sites is publicly asking for a product recommendation in your product's industry, tell this person about your product and its benefits as related to him.

Let's say someone is asking for a generally good project management app to use, and your product happens to be a project management app. If your product helps people with project management, and someone is asking for a product like your product - tell them about it *right away*! People who need a project management app and who publicly ask about project management apps are asking to be your customers. Direct

these people to your product and help teach them about how your product will be a good solution to their problems.

On social media or forum sites, people often vent their frustrations about the problems or pains they're experiencing in their lives and/or businesses. If someone talks about a problem he has and your product solves that problem, respond to this person and inform him about your product.

Imagine that someone is publicly expressing a problem of slow business growth. In this situation, if your product will somehow help this person grow his business faster (and therefore solve his problem), then you must do everything possible to let him know about the solution that your product can offer.

Case study:

There's a [question on Quora](#) that asks for alternatives to LaunchRock, a landing page service. Scott Watermasysk, co-founder of KickoffLabs, a site that competes with LaunchRock, wrote an answer to this post about KickoffLabs and its features. Scott's answer to this question has helped KickoffLabs get a bunch of new customers.

If you ever see someone asking for alternatives to one of your product's competitors, jump into that conversation right away and recommend your product as a solution. (It's only natural for you to disclose that you have a biased opinion of the product).

Chapter summary

- When someone publicly expresses a problem that your product solves, getting this person to buy your product becomes a lot easier.
- Go to where your ideal customers hang out online and search for them there.
- To find possible customers, look for people who are:
 - asking for alternatives to your product's competitors;
 - asking for general recommendations for products in your product's industry;
 - and, expressing a problem or pain that your product solves.
- Once you find these people, talk with them, help them, and (eventually) tell them about your product and the value that your product can provide to them.
- Going to where your customers are online and talking with them is a hard process to scale, but it's something that you should definitely do when getting your first customers. Occasionally, you should still do this after you've built up a larger customer base.

8



**IN COMMUNICATING WITH
CUSTOMERS, AIM FOR 50 –
NOT JUST 3**

After you've found a few hundred leads who fit the description of your ideal customer by searching through LinkedIn, Twitter, Google, or other online communities, it's now time to contact those leads.

When you contact your leads, reach out to each of them individually via email, inMail or LinkedIn. In the initial message you send to leads, be upfront about what you'd like to discuss with them. Tell them that you want to speak with them over Skype, the telephone, or in-person about their industry, profession and the problems and pains that they face.

Here's a brief email template you can use to contact people and ask to have customer development conversations with them:

"Dear [insert_first_name_of_person_you're_contacting],

My name is [insert_your_own_name]. I am an entrepreneur working on starting a new company. For this new company, I'm hoping to build a product that provides [describe_biggest_benefit_of_your_product] to people who are professional [insert_name_of_job e.g. developer, salesperson, content marketer, etc.] who work at a [insert_type_of_company e.g. financial services company, marketing company, design company, etc.]. After doing some research, I noticed that you have a career in [insert_name_of_job] and you work at [insert_name_of_company_that_person_works_at e.g. Google, Nike, Twitter, etc.], which is a [insert_type_of_company].

Would you be interested in having a brief conversation with me about [insert_name_of_job] and [insert_type_of_company]? The conversation will be extremely helpful for me in learning more about your job and the industry you're in. Since I honor that your time is valuable, rest assured that our conversation will take only 20 minutes of your time.

If you're interested in talking with me and helping me out, please let me know by replying to this message. This way, we can get a date and time for a call scheduled. No worries if you'd prefer not to speak with me.

Thank you so much for your time!

All the best,

[insert_your_name]"

If someone agrees to meet you personally, offer to buy them coffee, tea or a complete meal. You can't have conversations with people over email; the conversations have to be over the phone, over Skype, or in-person.

Aim to have at least 50 conversations with 50 different people who fit your ideal customer's profile. This piece of advice comes from Jason Cohen, who did this to determine whether or not the idea for WP Engine was valuable.

If you don't want to have at least 50 conversations with prospects, then aim for at least 20 to 25 conversations with potential customers. A lot of the people you email and ask to speak with may reject you - they may say they're not interested and some may not even respond at all. So, you'll have to send at least several hundred emails to several hundred unique leads in order to have at least 50 conversations.

It's hard work, but it's worth it. You don't want to work on a product that no one will actually need, do you? You want to have people who will pay for your product. You want to develop a product that people actually need because it solves a severe problem for them.

What are **the goals** of having these conversations? **Disprove things about what you believe the customer wants. And, find out what the customer actually needs help with.**

During customer development conversations:

- **Don't** pitch your product or the idea for your product.
- **Don't** try to sell people on the idea for your product. Instead, ask people to pay for your product based on a simple description of its benefits and features. (We'll go into more detail about this in the next chapter).
- **Don't ask leading questions. Don't talk to them about what you think their problems are. Don't say why you think your amazing product idea can solve the problems you think they have.**
- **Do** put your ego aside. Put the belief you have in your idea aside. You should bruise your ego as badly as possible. Disprove your initial product idea and your initial beliefs about your ideal customers.
- **Do** learn as much as possible about your potential customers and their actual problems and pains. Find out about what sorts of "vitamin" products they can actually benefit from.

This is a brief outline on how your customer development conversations should proceed:

1. Spend 10 minutes or so asking the potential customer about his background: his job, routines, responsibilities, and target skills, among other things. Let him talk about himself - you can't speak for them. Remember, you're simply getting to know their problems and personal pains.

2. To help give you ideas for “painkiller” products, spend some time asking about the problems he personally faces in his career. To help you think about ideas for “vitamin” products, also ask about what’s important for him in his business or career.
 - a. As a follow-up question, ask if he uses any products to help him solve his problems or enhance what’s important to him. If not, ask him if he knows of such products.
3. To help think about ideas for vitamin products, later, ask the potential customer what’s important to his company. Also, ask what problems and issues his organization is facing right now.
 - a. As a follow-up question, ask if his company uses any products to help them solve their problems or enhance what’s important to them. If not, ask him if he knows of such products.
4. If there are any ideas you’re looking to validate or invalidate, bring up these ideas. Don’t do a hard and sales-y pitch for any of your ideas. Instead, describe your idea and its main benefits briefly. Don’t be persuasive. Ask for your prospect’s feedback about the ideas. Also, be sure to talk price and payment with the potential customer using the guidelines we give you in the chapter titled, “Customer Development 102.”

If you call a potential customer for an idea that you think is good and all you do is pitch the idea to your prospect 45 minutes, then this person better want to buy whatever it is you’re selling at that moment.

Obviously, this isn’t effective because you haven’t learned anything about the customer yet. Hey, the customer probably doesn’t need what you’re pitching to him.

In the heat of the moment, if what you’re saying sounds really good, then the person you’re talking to will probably agree that it’s a good idea. However, the feedback you’ll get here won’t be valuable - you see, you’re biased to your idea so your prospect will be biased to your idea also!

Customer development is for learning about your ideal customers and their problems. It's also for disproving everything you think you know about your ideal customers, their problems, and their pains.

Ask about:

- what your ideal customers do on a daily basis,
- what their responsibilities are in their job,
- what skills they use,
- what skills they'd like to improve on,
- how your ideal customers manage their businesses or employees,
- how they work on growing their businesses each month,
- what they hate about their business or professional lives,
- what they think can be better in their business,
- what they believe are the issues that prevent them from making more money,
- what their biggest problem is,
- why this problem is a big deal to them,
- and many other questions!

Seriously. Don't talk about your idea. Don't say why you think your idea is amazing. Don't tell your ideal customer what you believe their problems are - instead, listen to the problems they actually have.

Even if your product idea is something you will definitely buy, this doesn't prove anything. You're biased, remember?

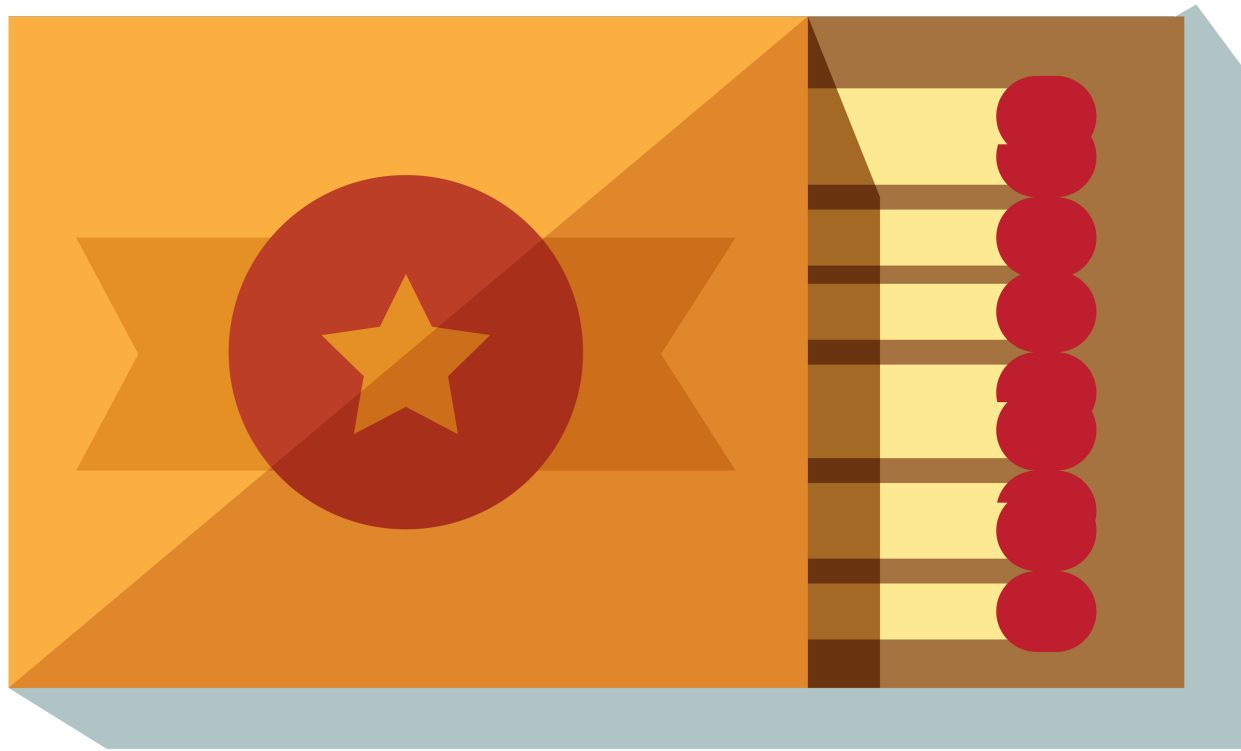
Even if your product idea will solve your worst "pain" or will provide an amazing "vitamin" to you, this doesn't mean that your ideal customer will value your product.

You're not the customer for your product.

The average person who fits your ideal customer's profile is the customer.

Chapter summary

- Have at least 50 conversations on the phone, on Skype, or in-person with people who fit the description of your ideal customer.
- Don't sell your product to the people you are conversing with.
- Aim to disprove everything you think you know about your ideal customers and their personal struggles.
- Ask questions to your ideal customers about what they do and what problems they face.
- You're not the customer for your product. Just because your product idea helps you out doesn't mean it will help other people in your industry.
- Let your ideal customers do most of the talking.



CUSTOMER DEVELOPMENT 102: TALK ABOUT PRICE (THINK ABOUT GETTING YOUR IDEAL CUSTOMER'S MONEY)

If a customer gets lots of value from a product or an app, he will gladly pay for it. Keep this in mind when you're talking with your customers and asking them to pay for your product.

Why will people be happy to pay for a product that gives them lots of value and helps them run their businesses better? Simple. If a product provides tremendous value to your customers, your customers will not want to see it go away!

The only way to ensure your product's sustainability is to charge customers for its continuous use. People you're selling your product to know this. Most free products end up dying except for a lucky handful like Google, Facebook, and Twitter which get hundreds of millions of free users, so they charge advertisers big bucks in order to show ads to their free users and get revenue.

Your customers won't want your product to die if it really helps them, so they will pay for it.

During your customer development process, remember this: if you can't get anyone to pay you or even to commit to pay you for your product, your idea for your product doesn't solve a powerful "pain" or provide a compelling "vitamin".

Most will say they think you have a good idea, even though they have no intention to pay you for your product - ever.

This may be because they don't want to hurt your feelings. This can also be because they initially think they'll actually use the product, but when it's time to pay for it, they decide they don't *really* need it.

Here are 9 Proven Tips To Ask Potential Customers To Pay For Your Product:

- To get actual, genuine feedback from prospects, talk with them about the price of your product. After establishing the product's price with your prospective customers, ask them to pay for your product.

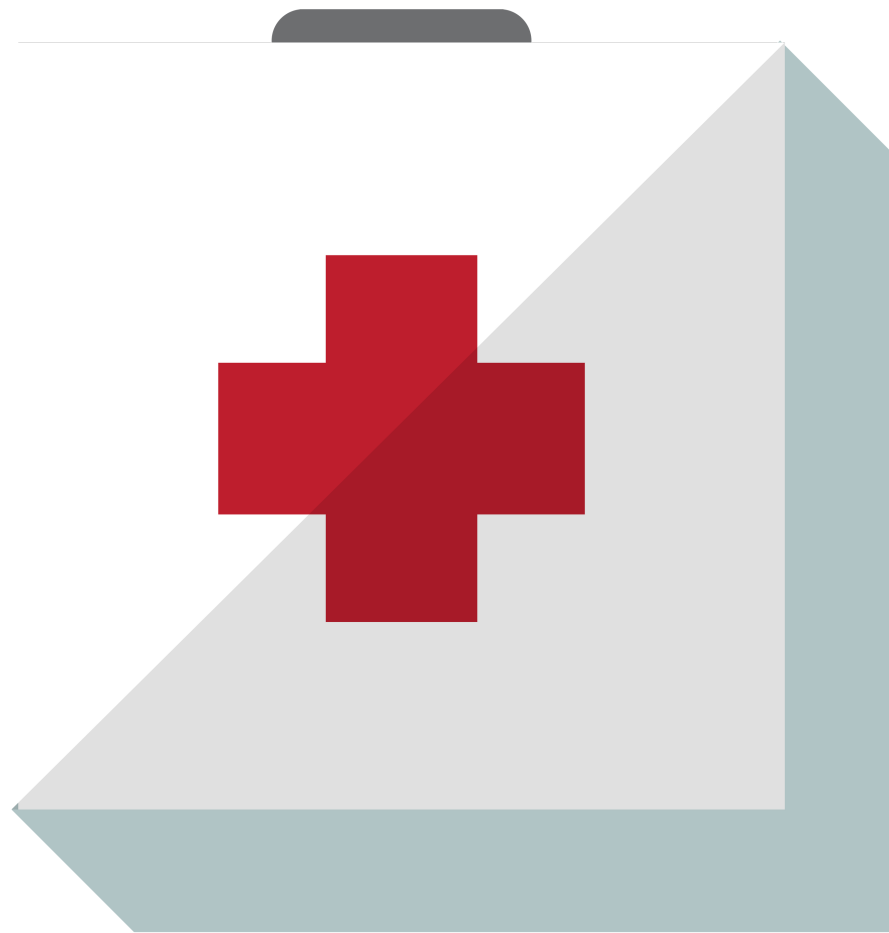
- During conversations, if your prospects describe a severe pain that your product idea can solve, it's okay to bring up your idea and ask for their feedback on it.
- You can also bring up your product idea if your ideal customers mention something that makes you believe they can get value from your "vitamin" idea.
- When receiving feedback on your idea, people will give you a positive feedback or a negative one. When you do get positive feedback, it may not actually mean anything due to the reasons described above.
- To get people to give you honest and real feedback about your idea, put them on the spot and ask them to put their money where their mouths are.
- Get at least 5 to 10 people to pay for your product before it exists. If you can't do this, it doesn't necessarily mean that you should stop working on it. It's just that getting 5 to 10 people to pay for your product before it exists is just about the best validation for an idea you can get.
- When asking someone to pay for your product before it exists, be direct and ask him buy it. Have a pre-order price in mind. (You can also have different pricing tiers based on the value that your customers will need from your product). Ask people to pay - don't pressure them but do be direct with them. Explicitly ask for payment.
 - They can give you money via online payment right away.
 - They can give you a check that you won't encash until your product comes out.
 - Or they can give you money via online payments that you'll hold until your product comes out.

- Give people who pre-order your product a money-back guarantee. Giving people who pre-ordered your product a 30-day moneyback guarantee should be a good amount of time. Start the 30-day money back guarantee when people start using and getting value from your product.
 - This money-back guarantee shouldn't take effect until your product is ready to be used by people who pre-ordered.
 - It shouldn't end until they've had a chance to use your product for a while.
 - Give refunds to anyone who asks for them during your product development stage, as long as it's before your product is ready to be used.
 - This is just a good, honest, and ethical policy to include. Additionally, it will likely increase the conversion rate of people you get to pre-order.

Chapter summary

- To get genuine and honest feedback about your product ideas, talk with your potential customers about your product price.
- Try to get your prospects to pre-order your product.

10



**SEVERE PAINS AND BADLY
NEEDED VITAMINS**

Severe “pains” that people will pay to solve and “vitamin” products that are valuable are easy to distinguish from minor pains, mere inconveniences and useless vitamins.

When you do customer development, if someone has a severe pain or severe need for a useful vitamin, he’ll be extremely emotional and passionate about it. It will be clear that the pain affects him and his business significantly.

Why do you need to tell apart severe pains from minor pains and powerful vitamins from crappy vitamins? It’s because your customers will only pay you to solve severe pains for them. They’ll only purchase your product if it’s an awesome vitamin!

Look for how emotional and passionate people are when they’re describing their problems, pains, and business-related areas that will benefit from vitamins.

If someone starts yelling expletives when describing a pain or a need for a vitamin, take this as a good sign that their need is pretty severe. If your prospects sound angry, excited, or especially sad when telling you that they have an intense desire to grow their businesses faster, it means that they severely need your good “vitamin” product.

For example, in one conversation Patrick McKenzie had with an exterminator about no-show appointments, the exterminator started cursing and yelling. People not being at their houses for appointments is such a big problem for this exterminator that he had to describe it by swearing and venting his frustrations. When Patrick had this conversation, he knew that there was tons of value and potential for his Appointment Reminder product.

If a pain, problem, or need for a vitamin affects people, their businesses, or their jobs extremely, you’ll be able to tell through these obvious indications:

- Extreme problems cause your prospects to lose a significant amount of money. They may also prevent them from making more money.
- Severe problems make people’s jobs so difficult that they cause them to dislike their profession and stop their business operations.

- Extreme problems may cause wasted and unproductive working hours. These may also cause employee demotivation - the business may have trouble motivating its employees at a large scale to work harder and contribute more to the company.
- **A good general rule for spotting severe problems: they directly or indirectly cause people to lose a decent amount of money monthly or they prevent people from increasing the amount of money they make monthly.** A corollary to this rule: *if a problem causes a person to lose large amounts of time (several hours per week), it is a severe problem because it is causing them to lose money.*
- People will pay for “vitamin” products that a) help enhance something that’s good for their businesses or b) help decrease something that’s bad for their businesses. As we’ve discussed earlier, know what is important to your ideal customers and what desires they have for their businesses so you can determine if a “vitamin” idea is good.

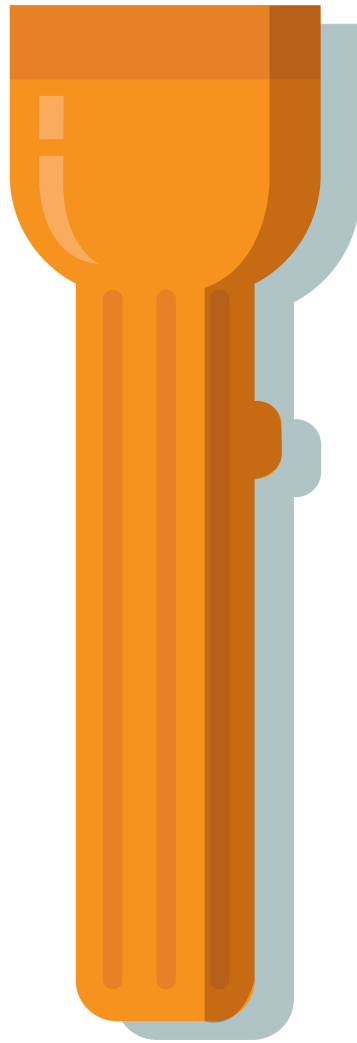
Once you identify what’s important to your ideal customers, figure out if they’ll pay for a vitamin that enhances this by focusing on how they describe their desires. If they describe it with passion and emotion, this is a good sign that they can use a vitamin for the thing they’re describing.

For instance, if e-commerce site owners passionately say that they desire to have more repeat-customers to increase their business growth, then a very good opportunity for a vitamin would be a product that helps increase the number of e-commerce sites’ repeat-customers.

Chapter summary

- Only look to build products that solve severe pains or provide lots of value to people in the form of “vitamins”.
- To determine if a problem is extreme, keep track of your potential customers’ emotions when describing the problem.
- To determine if a vitamin will provide lots of value to customers, pay attention to how they describe the business-related factor that your “vitamin” product will enhance or decrease.
- Good vitamins will affect things in people’s lives that they are passionate about. They will also significantly affect your ideal customers’ businesses and lives.
- If a problem or lack of a vitamin causes someone to lose a large amount of money or prevents someone from making more money predictably and consistently, this is a sign that the problem or need for a vitamin is huge.

11



**DON'T INVENT THE PAIN
– IDENTIFY IT!**

When you think you have a great idea and inspiration strikes, it is easy to put blinders on and rationalize that your idea is amazing even if your customer development interviews tell you otherwise.

Don't become attached to a product idea you have. Allow your product ideas to fail and be disproved during your customer development interviews. If you don't actively try to disprove your idea, you will fail and waste a lot of your time and money by building something that people don't need because it doesn't solve a powerful pain for them.

Very rarely will your first product idea actually be valuable to the people you'd like to sell to. But, this isn't a bad thing if you do customer development the right way.

It's disheartening when the idea you thought was awesome turns out to be useless to your ideal customers. But, this will happen. You'll bruise your ego. You won't feel good.

But, if you determine that your initial idea was bad so you decide not to act on it, this is a sign that you are disciplined. Believe me, you'll eventually be successful. After lots of customer development interviews, you'll learn what the real and severe pains of your ideal customers are. Eventually, you'll also come up with effective ways to solve those pains.

It would be horrible for your product and business to fail because you continue to work on a bad idea even after learning that it sucks!

Want to know how to find out if you're *subjectively* rationalizing your idea as a good one even though *objective* signs say otherwise? **Here are four pitfalls you should watch out for:**

- You build the product without conversing with potential customers about their lives, businesses, and problems. When you think you have a good idea, start to determine if it is valuable right away - don't start to build it immediately! You're just setting yourself up for failure if you do this.

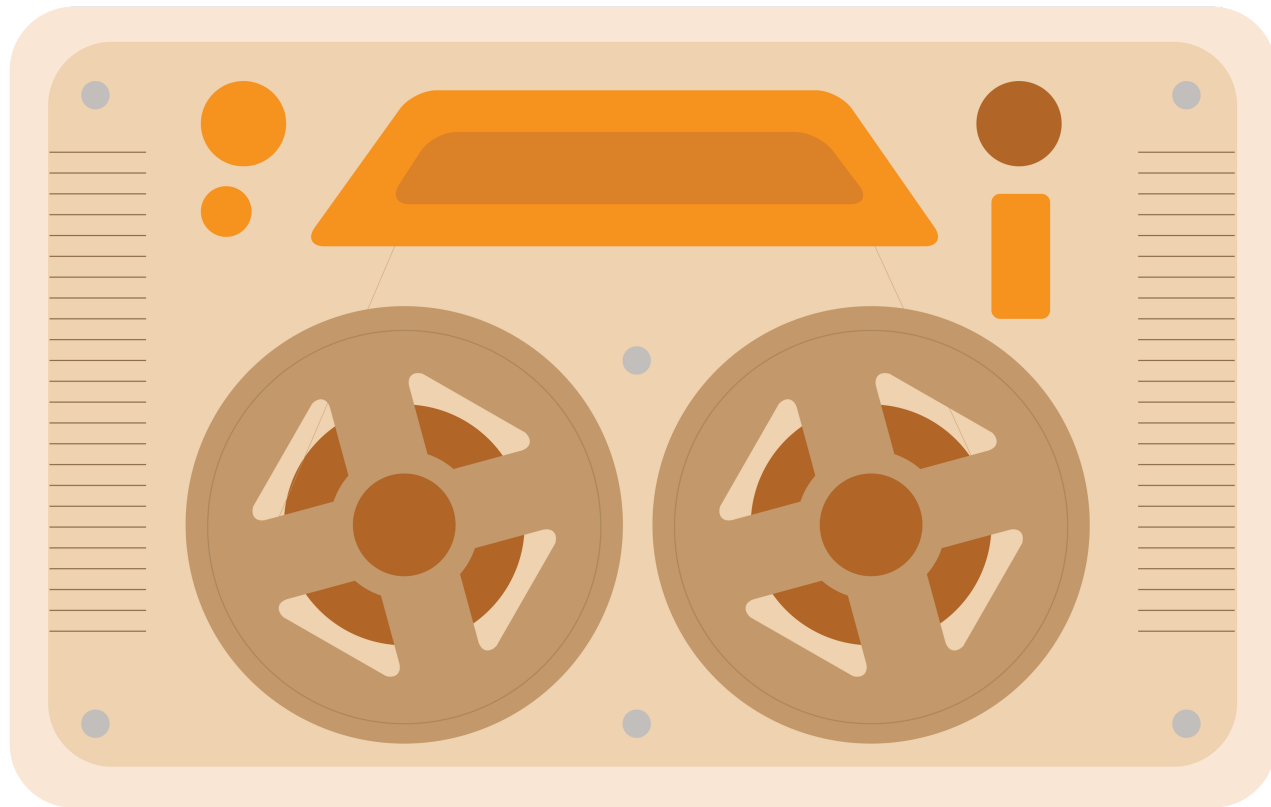
- When a good idea strikes, it can be easy to forget that you should validate (or most of the time, invalidate) the idea first so you don't waste your time working on something that's going to fail.
- Never start building your idea right away, but always start doing customer development for it right away.
- You build the product even though you've had fewer than 20 to 25 customer development conversations. If you start building the product when you've only had fewer than 20 to 25 conversations with customers, it's likely that you're likely rationalizing the value of your idea.
 - In order to find an idea and fully validate it, you need to have at least 20 to 25 conversations with potential customers.
 - Hearing from 10 people that they have a severe problem that your product can solve is encouraging feedback; but, it's not enough feedback.
 - Only build your idea if at least 50% of the people you talk with have encouraging feedback. These people should have a big need that your product idea can fill.
- You build your idea even if the feedback for it shows that it won't solve a real and severe problem. After your customer development conversations with 20-25 potential customers, look at how many of them actually had the problem your product aims to solve.
 - If fewer than 50% of them have the problem or need that your product idea is intended to solve, your product idea is not valuable enough.
 - If fewer than 50% of them express the problem as "not severe", your product idea is not valuable enough. Your ideal customers won't pay for it.*

- * *Exception*: Fewer than 50% of your customers should:
 - Express that your idea solves a real and painful problem for them and,
 - Pre-order (or commit to pay for) your product.
- You build the idea even if you can't get 5 to 10 people you spoke with to pre-order (or commit to pay for) your product as soon as it's ready. If your idea is worth building into a product and a business, it will be valuable enough for you to convince 5 to 10 people to pre-order or firmly commit to buying it when it launches.
 - If you can't get 5 to 10 commitments from your ideal customers based on your idea alone, don't build the idea's product because it won't be valuable to them.

Chapter summary

- If you think your idea is great, you're biased.
- You may rationalize that it's a good idea even though it doesn't solve a problem or it doesn't provide any value to anyone.
- Don't build a bad idea into a product - your ego may be bruised, but at least you'll still have the resources to improve. Most people, even the best entrepreneurs, have mostly horrible ideas for products and businesses.
- You may be rationalizing a bad idea into a good one if you:
 - did not do any customer development for the idea;
 - did not do enough customer development for the idea (50 conversations ideally, but definitely at least 20 to 25 conversations, realistically);
 - did not hear from enough people that they have a severe problem that your product can solve; and,
 - did not get at least 5 to 10 people to commit to pay you for the product.

12



**WHEN TO STOP BEFORE
YOU START**

It's time to stop working on your idea and move on if:

- you find that your idea doesn't solve a real and intense problem, and,
- you can't get anyone to pre-order your product or commit to pay for your product before it exists.

There's nothing wrong with admitting that an idea you had was bad. What is wrong and harmful is continuing to work on a idea even if all of the signs are telling you that the idea is shit.

If your idea is bad, stop before you start building it! You'll save yourself a ton of time and money. Also, working on a crappy idea for a few years only for it to fail is extremely demoralizing. You don't want to end up demoralized and dejected.

Do customer development the right way. During customer development, you'll discover the real, severe problems of the people you want to sell to. Here, you'll come up with ideas for products that solve those problems even if your initial idea was crap.

Invest time and energy into the customer development process. You'll be much happier and your product will be much better because of it.

If you can't find your first customers before you have a product and its features, then you can't find paying customers for your idea when you do have a product! Most people think it will be easier to find customers for your idea once you have a product, a shiny marketing site, and lots of features and business employees. This kind of thinking is not true.

The fact is this: if you build a product based on an idea that doesn't solve a real and intense problem for people, you will have tons of trouble finding enough customers to sustain your business. If worse comes to worst, you may never find any customer at all.

Investing lots of time and money into a shitty idea won't make it any less shitty. It won't make it any easier to find your initial customers also.

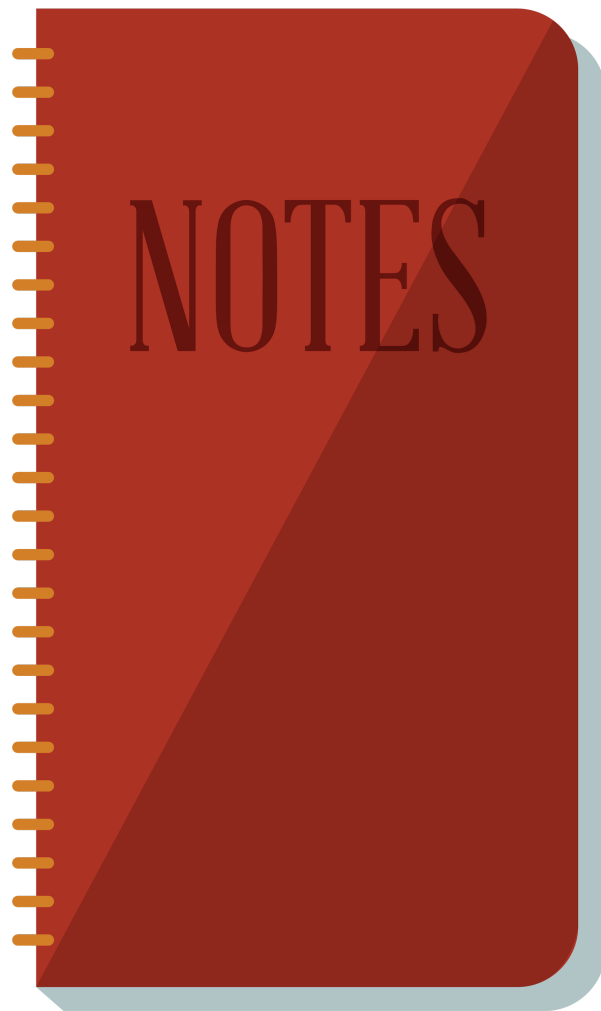
You'll know whether your idea is good or bad based on the conversations you have during customer development interviews. If these conversations show you that your idea is bad, please don't keep working on it. Too many businesses have failed on both large and small scales because people invested a considerable amount of time and money into their ideas even though they were crappy.

If it's a bad idea, stop working on it even before you start building it.

Chapter summary

- Don't invest time and money into an idea if you determine that it isn't a valuable idea that solves a real and significant problem for your ideal customers.
- Once you find out that an idea is bad, stop building it before you start. It's emotionally hard. But you need to do this so it'll be financially easy for your bank account, your peace of mind, and your business.

13



**TEACH EVERYTHING YOU
KNOW**

What's the best way to build an audience and get leads? Nathan Barry, the author of the highly successful book, **Authority**, has an excellent answer to this question - teach about things that are important and relevant to the people you want to be a part of your audience.

Don't just randomly teach about things. Nathan believes you should teach everything you know that is relevant and valuable to your ideal audience. Share what you teach with as many people as possible. Even if you're a complete beginner to the industry, skill, or discipline that you'd like to build an audience around and teach about, you can still teach everything you know.

How?

Nathan says that if you create content that teaches other people, you're providing yourself the best education possible about your topic. One common statistic that supports this is that people who teach what they know will remember about 90% of what they teach, but people who learn from teachers will only remember about 10% of what they learn.

Even if you started teaching people as an expert, you'll eventually create content that teaches everything you already know, so you'll also have to start learning new stuff to keep creating new content.

On the other hand, if you're a beginner at a particular skill or discipline in your chosen industry, all this means is that you get to learn about the industry while you are teaching about the industry. For example, if you want web designers and front-end designers as your audience but you've never done web design every, you'll have to (and get to) learn more about web design so you can start to teach your audience about it.

When you teach your audience, your content can come in many forms. You can teach people by blogging, making video tutorials, podcasting, and engaging with people on social media.

Aim to teach your audience the specific skills, insights, or practices that they can use to improve their businesses and their lives so that your content will be significantly valuable.

Why is teaching people so effective at building an audience? It's because if you teach people, you start providing value to them right away or you provide value to them as you improve your writing and teaching skills eventually.

When you provide value to people, especially when you provide value to people consistently, they'll want to keep coming back for more and more of your content. They'll come back on their own, or they'll give you their email addresses and allow you update them when you post new content. People who think what you teach is valuable will also share your content on social media. In the end, more and more people will find your content and get to see and benefit from its value.

Case studies:

Nathan has built a huge audience by teaching people everything he knows.

Other good examples of people who have had lots of success by teaching others and providing value to others include Brennan Dunn, Justin Jackson, Adii Pienaar, Amy Hoy, Pat Flynn, Chris Guillebeau, John Lee Dumas, the Buffer Blog, the Kissmetrics Blog, Ryan Hoover, Rob Walling, the Intercom.io Blog, Patrick McKenzie, and many others. Check out their blogs and their teachings so you can see what sorts of content they write to help provide value to people.

Chapter summary

- Teach everything you know about the topic, industry, and profession that you want to build an audience around.
- Even if you're a beginner, start teaching people because as you teach people you'll learn more and more too.
- Teaching is a great way to build an audience.
- When you teach, you provide value to people, and when you provide value to people, they value you and what you have to say.
- Teaching valuable content to your audience will encourage them to share what



**TALK TO JUST ONE
PERSON WHEN TEACHING**

When you're writing your content and teaching people, there are so many different ways you can teach a topic. You can teach in a way that beginners will understand, or you can go much deeper into your topic and cover parts of it that only experts will find valuable.

How should you write and create your content so that it is definitely going to help your target audience?

Nathan Barry has a strategy that is very useful for making sure your content will always help other people: in creating your content, teach to one person only.

This person can be a specific person from your life, such as a friend, a parent, a sibling, or a colleague. Or, this can be a person who fits a certain description.

In creating your content, for example, the person you want to talk to about programming is someone who's been coding for at least a few years. Or, he may be someone who wants to learn how to code, but has no idea what coding is or where to start learning.

Talking to just one person may seem like it limits the number of people who will find your content valuable - in fact, the opposite will actually happen. As Nathan says, there are lots of people out there in the world who are in a similar situation or skill level to the one person you're aiming to teach and talk to.

When you create content for just one person, you can make it in a way that you know the person you're writing to will find valuable.

If you create valuable content for one specific person, there are thousands, hundreds of thousands, or millions of people just like your target person! As a result, many people will enjoy and get value from what you're teaching them.

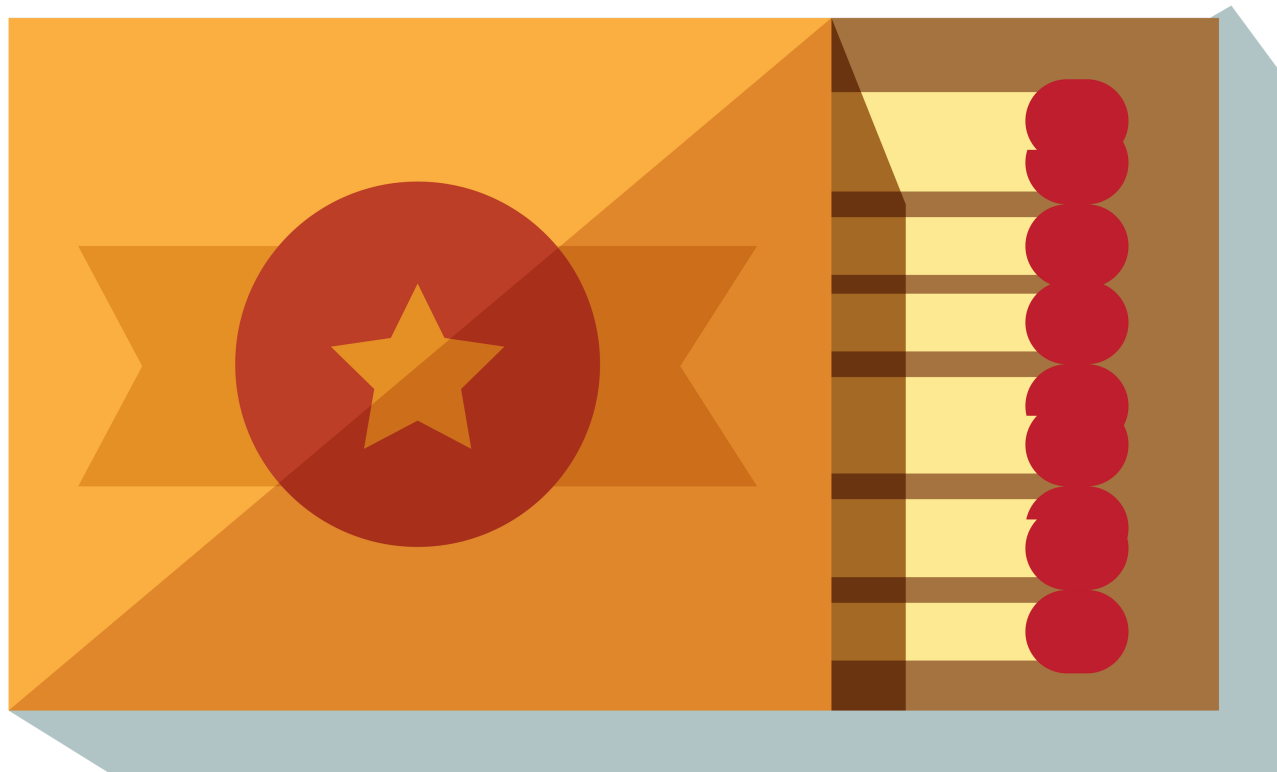
Don't just teach everything you know. Create each piece of content specifically for one person in a way you know he will find it to be valuable.

Here are a few questions you can ask so you can identify a specific person who will benefit from your teaching:

- What does he or she do for a living?
- How long has he or she been doing that?
- How old is he or she?
- What comprises his or her daily routine?
- Is he or she a beginner or an expert in his or her field?
- What are some of the common problems that he or she may face?
- Can he or she understand the industry-specific terms you're using?
- Do you think he or she will prefer a casual blog post or a formal content?
- What skills will help him or her perform better at his or her job and/or advance his or her career more quickly?
- How much free time does he or she generally have during the work week and on the weekends?
- Does he or she dislike his or her job or career, or wish he or she was in a different job or career?

Chapter summary

- Write content and create content for just one specific person.
- If you do this, tons of other people will get value from your content because lots of other people are in similar circumstances to this your target person.
- Create valuable content so you'll be much more successful in building up your audience.



**AUDIENCE-BUILDING 101:
YOUR CONTENT SHOULD
ALWAYS HAVE A CALL-
TO-ACTION**

Always have at least one primary call-to-action at the beginning or at the end of each piece of content you produce.

The primary call-to-action for each piece of your content should:

- ask people to join your email list or newsletter,
- direct people to a landing page that encourages them to sign up for an email list for your blog or,
- direct your readers to a landing page that encourages them to sign up for an upcoming product you're going to release.

Also, have a less-prominent secondary call-to-action that encourages people to share your content on social media. This will help amplify your content's reach - but asking people to share your content should never be the primary call-to-action.

Why should your primary call-to-action always ask people to join your list?

Why should you not focus on asking your readers to share your content on social media (or worse, to follow you on social media)?

The answer is that the best and most profitable way to build an audience is to build an email list. Email lists and email marketing are the holy grails of building an audience, while getting your content shared on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn is just like a piece of bread. Getting the holy grail should be more important to you than getting a hearty piece of bread. So, in your call-to-actions, aim to get your readers to sign up on your email list.

Why are email lists and email marketing better compared to social media?

Compared to a Facebook like or Twitter follow, an email address gives you a much more direct and consistent contact with your audience. Generally, people follow at least 100 to 500 people on Twitter so they constantly get a new stream of Tweets. Here, it's very easy for Tweets containing valuable content that you want your followers to see to get lost and forgotten. People may get value from your content if they had the chance to see it, but if you only post it in a Tweet, there's a good chance that it won't be seen.

The same thing applies to Facebook posts. Your Facebook page likers will only briefly see what you post. Now, there are tons of posts that are vying for a spot in the news feeds of your product's Facebook fans. Also, Facebook has been reducing the amount of organic exposure that posts from pages get. Facebook's been doing this because it wants to make money - one way to achieve this is to charge you to reach the fans that you've worked so hard to get in the first place!

The point is that very few people in the audience that you build up on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social sites will see your content when you post it.

When you build up your audience by asking people to subscribe to your email list, it's much easier for you to contact your audience and give your valuable content to them.

Email lists and email marketing help you build a real audience by giving you much better access to those in your audience. Tons of people have had amazing success at building an audience by using email as their main marketing tool.

Brennan Dunn, Nathan Barry, Chris Guillebeau, Pat Flynn, and hundreds of thousands of people have probably used email marketing to successfully build and grow their businesses.

Case study:

When Moz was just starting up, Rand Fishkin and his team had a fast-growing blog that lots of people frequently visited. But, for a long time Rand didn't collect email addresses on Moz's blog. He admitted that not collecting people's email addresses right from the start was huge mistake.

After Moz had been around a for a while, the team sent some of its content to its hundreds of thousands of free users via their email addresses. When Rand and company did this, they realized that they had to start to collect email addresses on the blog. They learned this because tons of the free users they sent their content to viewed it and shared it with their friends.

Another success story that shows you should collect emails on your blog is from Brennan Dunn. When Brennan was writing his first book, *Double Your Freelancing Rate*, he collected email addresses on his landing page. Each week before the book launched, Brennan sent a valuable piece of content to his list. After the book launched, he continued to send one valuable piece of content per week to the email list.

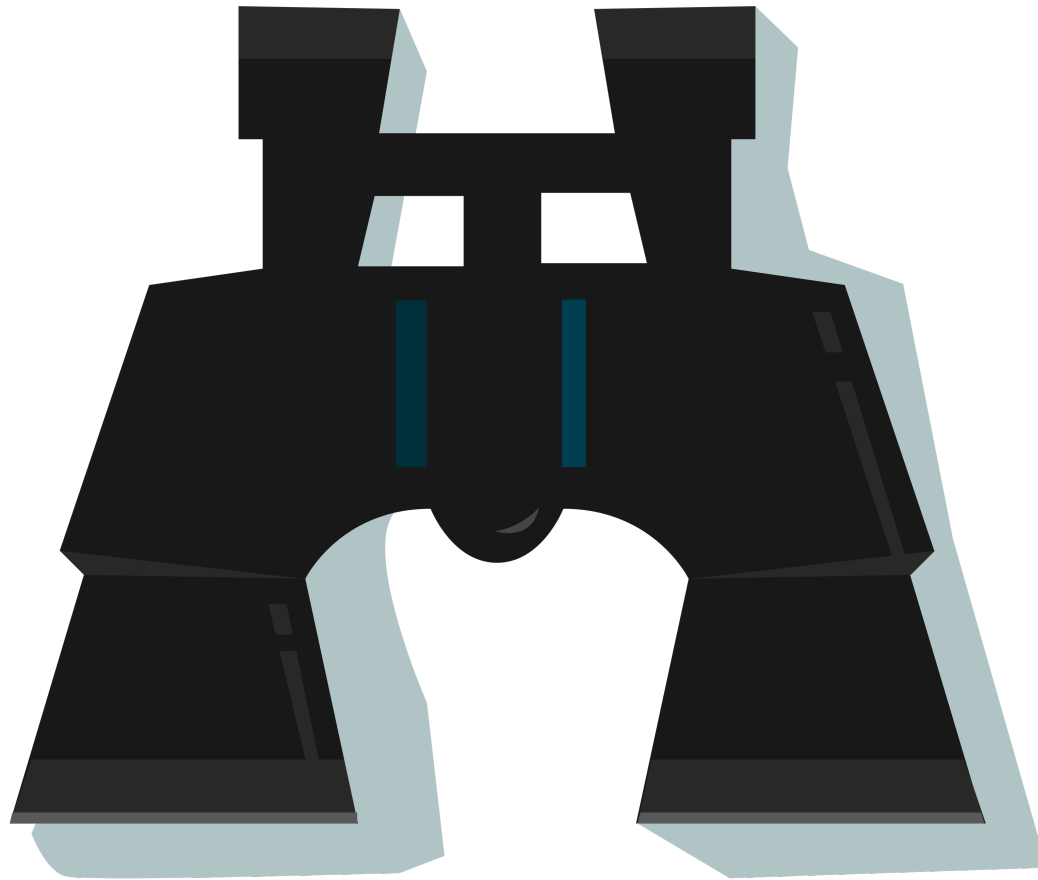
Over time, after he asked his content viewers to join his list, Brennan's list has grown to have more than 10,000 people on it. Now, Brennan's list is his primary source of customers for each of his products.

In fact, [in a recent interview](#), Brennan said that 30% of his email list joiners list buy one of his products just one week after joining.

Chapter summary

- Your main call-to-action in your content should encourage people to sign up for your email list - always.
- Only encourage people to share your content and follow your social media presences in secondary call-to-actions.
- Building an email list is the best way to build an audience.
- An email list gives you the best way to access your audience and give your content to them. As a result, this will help build trust over time and make people more likely to buy your product.

16



**DON'T LET YOUR
AUDIENCE DIE**

Audiences can die, and they can die easily. If you go a month or two without contacting your audience, most of your audience will probably be dead.

What does it mean to have your audience die?

It means that most of the people in your audience will have:

- forgotten who you are,
- or forgotten why you and your content are important.

As a result, your audience will not open your emails and will not click on links to your content, no matter how valuable your content is. This can also result in large portions of your audience flagging the emails containing your content as spam. You definitely don't want this, do you?

How can you prevent the death of your audience? It's fairly simple and easy! **Just follow these three steps:**

1. Consistently create great content by teaching everything you know. Produce 1 to 3 awesome pieces of content per week.
2. Share your content with your audience regularly. After producing 1 to 3 awesome pieces of content per week, send 1 to 2 emails per week to your audience. Tell them that this content is available and that they should check it out because it will help them with their lives, businesses or jobs.
3. Sit back, relax and smile. That's it! To preserve your "audience life", consistently send 1 to 2 emails per week with all of the valuable content you produced that week.

It's tragic to let your audience die, especially after you spent so much time and put in so much hard work to build it. Consistently communicate with them and provide valuable content that aims to improve their lives and their businesses significantly.

Case studies:

People who are experts and highly-skilled at building audiences like Nathan Barry and Brennan Dunn send content to their audience almost every week. Naturally, they experience good results from doing this.

Brennan sends his audience one weekly email containing one valuable piece of content every Tuesday. If he misses this schedule, he should always have a good reason to explain what happened. This fantastic consistency from Brennan helps to ensure that his audience never dies. It also makes sure that the people in his audience are always engaged and happy, which means they'll be more likely to purchase his products.

Nathan writes a new post and sends it via email to his audience once every 10 days. This has worked very well for him and helped keep his audience alive, engaged, and eager to buy his products. Nathan's 10-day schedule is also good to consider if you think it might be too much to produce an amazing piece of content and send it to your email list every week.

Chapter summary

- Building an audience takes a lot of work, so don't let your audience die.
- To keep your audience alive and engaged, create at least 1 great piece of content per week and send this content to your email subscribers and post it on your social media networks regularly.

17



**ALWAYS APPROACH YOUR
AUDIENCE WITH AMAZING
ARTICLES**

Whenever you contact the people in your audience, always give them something that will be valuable to them and make their lives better.

Always contact your audience with value.

Most of the time, contacting your audience with value will be easy as long as the content you produce is valuable. The vast majority of the emails and social media posts you send to your audience will be about content that can help them improve their lives.

To grow your audience and gain their trust, produce and provide valuable content to them consistently without asking for anything in return. 95% of your communications with your audience should give free and significantly valuable content.

95% of the time you communicate with your audience, send them at least one valuable piece of content. This is the only effective way to build a loyal and large audience that's interested in buying your product.

As for the other 5% of the time you contact your audience, sell your product to or ask a favor from them. But, don't just sell to your email list. Don't just pitch your product and leave it at that. Giving in to this temptation is a big mistake.

Any time you contact your audience to sell a product or to send great new content, make sure that the people in it are better off and more likely to succeed after hearing from you. This is a strategy that comes from Brennan Dunn. It's extremely important.

Remember: an email with only your product pitch contains no value - even if your product is extremely valuable.

Your audience has invested a lot of time in following your content and keeping up with it, so they deserve to only receive the best. Put valuable content in all your emails to your audience, even if the content is very small.

Most of the time, doing this will be easy because you won't be selling or asking for anything. But, you must still give value to your content even during the 5% of the time you sell or ask for something.

If you don't provide value to your audience, your audience will:

- reduce (and perhaps even lose) their trust for you,
- be less likely to share your content,
- be more likely to unsubscribe from your list and stop following your content, and,
- be less likely to ever purchase your product or get your service.

Another benefit of always providing valuable content to your audience is that people from your audience will share it, which will help grow your audience and list even faster.

How should you contact your audience in a way that you provide them with value even though you're selling a product or asking for a favor?

Here are three quick, simple and effective ways:

1. Find a quote that will help some part of your audience's businesses or lives and put it in the message to your audience. It's a small piece of value, yes, but it can be a nice way to include a piece of value that doesn't get in the way.
2. Include a small lesson or piece of advice related to your product that will help your audience even if they decide not buy your product.
 - a. For example, if you sell your product to ecommerce business owners to help them get more repeat customers from their existing customer base, you could include a tip on how they can get repeat customers for their businesses - even if they don't buy your product.

- b. As Brennan says, there are many way for people to partially or fully solve the problem that your product solves, even without using your product. Give people an idea for solving their problems without your product or any other software. This seems counterintuitive, but people will appreciate it and realize that you truly care about them. Plus, if you tell people how they can solve their problems without using your product, you can find a way to bring up why your product is simpler, more efficient, and more effective than these alternate solutions.
3. Interview someone in your ideal customers' industry. Share this interview with your audience when you ask them to buy your product or do you a favor. Make the interview focus on only tips and strategies that will help your ideal customers. (You can subtly mention your own product once or twice - that's it.)

Chapter summary

- It takes a lot of hard work and time to build up an audience, but it takes only a few moments to lose that tremendous amount of hard work and effort on your part.
- Whenever you contact your audience, always provide value to them, even when you're selling to them or asking them for a favor.
- You don't have to provide a ton of value every time you communicate with your audience, but you must provide some value, even if it's small.

18



**WRITE ABOUT WHAT YOU
KNOW ABOUT & CARE
ABOUT**

When you write to your audience, David Heinemeier Hansson says you should only write about what you know about and care about. It's a simple tip, but an important one to keep in mind.

People will only be interested in and care about your content if you are authentic, interesting, and credible.

How can you be interesting and credible? You need to know a lot about the content you're teaching to your audience!

How can you be authentic? You need to be caring and be passionate about the content that you're teaching people.

If you don't know what you're talking about when you create content, people will see right through you. Additionally, you'll struggle to build an audience because people will know you're not truly invested.

If you don't care about the content you're creating and teaching, people will see right through that, too. Plus, if you don't have passion for the stuff you're teaching your audience, you won't enjoy your work. Ultimately, it won't be a fun experience!

Don't just blog and produce content so you can build an audience.

Build an audience, teach them and produce helpful content because you're genuinely interested in and passionate about what you're doing.

Case study:

When you read Basecamp's blog [Signals vs. Noise](#), it becomes very clear that David Heinemeier Hansson, Jason Fried, and the rest of the Basecamp team are extremely passionate about the stuff they're writing about.

Some of the common themes that the Basecamp team truly cares about and knows about that come up on the blog are bootstrapping, keeping products simple, having a healthy work-life balance, building businesses with actual profits, and using remote working to build an all-star team.

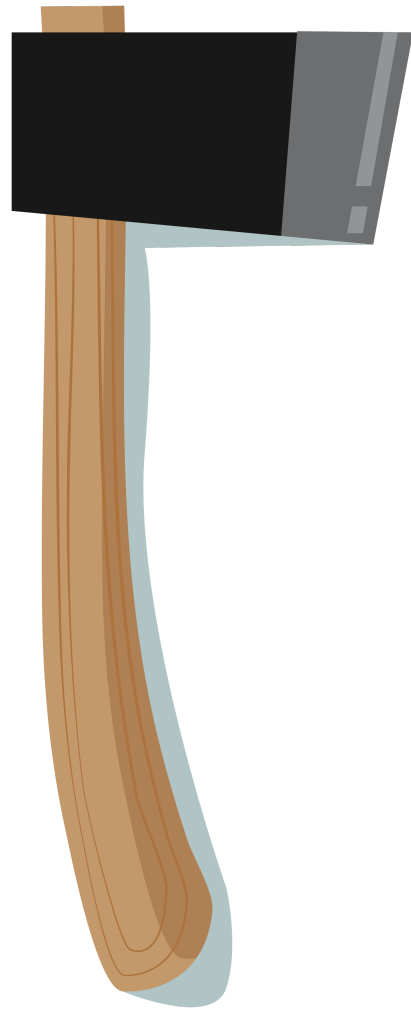
Whenever one of these topics comes up on the blog, whoever's writing about it gets really fired up and the writer's passion gets visible. Also, the content related to these topics (and every other topic!) are helpful and valuable. This just shows that the Basecamp team has tons of knowledge about the stuff they write.

Be like the folks at Basecamp. Over the years, Basecamp has built an enormous audience and following because they used these rules. As a result, they're able to get tons of customers as well.

Chapter summary

- Only create content when you know a lot about it and when you have a passion for it.
- If you create content that you don't know about and don't care about, you won't build an audience. You also won't have fun with your work because people will see what you're doing - and they won't like it.

19



THE MINIMUM VIABLE AUDIENCE

The minimum viable audience is an idea from Brian Clark of [Copyblogger](#). It's also a tactic that Clay Collins effectively used to successfully get his first customers for LeadPages.

What's a minimum viable audience, you ask?

It's the minimum audience you need so you can converse with and help solve the problems of your target audience. You need a minimum viable audience so you can find a relevant product idea and get your product's first customers.

A minimum viable audience can be any number of people in your audience (or email subscribers) as long as you're able to get consistent comments on your content and replies to your emails about the problems they have and the issues they face.

Generally speaking, though, a good rule of thumb to consider for your minimum viable audience is you need more than 1,000 people.

Why?

It's because with 1,000 subscribers or so, you can consistently get comments on the posts you write and you can receive around 20 to 50 email responses whenever you ask a question via email.

Also, with about 1,000 subscribers, you'll get a fuller and more diverse feel of what your ideal customers will actually need from your product.

Use the strategies and tactics we've discussed so far to build up your audience. When you have a minimum viable audience already, ask questions to them. Doing so can help you discover their problems.

Afterwards, pre-sell to them once you've come up with a product idea that solves their business-related problems for them.

Case study:

Before Clay Collins pre-sold LeadPages to his audience, he built up a fairly sizable audience.

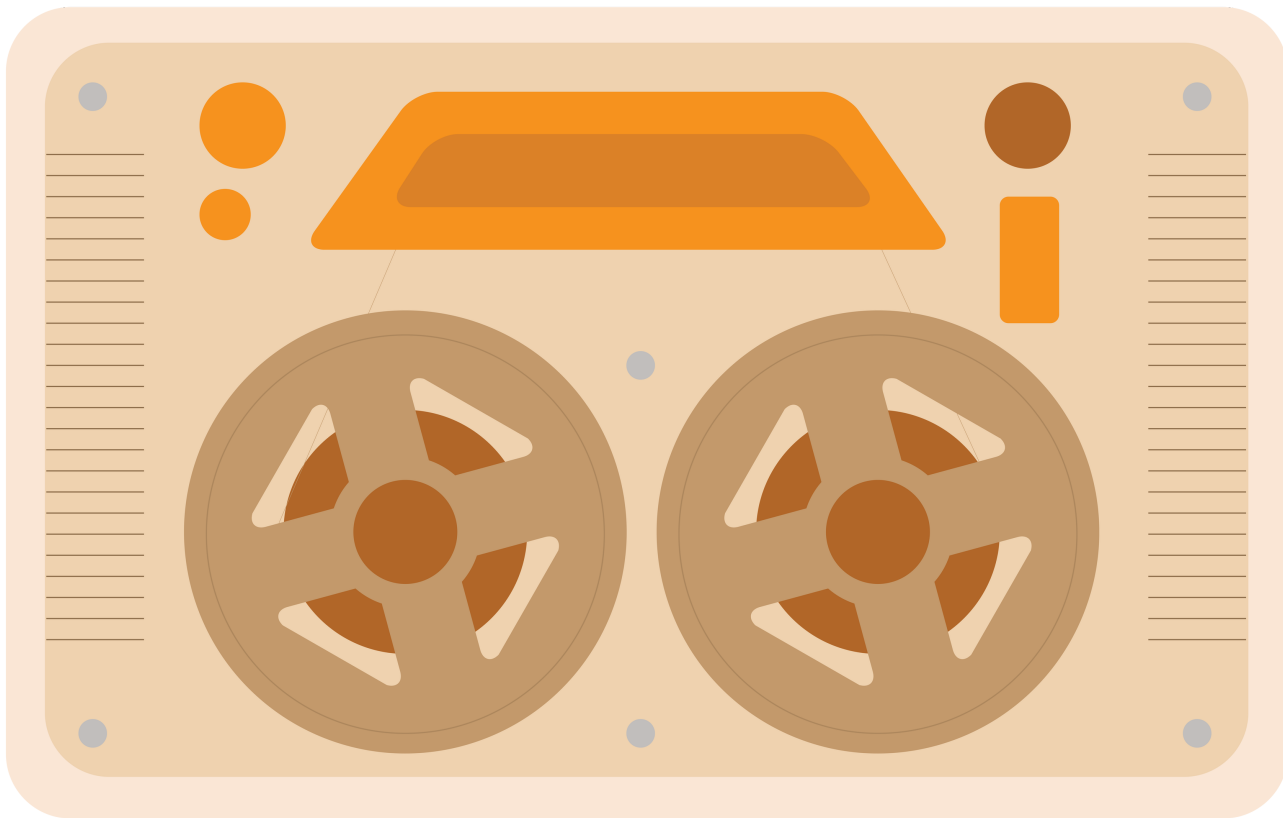
Clay determined that LeadPages would help lots of different people and would have a big market because he had a large audience at that time. Having a large audience enabled him to research people's problems and eventually pre-sell LeadPages to them.

Without having that audience, Clay likely wouldn't have heard from enough people to determine that there was a real need for something like LeadPages. Plus, having that initial minimum viable audience gave Clay lots of good momentum with his future content marketing efforts for LeadPages because he already had a group of people who valued what he said and shared his content with others.

Chapter summary

- Finding your product's first customers by building up an audience is a great strategy.
- But, you must have a minimum viable audience before you can look to it to discover problems to solve and find out people to sell to.
- A minimum viable audience should have at least 1,000 email subscribers.

20



**BUILD RELATIONSHIPS
WITH INFLUENCERS IN
YOUR INDUSTRY**

Once you've found the email address of the person you want to build a relationship with, it's time to build that relationship. There are lots of ways to build relationships with people, but we're going to talk about two different strategies in this chapter.

The **first strategy is one that Alex Turnbull used to build relationships with lots of high-profile entrepreneurs fairly quickly**. Using this strategy, Alex was able to get a thousand new email subscribers for his audience in under 24 hours.

Alex Turnbull's The Influencer Strategy:

1. Build a list of 80 to 100 influencers in your industry who you want to build relationships with.
 - a. Look for people who have audiences similar to your desired audience.
 - b. Look for people who will get value from what you write.
 - c. Also, come up with an idea for a blog series that will resonate with the influencers.
For instance, Alex pitched influencers an idea for a blog series about how he grew his startup, Groove, to \$100,000 in monthly recurring revenue.
2. Building relationships with the influencers on your list by not contacting them directly yet. Aim to start discussions with them and help show them that you care about and you get value from their content. Alex's template for building influence in this way is as follows:
 - a. **Follow each influencer on Twitter,**
 - b. **Write at least 2 tweets to each influencer on Twitter in response to their tweets,**
 - c. **Write at least 2 comments on their blogs, and,**
 - d. **Share at least 2 of their blog posts.**

3. After completing all of the activities, send each influencer a short email with a very small request. Personalize the email. Empathize with each influencer by talking about how they probably get lots of emails from people looking for advice from them. Next, describe to them what the idea for your blog and/or blog series and/or product. Tell them that you'll be honored to share it with them. Ask first if you can send it to them. Don't send it to them in the initial email - wait for them to give you the green light first.
4. Most people you contact will give you the green light. Whenever someone gives you the green light, send them the initial site/idea for your blog series, and ask for quick feedback about it. If you've picked a topic that the influencers are passionate about and care about, they are likely to offer to Tweet about it and comment on it when it launches.
5. Right before you launch your new blog/blog series, send a quick email to all of the influencers who were receptive to it about an hour before launch. In this email, tell them that the new blog is launching soon and ask them to kindly Tweet about it when it launches - if they want. Give them a pre-made Tweet to share your blog. This way, they spend as little time as possible sharing it. (Note: Don't pressure influencers to share it. Make your request relaxed and nonchalant. Say it's no worries if they don't want to share).
6. After your blog launches, respond to every comment.
7. Ask every one of the influencers who tweeted and/or commented on your post if you can send them new posts well before they launch in order to get their feedback and suggestions on the posts.
8. Be sure to thank all of the influencers who helped you out again. Most of the people you ask to keep in touch with will be delighted to give you feedback on your posts and to continue to help you out. Send the draft for each new post to every influencer

who agrees to give you feedback, and be sure to actually incorporate their feedback and suggestions. Not only will this strategy help you get lots of traffic and email subscribers for your blog, but it will also help you build relationships with awesome influencers in your industry.

Case study:

Alex Turnbull used this strategy with Groove's blog to get 1,000 new email subscribers in one day. Alex found a great concept for a blog series and started engaging with influencers and their work online.

After engaging with 80 to 100 influencers, Alex sent each of them a short email asking if they'd be interested in hearing more about the blog concept. Most were interested - they even ended up loving the concept so much that they commented and shared the first post.

Now, Alex has focused a smaller group of these influencers to help him get feedback for posts and build even stronger and more personal relationships. Based on the success Alex has had with this strategy, it's definitely something you should try.

The second strategy is a more generic strategy that you can use to build relationships with people over time.

The General Relationship-Building Strategy:

1. Create a list of 80 to 100 influencers in your industry that you'd like to build relationships with.
 - a. Look for people who have similar professional interests as you (but are farther along in their careers).

- b. Look for people who have audiences that contain lots of people who you target to be a part of your audience and who fit the description of your ideal customers.
- 2. Engage with each of these influencers in the same way that we described above. You can engage with influencers if you:
 - a. **Follow each influencer on Twitter,**
 - b. **Write at least 2 tweets to each influencer on Twitter in response to their tweets,**
 - c. **Write at least 2 comments on their blogs, and,**
 - d. **Share at least 2 of their blog posts.**
- 3. After you've engaged with all of the influencers on your list, send each of them a short email. In this email, ask for something very small - a 5 to 10 minute conversation with the influencer so you can ask him or her 2 to 3 questions. Ask if you can send them the questions you want to ask and ask if you can send them 2 to 3 times for doing a call to see if any of them work. Emphasize that you'll be completely happy to work around the influencers' schedule, so if there is a particular date and time that'll work really well for them, you'd be happy to make that work.

Note: The questions you ask people should actually help you. The questions you ask should be very specific to each influencer. Don't ask them questions just for the sake of getting them to talk with you! Make sure the questions relate to their expertise and relate to your product or business idea in some way. At the end of the call, thank the influence and tell them how their advice will help you.

- 4. At least 50% of the people should be interested in having a call with you. After you schedule and have the call, send an email thanking the influencer. Also, say that if

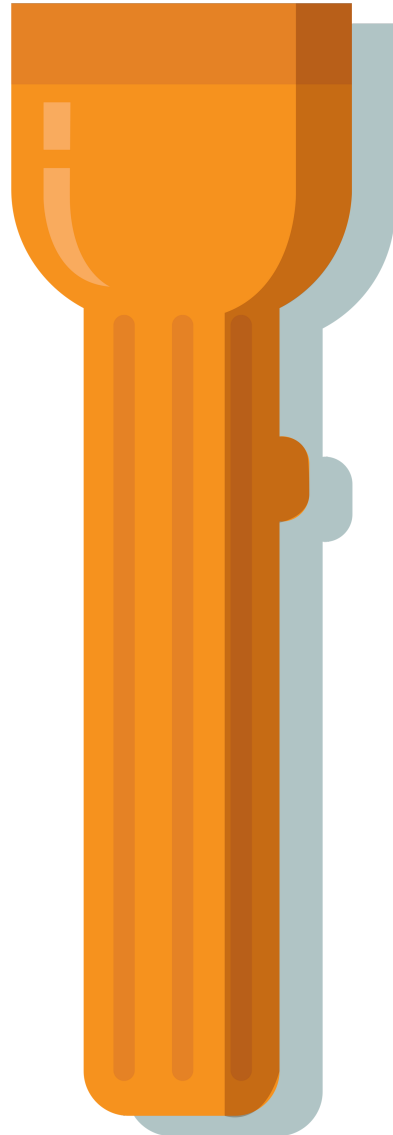
there's anything you can do to help the influencer, you'll be happy to help in any way possible.

5. After each call with an influencer, continue to engage with them by commenting on their blog posts, sharing their posts, and conversing with them on Twitter.
6. 6 to 8 weeks after your initial call with the influencer, send them an email asking how they're doing. In this follow-up email, say that you just wanted to check in and see if there's anything you can help with. If the influencer asks for your help with something, make this your priority.
7. 6 to 8 weeks after your first follow-up email, send another email to check in and ask if there's anything you can help with. During the time between follow-up emails, keep engaging with the influencers! Never stop engaging.
8. About 4 weeks after you send your second follow-up email, send the influencer another email asking if he or she has the time to converse with you for 15 to 20 minutes. Tell the influencer that the conversation will be about specific issues, skills, or strategies that you'll love to learn more about. Work completely around the influencer's schedule when setting up the call. Naturally, bring 5 to 7 specific questions into the call. After the call is over, be sure to send another thank-you email.
9. After this point, continue to always engage with the influencers by conversing with them on Twitter, commenting on their blog posts, and sharing their posts.
10. Also, continue to check in with each influencer every 8 weeks or so to ask if there's anything you can do to help him or her. If you do this consistently over time, this will help you build extremely strong relationships with anyone you want.
11. After about six months to a year of doing this, your relationships with influencers will be strong enough to the point that you can ask them for infrequent (but, larger) favors. You can also start to plan things to do with them like going to conferences, having regular phone conversations, or meeting up and hanging out for the weekend to discuss both business and fun.

Chapter summary

- Build up relationships with influencers in your product's industry. You need to do this because influencers can:
 - Advise you and help you improve your product and set a vision for it,
 - Be great customers for your product to have if you're able to get them to buy it, and,
 - Introduce you to other influencers who can potentially be good customers for your product.
- To build relationships with influencers, use Alex Turnbull's Strategy or the General Relationship-Building Strategy.

21



**HOW TO FIND ANY
PERSON'S EMAIL ADDRESS**

To build a network, you need to get a hold of influential people and converse with them.

What's one great way to start getting to know people in your industry? **Send them an email.**

Almost every professional in today's day and age has at least one email address. All you need to do to contact him is to find his email address.

Now, some people make their email addresses publicly available and encourage you to contact them and ask them questions. For example, Patrick McKenzie, one of the most generous people in the software and technology entrepreneurship industries, **has a page on his website** that is devoted to encourage people to reach out to him via email and talk with him about software.

Most people, especially influential and successful people like Patrick, don't make it super easy to find their email address and contact them.

But, did you know that it's possible to find most people's email addresses?

Here are 3 strategies from **this post by Scott Britton that can help you find almost anyone's email address in the entire world:**

(Note: If you can't find anyone's email address using any of these strategies, that person probably has an entertainment celebrity status, has no email address, or has created an email address with the intention of making it very difficult for people to find.)

1. The first technique is to use **Rapportive** to guess someone's email address.
Rapportive is a Gmail add-on that LinkedIn owns.

You need to guess the person's email address by inputting his email address into the "To" field:

- If someone has a social media account (or multiple online social media accounts) connected to his email address, this person's social profiles will populate in the right-hand side of Gmail where Rapportive is located.
 - If someone's social profiles don't populate on the right-hand of Gmail, there's a good chance a) this person doesn't have any social media profiles connected to their email, b) this person doesn't have an email address that you'll be able to find or, c) you haven't guessed the right formula for his email yet.
2. If Rapportive fails, use the second technique. Manually input all of the different possible combinations of email addresses into the [MailTester.com](https://www.mailtester.com) website.

When you put an email address into MailTester, one of three things will happen:

- MailTester will return a completely green-colored text to you. You've found the correct email address for a specific person!
- MailTester will return a bunch of green-colored text followed by yellow-colored text after you enter someone email's address. This means that the site or service that hosts the email account for the person you're trying to contact doesn't allow you to verify the authenticity of his email address.

If MailTester returns yellow-colored text for one email address formula on a particular domain, it's likely you won't be able to test the correctness of all the email addresses on this domain. Yellow-colored text from MailTester doesn't mean that the email address is wrong - it just means that something is blocking MailTester from testing the correctness of an email address.

- MailTester will return a block of green-colored text along with some red-colored text. This means that the email address you guessed is incorrect. You should try a different address. Getting red-colored text for all of the email address you try to guess for a particular person does not mean you should give up hope.

There’s still one more fantastic strategy you can use when looking for someone’s email address.

3. The third amazing tactic you can use is a service called **Toofr**. Toofr is a SaaS app. The way it guesses email addresses is simple, easy, and quick. All you have to do with Toofr is to enter the first name & the last name of the person you’d like to contact and enter the domain name that you think the person’s email address is hosted on.

When you enter all of this information, Toofr will check 17 different formulas based on a person’s first and last name to see if any of those formulas are this person’s correct email address.

When Toofr finds a correct email address among its formulas, it will tell you by highlighting this email address in green.

15 Email Formulas You Can Input To Find Anyone’s Email Address

Try each of these 15 formulas for email addresses based on the person’s first and last name. Next to each formula is an example of what each formula would look like if you were to type it out with my first and last name, Jack Kaufman.

In the formula chart, please note that Firstinit represents the initial of someone’s first name and Lastinit represents the initial of someone’s last name.

(Note: None of these email addresses used as examples actually belong to me.)

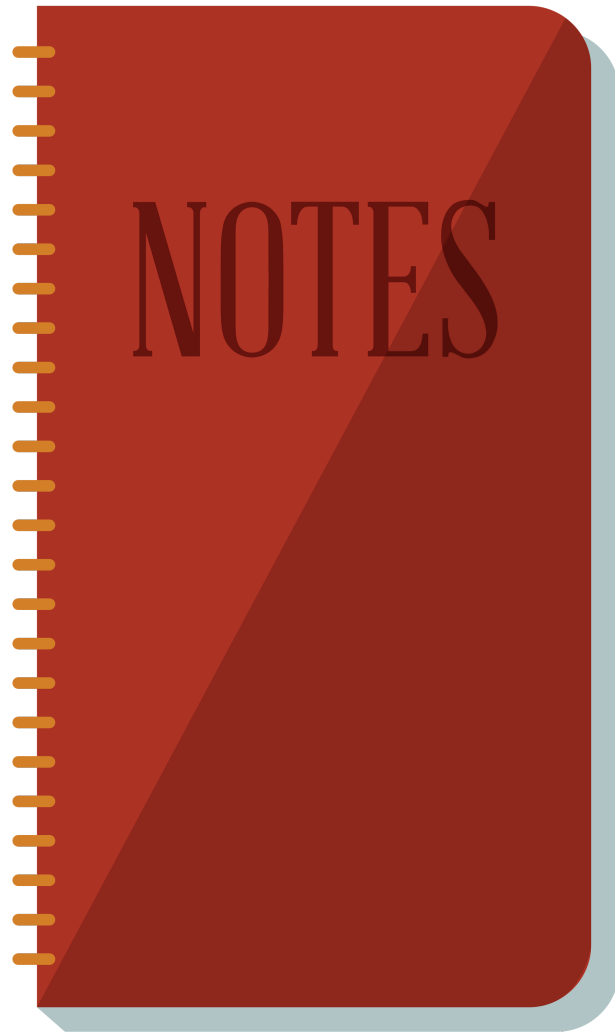
Please go to the next page to view the table of 15 different email formulas.

EMAIL FORMULA	EXAMPLE EMAIL
Firstname@domain	jack@example.com
Firstname.Lastname@domain	jack.kaufman@example.com
FirstinitLastname@domain	jkaufman@example.com
Lastname@domain	kaufman@example.com
Firstname_Lastname@domain	jack_kaufman@example.com
FirstnameLastinit@domain	jackk@example.com
FirstnameLastname@domain	jackkaufman@example.com
LastnameFirstinit@domain	kaufmanj@example.com
LastnameFirstname@domain	kaufmanjack@example.com
LastinitFirstname@domain	kjack@example.com
Firstinit.Lastname@domain	j.kaufman@example.com
Lastname.Firstinit@domain	kaufman.j@example.com
FirstinitLastinit@domain	jk@example.com
Firstname-Lastname@domain	jack-kaufman@example.com
Firstname.Lastinit@domain	jack.k@example.com

Chapter summary

- You should be able to find nearly any person's email address by using the Rapportive trick, the MailTester trick, and/or the Toofr trick.
- Once you've discovered your ideal customers and their online hang-out places, use this technique to actually contact them.
- If you're unable to find a person's email address using the Rapportive trick, the MailTester trick, and the Toofr trick, it can signify that you won't be able to find the email address of the particular person you're hoping to contact.
- Being unable to find someone's email address doesn't mean you should give up hope. You can also develop a relationship with someone close to your target person. Afterwards, politely ask for an introduction.

22



**THE BEST TIME TO BUILD
A RELATIONSHIP WITH
SOMEONE IS WHEN YOU
HAVE NOTHING TO SELL**

If someone cold-emailed or cold-called you and suddenly asked you to buy their product, how would you feel?

Unless this product significantly helped you in the past, you probably wouldn't be interested in buying it, right?

Selling people software and products by cold-contacting them is a good strategy. Yes, it often works.

But, if you'd like to build relationships with certain people, don't sell them something during the first time (or the second, or the third, or even the fourth time) you contact them.

Colin Nederkoorn said, "The best time to build a relationship with someone is when you have nothing to sell." This statement couldn't be more real.

You probably don't want to invest time and effort into building a long-term relationship with someone who tried to sell you something the first time he met you, right? So, don't sell someone a product with the first time you contact him - if you'd like to build a long-term relationship with them. Only do this if you're absolutely sure your product will help them tremendously.

To build a strong friendship and business relationship with someone, get to know them and their businesses. Talk with people you'd like to build relationships with and ask them if they can help them with anything. Don't ask for something in return.

If you help people without them asking you to, when the time comes that you need their help, they'll be much more likely, willing, and happy to help you.

Selling your future product to the influencers you build relationships with is not the only benefit. Other future benefits of building relationships with people even before you have anything to sell include:

- Your professional network may mention your product in interviews or blog posts.

- They can refer you and your product to a friend and/or colleague who they believe will get lots of value from it.
- They can introduce you to key leads, potential hires, and other people like PR people, journalists, and reporters who can help you get more initial customers and long-term customers as your business expands.

Case study:

Colin Nederkoorn started to build relationships with people well before he started to ask them to sign up for his business, Customer.io. One of the people Colin built a relationship with was Rand Fishkin.

Although Rand didn't sign up for Customer.io when Colin asked him to, Colin's relationship with Rand has still been very valuable. For example, Colin mentioned that when Rand was interviewed one time, he mentioned Customer.io as a cool marketing startup to watch.

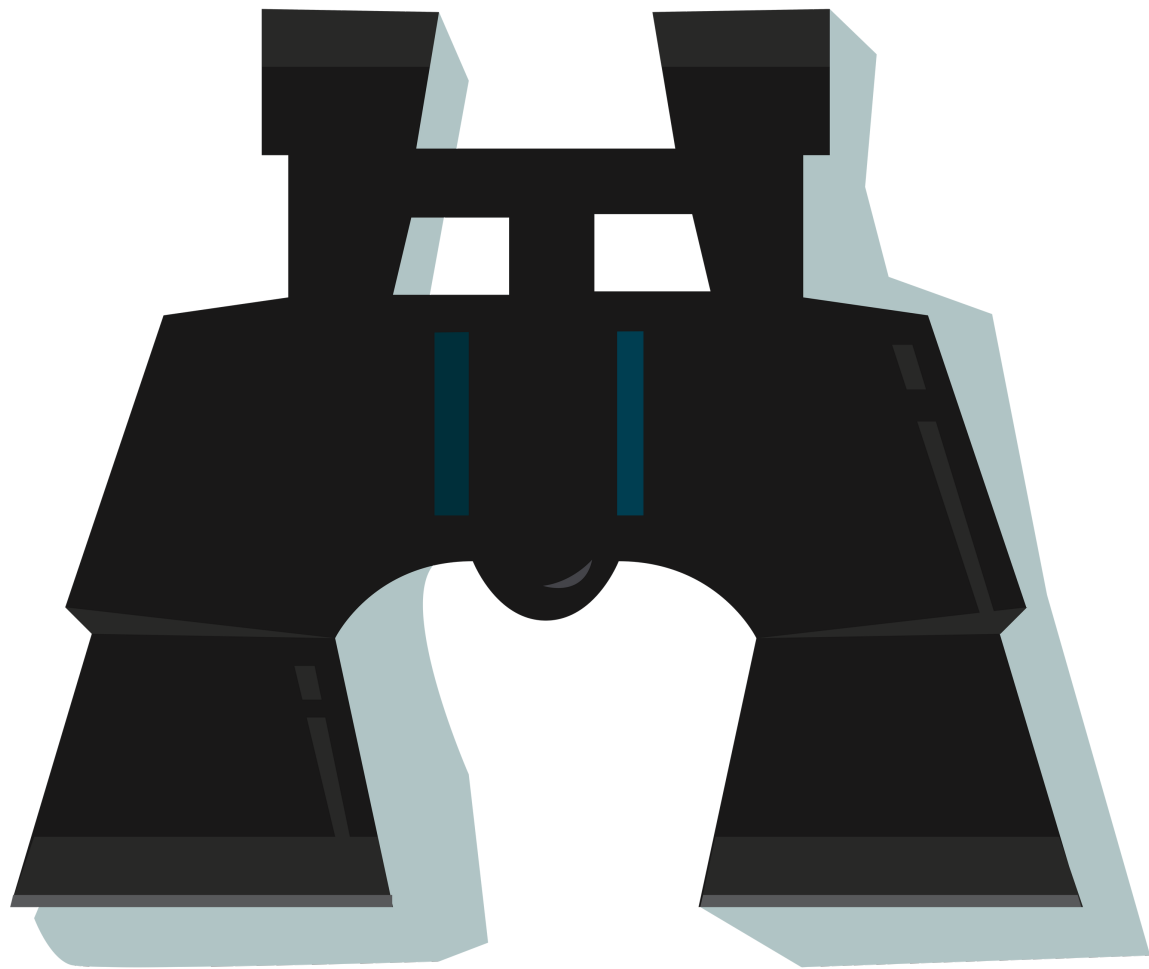
If Colin's first email to Rand had asked him to buy something, Colin's relationship with Rand probably wouldn't have been too strong.

Colin built up a relationship with Rand over time before asking for the sale. Ultimately, this led to a very strong and healthy relationship. Despite the fact that Rand didn't sign up for Customer.io, Rand still brought up Colin's product during his interview because they had a strong relationship. As a result, this mention likely helped send some free trials and customers for Colin in the long run.

Chapter summary

- If you want to build a good relationship with people, never sell to that person the first time you reach out to them.
- As Colin Nederkoorn likes to say, "The best time to build a relationship with someone is when you have nothing to sell."
- Build relationships with people by helping them before they ask for help and by getting to know them, their lives, and their problems in a genuine and interested way.

23



TOOL-BASED MARKETING

Create free tools that solve small problems for potential customers. If these tools are valuable and helpful to potential customers, lots of people will share them and link to them. This will help drive a lot of nice traffic to the free tools that you can use to generate leads for your business.

There are two ways you can use free tools to get leads for your product:

1. Make your product a sponsor of the free tool. Have a prominent (but discrete) call to action to encourage people to visit your product if they want a better version of the free tool.
 - a. The ad or call to action that encourages people to visit your product
 - i. should not be intrusive **and**,
 - ii. should not damage or hinder the user experience of the free tool in any way.
 - b. Let the people get as much value from your free tool as possible to encourage more shares, more links and more traffic.
2. Make your product a sponsor of the free tool. Have a prominent (but discrete) call to action to encourage people to sign up for a free email course related to the free tool.
 - a. The ad or call to action that encourages people to visit your product
 - i. should not be intrusive and,
 - ii. should not damage or hinder the user experience of the free tool in any way.
 - b. When creating this email course, use steps 2 and 3 from the how to create profitable online ads chapter to create an email course that will provide value and help you sell your product.
 - c. The email course's goal is to primarily provide free value to the people who sign up for it and to sell your product a bit as well.

What free tools for your potential customers can give them lots of value - but can also convince them to try your product?

One good way to build a free tool is to take one of the key features from your product and make it into a version with fewer bells and whistles.

You can also build a free tool for potential customers that solves a different problem from the problem that your main product solves.

For instance, if your product is for freelancers, build a calculator to help them project monthly and yearly revenues based on how many hours they work per week and what they charge per hour.

Or, you can also build a tool for freelancers that creates basic, well-designed and HTML- and CSS-generated portfolio that they can use as a starter portfolio until they get more established.

Since there are various free tools you can make to collect leads, it's up to you to decide which tool to build. Just make sure that whatever tool you build solves a real problem for your main product's potential customers. Also, provide a way for your free tool to collect and generate leads.

Case study:

John Sheehan and the folks at Runscope have used this strategy to get tons of leads and scale up their customer acquisition.

Runscope owns 6 free tools that are heavily used and are very effective for getting leads. These tools are [RequestBin](#), [Embed curl](#), [Hurl.it](#), [API Changelog](#), [API Digest](#), and [API Jobs](#). Some of these tools were built by, while others were acquired by Runscope.

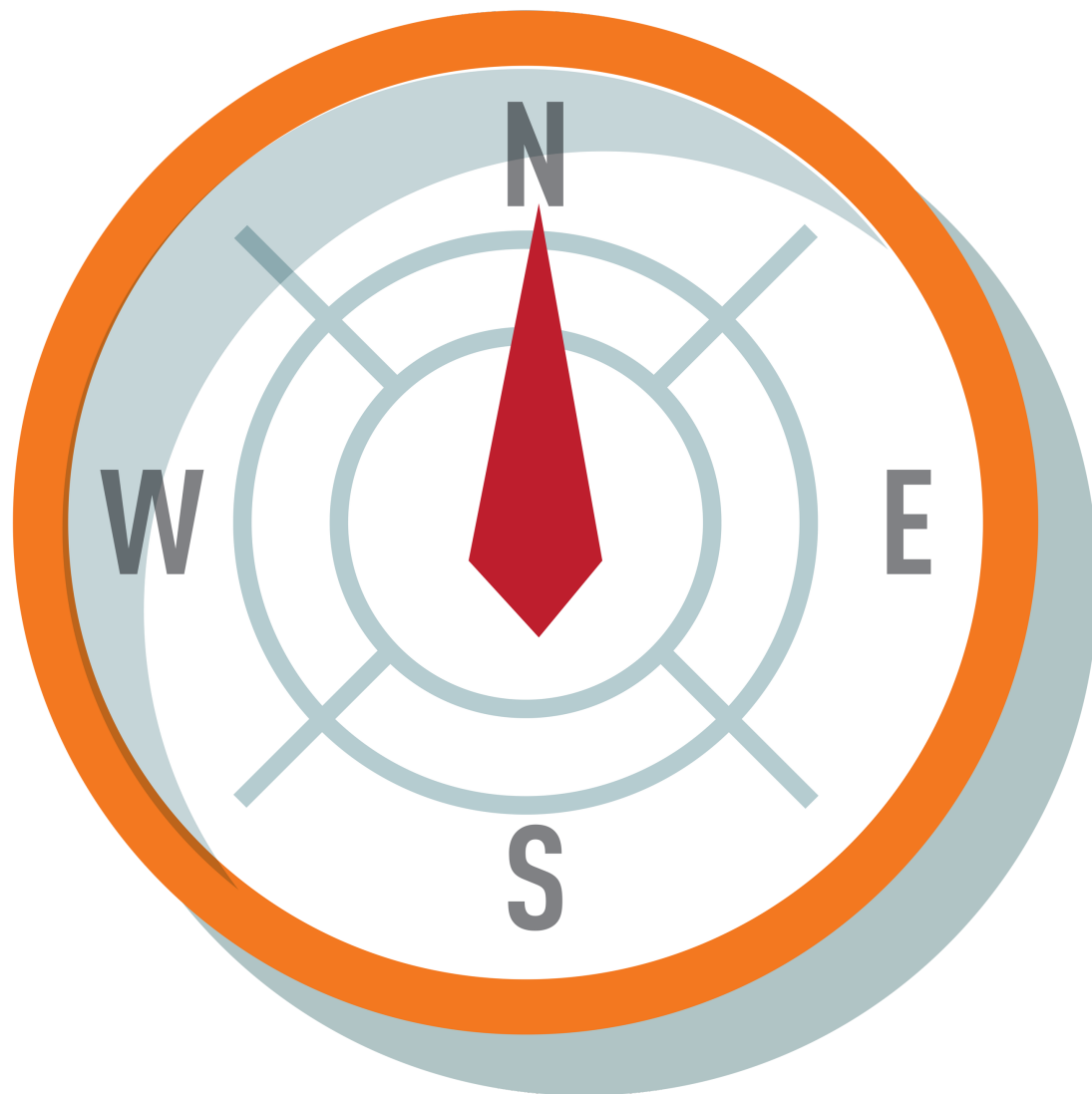
Runscope does not only own these 6 free tools. It also sponsors another 5 free tools that help drive leads.

In our interview with John, he said that these free tools drive most of the leads and signups for Runscope. You should definitely consider building free tools that solve real problems for potential customers to help drive leads for your product.

Chapter summary

- Tool-based marketing can be a great way to get leads for your product.
- Build small tools that provide a decent amount of value to people in your target market and give them away for free.
- Your main product should be the sponsor of your free tools.
- You can collect leads by referring people from the free tools directly to your product's site, or by collecting collecting people's email addresses and sending them a free email course.
- You can get people's email addresses on the site of the free tool itself.
- You can also refer your free tool's users to a landing page for your email course. There, ask them to give their email addresses to you.

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INTEGRATION MARKETING

Integration marketing is another awesome strategy to get your product's customers in its initial development and in the long run.

Usually, when you integrate your product with an already established product,

- the other product will list your product on its page of official integrations so this can drive traffic and customers to your product; and,
- the owner of these products may send an announcement to all of their customers to let them know that their product and your product can now communicate and work with each other.

Getting a listing on another product's integrations page is fantastic, but being included in an email to all of another product's customers is incredible. Now, other products probably won't send an email to their customers if your product is fairly new, but if it is very valuable, then they just *might*.

After your product becomes more established, more of the companies you integrate with will send emails to their customers to announce their integration with you.

Here are six steps to effectively do integration marketing - one integration at a time:

1. Choose another product or service to integrate your product with. This product or service should:
 - a. be used by your ideal customers in their businesses or lives,
 - b. consistently give value to a fairly significant portion of your customers; and,
 - c. have a mutually beneficial relationship when integrated with your product.

People who choose to use the integration between your product and another product will get increased value from your product and the product that they're integrating your product with.

2. Integrate your product with the other product! Here, you'll most likely need a developer, although it's also possible for you to do the integration through Zapier. When doing the integration, be sure to refer to the other product's API documentation or to refer the developer you're working with to its API documentation.
3. Test to ensure that your integration works. Check if it has the features and functionality that you want it to have. After you've tested the integration, ask 5 to 10 of your customers to test it out and give you feedback. Based on the feedback these customers have, make changes and improvements to the integration until it is ready for a much wider audience.
4. After the integration is finished, launch it to all of your existing customers. Send them an email to tell them about its presence and its significance to them. Also, write up a blog post about it.
5. Tell the people at the other product's company that you integrated your product with their product. Usually, there will be a dedicated employee and/or email address to contact to let them know that you've created an integration with their product. The employee dedicated to developer relations may have a title like "Director of Platform," "Director of Business Development," or "Director of Partnerships."
 - a. When you contact an employee who does partnerships or API at another company or when you contact the dedicated email address for partnerships, ask for your product to be included in the other company's integrations directory.
 - b. When you let the other company know that you integrated your product with its product, it's also good to ask for an email announcement to be written to its customer base to let the people in it know about the integration. This will help get a good amount of traffic and customers for your product.

- i. **Note:** Don't pressure the other company too much to do this. If your company doesn't have a decent amount of customer yet, the product you're integrating with might not send an announcement to its customers. If the people who own the product decide not to send out an email blast, that's okay. Being included in a product's integration directory is still a great way to get traffic and customers.
6. After you complete one integration, repeat steps 1 – 5 to do as many integrations as you want. Just make sure you're not doing product integrations only for the sake of doing product integrations. Any time you integrate your product with another product, the integration should provide some value to both the customers of your product and the customers of the product you're integrating with.

Case study:

Three companies that have had tons of success with integration marketing are Zapier, Wilddbit, and Bidsketch.

Zapier's main product is one big system that integrates over 250 APIs with each other. Each time Zapier has added an API and product to its massive list of integrations, it's been included in that API or product's integration directory. Also, most of the time Zapier integrates with other products, these other products will send an announcement to all of their customers and write a special blog post about the integration. This helped Wade Foster and the Zapier team get amazing early traction when first working on Zapier. It has also helped Zapier see fantastic long-term growth.

Wilddbit used integrations very successfully to help market one of their products, Beanstalk. So far, Wilddbit has integrated Beanstalk with 14 other products. Wilddbit also tries to integrate Beanstalk with at least one new additional product per month to help it grow.

Ruben Gamez has also talked about how integration marketing has been a huge win for him and Bidsketch. Right now, Bidsketch has 6 integrations with other products. Integrating Bidsketch with these other products helped Ruben get some good initial customers. It has also helped him get lots of customers over time.

Chapter summary

- Integration marketing is a great way to get new leads and customers for your product.
- When choosing products to integrate with your product, choose products that your ideal customers and some portion of your existing customer base will get value from if they were integrated with your product.
- After integrating another product with your product, announce it to your customers, tell the other company about the integration, and ask that company to put you into its integration directory.
- It will also tremendously help if you ask the other product's company to write a blog post about the integration and announce it to its existing customers.



**PUT YOUR PRODUCT IN
APP DIRECTORIES**

This is a pretty simple strategy that can help you get tons of initial customers while your product is in private beta, public beta, in launching mode. There are tons of product directories that are built to let people list their products in the directories so people can discover them.

It doesn't matter if your product is being developed or is being launched - as long as there is a site where you can collect leads who are interested in your product, you should list your product in as many of these directories as possible.

There's a huge list of product directories that you can use to promote your product in [this post](#) from Robert Graham's blog. Put your product into as many of the directories listed in that blog post as possible.

You can also list your product in online communities where people in your target market congregate. For example, when you launch your product, always post it to Hacker News as that can help drive a huge amount of traffic to it if it does well there.

Other places you should post your product include [Product Hunt](#) and any subreddits whose members will find your product to be valuable.

Lastly, there are tons of other niche communities online that you should look for and post your product to when it launches. These communities can be forums that relate to your product's industry. As such, they can help drive some good traffic to your site.

Another big benefit of posting your product to online directories and communities is that you'll build up lots of nice backlinks to your product's site. All of these backlinks will help send traffic to your product in the long run by giving you a nice SEO boost.

Case study:

When launching Bidsketch, Ruben Games put Bidsketch into as many existing product directories that he could find at that time. (Ever since Ruben launched Bidsketch, the number of product directories has increased considerably).

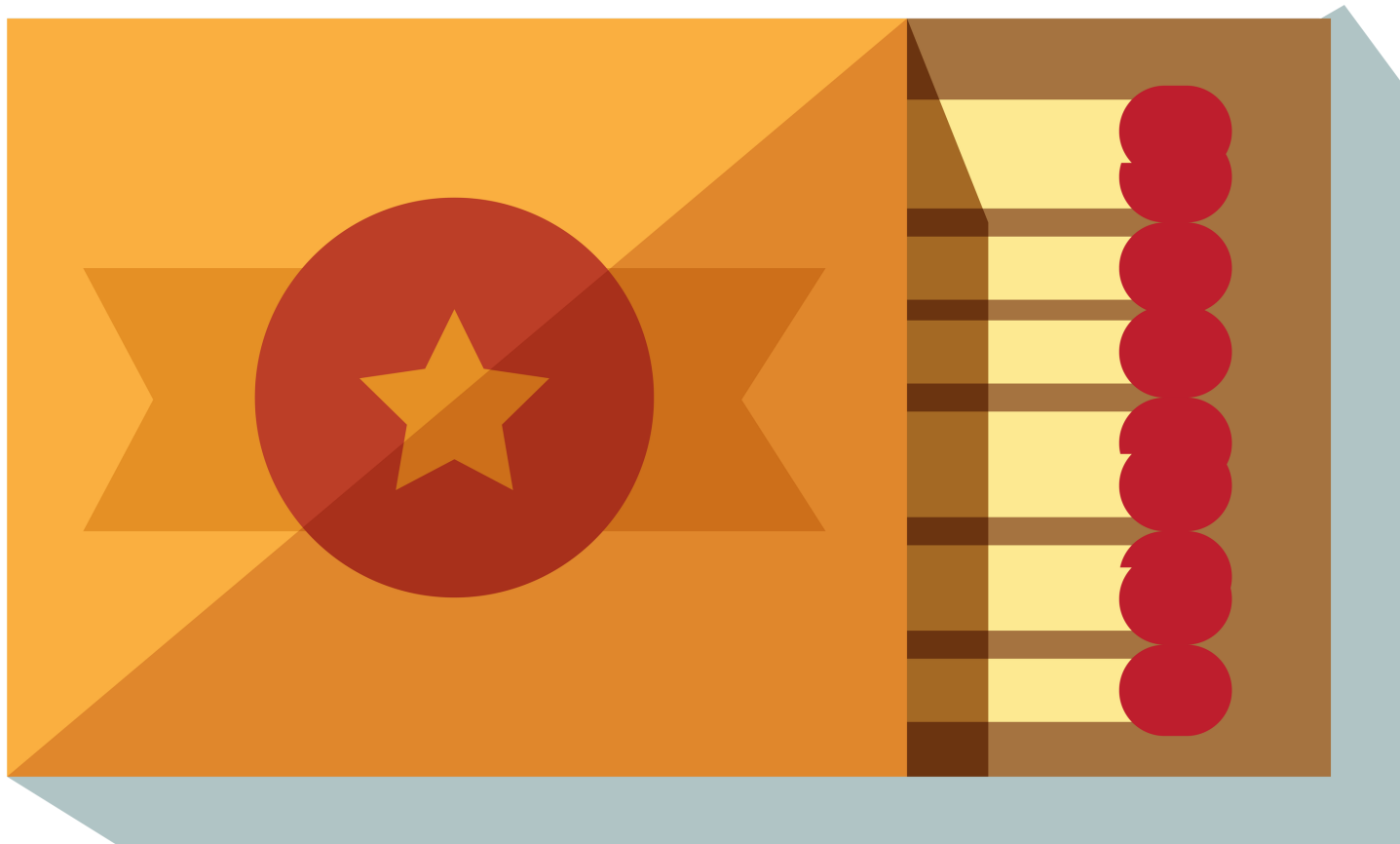
Ruben has said that doing this helped send some good early traffic to Bidsketch. It also helped give him some good initial SEO help.

Now that there are more than 100 available product directories, you can see decent SEO returns by putting your product into as many directories as possible. Plus, all of the directories will send you at least some traffic (which is better than no traffic, especially if you capture some of the traffic as leads by getting their email addresses!).

For example, when Adii was working on PublicBeta and collecting leads for it, he posted PublicBeta on the directory [Beta List](#), and ended up getting more than 400 email leads from there alone.

Chapter summary

- List your product into as many online product directories as possible.
- Post your product into as many online communities as possible.
- You can add your product to a lot of these directories and communities at any time, but the best time to add your product to these places is right after you launch.
- Online directories will help you get first customers for your product by sending a good amount of traffic to your site.
- Online directories will also help you get customers in the long run by giving you an SEO boost. This means that they'll send more traffic from search engines over time to your website.



**ASK FOR REVIEWS OF
YOUR PRODUCT FROM
BLOGGERS IN YOUR
PRODUCT'S INDUSTRY**

To get your first customers and build strong early traction, ask bloggers in your product's industry to review your product when you launch - or even after you launch. **If you ask bloggers in your industry to review your product, you'll get customers in a few different ways:**

- When bloggers write the reviews of your product, they will share the reviews with their audiences, who will help expose your product to a huge group of people who can end up being customers.
- Bloggers also build valuable backlinks to your product from already established sites. This will help improve your product's SEO and drive more traffic from search engines over time.

To find the right bloggers and to incentivize them to review your product:

- Don't randomly pitch your product to the major startup blogs or technology blogs and ask them to review it. These big publications like TechCrunch, Mashable, VentureBeat, ReadWrite, The Next Web, and others get tons of people asking them to review or write about their products every day. The odds that a big, generic startup publication will write about your product are very slim. Unless your product's ideal customers are specifically involved in the startup or technology industry, it's best to not waste your time pitching the big publications to write about you.
- Instead of asking enormous blogs to review your product, look for prominent individuals in your product's industry who have already built relatively large audiences.
 - For example, if your product's ideal customers are programmers and developers, ask prominent bloggers who write about programming, like Alex MacCaw, Scott Hanselman, and Pete Keen, among many others. Once they do write reviews of your product, you can get more early customers.

- The people you emailed to ask for a product review won't just do so when you ask them to. To encourage bloggers and people in your industry with large audiences to review your product, you can:
 - Offer to let them use your product for free for a year.
 - Offer them the chance to be an affiliate for the product if they like and find it valuable.
 - Offer to give a discount to the people in their audience.
 - Create a generic coupon code that everyone in the audience can use to get a discount. Keep the discount active for a limited period of time (like one or two weeks).
 - Or, you can offer a discount to a limited number of people in the reviewer's following. For instance, your discount can only be available to only the first 100 (or whatever number you want) people in the reviewer's audience who want to use it. This is a good way to create scarcity and drive desire for your product because people will want to take advantage of the deal before it runs out.
- A lot of the people who you ask to review your product may not respond to your request at all so prepare for a lot of rejections. Even if a lot of your requests for reviews result in rejection, keep asking people. Any review you do get will be valuable as they will help you get more initial and long-term customers.

Here's an email template you can use when contacting bloggers:

(Note: You don't need to always use this template. In fact, you should test variations of this template to see what is most effective in getting bloggers to review your product):

“Hi [insert_first_name_of_blogger],

My name is [insert_your_name]. I’m currently working on a new product called [insert_name_of_your_company]. My product, [insert_name_of_your_company], helps [insert_identifier_for_ideal_customers e.g. developers, marketers, salespeople] [describe_benefits_of_your_product]. The product helps people get these benefits by having [describe_main_features_of_your_product].

What made me passionate in starting this company? Here’s why and how I did it: [Describe the story of how you founded your product. Tell them why you’re creating it. Make this story as compelling and interesting as possible while still ensuring it is factual and true.]

I wanted to see if you’d be interested in writing a review of [insert_name_of_your_product] for [insert_name_of_blogger’s_blog]. I think the people in your blog’s audience will find my product valuable and significant to them because [insert_reasons_why_people_in_blogger’s_audience_would_find_your_product_to_be_valuable].

If you were to write a review of the product, I’d be happy to give you a year of free access to it. Also, if you like the product’s advocacy, I’d be happy to have you become an affiliate for it so you can earn a commission for each sale you bring to the product.

No worries if you’d prefer not to write a review of my product.

Thank you so much for your time.

All the best,

[insert_your_name]”

Case study:

When launching Bidsketch, Ruben asked more than 30 bloggers in the freelancing/consultant space to review it. He ended up getting a nice number of reviews which got him great initial customers to Bidsketch and got him good early traction. Also, these reviews helped with SEO by giving high-quality backlinks to Bidsketch from established sites.

For his product HitTail, Rob Walling encouraged bloggers to write reviews for it by offering them a free year of one of the middle-tiered plans of HitTail if they did it. Getting reviews for HitTail is important for Rob and the growth of his business, so he didn't have any problem incentivizing people who can help him achieve this.

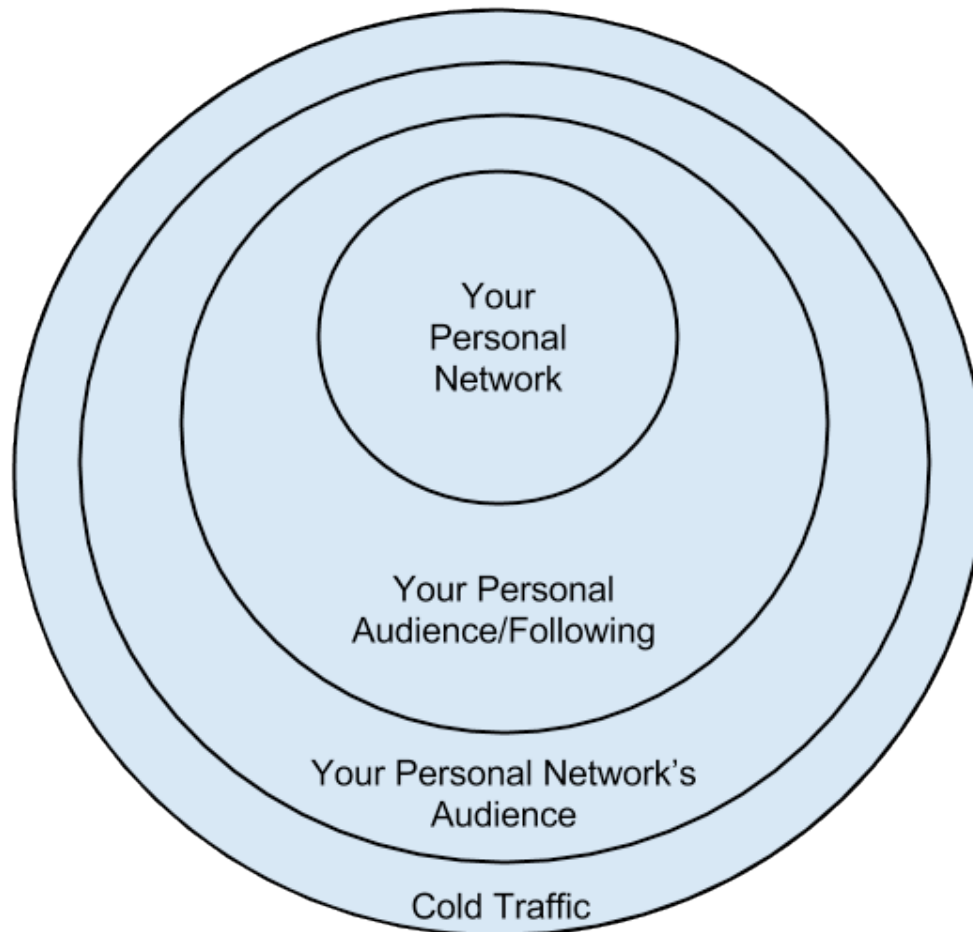
Chapter summary

- Ask bloggers who have audiences in your product's industry to write reviews of your product.
- Unless your product's ideal customer is in the startup industry, don't waste your time by asking big startup blogs to write about it.
- To help encourage bloggers to write reviews of your product, offer to give it to them for free for a certain period of time and let them promote it as affiliates if they like it.



CONCENTRIC CIRCLE MARKETING

Concentric circles are layered circles where you have one smaller circle in the middle, and then more circles layered on top of the first circle where each circle is a little bit bigger than the previous circle.



Rob Walling has an effective and efficient marketing strategy to find your first customers. It's called concentric circle marketing.

Rob's strategy rests on the basis that there are four different concentric circles you can market to:

1. The first circle is your **personal network**. Sell your product and determine its value by talking with people who you personally know. Do this before you talk with anyone else. In here, you can always contact them and they'll easily acknowledge who you are.

They'll also respond to you and reasonably help you, as long as you have a great relationship with them.

2. The second circle is your **personal audience/following**. These are the people who form a part of your audience and who follow you on social media. Your second circle is full of people whose ears you have - through your personal blog, your business's blog, your podcast, or any medium where people follow you and your work.

These people value what you have to say and listen to what you have to offer since you've consistently provided value to them in the past. You may not personally know a lot of these people (though it's good to try to!), but they know you.

3. The third circle is **your personal network's audience**. Ask your friends and colleagues if they can promote your product to the people who follow them.

Note: Only ask your friends to promote your product to their audiences if their audience will get value from your product. For example, if you have a friend whose audience is made up of mostly freelancers, and your product is built specifically for SaaS businesses, then don't ask that friend to promote your product!

Your friends can promote your product to their audiences if they:

- Tweet about your product and post about it on Facebook or other social media sites.
- Include a link to your product with a brief description of it in their email newsletter that goes out to their email lists.
- Give your product a shout-out on their podcast or video show.
- Invite you to their podcast or interview show as a guest to talk about topics that you're knowledgeable about. You should talk about something that'll help their audiences. While you're on the show, you'll have an opportunity to mention your product and describe how it can help them as well.
- Have you write a guest post for their blog.

If your friends have big audiences, it will never hurt to ask them for a bit of help promoting your product. Just don't pressure them too much. Also, tell them it's no problem if they prefer not to promote your product to their audiences.

4. The fourth circle is **cold traffic**. Cold traffic is in no way connected to you. It does not come from someone you necessarily know or follow. People who come to your site as cold traffic likely will have little idea of who you are and why they should buy something from you. Cold traffic may come from advertising, random reviews, or social media. **Make sure that there's a way for cold traffic to easily sign up for free educational content that you can give out to them over time. Examples for these are signing up for your list or your free email course.**

Some cold traffic will buy your product right away, but most cold traffic won't buy your product immediately. Give them a way to get to know you and learn from you for a bit of time so you can build up trust with the people who came to your site. Eventually, the people who came to you as cold traffic will warm up. Then, you'll be able to get a much higher conversion rate.

Always have an email opt-in form on your product's sales page that people can use to sign up for free content. If you give away free content to cold traffic over time, you'll get way more customers in the short-term and especially the long run.

Case study:

When Rob Walling was getting the first leads and customers for Drip, he used this strategy. At first, Rob spoke with people from his network about Drip and asked them to be the first customers.

Next, Rob sent an email blast to his personal audience and asked them to sign up to receive news about Drip on its landing page, if they were interested.

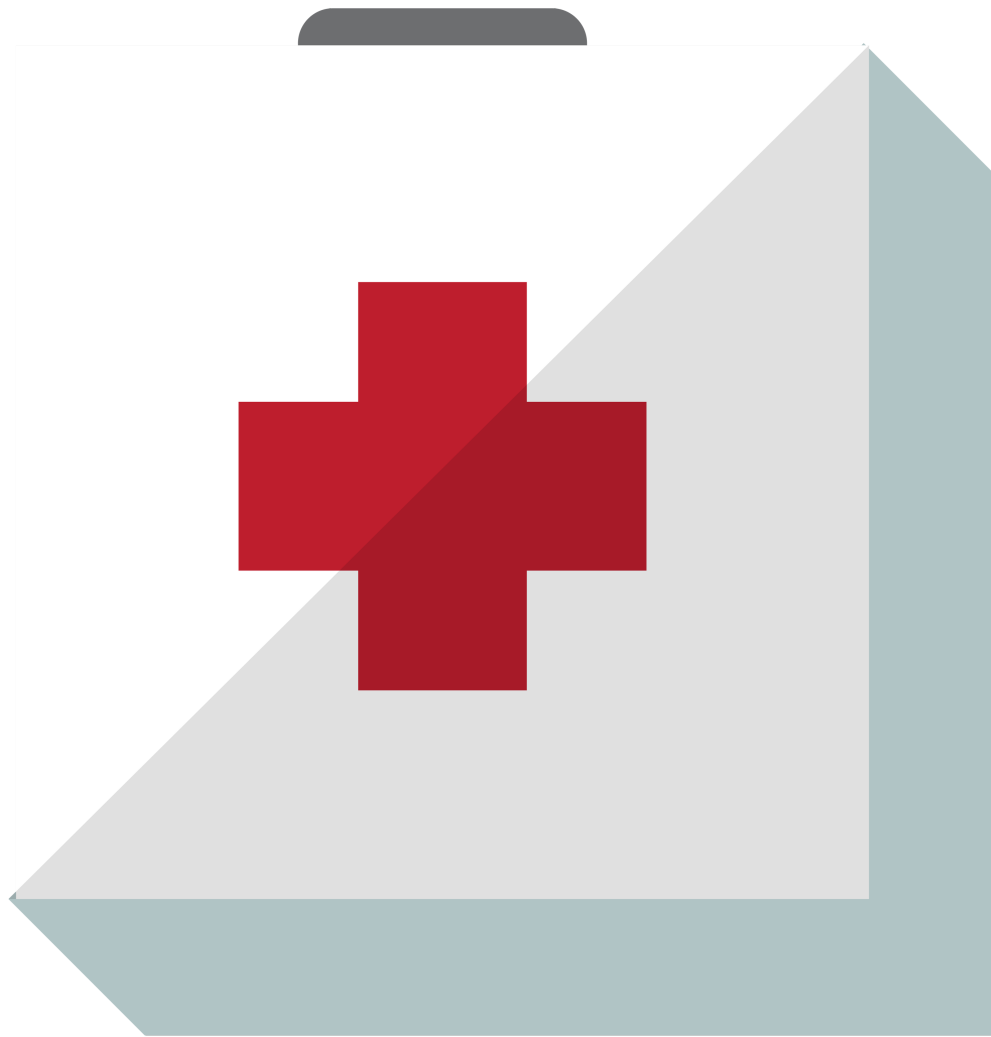
Then, Rob asked friends and other people in his network to share Drip's landing page with other people so he could get as many leads for Drip as possible.

Afterwards, Rob had a segmented launch* for Drip. Finally, after this, he started letting cold traffic come to the site and sign up for it when he had the public launch already.

** Segmented launch is a topic that we'll talk about in a future chapter.*

Chapter summary

- Concentric circle marketing is a blueprint for marketing to different groups.
- Start selling to your network and friends.
- Secondly, sell to your audience.
- Thirdly, sell to your friend's audiences by asking them to promote your product to their audiences.
- Finally, sell to cold traffic. Encourage people who visit your product's sales page as cold traffic to sign up for free content from you so you can gain their trust over time.



**IMPLEMENT THE FEATURE
REQUESTS OF YOUR
PAYING CUSTOMERS**

Only implement the feature requests of your paying customers. If a non-paying customer has a feature request, politely thank him for feedback, but don't act on it unless he starts paying for your product.

Oftentimes, people say that they will definitely pay you for your product if only it had this "one extra feature" that they'll like.

Want to know the truth? These people will likely never pay for your product, even if you implement 50 or more of their feature requests!

You see, free users who make feature requests don't care about how much value they get from your product. All they want is to get as much free value from your product as possible.

Why should you only implement the feature requests of your paying customers?

Here are three good reasons:

1. You can keep your paying customers happy and satisfied with your product. Hence, you lower your churn rate and increase the average lifetime value of your customers.
2. Your paying customers are likely to succeed with your product and to get more value from it. As a result, your existing customers will refer new customers and tell their friends about your product.
3. You add *valuable features* to your product instead of unnecessary ones. Feature requests from free users won't add any value to your product when implemented. Most of the time, only the feature requests from paying customers will increase your product's value.

As Liam Gooding says, free users will have requests for "cool features or additions" to your product, while paying customers will have requests for "valuable features or additions" to your product.

It doesn't matter if you have a cool product - what matters is that you have a valuable product. So, only implement and build the features that your paying customers want you to build.

How should you look for the feature requests of your paying customers? A lot of the time, they'll contact you.

You can also be proactive in looking for feature requests and other ways to improve your product. **Here are a few strategies to use when looking for feature requests:**

1. Email your customers every once in a while - quarterly or semi-annually will do. Ask them about what changes, improvements, and new features they'd like to see in your product.
2. Create a dedicated email address that customers can use to send feature requests to you. When new customers sign up for your product, tell them that if they ever have any suggestions or requests for features, they can send them via that dedicated email address.
3. Create a forum for your product customers. Establish a forum thread for feature requests. Allow all customers to submit ideas for feature requests or product improvements. Then, let people vote for the ideas in the thread. Finally, you can prioritize which feature requests and product improvements you should build first based on their vote counts.

Note: Don't implement all of the feature requests that your paying customers give you. Even though your paying customers will give you suggestions for valuable features, not all of the feature requests from paying customers will be sensible and valuable. Implement the features that are most valuable to as many of your customers as possible. Use your judgement.

Case study:

Initially, Liam Gooding and his co-founders implemented the feature requests of both Trak's free users and paying customers.

Over the years, they discovered that when features requested by free users were filled, these features added very little value to Trak. They did not help convert many free users into paying customers.

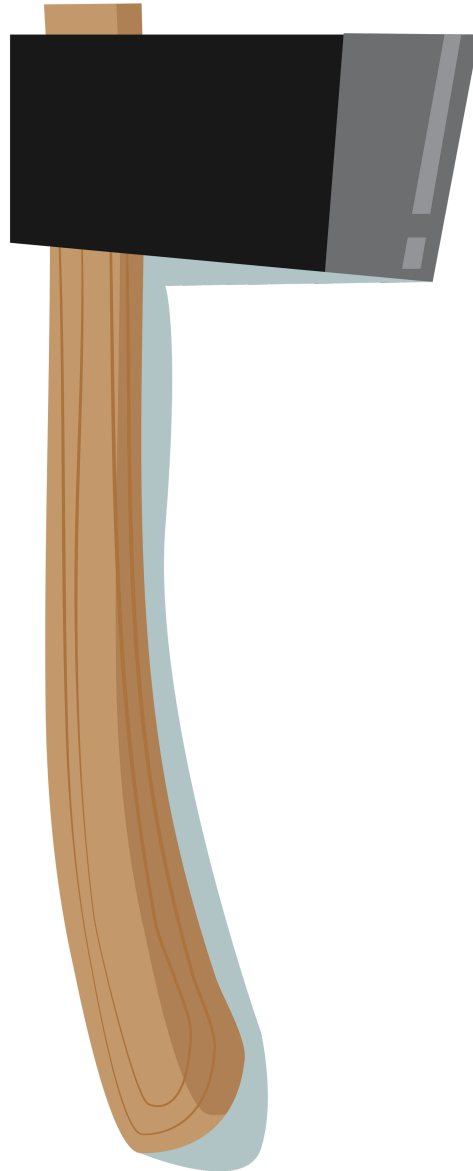
However, when they implemented the feature requests of paying customers, Trak became a much more valuable product for both existing and *potential customers*.

After this study, Liam and his co-founders began to only implement the feature requests of paying customers. Ultimately, it has been a great decision for them.

Chapter summary

- Only implement the feature requests of your paying customers.
- Your paying customers will have ideas and requests for valuable features.
- Your free users will have unnecessary requests most of the time.
- Only implementing feature requests from paying customers will help you get more new customers and retain your old customers as well.

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**LAUNCH NEW FEATURES
FREQUENTLY**

Your product doesn't have to be perfect on day one.

In fact, it *shouldn't* be perfect - it should only be progressive. Meaning, you should launch new features frequently.

At first, put as few features as possible in your product. Only include features that solve your ideal customers' core pain. These "pains" should be painful enough to convince your clients to pay for your product.

Aside from the time and money you will save by not developing all of your product's features, there are other advantages to do this: a) people will be more likely to share your product, b) people in your audience will be more likely to convert and start buying your product, and, c) people who already pay for your product will be less likely to churn.

By not creating all of your product's features before launch, you'll be able to launch new features for your product more frequently after its launch. Why will this help you get more initial customers?

Each time you launch a feature:

- You'll post about it and write about it on your company's blog.
- You'll send the news that your product has new features to your existing customers and your audience. Meaning, people who weren't already convinced of purchasing will receive more and more reason to purchase over time. You encourage them to take the plunge and take the next step.
- Your existing customers and the people in your audience will likely be impressed by how quickly you're improving the product. This can urge them to tweet about your product and share its value with your friends.
- **It shows your existing customers that you care about them.** Who is the primary group of people who will benefit from product improvements and new features? Your existing customers, of course! Improving your product and creating new features

regularly will help make your existing customers happier. In turn, this can increase the lifetime value of your customers and decrease your churn rate because they'll stay with you longer.

Now, how frequently should you look to make big improvements to your product and add new features?

A good pace to consider may be every two weeks, every month, every two months, or every quarter, depending on how many resources you can devote to product development.

Just remember: never add features for the sake of adding features. It's better to go years without adding any new features to your product than to add tons of unnecessary features that won't give any value to your product.

Case study:

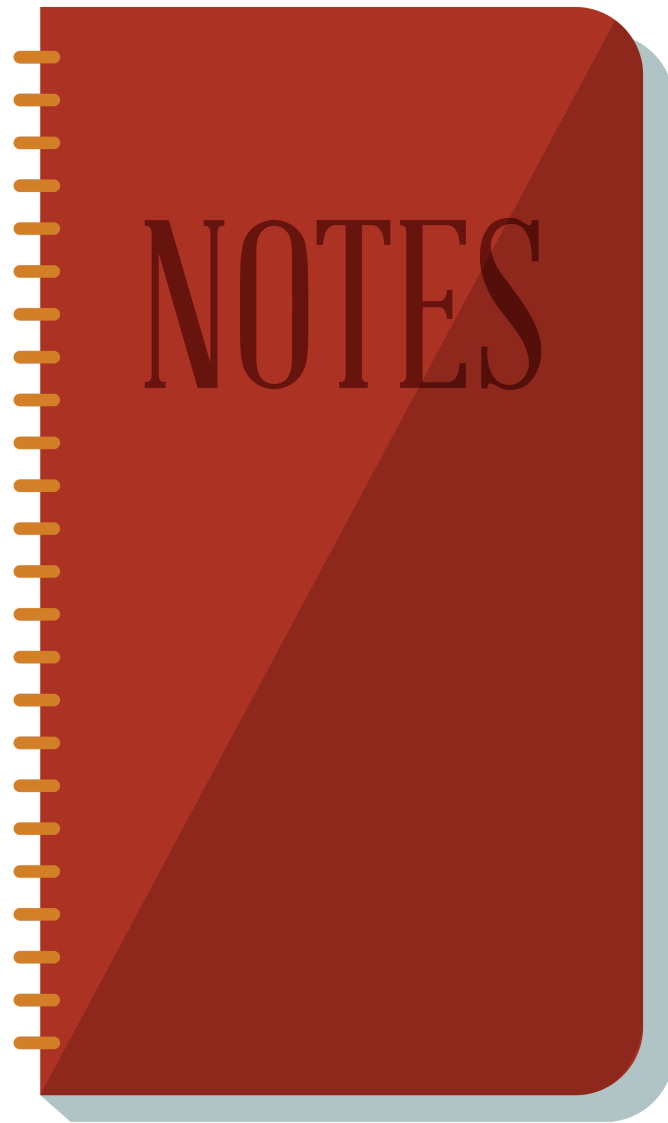
Nathan Kontny launches new features for his product *all of the time*. I feel like I get an email from Nathan at least once a month about new features he's made for Draft.

Because Nathan improved the product and added new features so quickly, a lot of people shared **Draft** all over the place! They're impressed by how awesome Draft already is and by how it's become much more awesome as time goes by.

Chapter summary

- Don't launch a perfect product.
- Launch a product that solves your ideal customers' biggest problems or pains.
- As time goes by, add features and improve your product consistently. This will make your existing customers happier.
- Do this so that more people will sign up for your product and share it with their networks.

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**PROVIDE AMAZING
SUPPORT TO YOUR
CUSTOMERS**

If you support your existing customers well, your churn rate will go down. Also, your customers will continue to pay for your product longer, so, your customers will have a higher lifetime value.

To provide great customer service, you need to be extremely empathetic.

Think about the companies that provide really crappy customer service. Then, do the exact opposite of what they do! When you contact the customer service at a company like Comcast or Time Warner Cable, you'll have a bad time. It'll probably take you at least a day or two (or 10) to get your issue resolved.

When you've had a bad customer service experience, you felt frustrated, right?

Be empathetic and compassionate when people have a problem with your product or service. Do everything you can to solve their problems.

Scott Watermasysk and his co-founders at KickoffLabs provide excellent customer service to their customers.

The 7 Ways To Give Great Customer Service To Your Clients

- Be empathetic and compassionate toward your customers. Tell them that you're sorry that they're experiencing a problem with your service. Let them know that you'll do everything possible to fix their problems. Then, actually go and do everything possible to fix your existing customers' problems.
- Make it *very* easy to get in contact with you and your support team.
- When someone submits a support request, answer the request and help that person within 24 hours after answering the request.
- Allow people to chat with you or your support team directly during normal business hours.

- Give people a phone number that they can use to call you. Answer people's customer support phone calls right away. If not, allow people to leave a message. Tell them how long you'll respond and what their other options are to reach out to you.
- If people call your customer support phone number and leave you messages because you're unable to answer their calls right away, answer their calls within 24 hours.
- Have support documents and articles that answer frequently asked questions. If someone contacts your support team and asks a frequently asked question, don't just refer him to the support articles. Offer to walk him through all of the steps needed to solve the problem.

Aside from retaining your existing customers and lowering your churn rate, what's another enormous benefit to providing amazing customer support? Word-of-mouth marketing.

If you provide great support to your customers, they will tell other people about you and your product. Your customers will give rave reviews and even become your product evangelists! They'll recommend you to their friends and colleagues. They may even personally encourage them to sign up for your business.

Providing great support and doing everything possible to ensure that your customers succeed are two of the best ways you can market your business.

Excellent support is one of the great differentiators you can use to help promote your company.

Now, you'll reach a point where you and the co-founders of your business (if you have co-founders) will not be able to handle all of the support requests you receive. As a result, you may not provide a very high level of customer service if you're saturated.

When you reach this point, you have two strategies you can consider to decrease your customer support work and increase the quality of your customer service at the same time:

- Hire a full-time employee to help with customer support.
 - This is expensive. Don't do this unless the act of responding to customer service already prevents you from significantly working on your business development, marketing, and sales.
 - Here, you can develop a system that can make customer support team hiring and training easier in the future.
- Hire a virtual assistant on oDesk or Elance.
 - This is much less expensive but it will require you to do more work than hiring a full-time employee.
 - You need to put together very specific instructions about how to answer certain types of support requests.
 - You also have to develop a system that your assistant should use to forward requests to you when he isn't sure about how to respond to them.
 - The nice thing about putting this system together is that once it's put together, much of your support will be automated. But, it will require more work from you upfront and perhaps even more work from you in the long run.
 - Still, hiring a contractor or virtual assistant is a great option. We recommend you to try this out before you hire a full-time employee. To learn more about hiring a virtual assistant, check out [this blog post from Pat Flynn](#), this [podcast episode](#) from Pat Flynn, and this [Udemy course](#) from Rob Walling.

Case study:

Scott Watermasysk says that providing awesome support to KickoffLab's customers has been one of the biggest ways he and his co-founder have grown the business.

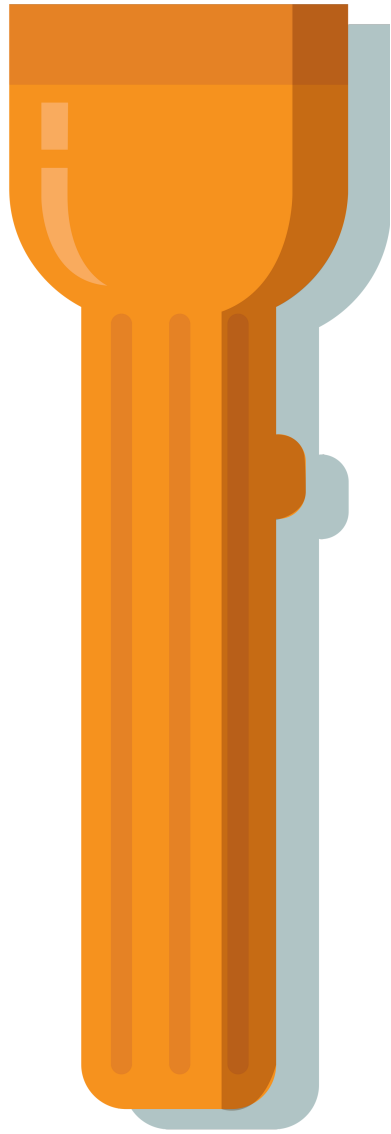
Because KickoffLab's support is so good, even people who haven't had success in getting many leads as they want with KickoffLabs still recommended it to their friends. Why? It's because Scott and his co-founder took such good care of them!

Great customer support pays huge dividends. It will help you get more customers in both the short term and long term.

Chapter summary

- Be empathetic and compassionate.
- Provide amazing customer support to your existing customers.
- Great support will urge your customers to recommend your product to their friends.
- Ultimately, awesome customer service will help you retain more of your existing customers and get more new customers in the long run.

31



**BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT
YOUR METRICS AND STATS**

People have a fascination with metrics, analytics, and numbers. It's interesting to hear and see how much money a business is making, where the business is making that money from, and what strategies are helping or hindering that revenue.

Many online entrepreneurs have had great success with being transparent about their income, their money-making products or services and their income-generating strategies that are implemented monthly.

People who are transparent about the income from their online business are also very good about discussing the issues that cause a decrease in revenue. As such, these people are also knowledgeable in telling their audiences how to fix these problems.

For you to get more early customers and long-term clients, be transparent about your revenues, expenses, and profits.

Here are three different strategies you can use to be transparent about your business's metrics:

1. Make a blog post that specifically lists:
 - a. where your revenues come from,
 - b. where your expenses are allocated, and;
 - c. how much profit you make monthly or quarterly (We suggest monthly income reports to drive more consistent traffic to your blog).

Also, include commentaries in your income reports such as why your income was the way it was for each month. You can even give monthly actionable insights that your audience can implement in their lives and businesses.

Case studies:

To get a sense of how others do their income reports extremely well, check out [Pat Flynn's list of monthly income reports since the start of his online business](#). Browse through [John Lee Dumas's list of income reports for his business as well](#).

For both Pat's income reports and John's income reports, they list out exactly where all of their monthly revenue comes from and they also enumerate their monthly expenses.

In addition, Pat and John talk about why they think their incomes fluctuated from a certain month. They also share any lessons they learned that caused their incomes to increase or decrease. Being transparent about their income and their source of revenue has helped Patrick and John get tons of additional traffic and build a loyal and engaged audience.

2. Make your company's business analytics dashboard:

- a. accessible to the public, and,
- b. updated in real-time.

If you use a business analytics service like Baremetrics, Hookfeed, or Kissmetrics, you can email their customer support and ask them to make your business metrics dashboard public.

Case studies:

Josh Pigford of Baremetrics has had a lot of success in acquiring customers and driving traffic to his product by making the financial metrics for Baremetrics available for the public to see in real time. If you go to [this site](#), you can see Josh's monthly recurring revenue, the lifetime value of his customers, and a lot of other relevant financial statistics. Since people are so interested in metrics and numbers, Josh has had a lot of success in driving traffic and getting customers from opening up his analytics.

Buffer, a much larger company than Baremetrics right now, has also opened up [their financial metrics on Baremetrics](#) in addition to all of the other ways that Buffer is transparent. Buffer's transparency has also really helped its business.

3. Publicize the amount of traffic your site or blog receives each month and state the reasons for the amount of traffic you receive. Because of people's love for numbers and traffic comparisons, being transparent about your web traffic is another great way to get more customers, build up your audience, and increase the traffic to your blog.

If you do disclose your traffic numbers each month, be sure to talk about why your traffic was what it was for each month. Sharing your traffic and financial metrics will help pique people's interest and draw them to your site. Teaching the secrets about why your income or traffic is what it is will definitely keep people coming back.

Case study:

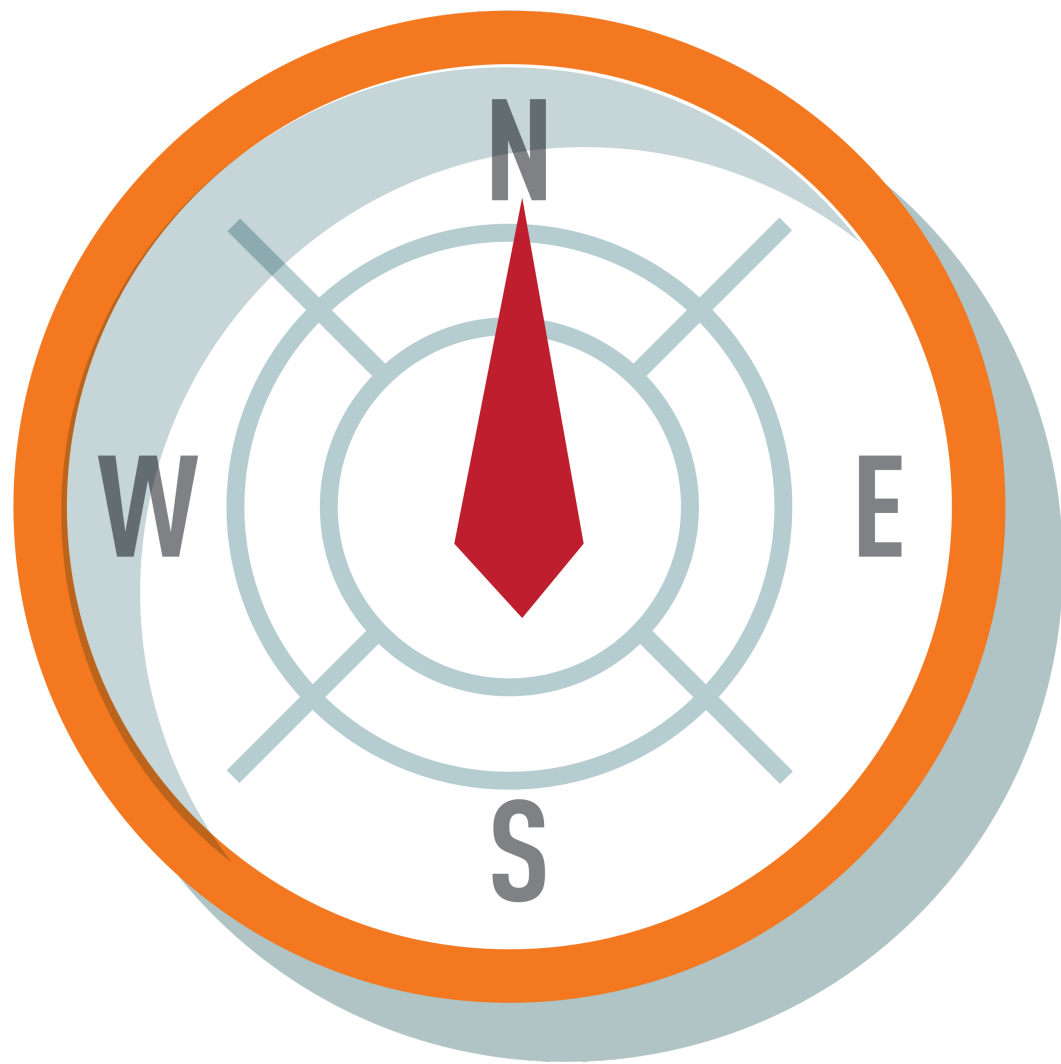
The folks at WP Curve release their monthly income, monthly website traffic and monthly content traffic regularly. They break down how many visits, Tweets, and comments every piece of new content they write each month gets. They also break down the stats for how many visits their most-visited pages and content get.

Being transparent about both their income and traffic stats has been extremely effective for the WP Curve team. However, if you feel comfortable in releasing only your traffic metrics, that's great, too! People love transparency. They love seeing the numbers from other blogs and businesses, so be open about your traffic. If you do this, it should help you get more visitors, leads, and customers.

Chapter summary

- Most people are too afraid to share their financial metrics and/or traffic metrics, even though others have a fascination with these sorts of numbers and statistics.
- Distinguish your blog and business by being transparent about your business's financial metrics and/or traffic metrics.
- Transparency of this kind will help you get more traffic and more customers.

32



**EXACT MATCH DOMAIN
BONUS FOR SEO AND SEO
IN GENERAL**

SEO is a great way to drive traffic to your site. In order for you to have an effective SEO strategy, you need to write and create a lot of great content on your website.

How can you create high-quality content? Build a loyal audience. Then, produce content that teaches people everything you know. While you're doing this, optimize your site and content for SEO as well.

Take note: if we will cover the ins and outs of SEO, it might take us three to seven books to do this!

To learn more about SEO, we recommend you check out these resources:

- **Moz's The Beginner's Guide to SEO,**
- **Neil Patel's The Advanced Guide to SEO,**
- **SEOBook.com,** and,
- **Paddy Moogan's The Link Building Book.**

One specific SEO strategy that we want to talk about is the Exact Match Domain Bonus.

You want to get more traffic, leads, and customers both in the short-term and the long run for your business, right?

Here are four steps so you can effectively use the Exact Match Domain Bonus:

1. For your domain, pick a search query that has a lot of searches each month.
 - a. Choose a search query that your target customers will actually search for.
 - i. Think about your target customers: how would they search for a product like yours?
(**Note:** Customer development interviews and target market research will help you to think in this way).
 - b. Don't pick a domain that has an exact match for a long tail search query. Using <http://www.learnhowtocodecontrollersinrails> (not a real webpage) for the search query "learn how to code controllers in rails" will not help you much as this is not searched very often.

- i. For specific search queries and long-tail search queries, it's best to try to rank for these queries by producing content that includes the long-tail search queries (especially in the title of the content) and provides lots of value to people.
2. To research how much traffic certain search queries get each month, use the function titled "Get search volume for a list of keywords or group them into ad groups" in **Google's Keyword Planner**.
3. Only use the exact match domain bonus when picking your product's domain if:
 - a. you can find an available .COM, .NET, or .ORG domain that relates to your product's industry *and*,
 - b. your chosen search query has a high monthly search volume of more than 25,000 to 50,000 searches per month.
4. After doing steps 1-3, start using that domain and start building links to it. After you get some links to your site with an exact match domain, eventually, your site will rank number one in Google for the search query that matches your domain.

Though the exact match domain bonus still has the potential to be a helpful strategy, there is **some evidence** that points to a decrease in its effectiveness over the past few years. If you can't find a domain for your company that exactly matches a search query with a high volume of searches, then you should probably choose a name and domain for your company that you can turn and build into a unique brand. Also, if you can't find a domain for your company that exactly matches a high-volume search query, then you should focus much more on other SEO strategies, which is a good thing to do anyway.

Case study:

This is the strategy that Patrick McKenzie used to get a lot of traffic and customers for his businesses Bingo Card Creator and Appointment Reminder. The Exact Match Bonus is that if you own the exact .COM, .NET, or .ORG top level domain for a particular search query, it'll be much easier for you to rank in the number one spot at this query.

For instance, Patrick uses the domain <http://www.bingocardcreator.com> for his product Bingo Card Creator. So, Patrick gets an enormous SEO advantage for the search query “Bingo Card Creator” in Google, Bing, and other search engines.

For Appointment Reminder, Patrick uses the domain <http://www.appointmentreminder.org>, which gives Patrick a huge boost and advantage for the search query “appointment reminder”.

When looking for a domain and a name for your product, consider the Exact Match Domain Bonus. If you use this effectively, the reward will be a big boost in traffic. Ultimately, you’ll get more and more initial customers and customers in the long run.

Chapter summary

- The exact match domain bonus is an SEO technique that can help drive lots of search traffic to your site and help you get more customers.
- The technique is that a .COM, .ORG, or .NET domain will have an easier time getting the top search result in ranking as the top search result in search engines for the search query that exactly matches the domain.
- To get the full benefit of this technique, find a domain name that matches a search query with a lot of monthly search volume.

33



EXPAND YOUR MARKET

Upon launching your product, you may believe that it can only help a fairly small market.

Don't limit yourself with this kind of thinking. Always be on the lookout for ways to expand your product's market.

When David Heinemeier Hansson and Jason Fried launched Basecamp, they initially marketed it to their consulting friends only, even though they knew that there was a broader market of clients who could get value from it.

Because of this, David and Jason didn't just stop with marketing Basecamp as a tool just for consultancies. They also expanded the market and the marketing for Basecamp. Through their efforts, Basecamp is now one of the biggest SaaS successes ever.

When you build and launch your product, you'll have a good initial market and idea of who your ideal customers are. But, sometimes you can expand your market and sell your product to much larger groups of people in various industries than you initially imagined.

For you to find out if you should expand your product's ideal markets, your marketing copy, and your marketing strategies, here are three tips:

1. Talk with as many of your new customers as possible. Understand:
 - a. who they are,
 - b. what their businesses do,
 - c. what role they have in their businesses,
 - d. why they signed up for your product,
 - e. and what their business-related problem/s are.

2. Notice if a significant trend is present during your conversations with your new customers:
 - a. If at least 5 to 10 people from an industry not in your target market have signed up for your product, this is a pretty good evidence that you should actively sell your product to a larger market.
3. If people from other markets who pay for your product have the same problems as your ideal customers', A/B test your marketing copy to see if you can generalize it to appeal to a broader group.
 - a. For example, if you initially thought only developers needed your product, but then you determined that freelancers and consultants need your product too, change your copy to appeal to developers, freelancers, and consultants.
 - b. Or, if it is impossible, make different landing pages that speak to each different market. For example, Braintree has specific marketing pages that speak to developers who need recurring billing, marketplace billing and inside-product billing.

Case study:

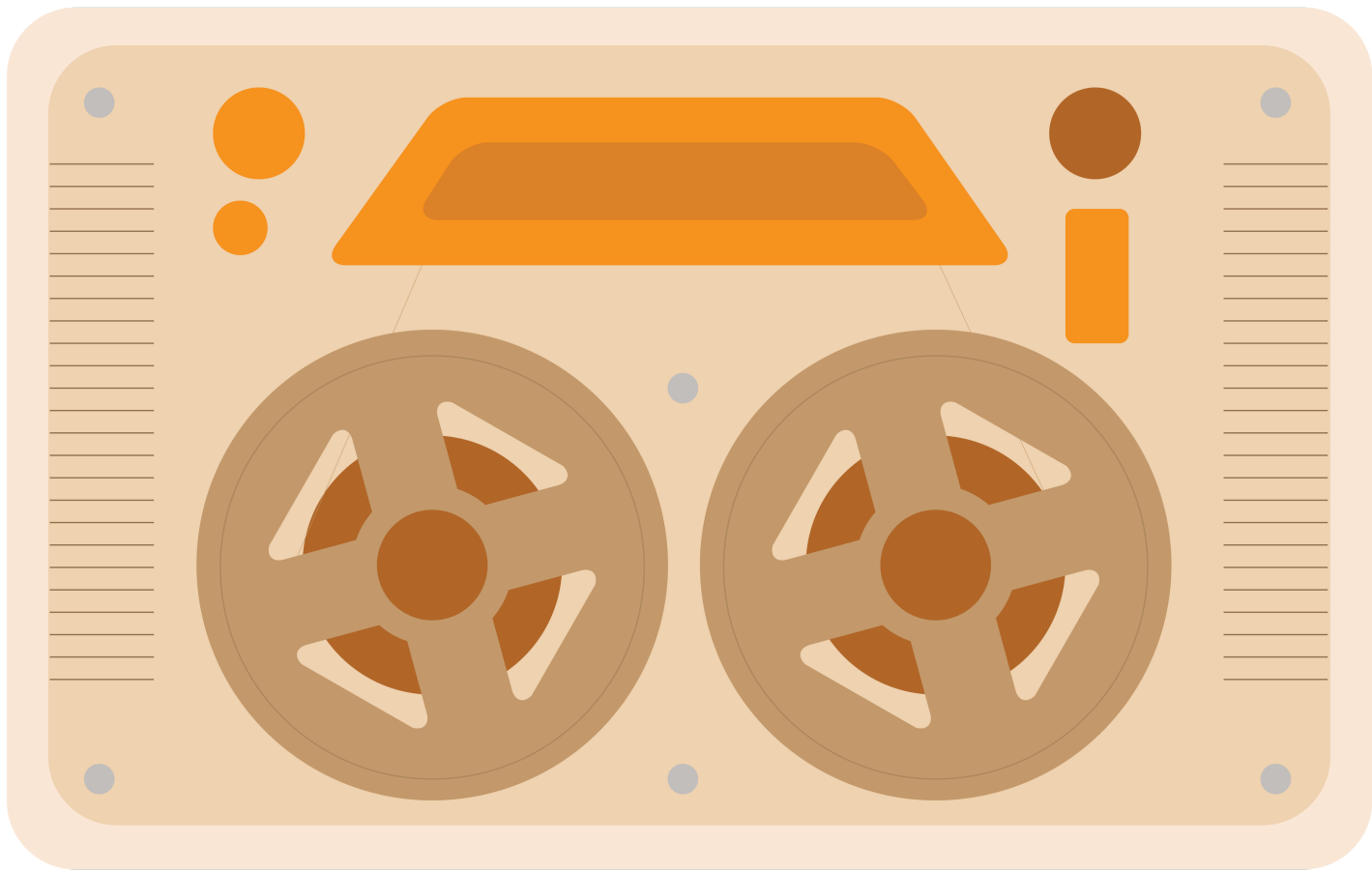
When Patrick McKenzie launched Appointment Reminder, most of his marketing copy was geared toward salon owners and massage therapists. He initially wrote his marketing copy for salon owners and massage therapists because all of his customer development conversations in Chicago were with salon owners and massage therapists.

After a while, Patrick noticed that other business types aside from salons and massage therapy clinics were signing up. He decided to investigate. After conversing with these other customers, he found that Appointment Reminder was valuable for anyone who charged money for their time. It was also valuable for all people who lose money every time one of their clients forgot an appointment or cancelled at the last moment.

While it was a good thing that Patrick limited his customer discovery conversations to a small market of people, it was even better that Patrick expanded his market along the way.

Chapter summary

- Look for ways to expand the market of people who you sell your product to.
- Have conversations with as many customers as possible to see what industries they work in and what problems they have that your product solves.
- If many people not included in your initial ideal market have the same problems as your initial market, consider expanding your product's market and marketing so you can sell to these other people.
- Expand your product's market if you can, but don't do so to the point that you see your conversion rates decrease because you tried to reach a broader group.



**CHARGE PEOPLE FOR
YOUR PRODUCT, EVEN IF
IT'S ONLY IN BETA**

If you launch your product in a beta period before you make it public, require the people who want to join your beta period to pay for your product.

There are 2 ways you can do this:

1. Charge people a flat rate for being a part of the beta. This is regardless of the pricing plan they'll actually use when your product officially launches. For example, you could charge everyone who is a part of your beta \$50 to be a part of it. Then, when you officially launch your product, you can change the beta testers' monthly bill to reflect what they'd actually pay monthly when the product has its normal pricing.
 - a. **(Note: If you do this, let people know that the entrance fee to the beta is all they'll have to pay during the beta. But, once the beta ends, beta-tester who want to remain as customers need to start paying the actual price for use of the product. Setting expectations upfront is key.)**
2. Give your beta-testers a nice discount on your product. For example, giving them a 25% discount for 1 year is good. Offering a discount at this stage is important for incentivizing beta testers to pay for your product before most of the bugs are gone. It's also to encourage them to give you feedback about your product before your product officially launches.
 - a. If you decide to do your product's beta this way, don't give your whole audience the chance to be in the beta. Instead, decide who in your audience or network is most likely to use and benefit from your product. Then, tell them they've been specially selected to try and use the product before anyone else. Letting people know that they're part of an exclusive group of beta testers will make them more likely to join and pay for it.

Charging people to access your beta helps you in three critical ways. It:

1. Separates serious customers from the people in your audience who'll never pay for your product.

2. Shows you that your ideal customers truly need your product and that your product actually solves an extreme pain or problem. If no one is willing to pay to access the beta of your product, your product doesn't solve a powerful enough pain or problem for them.
3. Gives you feedback that's *actually* valuable. If you have a free beta period, some of the people in your beta will be serious customers and others will just be free users. The problem with this is that if both the serious customers and free users are giving you feedback, there's no way to tell the worthless feedback (from non-serious customers) from the valuable feedback (from serious customers).

When you charge people to get into your beta, all of your beta users will be serious customers. So, all of the people using your product will only give you feedback that will enhance the value they're getting from it.

If someone pays for your product, they won't give you superfluous feedback - they'll give you feature suggestions and feedback that will directly improve the value of your product. Why? It's because they want more value from your product!

Non-serious customers who will never pay you don't care about the value your product provides. All they care about is getting as much free stuff as possible.

Case study:

Two examples of people who have had success charging for access to their betas are Wade Foster (Zapier) and Liam Gooding (Trak).

For Zapier's beta, Wade and his co-founders ended up getting around 800 beta customers, which helped them get some good initial revenue. This strategy truly helped them determine that Zapier was an excellent product to be building.

Before Liam Gooding and Trak charged people for their beta and dropped the free plan in their pricing, they were getting tons of useless feedback from the free users of Trak. Liam describes it perfectly. He says that the free users made suggestions for “cool additions” to the product, while the paying beta customers made suggestions for “valuable additions” to the product”.

You don’t want suggestions for “cool additions”; you want suggestions for “valuable additions”. Cool additions to your product don’t improve it. They don’t help you get more customers - valuable additions do.

Chapter summary

- Charge people for access to your beta.
- When you charge people for your beta, charge them a flat fee to enter and then charge them the full price for your product when it officially launches, or give them a discount on the normal price of your product for a year or two.



THE 5-STEP FORMULA FOR EFFECTIVELY PRE-SELLING YOUR PRODUCT TO YOUR AUDIENCE

How do you validate your product idea if you already have an audience?

Ask the people in your audience to pre-order your product based on your idea alone.

This is also a great strategy to get the first customers for your product once you have built up an audience. Clay Collins has a 5-step formula to effectively pre-sell your product to your audience. He used this formula when pre-selling an annual subscription plan for LeadPages to his audience and ended up with more than \$40,000 in pre-orders. Talk about great validation, right?

Now, if you do pre-sales to your audience, you probably won't make \$40,000, but if you get 5 to 10 pre-orders, then this is an excellent sign that your idea is good.

Why should you aim to get 5 to 10 pre-orders?

If you're able to get 5 to 10 pre-orders for a product that does not exist yet, there's a good chance that with effective marketing, you'll be able to find and get hundreds or even thousands of other customers for your product.

Here's the 5-step formula for you to effectively pre-sell your product to your audience and network:

1. **Product Co-Creation.** Involve your audience in coming up with the idea for your product. Make sure *they know* that they helped co-create the idea for it. To do this, consistently ask your audience what very big problems they have and why those problems are so troublesome. Ask them to:
 - a. Describe their problems in the comments of your blog posts or other pieces of content you create.
 - i. Their problems should be related to the content and topic of your blog post, or related to the overall topic of your blog.
 - ii. When you email them with new content, ask them for general problems they face related to the overall topic of your blog or related to the content in your

email and its content. The nice thing about asking people what their problems are over email is that email lends itself nicely to having a conversation with people where you can think carefully about how you respond to them and what follow-up questions you ask them.

- iii. If you host regular office hours for the people in your audience, spend the last few minutes to ask them about what problems they face related to the overall topic of your blog. From there, ask more specific followup questions.

After asking your audience to share their relevant problems with you, initially announce your product idea to them. Tell them your product will solve some of the problems that they brought up.

It's important that they know that your product is a result of them bringing up their problems, asking for you to solve these problems and ultimately collaborating with you.

For people to believe they helped co-create your product, you have to actually have them help co-create your product. One way they can do this is by telling you about their problems and the significant effects of these problems to them. After they've done this and you are ready to announce pre-sales for your product that solves their problems, tell them about the important role they played in coming up with the product and reinforce this notion fairly frequently.

Thank your audience for describing their problems and pains to you. Tell them they helped you come up with the idea. This will help your audience believe they helped co-create your product, because they actually did.

2. **EIN (Early-Investor-Narrative).** In our culture, there are lots of stories of people who invested in a company early or who joined a company in its initial stages. These people ended up having great success because of it. Our culture values stories where people took a risk early on in something, and ended up having lots of success because of that risk.

For example, the first chef at Google or Facebook likely worked for very little money, but also likely ended up making lots of money because of the stock options they were given.

Now, you can't give your initial customers stock options in your business.

But you can *create the idea that your initial customers are early investors* in your business because they're helping to make it sustainable. As early investors of your business, they will benefit because they'll be the people who use your product the earliest and get the most value from it as a result.

Help create an EIN around your product by telling your initial customers that they'll be the first to use your product - because of this, they'll get more value from your product as compared to someone who signs up later.

Also consider offering your initial customers a one-, two-, or three-year discount on your product, but never offer a "life-time" discount. Don't offer a life-time discount because it's a hard (and often impossible) commitment to keep. It's tricky to define "life-time". Additionally, it may be difficult to keep this promise if your product is ever acquired or managed by someone other than you.

3. **Scarcity.** Create the desire for your product.

a. Scarcity works in two ways. Limit the:

- i. Period of time during which people can pre-order your product, and,
- ii. The number of spots that are available for pre-order.

Building up scarcity is important to getting pre-orders for your product. Be upfront with people that you're limiting the time during which they can pre-order and the number of people who can pre-order. Tell them when the time period will start and end, and the

limit of how many people can pre-order well before the pre-orders start, and remind them periodically about when pre-orders start. If you start building desire for your product well before pre-orders start by making pre-orders scarce, then people in your audience will be much more likely to eagerly pre-order your product when it's ready.

4. **Social proof.** To get people to pre-order your product, it has to have social proof.

Social proof can be:

- a. Quotes from big names in your product's industry about how great or helpful your product will be
- b. Lots of discussion or chatter about your product on Twitter
- c. Quotes from people in your audience about how excited they are for your product
- d. Articles about your product on well-known blogs or sites, which you can then link to from your pre-order page using logos from the blogs or sites

It will take hard work to get social proof, but it's very necessary so you can do an effective pre-sales of your product. Once you have social proof, make sure people know about it. It will help you get pre-sales by making people more excited about and interested in your product.

5. **Status indicators.** Give your pre-order customer a status indicator, if you can. A status indicator shouldn't give people the idea that customers who pre-ordered the product are better than customers who didn't pre-order. Instead, it should let people who pre-ordered know that you appreciate their support so you want to reward them in some small way for it.

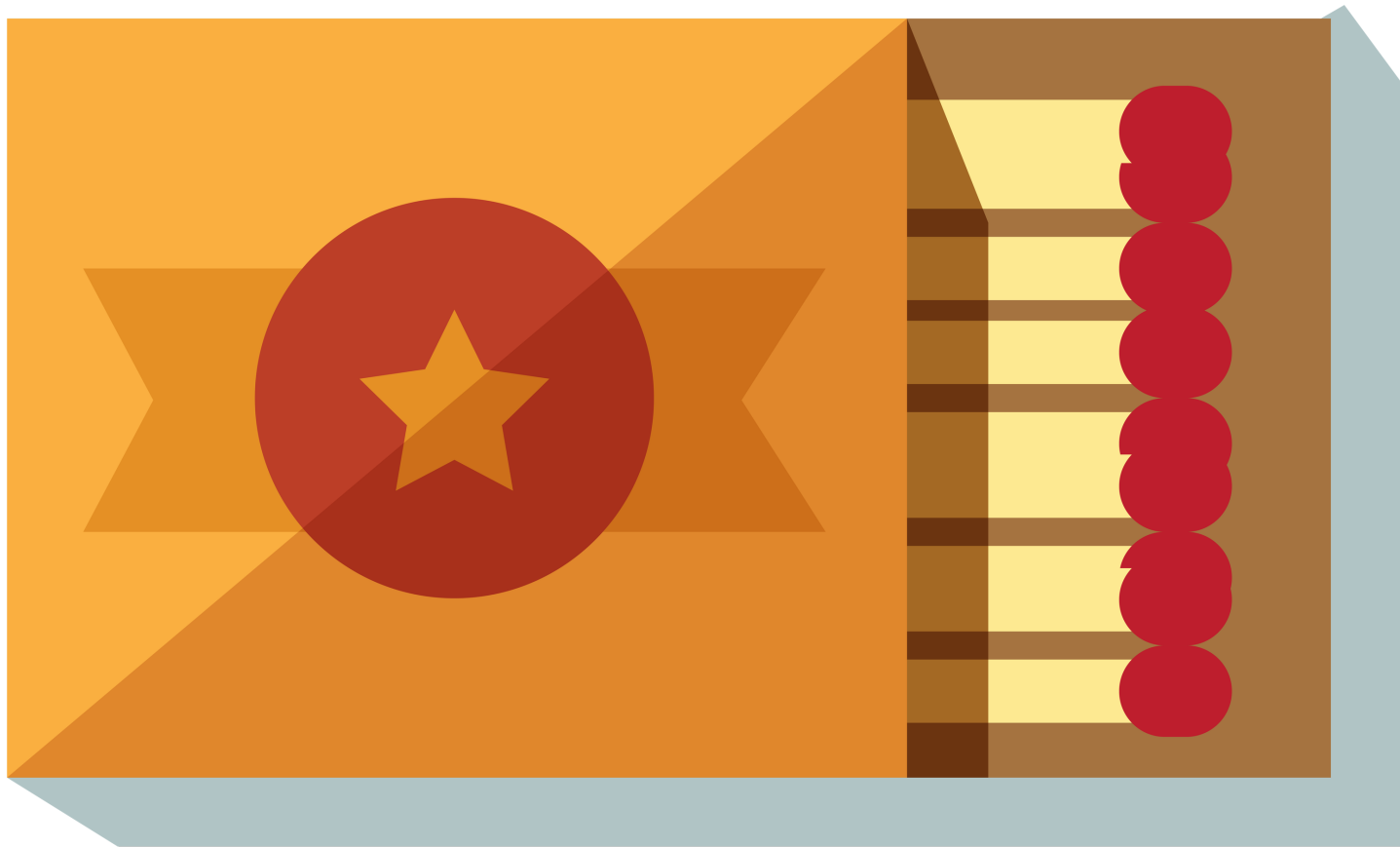
Status indicators help sweeten the deal and act like the cherry-on-top of your pre-sales. If you adequately satisfy the four other parts from this pre-sale formula, status indicators will be the last piece that can motivate people to pre-order.

To produce status indicators for your pre-order customers, you can:

- Give them a special tag or badge in your product's forum or community to let others know who pre-ordered the product.
- Send them a special limited edition t-shirt for your product. (Don't make this shirt ever again and don't give to anyone who is not a pre-order customer.)
- Host a special educational webinar for them. In the webinar, help your pre-order customers solve their business problems and answer their business-related questions. Record the webinar and send it to everyone who pre-ordered.

Case study:

As I mentioned above, Clay Collins used this formula to get more than \$40,000 in pre-sales for LeadPages. To successfully pre-sell your product, you need to have at least a minimum viable audience. Before Clay started doing pre-sales for LeadPages, he had already built up a good-sized audience. To get your first customers, use this 5-step formula for pre-sales. If you do them well, you will get good results.



THE ULTIMATE VALIDATION METHOD

The “Ultimate Validation Method” is a tactic Adii used to get more than \$2,000 monthly recurring revenue and more than \$4,000 in total revenue for the initial version of PublicBeta before it even launched.

Its goals are to get an early customer base and to validate that your idea solves a problem by selling your product to people, even before it’s built.

To use the “Ultimate Validation Method”, here are seven steps you can take:

1. Put up a **landing page** and collect leads in the landing page in the form of email addresses. The landing page should describe:
 - a. what problems your product will solve,
 - b. how your product can help people (the product features), and;
 - c. in what way your product can help people (the benefits your product provides as related to your customers’ problems).

As you build up an email list of leads, continue to communicate with those leads about the product and other valuable content you’re creating.

2. Write **valuable content** on your landing page. To drive traffic to your landing page, share with as many people and in as many places as possible. Also, do guest posts on well-known and high-traffic blogs and publications. In these guest posts, link back to your product’s lead-collection landing page in the author bio. Try to get at least 1,000 email address leads before sending the leads the next version of your product’s landing page.
3. Build the most **minimum viable product** possible. Sell something that you can get, but don’t have yet.

For example, the most minimum version of PublicBeta was an inventory of different business and entrepreneurial courses that only had a title, description, and a

commitment from the entrepreneurs teaching the courses that they would eventually dedicate the time to teach them. At the time of PublicBeta's launch, PublicBeta didn't have the educational content yet, but it had all of the content that would eventually get produced if there were enough validation and traction for the idea.

In building the first version of your product, aim to:

- build the smallest viable product,
- spend as little money as possible, and,
- and challenge your idea as hard as you can.

If you're building a software product, focus on putting together a landing page that your product would have if it was fully developed. Your landing page should tell customers what pains your product will solve, what benefits it will have, and what features it will have. To give people a sense of what the product and features will look and feel like, make mockups of them and include them on the landing page.

4. Direct people to a **signup page** where they can signup and enter their credit card information.

If you don't have a product yet, don't charge people for your product when they initially enter their payment information. Just store their user data and payment information in a PCI-compliant way using whatever payment processor works best for you. This way, you can sign them up and have them pay for your product when it actually goes live.

5. **Don't disclose** that your product doesn't exist - yet. Yes, it's hard to communicate with people that you don't have a product yet. It's also difficult to say that you're just

validating an idea. But, while asking for signups, you cannot let people know that your product is not available yet.

If you let people know about this, you can't actually validate your idea and you can't get honest feedback on it because they will be much less likely to show an intent to purchase by entering their credit cards.

Think of it this way - you're just telling your customers that's there a wait line before people can access your product. You're simply giving them a fake spot in the line.

The way you tell people about this depends on whether or not you get enough customers to validate a need for your product.

- If you get about 30 customers using this strategy, this is very good validation.
 - Go ahead and build the product.
 - Send an email to your customers a few days later to explain to them that the product isn't ready yet. Apologize for deceiving them.
 - After apologizing to them, explain to them in your email that it's very risky to start a business, so the use of this tactic was only a way to reduce that risk.
 - Remind people who signed up that you haven't charged their credit cards yet.
 - Remind your future clients that you won't charge their credit cards until your product is completely ready for them to use.

Some early customers may be pissed off that you used this strategy. Some may tell you to delete their information. But, most of them won't have a problem with it. After all, you haven't charged them yet, right?

- If you don't get about 30 customers after several weeks, think again.
 - You have to tell the people who did sign up that you're not continuing with the idea and product.

- Also, explain to them that your product wasn't actually built yet. Tell them that you were using a strategy to validate your product's idea.
- Thank the people who did sign up for their support. Tell them when you're shutting down the landing page, apologize to them for deceiving them and not finishing the product, and tell them that their user information and payment information will be promptly deleted.
- Naturally, immediately delete that information from your online payment provider.

6. After validating your idea, have conversations with your paid customers in order to prioritize and refine your product's road map. Ask them what other relevant problems they'd like your product to solve and what other valuable features they'd like your product to have. Also, ask them if they think any of the features on your product's initial landing page may be unnecessary when your product launches.
7. Finally, when your product is ready to launch, **onboard the customers** who pre-ordered your product first, but wait to charge them for it until the product officially launches to the general public. Get your initial customers' feedback about what could be improved, added, and/or removed from the initial version of your product, and then make improvements to it. Once you feel that you've adequately improved your product, launch it to the general public and start charging the customers who signed up for it before it even existed.

Before you charge them, let your customers know the date that they're going to receive their first invoice. Tell them how much they'll be paying monthly due to the pricing plan they have to use based on their needs.

Case study:

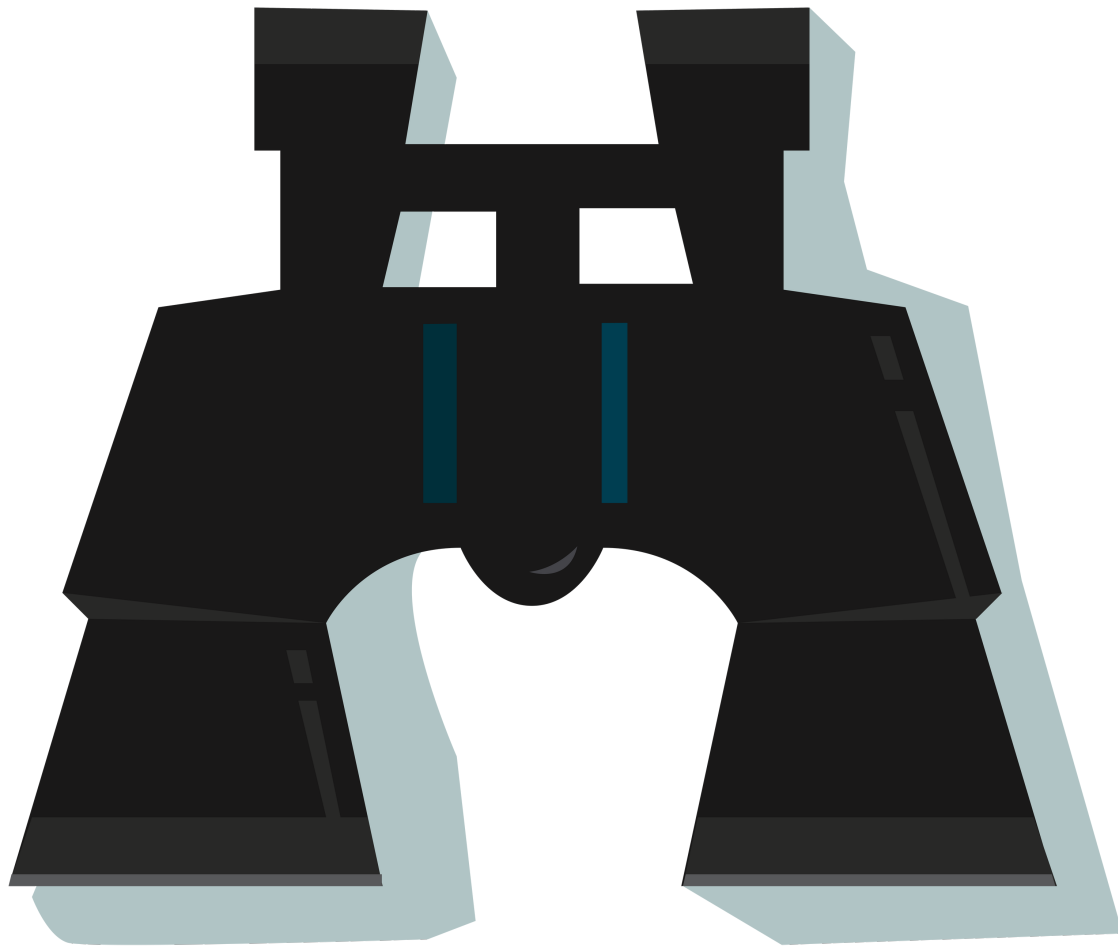
Like I mentioned before, Adii used this method to get more than \$2,000 in monthly recurring revenue and more than \$4,000 in initial revenue.*

Using this strategy, Adii got 71 initial customers, and only 4 of them angrily requested that their accounts be deleted. Adii was able to effectively validate the concept for PublicBeta and ensure that it will have strong early revenues when it launched.

Additionally, during Adii's conversations with his customers, he learned about what they actually wanted so he was able to tweak PublicBeta's product roadmap to the point where he could launch the actual product much sooner. As Adii says, the feedback and suggestions you get from paying customers is 10 times more valuable as the feedback you get from anyone else.

* There was more than just \$2,000 in initial revenue because a couple of people pre-paid for a year of the product.

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**USE LANGUAGE FROM
YOUR CUSTOMER
DEVELOPMENT TO CREATE
YOUR COPY**

When you're talking with potential customers and researching their problems and pain, they'll use common phrases and words to describe what their problems are and why their problems are significant for them.

Take note of the phrases and words your ideal customers use to describe their problems and the effects of these problems to their businesses. These should form the basis of your site's marketing copy.

To incorporate your customer's language into your marketing and sales copy, here are four steps:

1. Refer to the recordings of the conversations you've made during your customer discovery discussions with 50 prospects. Also, go back to your notes during your researches in online communities and social sites. From these sources, find an intense problem or pain that you can solve for your customers.

Note: Ask the customers you're interviewing in-person, over the phone, or over Skype if they'll be okay if you recorded your conversation with them. If they refuse, simply take notes about what they're saying during the conversations.

2. If your prospects allowed you to record their statements:
 - a. Go back after each conversation,
 - b. Listen to how they described their pains, problems, their career's industry their relevant problems, and,
 - c. Highlight the exact phrases they used in their descriptions. Put these notes into Google Docs or into Evernote along with all of your other research and notes about how your prospects described their pains.

For feedback you get from people over email, blog comments, social media research, forums and other online communities, put every comment or post that describes someone's pain into a Google Doc or into Evernote and link to where you found each comment or post, so you can go back and refer to the original source as needed.

To organize the common phrases people used to describe their pains, you can create a table with column-names like this one and put all of the phrases and other relevant information into it:

CUSTOMER #	INDUSTRY/ PROFESSION	PAIN/ PROBLEM DESCRIPTION	COMMON WORD/ PHRASE	REFERENCE
1	Freelance writer	“I hate not being able to be compensated properly for my work because I didn’t put in the right amount of time.”	Time Not being compensated properly	Blog post link: _____
2	Consultant	“Time is money, and if I’m wrong in billing my time, I lose money!”	Time Lose money	Interview voice recording #: _____

3. Read through all of your notes. Look for any phrases that occur repeatedly when describing problems.

For example, if you’ll sell a product to SaaS businesses to decrease their churn rates, common phrases you might notice are “Churn is really shitty” or “I lose tons of customers every month because of churn and that makes me feel shitty.”

There will be seemingly similar phrases that pop up much more frequently than any other phrases when people describe their problems, so be on the lookout for them. Once you’ve found a few of them, keep a tally of how often they’re used.

4. Put these common phrases into writing that you can use to form the backbone of your copy. Use them for your headline and your value proposition, arguably two of the most important pieces of sales copy you will create.

To get a main headline and value proposition from the phrases that describe people's pains:

- For an effective headline, repeat the most common phrase or the most powerful phrase that your prospects used to describe their problems. Let's continue with the churn example again. A common phrase for describing the problem of churn might be "Churn causes me to lose 3% of my customers every month." **To turn any statement of a problem into a headline, use a question that repeats the statement significantly.**

Some questions for your headline can be:

- "Does your churn rate depress you?", or,
- "Does your churn rate keep you up at night?"

In the same manner, a phrase turned into a statement headline can be:

- "Churn F*cking Sucks. Because of It, You're Probably Losing 3% to 10% of Your Customers Each Month"

For a great call to action, tell people to sign up for your product because it will make their problems go away. Basically, say that your product will help them get to the solution to their problems.

For instance, if the most common phrase people use to describe their problem with churn is "Churn causes me to lose X% of my customers every month," then a good call to action based on this might be:

- "Start your free 30-day trial now and reduce your churn by 20% in the first 6 months, or we'll give you your money back."

To create a good call to action from the common language of your prospects, tell them that your product will lead to or cause the inverse of their problems.

Case study:

Freckle, a product from Amy Hoy and Thomas Fuchs, create stellar sales copy by using the language their customers used to describe their main problems.

Freckle is a time-tracking app that helps make time-tracking easy, simple, and even fun. Its main market is composed of freelancers and consultants who charge money for their time, but dislike keeping track of the hours they work because doing so is time-consuming and frustrating.

Since time-tracking isn't enjoyed by most people, these people often tend to log fewer hours than they actually worked, so, the freelance professionals and the consulting firms miss out on lots of hard-earned revenue!

For a freelancer, forgetting to track 10 billable hours of time per month at \$100 per hour is a \$1,000 that is lost monthly or \$12,000 that is lost yearly. For a consulting firm that employs 30 consultants who each charge \$150 per hour, if each consultant forgets to track 10 billable hours of work per month, then this is \$45,000 in lost revenue monthly or \$540,000 in lost revenue yearly.

As you can see, people forgetting to track their time is a huge problem. Amy and Thomas incorporate this problem into Freckle's headline by using a statement that describes it. This statement is, "Our biggest issue is people forget to track their time."

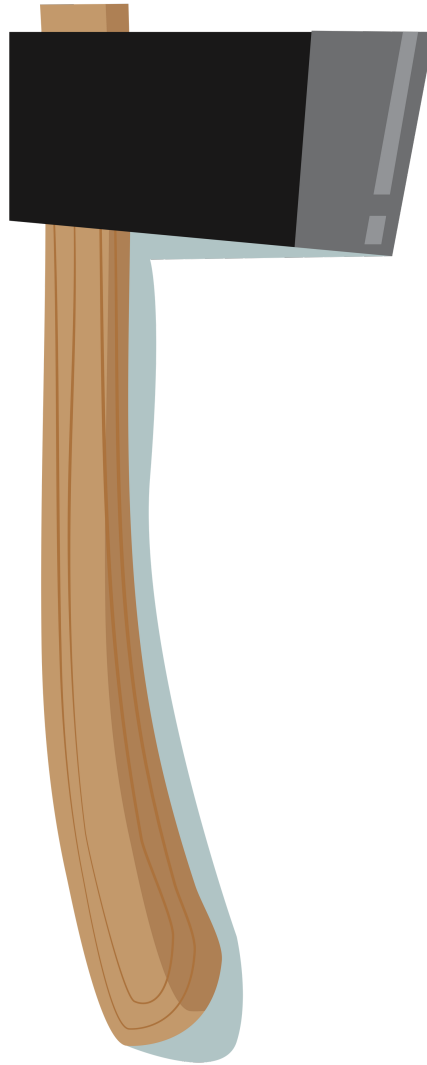
There's nothing fancy about this headline, but, so what? This headline will speak to anyone who's a freelancer or a consultant in a powerful way because it reminds them of an important problem they face.

The call to action Amy and Thomas use is, "Start your free 30-day Freckle trial and never miss another billable hour!" Here, Amy and Thomas have created an effective call to action because it tells people to sign up for Freckle. They have communicated that

Freckle will eliminate the problem of loss revenue just because of forgotten billable hours.

Freckle's marketing copy is a brilliant example of a business which used phrases that describe their target customers' problems to create great copy that sells.

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**SPLIT TEST YOUR SALES
COPY, ESPECIALLY YOUR
VALUE PROPOSITION**

A/B testing and split testing are huge topics that we can never cover in just one book (or even in ten books!), so we'll only give you a brief overview of how to A/B test and split test in this book.

Don't start A/B testing your website's pages until you have a certain amount of traffic. Patrick McKenzie, an expert in conversion rate optimization and A/B testing, says **you shouldn't start A/B testing or split testing until your product's marketing pages and/or blog gets to at least 3,000 unique monthly visitors.**

Should you A/B test or split test your product's marketing pages and/or blog?

You **definitely** should.

Do this after you hit at least 3,000 unique monthly visitors because improving your conversion rate is one of the biggest and easiest wins you can make for your business.

Getting more and more traffic for your business takes a lot of work and time, but you can start improving your business's conversion rate pretty quickly. This can lead to way more customers in the short-term and in the long run.

If you only focus on getting more traffic and you ignore the importance of converting more of that traffic into customers, you'll be wasting a lot of that traffic! Wasted traffic equals not only fewer customers, but also lots of wasted money and time for you.

Get started with A/B testing and conversion optimization for your business by following these five simple steps:

1. Only *start* A/B testing or split testing any landing page, marketing page, or blog until that page is seeing at least 3,000 unique visitors per month.
2. Sign up for an A/B testing and split testing tool like **Optimizely** or **Visual Website Optimizer**. These are the two leading split testing tools on the market. The one you sign up for will be based on your personal preference.

3. Integrate either Optimizely or Visual Website Optimizer into your site, and begin making tests. Never run multiple tests on the same page at once because you won't be able to tell which test is leading to an increase or decrease in conversion rate.
4. There are tons of places on your site that you can A/B test to improve your conversion rate, but here are a few important places to start testing:
 - a. Headlines and Value Propositions
 - b. Call to Actions
 - c. Social Proof
 - d. Images
 - e. Feature Descriptions
5. This is an **extremely** basic overview of A/B testing, split testing, and conversion rate optimization. To learn more about these very important topics that will have a huge impact on your business, check out:
 - a. [Visual Website Optimizer's "The Complete Guide to A/B Testing"](#)
 - b. [Visual Website Optimizer's Blog](#)
 - c. [Optimizely's Blog](#)
 - d. [Patrick McKenzie's Blog](#)
 - e. [Patrick McKenzie Conversion Optimization Course](#)
 - f. [Joanna Wiebbe's Books and Blog for Improving the Copy You Use in Marketing Pages](#)
 - g. [Bryan Eisenberg and Jeffrey Eisenberg](#)
 - h. [And follow everyone else from this list on Twitter and read their blogs.](#)

Case study:

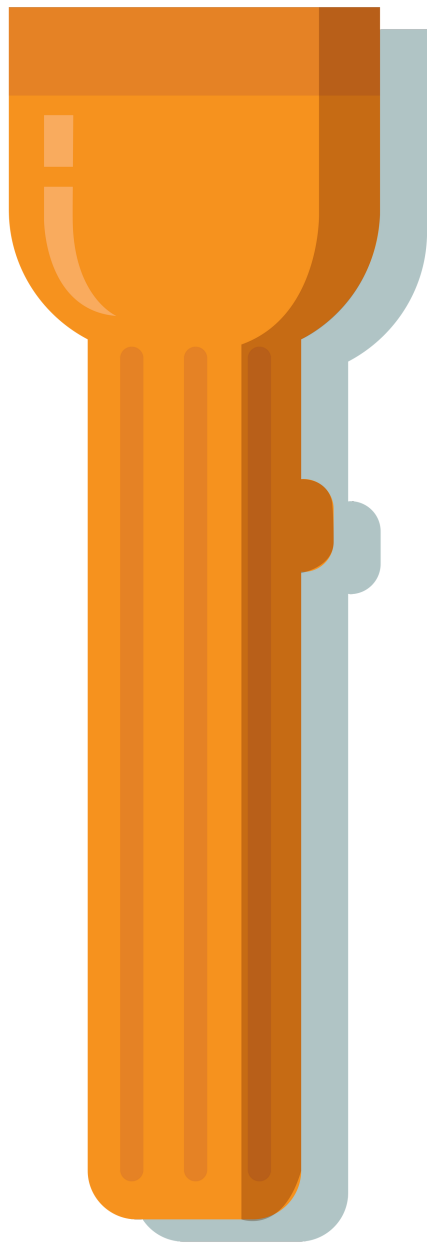
One of the most famous publicly available A/B testing experiments came from Highrise, a product that was created by the former 37 Signals (which is now just Basecamp).

The first test the 37 Signals team did for Highrise was testing their existing short-form landing page against a long-form sales page. This initial test led to a 37.5% increase in signups, which is really fantastic as it was a big win for their business.

After seeing this huge increase from just one A/B test, though, they decided to run another A/B test, which ended up having even better results. For the next test, they tested the original landing page against a very simple short-form landing page that had a picture of just a person. This new landing page had a 102.5% increase in signups versus the original landing page! This means that the new landing page was leading to a bit more than double the increase in signups than the original landing page. This one test helped get twice the amount of free trials for Highrise, which is an enormous win for the business. Hopefully, this example shows you just how important A/B testing and split testing can be to increasing your conversion rate, revenues, and profits. To get the full summary of the results of Highrise's A/B tests, check out [this post](#).

There are tons of other publicly available stories about the success people have had with A/B testing and split testing, so go to Google and look for those tests. If the results from Highrise aren't enough to convince you to improve your conversion rate, one of the many other success stories from the business world will.

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COLD EMAILING 101

Cold emailing can be an effective way for you to get early customers and customers in the long run. There are a lot of people out there who can benefit from your product - if they only knew about it.

Selling to people via cold email is a great strategy to introduce people to your product. Take note, though, that cold emailing is a very time-intensive process. It is hard to scale without a dedicated sales team that sells to large-enterprise customers. However, it is great for getting to your first 1,000 customers and landing important customers after this point.

To send effective cold-emails to your prospects, follow these tips:

1. Find *good leads* to send cold emails to.

Good leads are customers who fit the description of your ideal customers. They have the problem that your product will solve. A good lead will include the name and email address of the person in a company who ideally will use your product the most. He'll be the person who makes the decision to purchase your product.

Once you've determined your ideal customer during customer discovery, you can use LinkedIn and Google (and the chapter, How to Find Anyone's Email Address) to get tons of leads.

2. Write the *cold email to each lead one at a time*. Send each cold email right after it's finished:

- a. Personalize your cold email. Address the email to the first name of whoever the email is sent to, and reference the lead's company and role at the company at least once.
- b. Begin the email by briefly explaining why you're contacting the person.
 - i. Explain how you were researching for companies and the people in those companies who may get value from your product.

- ii. State that you thought your product may help them solve a big problem so you decided to send an email.
 - iii. Express your apology if your email is an inconvenience or a nuisance.
 - iv. Also, be sure to tell them that you're an entrepreneur working on a new business because this will help people empathize with you more. Most people believe that building a business is hard work (which it is!). The apology and the explanation should prevent most people from getting mad or annoyed at your email.
- c. Tell them about the problem that your product may be able to solve. Let them know how your product solves this problem and makes your customers' lives better by describing the benefits of your product and the main features that help get to those benefits.
- i. *If you've done your customer discovery the right way and incorporated the language your customers use into your sales copy, this part of your email should really resonate with the people who you send a cold email to.)*
- d. After accomplishing the previous steps, it's time to ask for the sale. To ask people to buy your product and sign up, be direct and ask them to become paying customers. This is the call to action of your email. Be upfront about it:
- i. Ask someone to purchase in your email only once. Don't ask for the sale more than once.
 - ii. When you ask a lead to buy your product in your cold email, it should contain *as little pressure to buy your product as possible*. Never ever beg for people to sign up.
 - iii. Your email should also include a sentence or two that tells them that it's no problem if they aren't interested in your product.

- e. Before you end your email, thank your leads for their time. Tell them that you'd be happy to have a phone conversation with them if they are interested in purchasing, but aren't ready to purchase based on the information in your email and on your site alone. By sending a cold email to people, you are taking up their time, so you should thank them for it.
- f. After your email signature, include a postscript (P.S.) sentence. According to Patrick McKenzie, the postscript of an email is often the most-read part of it besides the subject line. In this postscript, ask your leads to join a free email course that will help them solve a problem they have. Even if you don't sell your product in the initial cold email, getting people to sign up for your email course* will help you sell it - eventually.

** Use the techniques from the "How to Create Profitable Online Ads" chapter.*

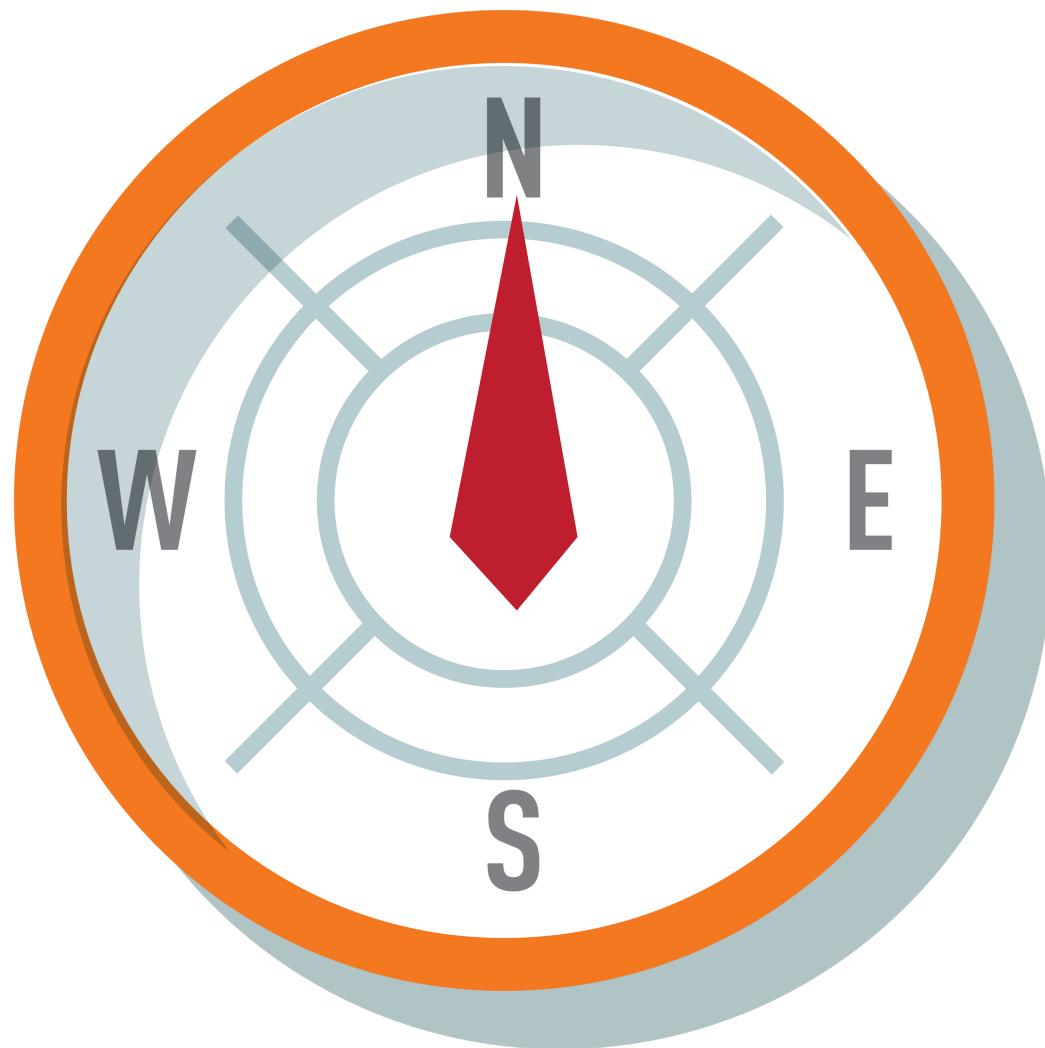
Case study:

Liam Gooding has had lots of success using cold emails to get customers for his product, Trak. In our interview with Liam, he said that cold emailing people has helped Trak get lots of early customers. Tons of other successful entrepreneurs have built great businesses by cold contacting people. So, definitely consider using cold emailing and cold contacting people as a way to get your business's first customers. It's also an effective strategy to get important customers for your business down the road.

Notes:

1. Some people will get pissed off at you for sending them cold emails. This is a reality of sending cold emails. Just brush it off. When people get mad at you, it can be hard to ignore them, but that's what you should do. In the end, all of the people who get value from your product and sign up for it as paying customers will be worth it.
2. Cold emailing people and asking for a sale in the first email is not a good way to build relationships with people. Don't cold email and don't ask for a sale from someone if you want to build a great relationship with this person.

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HOW TO PROFITABLY USE FACEBOOK, ADWORDS, AND OTHER ONLINE ADVERTISEMENTS

There are various ways to profitably and effectively use online advertisements like ads from Facebook, Google, and Twitter.

However, in this chapter, we'll talk about one strategy in particular that is very successful. This is a strategy that comes from Brennan Dunn. Brennan is someone who has used this strategy to profitably make money from Facebook ads. Use this with Facebook ads or retargeted Facebook ads, so you can drive cheaper traffic from Facebook to your website. With this strategy, you can also show your ads on Facebook to very specific demographics.

To determine if your Facebook ads are effective, look at your advertisement's click-through rate, which is something Facebook will calculate for you.

The optimal click-through rate for Facebook ads is 0.11% to 0.16%, or anything that is above this rate. With a click-through rate of 0.11%, your ads will get 11 clicks for every 1,000 times they're seen. Though the optimal click-through rate for Facebook ads is 0.11% to 0.16%, an average click-through rate for Facebook ads is 0.04% to 0.05%. If any of your ads have a click-through rate lower than 0.04% to 0.05%, you should rework and recreate your ads to try to get a higher click-through rate.

Take note that in using Facebook ads and other types of online advertisements, it's very easy to waste a lot of money on unprofitable ads.

So, before you start to use Facebook ads, learn as much as possible about them. Always watch your ads like a hawk and check to make sure you have no unprofitable ad campaigns running. If you do have unprofitable ad campaigns, you can end them right away on Facebook before they cost you more money.

If we taught you everything about the topic of using Facebook ads profitably and effectively, we'd need to cover 5-10 books, so we can't go into more about it here. To learn more about Facebook ads, though, you can check out the AdEspresso [Blog](#), [eBooks](#), [Guides](#), and [Webinars](#).

This strategy that Brennan used is a strategy that will work for you too. Follow these seven steps so you can get started:

1. Set up a **landing page** that you can drive traffic from advertisements to. This landing page should advertise a free email course that your leads can sign up for. To get people interested in the course, describe one of their pains. State why it's so problematic. Tell the people about the helpful content that you'll include in your email course. Finally, have a call-to-action that asks them to sign up for the course.
2. Create an **email course** using an auto-responder service like [ConvertKit](#), [Drip](#), [InfusionSoft](#), or any other email marketing software ([MailChimp](#), [Campaign Monitor](#), [AWeber](#)). In this email course, include valuable content to the leads who sign up for it. Your email course should:
 - a. Solve a specific pain/problem for your leads.
 - b. Run for 5 days to 30 days, but we'd recommend you go with a 5-day course.
 - i. If you do an email course that is longer than 5 days, spread out when you send emails to people. Don't send emails to people every day.
 - ii. If you do a 5-day email course, you can send the leads who sign up for it a section of the course every day.
 - iii. Break your course up into small lessons, and then move each lesson into an email auto-responder series. Your course can have anywhere from 5 lessons (for a 5-day course) to 7-10 lessons (for a 20- to 30-day course).
3. Start **product-selling** but only do this:
 - a. after the first 3 lessons in a 5-lesson course; or,
 - b. after the first 4 lessons in a 7-lesson course or 10-lesson course.

The first time you introduce your product, simply **soft-sell** it. In a distinct part of the lesson, briefly mention your product and talk about what it does. In 1 to 2 sentences, go over how your product can help your leads solve their problems.

Do a **hard-sell** for your product in the last lesson of the email course.

- If you have a 5-lesson email course: soft-sell your product in the 4th email, then in the 5th email, you can do a hard-sell of your product.
- If you have a 7-10-lesson email course: soft-sell your product in the 5th email, then in the last lesson, you can do a hard-sell of your product.

To hard-sell your product, devote a small portion of the last lesson in your course to providing free value to leads, and then use the rest of the email to talk about your product. Say how it will improve the lives of your leads (the benefits it provides) and explain how it will solve their problems (the features it contains).

After providing tons of free value to your leads, they won't mind if you spend a lot of time in the last email selling your product. In fact, they'll be much more eager to hear about it.

4. Though there are lots of great online advertising platforms, **Facebook ads** are probably your best bet for creating profitable advertising campaigns. Facebook gives you a huge amount of control over the type of people who can see your ad due to their demographic and interest targeting. Also, the CPC rates on Facebook are much better than rates on Google Adwords and many other platforms. **Keep track of your online ad expenditure very closely. Set a daily or weekly budget for your ads so that you don't spend any more money than you have available. Stop using ineffective ad campaigns.** It's easy to waste a lot of money using online ads if you're not careful.
5. Aim to get **10% to 20%** of the traffic that you send to your course's landing page to convert into receiving the email course. If you aren't getting 10% to 20% conversion,

work on improving the copy on the landing page and consider changing up your course's material if it doesn't solve an important problem for your leads.

6. Then, aim to convert **10% to 20%** of the leads who sign up for your course into becoming paid customers for your product (or at least free trial users your product). So, if 100 people sign up for your course, then about 10 to 20 of these people should convert into paying customers or free trial signups. If you aren't getting 10% to 20% conversion rate, you should revise the content in your course's lessons to make it more valuable and change up the way you pitch your product throughout the course.
7. Besides creating Facebook ads for people who have never visited your product or blog (by going to [this link](#)), another thing you can do is retarget the traffic that bounces from your product and/or blog and funnel that traffic into signing up for your free course. To retarget traffic, use either [Perfect Audience](#) or [AdRoll](#).

When retargeting traffic from your blog or product, you should still use steps 1 through 6 in this strategy and send your retargeted traffic to sign up for a free email course. Sending your ad's traffic to a free email course will give you a much higher conversion rate than sending your ad's traffic directly to your product's landing page.

Why? It's because an email course will increase the trust that your leads have for you and your product. This can make them more prepared to do business with you.

Case study:

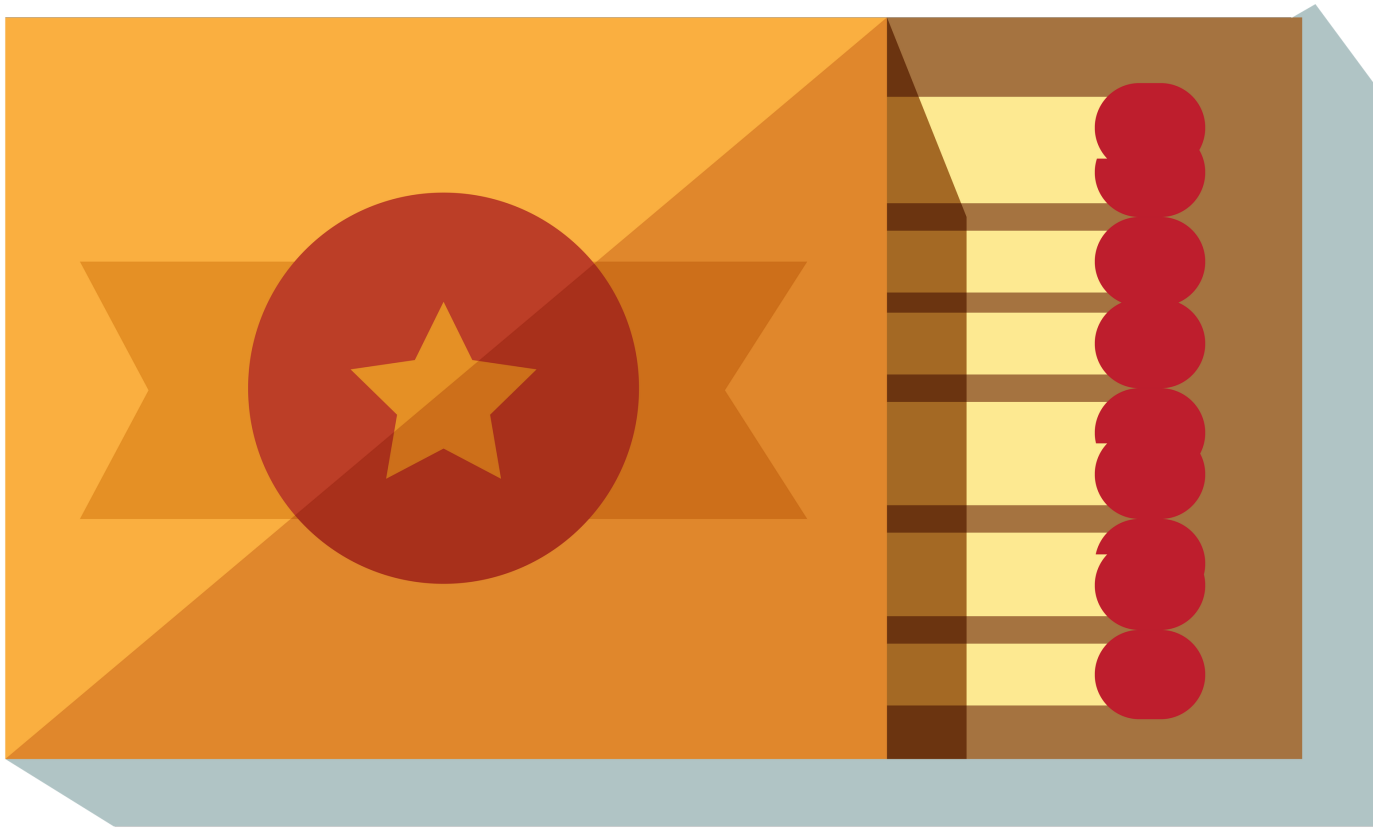
Brennan Dunn has effectively used this strategy to get customers for his SaaS product [Planscope](#) and his WordPress plugin [Conversion Funnel for WordPress](#). With this strategy, Brennan went from having [the idea for his WordPress plugin to having a paying customer for it in only 3 days](#).

Brennan also has had lots of success getting more trial signups for Planscope by [retargeting his traffic and sending that traffic to an email course](#). When people visit your product after clicking on a CPC ad, they likely aren't in the mood or mindset to buy anything. As Brennan has learned and shown, giving free value to people before asking

Chapter summary

- Use Facebook ads and/or re-targeted Facebook ads to drive traffic to a landing page that encourages people to sign up for a free educational email course.
- The goal of your email course should be to educate people about a topic related to your product and product's industry, so that you gain the trust of the people on your list.
- At different times during this email course, you can soft-sell your product to the people who are receiving the course.
- During your email course, do only one hard-sell.
- Set up your course so that it teaches people in a way that will eventually help sell your product. For example, teach them an effective solution to their problem. Now, your product will turn this effective solution into an easier, more efficient, and more scalable process. This way, your customers will be more likely to buy your product since they can see its value during your email course.

for a purchase makes your ad more effective by increasing the odds that people will purchase your product.



**HAVE A BIG-BUDGET
MOVIE STYLE LAUNCH**

When you launch your product, have a big-budget movie style. Do the same every time you make changes to it and re-launch it.

This idea comes from David Heinemeier Hansson and Jason Fried in their book **Getting Real**. It's an amazing strategy for having a big launch that helps you get lots of initial customers.

Think about how a movie launches.

Months and months before the movie comes out, the studio behind it will release a trailer that gives fans and moviegoers a glimpse of the plot and action, without revealing too much information. This helps to build up excitement and anticipation for the movie.

After a couple more months, the studio will release another trailer with different footages and plot details, which helps increase the excitement for the movie even more.

About a month before the movie starts, the studio will release a small snippet from the movie pretty frequently - maybe one or two snippets weekly.

Then, about 4-6 weeks before the movie starts showing, the studio will heavily promote the movie using paid ads on TV, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and even on print media. The new clips and the flood of ads will increase the excitement for the movie to an even greater height.

Lastly, the week before the movie starts, the studio will do an all-out advertising campaign and will have the main movie actors and actresses do as many media appearances as possible to encourage people to go see it in its opening week.

Movie launches are carefully crafted events that help movies earn huge amounts of money in their opening week. If you launch your product in this way, you can get a nice number of initial customers and revenue from the start.

To do a big-budget movie style launch for your product, you can make these nine steps as your guide:

1. You need an **audience** to do an online launch. If you build up anticipation and excitement for your product, but you don't have an audience to build excitement to, then your launch will fail. Create a following and a loyal fan base first.
2. **A good big-budget movie style launch should happen over the course of at least 1 month - you can implement it over the course of 3 to 4 months or even longer periods than that as well. Your big budget movie style launch can happen at the same time you're building your product.** Send your audience and anyone else you know a landing page specifically for your product. This landing page should describe what problem your product will solve, what benefits it will provide, and what initial features it will have. Send this landing page in an email to everyone who is already in your audience and ask them to sign up for it.
3. Create **one amazing piece of content** per week that will help solve a problem for or improve the lives of the people in your existing audience and landing page sign-ups. Send this piece of content to both your main audience's list and your landing page's list each week.

For your landing page's list, also include weekly updates about the progress you're making with your product. These updates could be screenshots, descriptions of fully-finished features or partially-finished features, and/or quotes from people who are testing the product about how much they love it. Send the content to both lists. This way, both lists will grow because the people on them will share the content. Also, if you give product updates to people on your landing page's list, this can help build excitement for your product.

4. A month or so before your product's launch date, also include **a list of all of the major updates** from your product to the people in your main audience. A month before your product launches, tell people in both lists the **exact date** that it will launch.

After you send this email that contains the major updates to your product to your primary audience, remind the people in both lists weekly about the date of your product launch up until it actually launches. Connect whatever valuable content you're sending to both lists each week back to your product and its pending launch.

5. Three days before your product launches, send an email to your primary audience and your landing page's email list to **remind them of the launch**. Tell them the date and the time of the launch. Emphasize that you'll give them a special discount during your product launch.

Create a valuable and product-related piece of content for this email. Relate your updates to what your product can do and to what their problems your product can solve. Mention your product and its upcoming launch in the email. Post 3 to 4 times in a way that doesn't detract from the value of the content you're providing.

6. The night before your product's launch, send an email to your primary audience and to your product-specific audience to remind them that your product is **launching the next day**.

- a. Also, include a small piece of valuable content in this email.
- b. Remind your clients about the specific time of your product launch.
- c. Mention the special launching discount that you'll be offering for it (Give people a launch discount to boost their incentive and motivation for buying your product right away. For a recurring revenue software product, this could be a 20% discount for the first year of product subscription.) The launch discount should last for 24 hours to 48 hours.

Note: A good time to launch your product would be 9 AM EST 10 AM EST. These times are good for launching products because they happen during the first part of the day for people on the east coast of the US. These times also mean that people on the west coast will get the email about your product launch right as they start their days.

7. On the day of your product's launch, send an email to both of your email lists to tell them that your product is **now officially launched and ready for purchase**. This email should:
 - a. Contain a brief description of your product and the main problem it solves.
 - b. Give people a link to where your product is located.
 - c. And have a call to action that encourages them to sign up. In your call to action, remind people of the special launch discount and tell them that the time period for taking advantage of the discount is limited; meaning, the discount will end in 24 hours to 48 hours.
8. Halfway through the duration of your product's launch, send people who haven't purchased your product an email to remind them about the launch of your product and about the launch discount that **will end soon**. Have a call to action that incorporates the launch discount and encourages them to sign up for your product.
9. When there are only 30 minutes before your launch discount ends, send one last email to people who haven't already bought your product. Tell them that the launch discount will no longer be available in 30 minutes. This is to encourage people to sign up as a part of the launch. After you send this last email, you should see a nice spike in signups. Finally, your launch will be over.

Case studies:

Nathan Barry and Amy Hoy are two experts when it comes to launching. They have used the big-budget movie style launch strategy to have enormous launches for their products.

Amy sells a \$1,500-course every couple of months. She uses this strategy to sell out the course every time. Amy sells out the course by sending people on her email list free,

valuable content related to her course. Of course, she does this for around 4-7 times before she opens sales.

Each time Amy sends people this content, she explicitly connects it to the course by telling people they'll learn similar stuff in the course and reminding people when the course will run and when signups will open. After sending this much amazing content, people are usually so excited to sign up for the course that many ask to apply for it early. In fact, the course even sells out in less than a day or two!

In the past few years, here are a few of the product launches (for self-published books!) Nathan Barry has had:

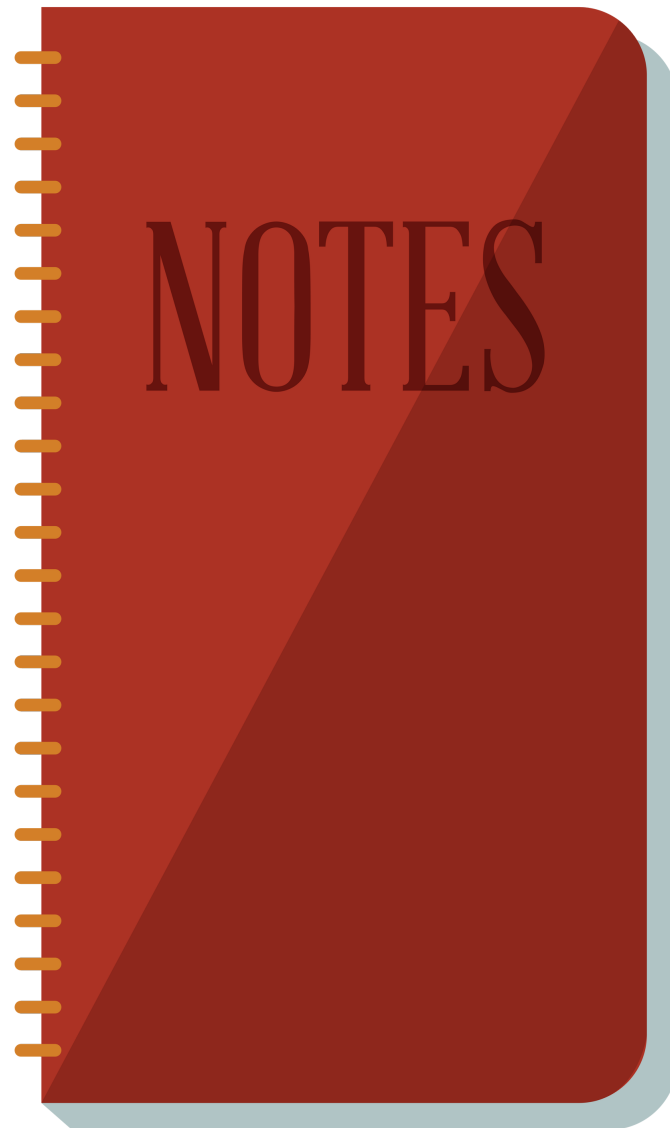
- The App Design Handbook's second edition made \$36,297 during a 24-hour launch.
- Authority made \$26,600 in its 24-hour launch.
- And, Designing Web Applications made \$26,679 during its 24-hour launch.

Before Nathan ever launches a product, he always sends out 3 to 5 emails containing valuable content related to the book to help drive excitement for its launch. He does this to encourage people to buy it right when it comes out. As you can see from the amount of money Nathan has made from just 3 of his launches, doing big-budget movie style launches has brought him a lot of success.

Chapter summary

1. To create a big and exciting launch for your product and to generate nice traction and momentum for your business right from its start, do a big-budget movie style launch.
2. Announce your product at least a month or two before it actually will launch.
3. Over the weeks and months before your product launches, you should build excitement and hype for your product, so that when your product's launch day comes, people are ready and eager to buy it.

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**FOR SOFTWARE
PRODUCTS, SEGMENT
YOUR LAUNCH (IF YOU
HAVE A BIG AUDIENCE)**

If you have a big audience, segment your product's launch.

Segmenting your product's launch means onboarding a small group of people from your audience to your product one at a time and making improvements to your product after each segment signs up.

After getting more and more segments of your audience to sign, you eventually do a big launch where you open the product to the rest of your audience. During this final step, you allow anyone to sign up.

Only consider using this strategy for your recurring revenue product if you have an audience (or product-specific email list) that has around at least 1,000 people on it. Otherwise, it is not cost-effective to segment your product's launch into 5 to 15 groups.

Here's how to effectively segment your launch:

1. Send the people in your audience a survey about what product features are most important to them. To incentivize people to fill out the survey, tell them that by filling out the survey, they're helping to make the product as valuable and helpful for them as possible.
 - a. In the survey, list out each feature you're planning to build in the initial version of your product. Don't list out all of the features you'd ideally have in your product - list only the features you initially planned to have in the first version of the product.
 - b. Each question in the survey should ask whether or not each feature needs to be in the product for each survey-taker to start paying for it.
 - i. So, if you planned to have 6 key features in your product when it officially launches, have 6 questions. Each question should ask about a specific feature's importance in getting someone to pay for your product.
 - ii. At the end of the survey, ask people for their email addresses so you can segment them into groups based on how they responded to the surveys. By doing this, you can also contact each group based on their survey responses.

2. Now, it's time to segment the survey respondents and survey responses into groups. Segment your list into groups based on the people who need the fewest features to start paying for your product to the people who need the most features to start paying for your product.

Contact first the groups of people who need the fewest features to pay for your product. For the groups of people who need the most features to pay for your product, contact them right before launching to everyone.

3. The first group of people you should onboard is the people from your personal network who are interested in signing up. Onboard these people one or two at a time - don't onboard about 10 of them at first. You don't have to necessarily charge them right away, but you should be upfront and direct about when you'll start charging them. Tell them that after a certain set of features are finished, they will start to get billed if they want to continue to use the product.
4. Incorporate the feedback and suggestions of your personal network. In fact, after you onboard each segment of your list, get feedback from the people who signed up. Then, look for ways to improve your product and the conversion rate.

For example, when Rob Walling was segmenting the launch for Drip, he noticed that Drip's onboarding wasn't very good at first, so this was heading to a much lower conversion rate than he wanted. Because he went and improved Drip's onboarding, this led to a better conversion rate when he launched to later segments.

5. Add the features that each segment needed for them to sign up for your product. Then, launch to those segments.

Launch to the people who needed the fewest features first, and as you make more features and get closer to the big launch, proceed to launch to the next groups.

6. Finally, you can do a big launch to the rest of your audience who didn't take the survey and who didn't get segmented. When doing this big launch, follow the advice from the chapter about doing big-budget movie style launches.

If you improve the product and its conversion rate after the individual launches to each segment, the conversion rate to your big list during your big launch will be very strong. Also, if you segment your launch, you'll have a nice base of customers right from the beginning. This strategy will not only make you feel great, but also, this will help make your business more sustainable.

Case study:

Rob Walling used this strategy very effectively when launching Drip. Before segmenting his launch, Rob built up an email list with more than 3,000 people on it. Then, Rob sent out a survey to the people on his list asking them what features Drip would need to have in order for them to sign up.

In this survey, Rob also asked people to include their email addresses so he could segment them into groups based on how they responded and so he could contact the groups separately.

After this, Rob created different segments to launch his product to. First, he boarded on people from his personal network to Drip. Then, he began launching Drip to each segment of his list bit by bit. After launching to his network and to each segment, Rob asked for people's feedback and made improvements to the product.

After launching to all of the segments he created, Rob did a big launch to everyone else on his email list who didn't take his initial survey. Using this method helped Rob consistently improve Drip and its conversion rate, so when he did the huge big-budget movie style launch, he was able to sign up as many paying customers as possible.

Chapter summary

- Segmenting your product's launch can be a great way to:
 - improve your product's features, benefits, and value before its big launch,
 - improve your product's onboarding and conversion rate before its big launch, and,
 - get a solid base of customers and momentum before the big launch.
- To segment your launch, send an email to the people on your launch list to ask them to take a survey about which features your product will need to have before they start paying for it.
- Next, segment the people who responded to your survey into groups based on how they responded and based on how many and which features they said the product would need to have before they started paying for it.
- Then, launch your product to each segment one at a time, improving your product and adding features to it after each segmented launch.
- Finally, after you've launched your product to all of the different segments, you can now do the big launch of your product to the public.

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SELLING TO THE PEOPLE IN YOUR NETWORK

Who are the first people you should look to sell your product to? These are the people in your network.

Why? It's because the people in your network can determine if your product actually solves a painful problem.

(Note: This is different from doing customer discovery with the people in your network. There, you're trying to get people to pre-order your product. When trying to get people to pre-order your product, you likely won't be taking money from them upfront. However, you can also use the strategies from this section when doing customer development and asking for people to pre-order.)

If you've built up genuine relationships with the people in your network by helping them (or offering to help, at least) when they don't ask for help and by getting to know them well before you try to sell them anything, they'll likely be happy to buy whatever you're selling as long as it's valuable and helpful to their business.

5 Simple And Significant Steps To Sell To Your Network

1. Send the people in your network email describing your product. You can also send them an email asking to speak with them over the phone or Skype about the product.
 - a. If they don't want to and/or don't have time to discuss the product over phone, ask for the sale from the person in a follow-up email.
 - b. If they do want to have a phone or Skype conversation with you about the product, ask them for the sale over the phone or Skype.
2. When asking for the buy from people in your network, don't be aggressive or pushy about getting them to purchase. This is an easy and sure-fire way to ruin the relationship with whomever you're selling.
3. Politely and respectfully ask for the sale. Tell them explicitly that there's no pressure to purchase your product. Saying something like, "It's no problem at all if you don't

want to buy my product. I won't have any hard feelings. I will completely understand," is a perfect way to emphasize to the people in your network that there is no pressure to buy your product unless it will actually help them.

4. If people from your network decide not to buy your product, ask them for **honest** reasons about why they're deciding not to buy. They may have some good feedback you can use to improve your product and ultimately get them to buy one day. **But, don't make product improvements just so you can convert those who are on the fence about buying your product into paying customers.** Even though the people in your network are experienced and successful, any feedback they give you before they're paying customers is less valuable than feedback you'll get from paying clients.
5. Every 6 to 12 months, follow up with the people in your network who decided not to buy your product when you initially pitched it. Only ask them to buy your product every 6 to 12 months after the first pitch. Of course, you should maintain your sincere relationships with the people in your network much more often than this.

Case studies:

Many successful entrepreneurs got the first customers for their product by selling to their network.

For example, Rob Walling got the first customers for his product Drip by reaching out to people he knew and by asking them if they'd buy it.

Other successful entrepreneurs who have had success getting their first customers by selling to the people in their network are David Heinemeier Hansson, Jason Fried, Jeff Epstein, and Dan Martell, among others.

In order to get the first experts for his startup Clarity.fm, Dan reached out to other successful entrepreneurs he knew and asked them to join. Building a network the right way and then being able to ask for help from the people in it is extremely powerful.

David and Jason got the first customers for Basecamp by asking Jason's consultant friends to sign up. Jeff got the first customers for Ambassador by asking people that he had built relationships with through the Techstars network to sign up for it.

Chapter summary

- As long as there are potential customers for your product in your network, they should be the first people you look to when validating your idea and selling your product.
- When you sell to people in your network, don't be pushy with them or pressure them a lot to buy your product. Let them know that if they don't want or need your product, it's totally fine so you won't take offense.
- Start building your network right away, and then when the time is right, sell to the people in your network.



**BE RESOURCEFUL AND
RELENTLESS**

Getting your first customers is hard and exhaustive. It takes a lot of work.

If you ask people in your network to be your product's first customers, you have to be resourceful and relentless. Even if you get your first customers using other tactics, you'll still have to be resourceful and relentless.

This is a piece of advice from Wade Foster. Take this to heart because it's really important if you want to be successful.

Being resourceful and relentless means that you do anything and everything you can to find customers for your product. If you have these traits, you persevere and keep trying to build a successful business even if your first idea (or first 10 ideas) fail to get a meaningful number of customers.

It's really hard to be resourceful and relentless, but it's worth it.

Be resourceful by looking for all of the different ways to get your first customers and being creative in how you get your first customers. To be relentless, work very hard and look all over for places to find your first customers and ideal clients. In order to be relentless, ask all of the people in your network and in your audience to buy your product. Additionally, ask all of the people you meet if they can get value from your product.

All of these tasks are nerve-wracking, but they are all helpful when trying to get your business's first customers.

Note: Being resourceful and relentless does not mean you should keep working on an idea even if all signs indicate that your idea does not solve a real problem. It simply means persevering and moving forward even when the going gets tough.

Case study:

When describing how he got his first customers into Zapier's beta, Wade said he was resourceful and relentless - naturally, you should be like this, too.

Wade had to work extremely hard to get Zapier's first traction. He contacted people in his network and and persuaded as many of them as possible to join Zapier.

The story of how Wade got the very first customer for Zapier shows just how resourceful and relentless he had to be. One day, he noticed that Andrew Warner posted on a forum that he needed an integration between AWeber and some other software product. Wade and his co-founders hadn't built this integration yet, but he still contacted Andrew to describe Zapier and talk with Andrew about it.

Andrew responded by asking for the price of the product. He also asked if the integration he needed was ready. Now, even though Wade and his team hadn't built this feature yet, Wade gave Andrew a price for how much he would have to pay to use Zapier. He told Andrew it would be ready the next day!

That night, Wade and his co-founders built the integration Andrew needed. As a result, Andrew became Zapier's first customer the next day.

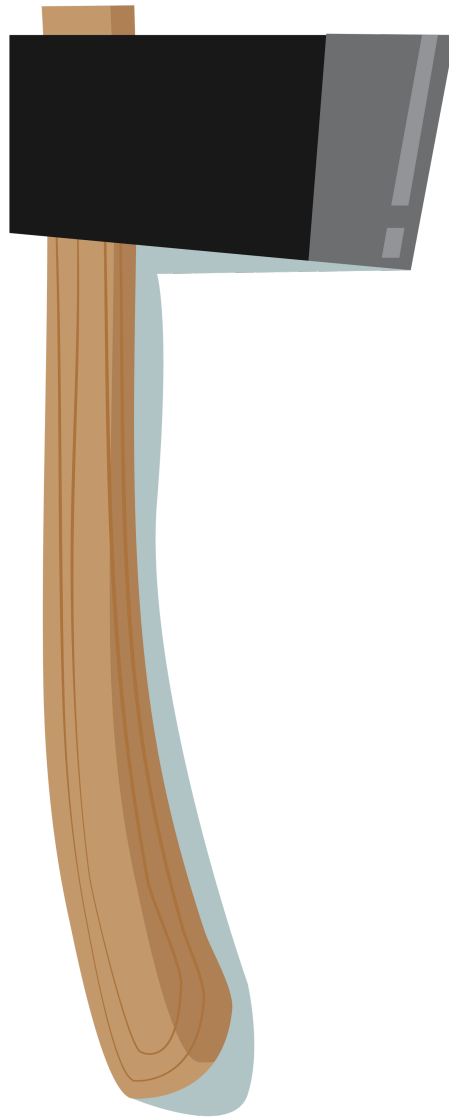
The story of how Wade got the first customer for Zapier is an excellent example of being resourceful and relentless. Wade and his team searched for people on the web who could become early customers for Zapier, found a potential early customer, contacted him, built his desired integration in a night, and then had their first customer the next day.

Be resourceful and relentless like Wade. Eventually, you will get early customers and traction for your product.

Chapter summary

- Starting a business and getting the first customers for a business is very challenging.
- To build a successful business and to get your first customers and long-term clients, be resourceful and relentless.
- Being resourceful means being creative and finding effective strategies to get customers for your business.
- On the other hand, being relentless means persevering and working hard to ensure that your business succeeds and sustains itself.

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**BOOTSTRAP YOUR
BUSINESS, OR AT LEAST
MAINTAIN THE MENTALITY
OF A BOOTSTRAPPER**

Bootstrapping a business means starting and growing a business using the revenues the business makes on its own. It means that you will not take financial assistance from outside sources to help start and grow your business.

If you decide to bootstrap your business, you will not take any venture capital, angel funding, or private equity financing.

Bootstrapping teaches you a lot of valuable things, such as:

1. The importance of making money and charging people for your product.

Companies that raise a lot of money put off the act of actually making money from their business.

When you've raised a lot of money and when you've grown your user base quickly, it's easy to say that it'll be easy to make money later. After all, you just need to throw some ads and you'll be swimming in dough, right?

Not quite.

You see, although Facebook and Google have had a lot of success with this strategy, it's actually very risky to rely on monetizing your free user base by showing them advertisements.

For example, think about the recent experience of Tumblr. According to CrunchBase, Tumblr raised 125.30 million dollars in venture funding before it was acquired by Yahoo for 1.1 billion dollars.

Almost every time a company is acquired for 1.1 billion dollars, the acquisition is a huge success for the company being acquired. In Tumblr's case, this acquisition was a very big success. *But, this was a lucky outcome for Tumblr.* Before being acquired, Tumblr was producing very little revenue. If Tumblr had not been acquired by Yahoo, it's hard to say whether or not Tumblr would have grown its revenue fast enough to justify its enormous valuation.

When you bootstrap your company, you have to rely on the money your business makes in order for it to survive. You have no venture capital to rely on to help you sustain the company. The only way for your business to make money is to charge your customers for using your products or services.

Some people who believe raising venture capital is a good thing may say that having a lifeline in the bank is great just in case you run low on cash. However, having this venture capital lifeline can be a very bad thing - it can reduce the priority you place on keeping and growing your customer base!

Bootstrapping forces you to charge for your product. It “pressures” you to find customers for your business. It teaches you that if you want to have a successful business, you have to make money and charge people for your product.

To build a sustainable business, have paying customers.

2. The significance of prioritizing what is actually important to work on.

If you’re bootstrapping your company, you need to make money in order for it to survive.

This means that your top priority in your business is to make your customers happy so you can grow your revenues and profits.

How will helping your customers live better lives help you prioritize what to do?

It’s simple.

You’ll only focus on doing what helps your customers succeed more:

- you’ll prioritize in building only the features that your customers really need and want,
- you’ll provide great support for your customers so they are more likely to continue using your product, and;

- you'll create customer-centric content as a part of your marketing strategy because this will help both your existing customers and potential product users.

Bootstrapping will force you to focus less on unimportant activities in your business and to focus more on what's actually important: helping your customers and potential customers succeed better in their businesses and lives.

Also, let's face it. By bootstrapping your company, you will prioritize your customers' ultimate well-being because you know you have to prioritize the act of making money.

3. The value of spending your money efficiently and effectively.

When you raise venture capital, you're not spending your own money to build and grow your business. You're using other people's money to build your business.

Why is this a problem?

Spending other people's money is a problem because it allows you to be more reckless and less careful than spending your own money.

If you raise venture capital and your business fails so you lose all of the money you raised, the only person who loses money is the venture capitalist.

On the other hand, if you use your own money to start your business and the business fails, your own money is now gone. Simply put, you're much more likely to be extremely careful with your own money than money you fundraise. When you bootstrap, you spend your own money so you'll think much harder about expenses and buying things.

Do you really need another employee to help "supercharge" your growth when you're already growing at a nice monthly rate and supporting your customers well with your current number of employees?

Does splurging on a fancy office really make sense before you've produced consistent and growing profits?

When you bootstrap, you'll only spend money on the things you absolutely need to successfully run and grow your business. You'll only invest in what's absolutely necessary because investing in useless things for your business will mean you are wasting your own money.

After all, you don't want to waste your own money, do you?

Case study:

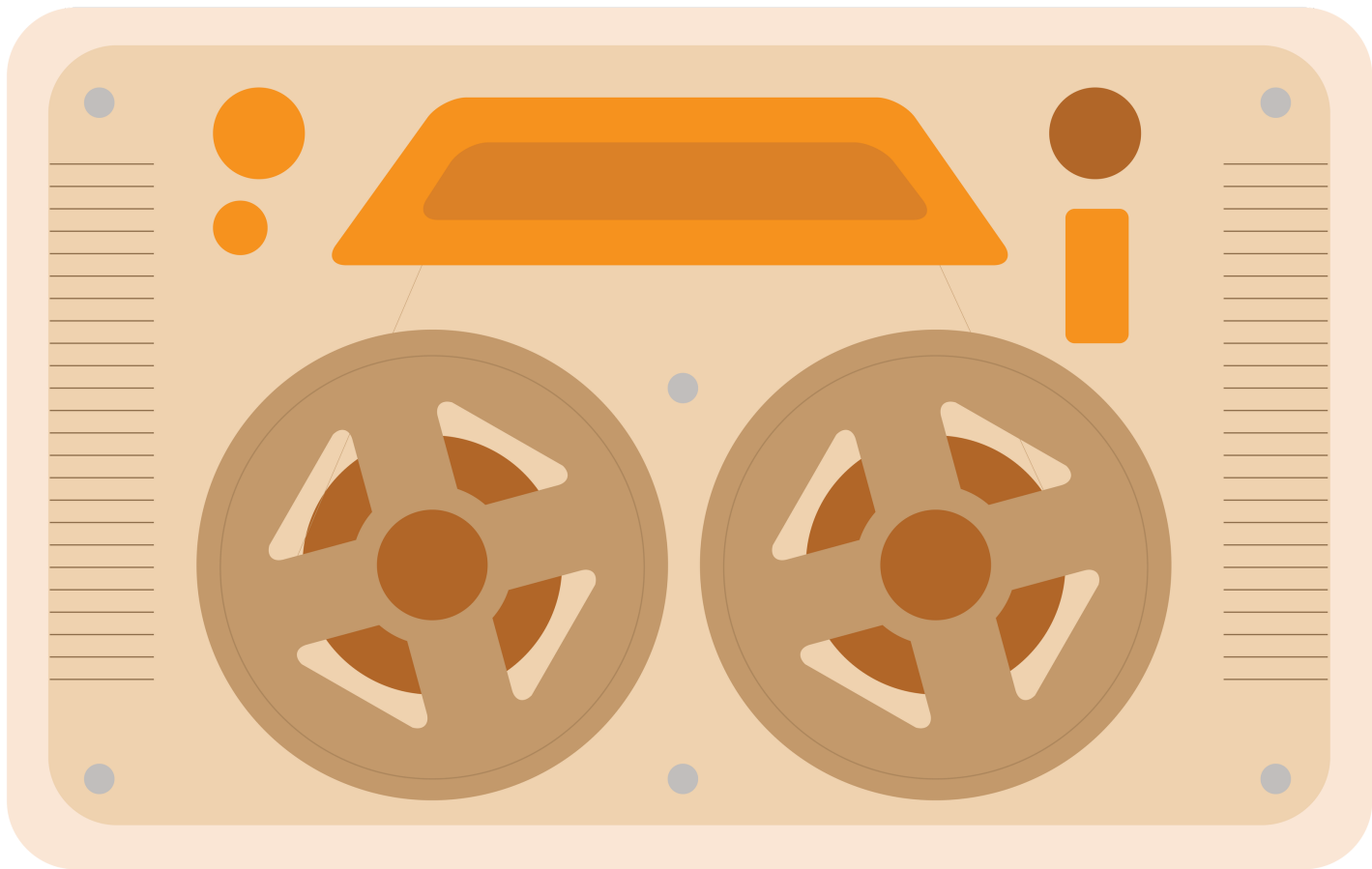
There are lots of entrepreneurs who have established extremely successful businesses by bootstrapping. Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson are arguably the two most successful bootstrappers of all time due to how they started and grew Basecamp into a huge and wildly profitable business.

Other entrepreneurs who have successfully bootstrapped businesses include Ben Chesnut of MailChimp, Chris Savage and Brendan Schwartz of Wistia, and Todd Garland of BuySellAds.

On another note, during our interview with Kelly Sutton, he said that even though he and his co-founder raised funding after bootstrapping LayerVault for a year, he and his team still try to maintain the bootstrapping mindset when running LayerVault.

Chapter summary

- Hopefully, these three bootstrapping lessons will compel you to bootstrap your new business.
- But, if you'd only like to bootstrap for the short-term and then raise funding for the long-term, I hope that these lessons have shown you that even if you raise funding, you should always try to maintain the mentality of a person who is bootstrapping a business.
- Having the mentality of a bootstrapped business founder will help your customers be much more successful and more satisfied with your product.
- Ultimately, bootstrapping will lead to the nice benefit of your business actually making revenues and profits and growing those revenues and profits regularly.



**IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE
TO GET FUNDING
WITHOUT HAVING YOUR
FIRST CUSTOMERS**

It's *extremely* difficult for you to raise money for your current business without having early customers and traction - unless you've founded or joined a successful business before.

You see, business investors nowadays want to have some evidence that your business is viable and potentially successful before they take a gamble and invest in you.

What do you need to do to prove this?

You need to have customers before you start raising money.

If your company goes through an accelerator like Y Combinator, TechStars, or 500 Startups, you may be able to raise funding without an initial customer base. But, 99.9% of the time, you'll raise funding more easily and get a better valuation if you have a big customer base and strong traction during your initial business development phase.

You should seriously consider bootstrapping your business, but if you do really want to raise an angel round or venture funding, then get your initial customers first.

Lots of entrepreneurs who raised funding before they got a good amount of customers ended up failing.

A few years ago, a startup called Color raised 41 million dollars before it launched. It ended up being acquired by Apple for a relatively small sum. What happened? The people who invested in Color likely never got their money back. Ultimately, Color was a failure.

If you're a venture-backed company which was acquired mainly for your talent, then your company is a failure. This is what has happened with Color - Color didn't try to get any customers, users, or traction before it raised money. As a result, it ended up failing in a very public and embarrassing fashion.

If you want to raise funding, get a good number of early customers and a strong monthly recurring revenue base *first*.

Case studies:

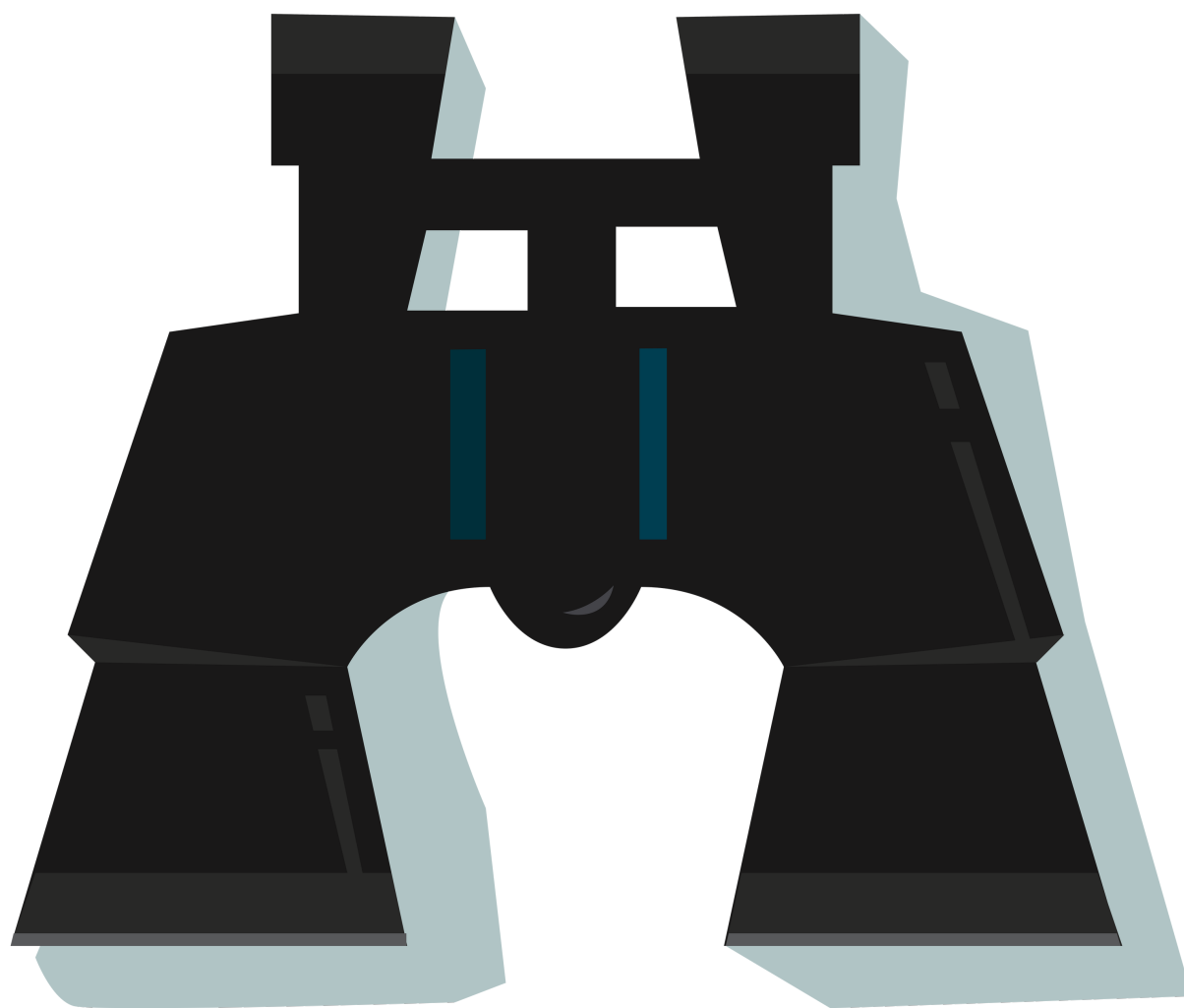
Before Jason Cohen raised money for his business WP Engine, he had been working on it for more than two years. During that time, Jason got WP Engine to profitability by getting lots of customers for it. He also found a product-market fit for WP Engine.

Because Jason got a ton of initial customers before raising money, he was able to raise money easily and use that money to help scale the business and accelerate its growth very quickly.

Likewise, before Clay Collins went out and raised money for LeadPages, he acquired a strong customer base for LeadPages so he got LeadPages to profitability. This helped Clay raise money for his business on his terms and on his own pace. Although LeadPages has been growing very quickly, it has still remained profitable. This only means that Clay and his team haven't used the money that they've raised yet. This is a great situation for Clay to be in because it means LeadPages has a nice safety net. Clay got into this nice situation by focusing on building an audience, solving a real and painful problem, acquiring lots of customers, and getting LeadPages to profitability. If Clay hadn't done this, LeadPages would likely be less successful than it is today.

Chapter summary

- In today's world, it's difficult to raise money for your business if you don't have your first customers and early traction yet.
- Though we recommend that you build, grow, and get customers for your business by bootstrapping, if you do want to raise funding for your business, you'll need to get customers for it.
- By getting customers for your business and reaching profitability before you raise money, you'll have less of a need to raise angel funding or venture capital. This will help you because, as they say, the best time to raise money is when you don't actually need the money in order to stay in business.



CONCLUSION

We've covered a lot of ground in this book. With it, you now have the effective strategies that can help you come up with profitable and customer-centric product ideas. You also have strategies for getting leads and converting those leads into your business's initial customers and your business's long-term customers. With these tips and techniques, you have what you need to start your successful business.

Don't just stop with knowing, though.

Start with doing.

Now, you have to actually go out and use these strategies and start your business.

Starting your business will not just seem hard - it will really be hard. In fact, for a lot of the things you need to do in order to build a successful business, you won't feel ready when you need to do them.

But, to build a successful business, you need to get over your fear and start taking on calculated risks.

At the end of his book [Authority](#), Nathan Barry talks about an idea that comes from his friend, [James Clear](#). Here it is: **for you to succeed, you need to do things before you feel ready.**

We agree with Nathan and James that this idea is extremely important.

To start and build a successful business, you need to start before you feel ready. This book won't help you much unless you go out, actually use these strategies, and start before you feel ready!

We want you to to succeed.

We want you to start a thriving business.

Therefore, we want you to get out of your comfort zone and start doing.

The last tip we leave you with is this - if you never start, you'll never have the opportunity to succeed.

To put it another way, Mark Zuckerberg always says, "Done is better than perfect." It's better for you to start before you feel ready than for you to wait for the perfect time to start.

There is no perfection.

If you wait for the perfect time, it will never happen.

Case studies:

These are two quotes that are often overused, but hopefully, they will get you to start right now and keep starting before you feel ready.

These quotes come from two of the most successful athletes the world has ever seen. These are about how two remarkable athletes started before they felt ready and did difficult things that made them feel uncomfortable.

Michael Jordan once said, "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Wayne Gretzky once said, "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."

Both of these quotes are saying the same thing: in order to succeed and accomplish things, you need to start doing.

Most of the time, you will have to start before you feel ready, no matter how uncomfortable or challenging it is.

Start anyway.