SUBSCRIPTION ENTREPRENEUR

HOSTED BY ERIC TURNNESSEN, FOUNDER OF **MEMBERMOUSE**™

"I don't know if anyone watched the Field of Dreams. It's famous for saying "if you build it they will come." When it comes to online business, that isn't true. If you create this amazing membership website they're not just going to come. That's not how it works. That's not how it works even with a local business that builds a shop. You might have a couple passerbys and it's going to be the same thing with the website. You might get a couple thing people show up through the search engine. You need a way to bring them to your business. Social media is that new way of doing it."

INTRO: That's Chris Palmer, our guest on today's episode of the *Subscription Entrepreneur Podcast.* Chris is the founder of two membership businesses AngleofAttack.com – *which specializes in flight simulator training* – and AviatorTraining.com – *an online flight school that provides pilot certification training.* In this episode, Chris shares the hard-won lessons he's learned so far after building two successful membership businesses. We explore topics ranging from the importance of authenticity, strategies for small businesses, social media, and more. So let's get to it... I'm your host, Eric Turnnessen.

Eric: Hey Chris. Welcome to the show.

Chris: Thanks for having me. Always a pleasure to speak with you guys.

Eric: Yeah you too. It's been a long time since we've known each other. You've been a customer of MemberMouse since I think around 2013.

Chris: That sounds about when I made my transition to the software. It's hard breaking up with old software, but when it gets painful enough you have to make the transition. That was a crazy time of my life. Glad to be where I'm at now.

Eric: From the beginning when I first saw you sign up for MemberMouse I was really intrigued by your content. What you do is pretty unique. Can you give us a brief introduction in terms of what you're teaching on your site Angle of Attack?

Chris: Yeah sure. So Angle of Attack is actually an aviation term. It's actually how lift *(the force that directly opposes the weight of an airplane and holds the airplane in the air) is produced. That's something that I yanked out of a pilot training book that I had pretty early on. I thought the term sounded pretty cool. I used to do video quite a bit in high school and even in junior high when everything was going to these non-linear editors. Even working with the home film camera I was doing stuff as a kid. But, my one big passion is in aviation. Eventually as I got through my first years of college. I was trying to find out what to do and how to make a living. I decided to put the two together, my aviation knowledge and my video knowledge. I did some video courses that were originally DVDs, but then quickly transitioned to digital courses online that I sold through a membership site.

Eric: These are actually flight training for simulations, right? Flight simulators?

Chris: Right. So, fight simulation would be categorized in the gaming industry much more than it would be in the flight training industry or even the aviation industry. The two don't commingle very much. I was basically catering to the crowd that was flying these really complex airplanes and didn't have any official pilot training at all. I don't want to say dumbing down the information but getting the manuals and making layman term front-to-back on how to fly these types of airplanes. Eventually, I did some free stuff as well - just the basics of how to fly, take off and land all with the use of a simulator.

Eric: You've been really successful with that business. There's so much that I think we could talk about in relation to that business, but the thing is you've actually pivoted and gone into a new direction. That's one of the things that we're going to be talking mostly about on this podcast. Also, specifically how you've used social media to grow the business. Angle of Attack, for the number of years that you've been running it, you're upwards of 15,000 members - it's a very thriving and successful business if you look at all the online businesses across our customer base. One of the immediate questions I have in terms of you starting this new business - what is the motivation to pivot and switch to your new one?

Chris: I've tried to be brutally honest with myself. I feel like it takes me several years to really get to a point where I'm ready to make a big change. What I noticed in the flight simulation market from a business perspective is the cap on the market was just way too small. There's only a couple hundred thousand customers in the world that I can possibly sell to. That's it. Then the dollar value that they're willing to spend is also really low. We're talking about sub $100, basically begging people for money. I was putting so much time into the marketing and emails. The problem is I couldn't, from a business perspective, grow my business, start to hire more employees and take more time for myself. It all cascaded down to being a lifestyle issue where I was spending way too much time doing everything myself. I still had the freedom, but it wasn't really freedom because I still had so much I could do. Through subsequent products, I tried different things to break that barrier and make it more of a legit business with hiring people to do the training material and be the director. I still was not seeing a difference there. I decided to go a different direction. I went into actual flight training, which is the ability through accreditation and doing training and schooling of my own, to be able to teach people. They get FAA credit and it starts to get them on the road to become a pilot.

Eric: I want to go into more of that, but taking a step back, when you came to a realization with Angle of Attack that you weren't able to continue in the fashion that would fit your lifestyle and business goals, was that a simple process? Was it like, "okay let me make the switch?" Or, was it challenging in some ways to let go and take the steps towards the new thing?

Chris: Yeah, I think that if I'm being really honest with myself, I wait way too long to make a business move. I tried to make it work too long. I could have started the process years earlier. The process itself could have been much shorter. Actually, it kind of goes off into a tangent - I ended up going into some business-to-business work that wasn't even online. I took all the knowledge I had and the skills, and video production in creating aviation training and went out to do some projects for people. That was the worst time of my life. It was terrible. From that was born this idea that I really do like the business-to-customer thing. I like dealing with people and seeing people achieve something. That's where I've come to today. Yes, I'm going to make money in my career somehow. I have all these talents and things I can spend my time on, but I want to see people achieve something. Many people have the dream of becoming a pilot and it's never realized. It's probably not realized by 99.9% of the people that think they would maybe want to do that. I really like the altruistic side of that too - seeing people achieve that. Not only am I still doing online training and it's for real aviation now, I'm doing online Ground School, but I'm also teaching people to fly. I have a flight school here in Alaska and I get a few customers here and there. Not a ton of people, but I actually get to see people achieve that and it's exactly where I was supposed to end up. Except, it took a handful of years to make mistakes and learn and grow to where now I can make it happen.

Eric: That's great. I hear that story so often. It's my story too in a way. I think for whatever reason we can we quickly discount or say, "all these years, it took this long, it should have taken shorter." One of the perspectives to take is, without all these lessons and fine-tuning and things

you went through with Angle of Attack producing the videos, seeing what worked and what didn't - the new site aviatortraining.com - you couldn't have done it without those things.

Chris: Right, and I spooled it up super quick. I know how to do a WordPress site overnight. I know to go out and get a template instead of trying to hire a developer. I know to plug-in MemberMouse right away, how to plug in the payment options, the checkout options and how all the stuff works behind the scenes to where turn-key, it took me a week to set that all up. Here I am taking payments and streaming live video. It's just a whole different ball game.

Eric: A side tangent here with that thought, with your business Aviator Training you talk about 99.9% of the people may not even achieve that goal. There's all these obstacles that come in the way. It's similar with stuff with MemberMouse - like you just rattled through. I know instead of putting an obstacle in front of myself that I need to go hire a developer, I now know just to get a template. Instead of doing this thing that takes a lot longer, I know to do this instead. Some of those obstacles, as you know now from the experience, are self-imposed. We think that in order to be successful we need the latest and greatest and the best looking. We look at all these surface-level things as being the keys to success - it needs to look right, cost me a lot of money, and it needs to take a lot of time. More and more, especially as I talk to people and hear from the people who have been successful, when it comes down to it and getting that success, it's all about taking the steps. Whatever steps they are it doesn't matter. You put one foot in front of the other and you start walking. We have all these ways that we procrastinate and we disguise these procrastinations by saying, "Oh well I need this and therefore I'm not procrastinating it's just what I need. Oh, but I don't have the money to do that so that's the reason I'm not moving forward." But, it's just a story.

Chris: It's really interesting because everything you just said - if you hadn't prefaced that with MemberMouse or starting a membership website or doing an online business - all of that could have explained people getting into aviation: time, money, and family obligation. It has brought on this really interesting role with me. I've learned very quickly that you can convince someone to separate their time and money, believe it or not, the money that they spend. There's plenty of money in the world, just look at all the yachts in Greece or the Mediterranean. There's just tons of money out there. There's plenty to go around, but convincing people to do the work either if it's to build a business, online business, or to become a pilot - it takes a lot of work. It's a tricky business because actually online business is a lot of fun, having your own "schedule and freedom." I put that in quotes because you still gotta work. There's a lot of work involved but, having your freedom is really valuable. Online business is a lot of fun. Being a pilot is amazing, but it takes a lot of work and that is the hardest thing to convince people of.

Eric: Right. I love the correlation between the two because you said freedom is in quotes. Tying it back to what you do - flying a plane, yes you chose to fly a plane, but you can crash it. You're steering it and you get the benefit of that, but you're also steering it so there's the risk. You can't get the quote, unquote "freedom" without the risks that come with it.

Chris: Just the sheer sweat that comes with putting time into getting it done. It's not just the time actually I think it's people being subconsciously afraid of the growth that's going to happen. Maybe even afraid isn't the word, but it's knowing that by becoming a pilot or by starting an online business you are going to become a different person. That freaks people out. Maybe they're comfortable with what they have now.

Eric: It's also the goal. So, it's this weird catch-22 situation. Now since there are corollaries here, can you talk a little bit about how you handle that specifically in your business? How are

you approaching through your marketing, through your conversations with people and handling the concerns that they may have? Maybe they can't do it and you're taking them from the starting point where they're landing on your site, to purchasing your online training, to going into live ground school with you.

Chris: Unfortunately, it's a bit of a complicated process because there is so much to learn when it comes to aviation. There's so many steps and I find that the teaching of the Ground School and teaching of the knowledge - the aircraft systems, air space, weather - all those things pale in comparison to just being able to teach people the path to get to where they need to go. When someone approaches the idea of becoming a pilot, they have no idea how to go up to an airport and start to ask. I think a lot of people don't do it because it's intimidating and they're scared of sounding stupid or whatever it is. All of my marketing answers to those issues - what are the steps that it takes to even get to the point where you get started. I find that so many of my competitors in the industry take that for granted. They think there's, which may be true, mentors out there who do that work and say - "hey you need to take this step that step and this step." Then you can start taking Ground School or lessons. Well, I'm trying to digitize that and make it a sales funnel. For example, if you go to aviatortraining.com the first thing that pops up is a private pilot action plan. It's the five steps you need to take before you take your first flight lesson. It's a very short PDF that I've worked super hard on. I created it in three days and it looks really nice. I did it on a template. I happen to be decent at photography as well. I'm on the border between amateur and professional, so the imagery in it is really good. It's five actual things/challenges for people that they have to know exist to get to the next step and take their first lesson. I digitize that - they download that guide and it gets them into an email list. Eventually I do a launch on that email list. I'm going through one right now that gets them into the Ground School. Honestly, there are some other people in my industry that are kind of sleazy about this process. I feel like I'm doing a great service because I'm giving away a lot of this and educating people through my various channels. Then I say - "hey if you want to take Ground School here it is, here's what we do and I offer a ton of great value there as well."

Eric: I really appreciate that approach to because the fact of the matter is, yes there's a lot of objections from people who want to start something new - for some of those people those are valid. If they can learn for free what is this really going to take, what's involved in this. To make this simple, there are 50% of people who are going to go through that - actually it's not that equal. Some people are going to go through it and as they read it they're going to feel - "oh that's a lot of work," but they're also going to get excited. Then some of those people are going to feel - "this is too much, this isn't for me." That's great because now the service has been done where now they know this isn't for me, but I've satisfied whatever urge there was to look into it.

Chris: Definitely. There's a lot of nuts and bolts in teaching them the steps. Then a lot of what I do with social media as well is to show them how cool it is to fly and all the different things you can do with it. Most of what you see through my Instagram and my YouTube channel is - here is what it's like to be a pilot. When you connect people to that passion and aspiration to do things like that then they can overcome a lot of things. Really you got to get the passion to overcome everything else.

Eric: Yeah because that enthusiasm is priceless. I remember I didn't have any interest in being a pilot and I never have, but when you started doing those videos on YouTube - I watched the second episode where you took the plane out on your own private trip with a buddy who came into town and you guys were flying over the wildlands of Alaska and you were filming bears on the ground and you landed on the beach and jaunted around for a little bit. I mean I'm not a pilot but that was pretty cool. I definitely wanted to be in the plane, but if I had any desire or latent

desire to be a pilot I would be like - "wow this is really exciting, this is worth me to pushing through whatever." I think that's super important and in our space too, and probably in a lot of people's spaces - education, free education is a great way to go.

Chris: And you've got the whole 80/20% rule. You're basically giving away 80% of what you do and then that 20% is what people end up paying for. Of course, you always want to make sure that it's in balance. You don't want to bankrupt yourself by giving everything away. You've got to be pretty careful about that. If you build up that passion for something and there's many different things and you also know a whole lot about the subject - Boom! - there's your key to your online business. That's it. There's going to be a market there somewhere.

Eric: Exactly. I would say as far as giving away stuff for free, for people who have never done that before, I would say typically they would be concerned and would have objections to it. Yes, there's a line where you don't want to cross, but in general that line is a lot higher than what people think it is.

Chris: It really is. I spend again at least at least 80% of my time just doing free content. I have a YouTube show - you were talking about it. It's a vlog of flying adventures. It's called the Angle of Attack show. I do a podcast as well, that is definitely more on the educational side but I get people that come in and do interviews. For example, one of my best interviews ever I interviewed a World War II triple ace that flew the B-51 and literally at the age of 23 was shooting down Nazis over Europe. It's crazy to think about. He's 96 years old and got on this video interview. To a certain extent, I think I've shot myself in the foot sometimes in not promoting myself enough. I just do that stuff because it's cool and I think people will like it and trying to do my part in growing the pilot pool. I've had to be better on things like that and by telling people - I'm not a podcast, I'm not just an Instagram Channel, I'm not YouTube show - I am a company that sells an online Ground School and these are just some of the cool things I do behind the scenes. I think people have to be careful with that too. That's definitely one of my faults. I don't promote what I do enough.

Eric: So, let's talk about that because I think that dovetails into your focus on social media right? What is your approach there, what is your high-level approach with social media?

Chris: Honestly, it's just to show the passion side of the business. I will share certain things through stories on Instagram. It gives me notoriety in the community. Instagram is my number one most successful source. I started Instagram about two years ago and I'm at 17K followers now. All organic, so those are all people that potentially will interact with what I do. The way it's set up, unlike Facebook or Twitter, people actually do see your stuff. Where is Facebook chooses what people see now and for the most part they're actually requiring you to pay to have your stuff seen by even your own followers. Twitter is the same way. So, Instagram, when you post something it goes in someone's feed in chronological order and they will see it. It's really simple. There're not complicated videos. I do these one-minute videos of me instructing other student pilots. They have been wildly successful. I post a lot of photos on there of just adventures I get to do and places I go promoting aviation. You'll notice on every recent post I share a number of hashtags because that's a search engine - that's how people find your stuff. I also put a thing below there that says something about our online Ground School. That's on every single post. It's not totally in your face, it's not annoying, but it's starting to educate people - we do online Ground School. You go to my profile the first thing about the company is online Ground School. I think those things should be subtle, at least that's how I feel personally about it. Maybe it's not the most wise business decision, but I think it should be subtle so people still understand what you do while not being totally in your face all the time "Ground School, Ground

School, Ground School." Then it's not going to be attractive to the people that go to your Instagram page and just see "Ground School" every other post. That doesn't do anything for people. You might achieve a certain amount of success, but it's not going to be that organic passion driven success where people are raving fans for what they see you do.

Eric: I agree with you. I prefer that approach as well. As far as future proofing, do you have any concerns because you have mentioned both Facebook and Twitter where they have this scheme to charge to put it in front of your subscribers. Do you think that will happen one day with Instagram?

Chris: I think it absolutely could. It's happened with every single platform so far. Instagram is owned by Facebook so we never know how those platforms are going to evolve, but what matters is that I'm playing in that market now. I don't know what the next thing is going to be, but I'm also not putting all my eggs in one basket. I have a handful of friends right now that are doing pretty well making a living on YouTube. Even within our aviation niche. I just don't trust what Google is going to do with YouTube. I think YouTube is on the brink of offending a lot of creators. I think people would jump strip ship pretty quick if something else came along that worked well. I just don't want to put all my eggs in one basket. It's also a challenge because I feel that I can't be consistent in any one platform, but the one platform I am most consistent with and the one that is the easiest to produce for is Instagram. Those things can cascade down through the others. For example, if I share a photo on Instagram, it also gets shared on Facebook and Twitter. Whatever is happening there, if people see it they can start to like and share it. I haven't had a lot of success on YouTube believe it or not. It's really interesting to see how little the algorithm is picking up what I'm doing even though I think it's amazing content. I'm putting so much effort into that and not getting enough reward. Whereas, I put a little bit of effort into Instagram and I get a big reward. It doesn't mean I don't still play in YouTube, I do. It's like a financial profile. I'm diversifying so if in the future if something does get pulled out from underneath me, it's not the end of the world. Honestly right now, I feel like YouTube, - which I had 20K subscribers from the previous flight simulation stuff, I feel like my YouTube has been pulled out from underneath me. Even though I'm at 26K followers there now, when I post a video it's hard to get over 2K views on my videos. I have no explanation for it. Just diversification is really important along the platforms.

Eric: Right. I think also a certain amount of realism - because to some people just reaching 26K subscribers on a YouTube channel would be success. That's not a insignificant amount of people. It sounds like you're willing to be pragmatic about the whole thing. You're looking at - here or all the things that I'm doing, here's what what's working and here's what's not. It doesn't matter that this number is here, if I'm not getting results then I need to focus my attention on the things that are going to give me the results.

Chris: I think Twitter is just a completely dead platform. It never worked for me business-wise anyway and I was pretty active on it. Especially over the last few years. Politically it's a dumpster fire of a platform. I don't see anything going on there. I don't see it ever turning around. Facebook is on the brink of doing that, but I also think Facebook is delving into things that are interesting. They have this new Watch section of Facebook. Facebook Live is really interesting to look into. In that sense, Periscope which is attached to Twitter is an interesting platform. I think you have to be really careful to put all your eggs in one basket, but I think you could also have too many baskets. I eliminated Twitter three years ago and decided it wasn't doing anything for me. It wasn't worth the time that I was putting into it. I've really pulled back on what I do with Facebook. Then I work pretty hard on filling my content on Instagram because I do see the results there. I see nice organic growth. I see videos go viral every now and again. It

just works a lot better for me. I still believe that YouTube is a powerful platform, especially for someone like me who is a video guy. If I'm the video guy and what I do is video training and produce videos - that's the place to be seen. So, I still need to play there and try to to make end goals even though I may not be getting the results I want. I'm trying to figure out those things out right now and how I can get it to work.

Eric: Right. I think that's the key. For people listening who are using Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube etc. - the message here isn't to delete everything that's not working for Chris. There's no one solution for this. You have to find your own fit. What works for you - what works for the market. You're in a very particular market so, that market is going to have certain behaviors. Everyone has certain behaviors. One market may go with one platform and another with another. The key here is you really have to pay attention and find out what works for you specifically.

Chris: Yes, definitely. Along those lines, you also need to put in a sufficient amount of effort into seeing if that's going to work. You can't just post a video here and there and, a post here and there, once a month, once a week. You have to know how much of an effort you need to put into it to prove that it will work or not - before you can definitively say if it's going to work or not. You can't just dive in for a few minutes and say - oh no this isn't going to work I'm going back out. You actually have to give it some effort for a while and have a plan to give it an effort. If it doesn't work, have the guts to cut your losses and go elsewhere.

Eric: That reminds me of split testing on websites. Like, if you're going to split test a banner versus another you have to reach what's called "statistical significance." You have to leave it up for certain period of time to have enough traffic go to it so it's actually giving you real data about the situation. You can't just leave it up for a couple hours and say - "only three people clicked on this one, but five people clicked on this" and call it a day.

Chris: I like the Field of Dreams analogy, but kind of the opposite of that. I don't know if anyone watched The Field of Dreams. It's a 90's movies, but it's famous for saying "if you build it they will come." When it comes to online business, that isn't true. If you build it - they will not come. You need a way to bring them to your business. Social media is that new way of doing it. I think email is still a very powerful tool, but that's a secondary step to your social media effort. I would call emails a list building effort. If you create this amazing membership website, they're not just going to come. That's not how it works. That's not how it works even with a local business that builds a shop. You might have a couple passersby. That's going to be the same thing with the website. You might get a couple people show up through the search engine. The bot that are doing all the SEO things. You need to do advertising of some kind, marketing of some kind and that's where social media comes in.

Eric: I hear something else in this story there too. We've talked a lot about these tools, but also another big thing that you're operating on is - why are you using those tools. What are you using those tools to accomplish? When people are just getting started they're trying - it's like those first-time flyers - they don't know what the first step is and they don't feel like they can go to the airport and ask, "how do I fly one of these things?" It's the same with starting a business. People don't know what the first question is. They will often see someone who they think is successful and copy. The market and the internet in general is saturated with so much let's just say - inauthenticity - people who are doing something for the sake of doing it. People who are real and have a story to tell and are being authentic I think do become successful. It doesn't mean it doesn't take work. Getting back to the future proofing - this is also important because you may be using those four platforms right now, but what you're doing is building your personal brand.

No matter what platforms change in the future, you are still going to be Chris Palmer, you're still going to have Aviator Training and you'll switch to the biggest thing of the day whatever happens

Chris: I'm even careful there. I did this pretty cool thing and it's actually kind of fun. You learn a lot about yourself. It's called the StrengthsFinder. You go through you take a test. There's a companion book that goes along with it and you find your five strengths. One of my strengths is futuristic. I'm definitely lean on the side of futuristic. I'm an 'early adopter' of technology. I buy the newest iPhone usually - I didn't buy this last cycle actually, but I will be getting it next week. I'm an early adopter of technology, but also when it comes to social media I hold back a little bit. I see how it works and what it's going to do. If I feel it has the right things that I could take advantage of, then I will just go full in really quick. That's what happening with Instagram. I started two years ago and I think if you were to start today it would be a much more difficult uphill climb. When I saw what it was doing for my business and what it could do, I went full speed ahead. I bought a nice camera to get the best out of it and went that way. For example, Instagram recently announced their IGTV. Some people are saying it might be a YouTube killer, but when I looked at its features, even though it was intrinsically connected to Instagram, I decided it wasn't for me because it only had vertical video and it didn't present the videos in a very good way. If there would had been a few tweaks to the platform or they tweak it in the future where you can do horizontal video, then I will be in there in a heartbeat. I will also try to get ahead of the rush of people that haven't quite realized that it's going to be valuable. There is that middle ground of not wasting time on something that isn't that great, but also when you do find the value - diving in and seeing if you can get ahead of that wave.

Eric: Speaking of the future, let's talk about it. My experience with the internet - and I've never really been into social media following and using it. Not saying that's right or not, it's just my personal preference - I find there's a lot of noise. Noise not only does it mean that you're hearing all the bad things, but it also means you can't hear the good things - you can't discern. I think that's one of the major challenges that's happening in the digital age right now. You don't know what's good information, you don't know what's bad information. I see that people are having a lot of success with transitioning and doing more in-person offerings. Weekend classes or even online live events. They're making this decision, going for the lower numbers - not going for the $19.95 price point for 20,000 people but going for the $399 price points at 100 people - that's more attractive. You can work with less people, have more impact and make the same amount of revenue. But, you're avoiding this noise of the internet - trying to be seen. You're connecting, more resonant with your passion and can be direct about it.

Chris: I hear two different levels there. There's definitely the authenticity that comes from your social media platforms. Again, if you're speaking from a corporate voice, you're not really going to get anywhere. If you speak from an authentic grassroots - "I'm part of the community, I'm doing good things, I'm doing the real thing" - that's a good place to come from when it's social media. People are getting pretty good at seeing who's authentic and who isn't - even the older generation who is slower to latch on to social media is starting to see who really who really is into it and who isn't. That's from a social media perspective. What you described was from a product perspective. It's an interesting observation because it's definitely something you see a lot in marketing these days where people are having a lot of success doing webinars to convert people into their courses. I've had pretty good success and picked it out of necessity in offering my live online Ground School. It was technologically pretty difficult to find the hardware and the software that would do what I needed to do. Usually, when you do that, when it is that difficult, you know that you're ahead of the pretty big wave that's coming. I just saw that no one else in my industry - again out of the necessity of diversifying from what other people do - I noticed that

no one else was doing live courses online. There was already online and there was already in person classes in my industry, why not make the best of both worlds and do live online myself? It's kind of a classroom type of environment. People can ask questions during the class and we'll slow down on difficult to understand subjects. As an instructor, I have to work hard to explain things in a different way sometimes if I don't quite explain them in the way I thought it was best explained. I can do that three or four times until the class at large is really understanding things. That has actually been pretty successful, but like you said, the numbers are a lot lower. I don't have hundreds of people getting in anymore, it's just a handful of people. It's a good little bump every quarter. When I do a live online class, I charge a premium for that course - I actually happen to have a course for $399 right now for my Ground School which, is a very fair and competitive price. It's right along industry standards. It's good to work for that level and have people have skin in the game. It seems to be working right now. It's interesting that you're observing that in the industry as well - it's that live, more personable interactions are doing better. I think the best brands are trying to do that or at least those that are trying to innovate, are doing exactly that.

Eric: Right and I think it goes back to something you were talking about at the beginning which, is, yes, it's not just about the monetary aspects. With those numbers of people, you know that after you're done with that class you have that personal satisfaction that you used knowledge that you obtained for yourself and passed it on to help people overcome objections and get to the point where they're actually lifting off the ground and flying. You can't put a price on stuff like that.

Chris: That goes to the altruistic side of what I do. I don't have a non-profit business, I'm not doing this all out of the goodness of my own heart. I'm trying to feed my family, but I really but it really does lend to something that's very important to me which is, seeing people achieve those things and having a small class number. I can actually say - "hey this my phone number, here's my direct email - send me a question anytime you need and let me know how it's going." I also have the ability, without the large numbers, to be able to know those people personally and know what their current path is or what their current place is on that path - on their journey. From my first Ground School, several of those people are taking lessons and several of them have become pilots. It's really cool to see that come full circle and see it work out for people. Even from a development standpoint, I know that you deal with development quite a bit in terms of user feedback and how that feedback gets into a great new products or updates. I want to do the same thing with my training. A, I need to learn how I need to improve as a teacher and B, I want to be able to circle that around really quickly and make it a fast life cycle so, overtime I can build the best product out there that has a great name for itself. To the point where the original social marketing, the word-of-mouth, starts to take over and people start to talk to each other about what are the best courses out there. That sort of thing takes years to do, but if you have a process for improving yourself and improving your product like that with your customers, than it can really pay off in the long run. Even though you may feel like you're slogging through the marsh in the very beginning.

Eric: That's an essential part of the journey. You don't skip the marsh.

Chris: No, no you don't.

Eric: If you build it, they won't come. It's the same thing. Don't have unrealistic expectations about what's going to happen. What we're really talking about is different strategies, for the lack of a better word, small business. I think when people talk about building businesses they may often think about large companies and getting to those places. The way those companies

operate - the way all different sized companies operate, are completely distinct to those levels and their size that they are. When you're dealing with a team of five to ten people, the strategies that we use and the way we approach the business, we have a lot of benefits. One of those is that we can have and maintain a personal communication with the customer and respond to that and incorporate it into the product. Which is also an expectation of the market for dealing with companies of that size. If I'm dealing with Google I basically go in with the expectation that they don't care about anything I say and they're not going to respond to what I need. I get that going in, but if I'm going to go work with you or, if I'm going to go work with somebody who I know is a small company, it's a relationship. There's a component of that and that needs to be honored. If it's not honored then those people aren't going to stick around.

Chris: There is an unwritten law now. You see it and how Generation X and the Millennials are treating the economy. We don't choose the biggest and best or the cheapest anymore. We choose the one that means the most to us. All the way down to the underwear that we wear. Everything we do if there is some sort of value proposition behind it beyond just the quality of the product, we're buying into that much more. To teach people about that value that you have, that personable value, you've got to be authentic. And I mean true authenticity. I'm not just talking about acting like you're authentic and doing all these amazing things.

Eric: People can smell from a mile away.

Chris: Right. They are very in tune now. They can tell what is fake and what is real. Even showing the bad side of - maybe not necessarily your business - but the downside of becoming a pilot every now and again with not being able to eat while you're in the air, you can't exactly pull over into a rest stop. There's plenty of cool to that side of the equation. Again, I think the new economy is a personal economy and I think more and more were moving away from the big businesses to pick those companies that align with their values.

Eric: It's exciting. I think there's so much opportunity there. Like you were saying earlier, there's so much to go around and worth talking about in order to teach value. What do you need to do in order to teach value? Nothing. You don't need to study anything, just bring value. That's it. You have to learn what your value is to offer. Then just bring it to the table. I also see this as a major sticking point for people starting. There are some very talented people I know who don't think that they're ready. They're constantly trying to do a personal feedback loop of how to improve. It's like - "oh I can make it better this way and then when I get it to this point, then I'll put it out there." But the fact of the matter is, A, that's a very lonely journey and you're never going to release anything to give people the opportunity to engage with you. B, the whole beauty of putting something out there is that it becomes a collaborative effort between you, what you bring to the table, and the people that want to consume it. If you just want to make something for yourself, then that's not business.

Chris: Right, exactly. When I went through that transition with flight simulation and what I'm doing now with Ground School, I said I worked business-to-business with some companies. The reason why I said it was the 'worst time' I've ever had in my career is because the people I was working with did not understand that middle ground of quality versus getting things out there and having this feedback loop. They wanted absolute perfection the whole time. It got absolutely nowhere and it was soul-crushing. Visually and aesthetically it was the best work I've ever done. I had 3D designers, I had CAD artists, motion graphic designers, and video editors. At one time I had a team of 20 people, but it was the most soul-crushing work I've ever done and there wasn't any personable aspect of that training at all. I can't see people actually enjoying it. It was all so corporate and so perfect. It just wasn't really going anywhere. I wanted to share that little

tidbit as well, that I've seen that end if it too and I would much rather put myself out there. Coming full circle, when I ended up going back to business-to-customer to do this Ground School stuff again, I had this interesting level of personal PTSD - in a way. I hate to use that term because people have real PTSD, but I had this emotional barrier. Before I was very willing and able to create something and release it and not worry about what people said - just know that I had to move on to the next thing. Now, I found myself being really reserved, not wanting to release something, wanting it to look really good because that's what that corporation did to me. Like, "man you gotta write this script for the 20th time because it has to be perfect and we can't believe that you can't write well, blah blah blah blah." I could go into so many sob stories. I realized that the only way I was going to make it happen again was if I did it. So, I created the email campaigns and created the website. I said I was going to do it all live. I had my own deadlines that I put into it. I said It was going to be released on this date, the Ground School dates are going to be on this date. I would spend all day creating the content - maybe two days creating the content for that one lesson and have that lesson done. I recorded it live. I had to be there live with the class in it. Then I had to immediately roll over into the next one. It was kind of a nice way of re-training myself. You just have to create stuff and put it out there and see how it does, get the feedback and improve the next time. Here I am the next time and I'm going to be improving that process making it even better, but it's not going to be exactly how I want it. I'm going to have to do it again and again and it won't ever be how I want it. That's just the way it is. If people can buy into that mentality and find a middle ground. Don't put complete crap out there - put some effort into it. Find some middle ground and put it out there. The most valuable asset is getting that feedback and improving it for the next time. That's just the way it goes.

Eric: That's where the feeling of it not being perfect comes from. We can sometimes think that - "oh it could be better." 'It could be better' is an obstacle, but really that's the fact that we already learned from what we went through and applied it to the next time. It doesn't mean it's not valuable to the audience.

Chris: Exactly.

Eric: Last week we talked to another customer who went through a transition as well. He was running a very successful website selling art training doing the information product model. He got to a point with the business where he wasn't enthusiastic about it anymore. He ended up switching his entire business model, launching a new site with a higher price point, and more one-on-one training - art training students. It was a very personal transformation and it had to happen. He had to do a lot of soul-searching, but the results of that was he had 1600% growth almost immediately. One of the things that really stood out to me about that was - I went to his site and thought - "wow I'm so surprised you've had 1600% growth because this looks like an out-of-the-box WordPress theme and nothing was done here." He was like - "yeah this is the worst thing I ever put out visually, but it's had the best results."

Chris: That's crazy.

Eric: What it tells me is that this isn't what people care about nowadays. What they want is the value. It doesn't matter what package it comes in. People are so used to having marketing shoved down their throat that it's not trustworthy anymore. I always like to reiterate that because I see it as a sticking point for people getting started. It's like the dress code, they feel like they need to follow the trend of the popular kids. All the popular the kids are wearing this so let me wear that and I'll be popular too. No, just be yourself. Wear what you want to wear and there is plenty of people out there who will resonate with that.

Chris: That's why these days I'm much more inclined to get a template that follows the look and feel that I'm going for instead of firing up a whole development team. There are times to do that, but you don't start there. You're definitely not starting there when you have a small business under five employees - likely, you're not going to be doing a really nice developed website. Like you said and what I said earlier, there's gotta be this middle ground. I'm so much of a visual learner and I really like video, photo and beautiful things. I've had a really hard time not having at least it looking a little bit good. But, I have my branding down enough now to where I find a couple templates here and there, I throw in the colors, I throw in the fonts, do a couple things with photography and I'm done. I don't want to spend a lot of time doing that because A, time is finite and I need to be spending it on the product. B, I've got to be spending it on marketing and you know the rest of the alphabet for all the other things that I've to do as a small business owner.

Eric: C for change. It's going to change anyway based on feedback. Cool, well I have one final question for you and that is - if you were going to do things over again, what would you do differently?

Chris: Well, hindsight is always 20/20. I would be faster to act on those things that I believed in. I would spend more time and effort educating myself and make sure that I'm on the right path of growth. Also, one thing I've been thinking about the last several months as I even look at where I am now and my business is, I need to have some sort of exit strategy. I may or may not exit, but, I need to know that the business needs to be doing this well by this date or I need to be making a change. Everyone makes these sacrifices in their personal life, but if year after year I'm not getting after it and following my heart - in other words if I'm just being complacent and things aren't progressing. I'm growing a family and I'm doing all these things that require my income to grow, but then my business is just staying the same. A, I don't want to be reactionary and B, the opposite of that, I need to plan more and stick to that plan and just create a lot of great stuff - constantly create. Then C, have some sort of plan if this doesn't pan out and I need to do something different. That's what got me into trouble with the original flight simulation business. I definitely think I learned that - I had already kind of learned that lesson by the time I did the business-to-business or the corporate work - very quickly, I realized it wasn't for me. I met my obligations and then got out of it and learned what I really wanted to do - where I am now. I am making micro adjustments there now. It's not perfect, but I'm making adjustments to make sure it works. I think overall just make sure that you have a plan that is laid out and solid - stick to it and if it's not quite panning out - be really honest with yourself and then be willing to change and pivot. Some of the best businesses ever, some of the most successful businesses ever happened because of a pivot. Not because of anything else. The one example I will bring up, but I really like hearing about other successful business stories - and that goes to what I said about education - make sure you educate yourself about a bunch of different subjects. There's a lot of great podcasts out there, a lot of great tools. So, Little Caesars is struggling against big pizza companies like Pizza Hut and Domino's in the 90s, it's not working out well. They get into the early 2000's and what does Little Caesar do? They simplify their entire business model and they focus on their $5 large pizzas. It completely changed their business. It totally changed everything and now the other guys are trying to catch up. I think it's a good example of a pivot rather than just reacting to the market. They didn't change much. They just did a pivot and so you have to be willing to pivot in your business. Like I have - not showing myself as a Little Caesars at all but, just be willing to do that because you may find exactly what you were meant to find. I will say it this way - take the time to disconnect from your business. Really, take a sabbatical go away for a few weeks and let your head clear out and think about your business in that space. That's where you'll find those pivots. Even the micro pivots you need to make in the current model that you have. That's how things are done.

Eric: With the pivot, you need to listen. Like you said, clear your head walk away and get some clarity. Then take action. The first thing that you started with, about what you would change - "doing things more quickly." Is that synonymous with questioning yourself too much?

Chris: Definitely.

Eric: When you hear what the direction is, even if you don't understand it, go with it. Follow it. That's the pivot.

Chris: At least follow it and start to build a plan and see how that plan would work. I do that quite a bit, and I waste a lot of time doing that, but that's where my best ideas come from. That's also where a lot of ideas go to die. It's just the way it is. If I'm up late at night and I can't get sleep because I have all these ideas in my head, I write it down in the default Notes app in my iPhone. Then I look at them later and say - "oh that was a great idea, but it wasn't really going to work," or "how does that fit into what I am currently doing?" Follow that rabbit down the hole and see where that goes. If it pans out it- and if it does, it could be a completely new business model or just a pivot to create a new revenue stream.

Eric: That's great advice. It has been great talking with you. A lot of great information. Of course, always great to catch up and hear how you are doing. I hope everything goes well with Aviator Training and you continue to have great success with teaching and helping people get up in the air.

Chris: I appreciate it. Last night I started a new launch for this current session of Ground School. I got an email this morning and realized I hadn't changed the product page. I was blurry eyed when I got up and ran out into the living room - got my laptop, hurried and got into the website and changed it quick. Those are the types of things, that for me as a business owner, is so nice with MemberMouse. I can focus on these little tiny things - get them done and the rest of the time it's just running. So, to end here, my main goal and my main purpose with my business is to be the thought leader. To come up with those ideas and create those ideas while in the background I have this machine running, taking care of everything. I don't know if you remember in the very beginning, the reason I switched over to MemberMouse is because I was doing so many support emails on little tiny things that the software could have handled. Like, "I purchased my product and I don't have access to it so, what should I do?" There's no reason that should be happening. The day I switched over to MemberMouse was absolutely amazing. It runs in the background. It freaks me out to look at the analytics and see, like you brought up earlier 20,000 members. That just blows my mind. I don't look at that stuff much, but it's back there growing. If I get into my payment platforms and look at how much money I've made in the last five years - it just freaks me out. That's what online business does. It's a machine and you're part of that machine. So, I really appreciate what you guys do and the passion you put into that product because it really has made my life easier and allows me to do more of what I love.

Eric: I'm certainly happy to serve you in that way. I super appreciate you being around as long as you have. And, I'm really glad that you've had the success you've have and I hope it continues.

Chris: Awesome man. I appreciate it.

OUTRO: I hope you enjoyed our show today and now have some valuable, actionable advice you can put into place for your own business. Many thanks to Chris for coming on the show and sharing so generously with our audience. Be sure to check out what Chris is up to on AngleofAttack.com and AviatorTraining.com. You can also see his beautiful, awe-inspiring photos from his many flights on his Instagram: @AngleofAttack. You can get the show notes from today's episode at SubscriptionEntrepreneur.com/107

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