

# SUBSCRIPTION ENTREPRENEUR



HOSTED BY ERIC TURNNESSEN, FOUNDER OF [membermouse™](#)

## EP 139: The 10 Fundamental Principles Of Powerful Copy with Jacob McMillen

*"There's just so much information overload these days that most of the stumbling blocks is just getting focused on the wrong things or getting distracted by the things that aren't that main focus. I think if there's one thing I've learned over seven years through multiple business models, it's just that the more singular the goal, it's the same thing, the main advice I give for copywriting itself, the more singular the goal you have, the more effective you are at getting there, and the quicker you get there."*

### INTRO:

You're listening to Jacob McMillen - our guest on today's episode of the Subscription Entrepreneur Podcast.

Now, before I introduce him to you, let me ask you two quick questions:

1. Do you know how to rank a piece of content on the first page of Google?

And 2... Once you've done that, do you know how to write copy that converts those visitors into leads, email subscribers, and customers?

Don't worry if you answered "no" to either of those questions.

Getting answers to them is the exact reason we invited Jacob onto the show.

You see, Jacob is an accomplished copywriter and content marketer who helps online businesses implement highly effective copy and content marketing strategies.

In our conversation, Jacob describes the processes and principles he uses to create content that ranks on the first page of Google AND how to write copy that converts those visitors into email subscribers, leads, and customers.

We don't waste any time in this episode and dive straight in to important topics like:

- The 10 fundamental principles of effective copy
- How you as an entrepreneur can write your own copy
- How to design a content marketing strategy
- And much more...

Jacob is a fantastic teacher and we hope you'll walk away from this episode with a clearer understanding of both content marketing and copywriting.

As always, I'm your host Eric Turnnessen and this is Episode 139 of the Subscription Entrepreneur Podcast.

**Eric:** Hey, Jacob, welcome to the show.

**Jacob:** Hey, thanks for having me.

**Eric:** Of course, my pleasure. So, to kick things off here, can you give us a 30,000-foot view of who you are and what you do? And actually, maybe 28,500-foot view would be more appropriate.

**Jacob:** Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. So, I'm a freelance copywriter who then started experimenting with a bunch of other stuff and landed into doing the whole course and membership model. I train other people who want to follow my journey of freelance copywriting. And I have a course for beginners, and then once they get to the sort of intermediate, advanced stage, I have a membership group, and that's how I got connected to MemberMouse, setting up and running that group.

**Eric:** Awesome. And how did you first get into copywriting and content marketing?

**Jacob:** I actually payed my way through college doing direct sales, and then it was sort of a love-hate relationship with sales. There were things about it that I really enjoyed, things about it that I absolutely could not stand. After college, I was kind of exploring the online marketing world, got into SEO and then through that, pretty quickly connected to the copywriting side of things and realized it was everything I loved about sales minus everything I hated about sales. So, I knew pretty quickly, hey, this is the career for me. Sort of dove in part time at first, and then transitioned into full time and just rolled with it ever since.

**Eric:** And when you were doing a full time at first, were you working for yourself or a company?

**Jacob:** So, initially, when I first started full time, I had one or two clients that I was an independent contractor for. I always had one client that was around 75% of my income. And then, probably about two years into that, I really dove into it more on a full-time capacity, and from that point forward, probably at any given point, the biggest client I had was more in the 25% range. So, I'd say it was more working for myself with various clients, if that makes sense.

**Eric:** Yeah. At this point, you've been doing copywriting for a period of time, so just to level set everyone, what is copywriting exactly to you and how do you define it?

**Jacob:** Copywriting, I would define it as any sort of writing that's intended to drive action, particularly in the context of sales, and sales being a loose term. Obviously, say you're a

nonprofit and your sale, quote unquote, is donations or if you're looking to drive phone calls, whatever the action may be, it's within the context of a business or organization that has some sort of value offer. And so, the copywriting's what drives pretty much everything. You either have a person who's sitting there, talking with another person and doing your sale, or you're doing it over the internet. And if you're doing it over the internet, it's nearly always through writing or video or audio, and the people who plan out the words for all of that are copywriters.

**Eric:** And do you find that there are certain fundamentals or principles that you follow for good copy and copywriting?

**Jacob:** Yeah, there's a ton. Actually, I just posted a list of 102 copywriting tips.

**Eric:** Oh my gosh.

**Jacob:** There's obviously a lot of things you can follow in writing better copy. Kind of the core of it is really just thinking through what people are looking for and finding a way to make it real clear that the product or service you're providing fits what the need or desire you're looking to fill. People get real excited about persuasion, real excited about various techniques, but at the end of the day, business comes down to product market fit, and copywriting is just about making it really clear that the fit is there.

**Eric:** Now our listeners are, for the most part I would say, entrepreneurs, solopreneurs who are building online businesses, and most people are going to be familiar with what copy and copywriting are, but not all will know how to write highly effective copy. So, what advice do you have for these types of people who are not trained copywriters but still at a certain set of responsibilities for writing a copy in their business?

**Jacob:** Yeah. I would say, particularly for entrepreneurs, solopreneurs, really paying attention to what your customers are saying is where you get the best copy, even for someone like myself who's been writing copy for seven years, the best copy I ever write is essentially just stealing the words straight from the customer and finding a way to put what they're saying within the context of the sales pitch. So, that would be number one.

The other one would just be clarity. Kind of going back to what I said before, it's not like... if you were to just record yourself giving your in-person elevator pitch and then turn that into your website copy, it would probably be better than what you have now. And it might even be better than if you were to hire a copywriter. Because at the end of the day, you know your product really well, you know your customers really well, most entrepreneurs can do a pretty good job of pitching their product or their service, and then there's just this weird disconnect that happens between when people speak and when they write.

So, good copywriting is almost, it almost just starts with trying to get over that sort of arbitrary hump that separates the words from the writing. So, if you can even just try to match how you write to how you speak, that's a real easy way to immediately improve your copy.

**Eric:** Yeah, I definitely have blocks that come when I sit down and start writing. I usually find it's easier to speak and record and then transcribe, personally.

**Jacob:** Absolutely.

**Eric:** But that's not always the most effective thing to do in certain situations. Do you have any advice for how to get better at doing that, more natural in terms of the way you write?

**Jacob:** Like many things, doing is first and foremost the best practice. On top of that, I would say, reading good copy and comparing what you're writing and what you have against things that you know are good or things that maybe someone who's more knowledgeable has identified you as being, hey, this is a really good example of copy, and just trying to identify where the differences are. And then, again, just kind of asking the right questions as you write, looking back over it and thinking, is this clear, is this unnecessary? Even myself seven years in, I delete a ton of stuff I write because I write it and then I realize, I'm not focusing on the right stuff here, or this is unnecessary, or I can further simplify this.

And so, it almost becomes kind of getting in the practice of self-editing is almost as big a part as the writing itself.

**Eric:** Yeah, and this kind of goes back to you talking about how there's 102 fundamentals principles of good copy, because the question naturally rises, "Okay, well, how do I judge if something's good or not?" And I feel like now, it probably gets into the area of art and science. How do you judge if somebody's a good dresser? Well, you get an immediate reaction to it, but then you can also get in the nitty-gritties endlessly. So, how do you balance between that art and science?

**Jacob:** When I'm teaching a new copywriter, I have them just focus on 10 fundamental principles. They're the first 10 tips on my 102 list. And I really just feel like if you can nail those, it's real hard to evaluate something within the context of 102 tips, but 10, it's simpler, and just making sure that the copy aligns with those 10. The main one's just being that you understand what you're trying to accomplish with the copy, you understand who you're speaking to, you understand what they have in their mind as they come to read your copy, and then you connect the aspects and features of what you're offering to the benefits it's going to provide to them or the challenges that it's going to solve.

And then just keeping that in mind and then practicing the writing, that gets you 90% of the way there, and then there's some level that as you gain experience, you just get better and better at the first draft, but even for the best copywriters in the world, the first draft is always just an educated guess. You're giving it your best shot based on what you know or the research you've done, and then you got to test it and see how people respond.

Sometimes, you'll knock it out of the park on the first try, sometimes, it'll completely bomb and it's not because it's subjectively bad copy. It's just, maybe the things you were focusing on weren't the things that, that audience segment responded to, and you shift it to another option that you could've taken the first time and all of a sudden, boom, people respond.

That would be, I'd say, the last piece is really just to be tracking and measuring user behavior and taking the time to try some different things out and see what works better than the first thing you tried.

**Eric:** Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And then, there's further complication. You talked about identifying the goal of the copy, what are you trying to accomplish. Now, a lot of times, when you introduce goals and objectives into a situation, that can mess with the naturalness of what you're trying to do. If I know that I'm trying to get somebody to do something, it becomes a little bit challenging to build rapport and have that conversation, knowing in the back of my mind, I have somewhere I'm trying to get to. Because if you go too quick, then you can alienate them. And if you go too slow, you could miss the opportunity.

**Jacob:** Absolutely.

**Eric:** How do you play with that?

**Jacob:** I would say, really understanding the context of where people are coming from, where in the funnel they're at, so to speak, and then also, your product. So, for example, if you're selling something that there's a lot of friction between the person and the purchase, maybe it's a very high cost product, maybe it's not notably high cost, but it's not necessarily solving an urgent problem, it's kind of solving a more minor problem or a more long-term problem, maybe it's something that kind of requires a lot of investment on their part, stuff like that. Then understanding that you don't have a mediacy to work with maybe makes you decide that you're going to need a bit longer of a nurturing timeline.

And so, then when you first meet them, maybe when you first put the ad in front of them or first get them to a landing page, you don't look to make the sale. Like you said, it wouldn't be organic. There's not really a natural way to make that the right choice for them. So, you look to get an email signup and get them into an email marketing funnel, or something like that. That's kind of the first and foremost thing to solving that problem is understanding the context and also, just in terms of general copywriting tip of the better you understand where your copywriting fits in the customer journey, the better you'll do it, setting the right tone and speaking to the right things and not trying to overplay your hand, but also, not underplaying it either.

And then the other part is just writing in a conversational tone, kind of exactly what we said before, writing like you speak, writing as how you would explain something as if you were talking with a friend. When you write in that conversational tone, at the end of the day, they clicked on your page for a reason, so you're never going to be completely out of context to

pitch them what you told them you were going to pitch them when they arrived. As long as you understand context, keep a conversational tone, you don't have to worry about over forcing anything.

**Eric:** Now, with regards to context, because this raises an interesting question, because, say, you just have the copy, the words and it's maybe in a Word document somewhere, now there must be some strategy in terms of, okay, how do I present this to the person? Am I going to do a long-form sales letter? Am I going to have a landing page that goes to an opt-in that then goes to another page and then adds them to an email list and then there's some copy in the email, auto-responder? Right? So, there's probably somewhat of an understanding these common terms of how these different pieces, the sales page, email, auto-responders, landing pages, et cetera, what role and how they speak in themselves as vehicles for copy?

**Jacob:** You want every piece to be strategic and you want the journey to be as short as possible, but you also want it to be as long as it needs to be. For example, even something if we're talking about a website journey where someone shows up to your homepage and you want them to sign up for your email list. A lot of times, if that's the number one goal for your site, you'll get to these websites where that's the goal, but they kind of like try to throw people all over the site or just sort of they give users 100 options of how to engage with the site and then just hope that they end up at some point going, hey, take my email, but you want to do is you want to create a linear journey and you want it to be as short as possible.

So, as soon as they get there, you want to try to get their email right off the bat. And then if they aren't ready to give it to you, then you kind of have the backup journey that takes them a little further. And then you try to get the email, and then maybe you'd make it a bit longer, maybe you send them to a second page, but then you're looking to get the email. And that's where the context, as long as it's intentional and as long as you're thinking through each step and then writing for that steps specifically, it's not super challenging. I think most people have an intuitive sense, particularly entrepreneurs and their intuitive sense of what the customer journey is going to look like, and if they're thinking about it at all, they're already in a pretty good spot.

**Eric:** How much of importance do you put on looking at analytics to inform adjustments that you're going to make? How many people, your click-through rates and your opt-in rates, and stuff like that.

**Jacob:** I would say it depends on the size of the business and the marketing channels at stake are at play. So, for example, I tend to use SEO most of the time, so with SEO, you're tracking on the front-end for people getting in. It's fairly limited. There's lots of tools that help you understand where traffic's coming from. But you still don't know how much of it is bots, you don't know. There's a lot of gaps in the metrics. I don't spend a tone of time worrying too much about tracking that initial channel. I kind of focus more on the later stages of the funnel, but if I was using PPC, if I was using Paid Advertising, then all of a sudden, analytics become 20x more

important because every single metric, not only can you know exactly what's going on, but there's a exact cost attached to every single metric.

So, if you're doing Facebook ads or Google AdWords, that's where metrics become critical to everything that you're doing. You typically, it's sort of like you talk about getting into a hobby where maybe you invest \$1,000 and it gets you 90% of the way there, and then you got to invest \$20,000 to get the extra 10%, it's sort of a similar thing with analytics. Usually, some basic analytics will give you everything you need to a certain point and then once you want to get real crazy, it's after your business is much bigger, much more extensive, you're running into specific problems and you're looking to invest quite a bit more money to get that extra few percentage points of analytics understanding.

**Eric:** Got it. Now, this is something I know that you're an expert at so I'm curious to hear your answer. Now, what influence does coffee have on copywriting? And what is the best type of coffee to drink for certain types of copy?

**Jacob:** Oh, man. So, I've been going down the espresso rabbit hole for the last six months or so. So, I got a pretty good machine, pretty good grinder, and I've been trying to iron my technique out. It's kind of funny, I went and do a class with a dude who's pretty much universally known as the top dude in my town for roasting and brewing coffee. And he was basically just saying, 90% of it is the ingredients, it's the beans and then the roasting technic for the beans, and then even the milk you use and the water that goes to the machine, that's all the main stuff. And then, the rest of it, how you handle it can be is just sort of like a science. It's just sort of more mathematical, you can just...

**Eric:** Right. That's the first 10, and then there's 102 other things.

**Jacob:** Exactly, that's exactly what it is.

**Eric:** That's cool. Yeah, it's a really, really fun process to get into that. And obviously, so many corollaries between how that's approached and how you're approaching copywriting.

**Jacob:** Yeah. It feels like that's kind of, sort of the 80-20 rule of life, right? The 20% of it, that gets you 80% of the way there, and then you got to do four times the work of that first 20% to get the last 20%.

**Eric:** Right. We're getting into this a little bit when you started talking about SEO. Another thing that you spend a lot of time focusing on with your clients is content marketing and strategy, so what is the difference between copywriting and content marketing? And how would you exactly define content marketing?

**Jacob:** Yeah. So, content marketing is, I guess is basically delivering value on a regular basis and building an audience around that consistent delivery of value. And then your business is basically the audience that you build. Some businesses kind of do it where they identify the



business model they want and then they use content marketing to try to build an audience that overlaps with the offers that they're providing, and then you're seeing more and more. You see a lot of businesses that they just kind of start with the content marketing side and then create the product around what the audience is demanding. And it's kind of the cool part of that is it's a guaranteed home run because they told you exactly what they wanted.

Yeah. So, in my particular case, I'm mostly, my particular expertise is ranking long-form content, blog content. So, basically, I'm sure you're familiar with the influx of ultimate guides and stuff like that, that come out. Stuff where you're looking at instead of a 500 or 1,000-word post, you're looking at 3,000, 4,000 words, all the way up to 15,000 words. So, for whatever reason, over the years, I just kind of got really good at ranking that stuff for nationally competitive key terms. And so, I kind of evolved, that was kind of one of those projects I explored and ended up, I spent the first half of 2019 building a content marketing agency. It went pretty well and then I just sort of, at one point, realized I hated it.

It's none of the things that I loved about freelance copywriting. So, I divested from that and went in the direction I'm currently going. I very much enjoy the content marketing for my own website and the actual writing, and that's part of why I didn't like running an agency is I didn't really get to do much writing at that point, but it's fun to kind of take a topic and just ask yourself, how can I make the best resource anywhere online for this? And then, you write it and create it and format it and make something really special, and that's kind of, that's the 90%. And then, there's an extra 10% that's kind of the on-post targeting, and then there's obviously the context of being able to put it on a topic relevant domain and some level of link building. But the big piece is just the ability to write 4,000 that people actually want to read.

**Eric:** So, you're saying the 90% that gets you towards ranking is what you're saying?

**Jacob:** Yeah. I guess to connect it to SEO, I think Google really gives a lot of emphasis to timeline page. If you're writing content that people actually stick around to read, you can kind of shoot up the rankings really quick and leapfrog a bunch of stuff that most people would think is untouchable. A lot of content marketing isn't really done, it's done for Google, it's not done for the reader. And so, when you come in and write something that people actually read, it can do really well.

**Eric:** So, basically, are you saying that good writing is enough to rank you on page one? How do things like design, load times, images, other ranking factors apply, if at all?

**Jacob:** Yeah. I mean, good writing is a big piece, domain relevance is a really huge one. I've been systematically knocking off a bunch of rankings for around copywriting because I've been running content on my site about copywriting for the last five or six years. So, my domain has good authority there, so when I try to rank for something really competitive, I just hit number three for the word copywriter. And so, when I go for something really competitive like that, I have the domain authority to back it up. If I didn't, it wouldn't matter how good my writing was. So, that's a big piece.

Site speed is one of those things, it's more like a gatekeeper rather than a ranking factor. It's more either you're fast enough or you're not, from what I've seen. Some people might argue with me on that and who knows, they could be right. But from what I've seen, it's more of a must be this tall a ride. And then, sure, your on-page ranking factors. There's definitely some things that can make a big impact, but it really comes more down to just checking off a few boxes. It's not really a talent thing, it's just being able to check a few boxes. Hey, we got the keyword in the headline, we got the keyword in the URL, stuff like that. Real simple stuff.

**Eric:** Got it. Now, once you've accomplished the getting people to this page and it's ranking well, I imagine that there's a strategy and an intention that then, that becomes the top of a funnel that leads people to some lead gen tool or whatever.

**Jacob:** Absolutely.

**Eric:** What's your strategy from that point forward in terms of accomplishing your objective?

**Jacob:** My content marketing funnel for the business I'm working on now starts with that top of the funnel traffic you mentioned, through SEO, through the blog post, and then when they get to the blog post, I make sure that I'm looking for an email signup from them with something relevant. So, I have sort of my main lead magnet is a blueprint that takes people through my journey to six figures as a freelance copywriter, so that fits most of my post. But some of them, it's not super relevant, so I make a specific lead magnet that sort of takes something from the post they just read that they might be interested in going deeper into and goes into that.

And so that way, I'm trying to collect as many emails as I can from all that SEO traffic because otherwise, yay, they came, they read my article, then they leave. If I don't get the email, it's probably not going to do me a ton of good. Maybe there's some level of brand recognition where they connect with me somewhere else, but it's mostly, the main values in getting the email signup, getting them onto my list. And then I'm sending out... I send out about one email a week and I try to provide, either once a month, I'll have a new blog post so when I publish it that week, the email takes them straight to the blog post, other times, I'm sending them other free resources or telling a story or with some helpful advice on freelancing or maybe there's a transactional email letting them know, "Hey, enrollment's opening up next week," or something like that.

And then once they finish my lead magnet, at the end of that, I point them to my two products, the course, if they're at a certain income level or below a certain income level, I pitch them the course, above it, I pitch them membership group.

**Eric:** How do you know what income level they're at?

**Jacob:** I just have the two and it just says, "If you're doing this-

**Eric:** Oh, they select it? Okay.

**Jacob:** "...I recommend the course." Yeah, exactly. Then basically, I'm just trying to publish great content each week or each month. And then every three months, we open enrollment for the membership group and I pitch that. I do more of a hard pitch every six months and more of a soft pitch the other, in between. And then I just did a presale for my course. I'm launching that at the end of January and then probably, once or twice a year, I'll do kind of a live launch for the course.

And that's basically it. It's just creating the content, delivering the value, collecting the email subs and sort of an evergreen thing.

**Eric:** So, you mentioned as one of the primary factors that influences ranking time on page, you also mentioned that it's important, frequency and consistency. So, you said that you do it once a month, is there a particular rule of thumb here in terms of how often you want to be posting something or is it just whatever?

**Jacob:** It just depends on the goal how quickly you're wanting to move. So, for me, right now, my priority is the products, getting them fully fleshed out and as good as they can be. With that focus, one post a month, is doable for me as kind of on the side. If I already had those finished, once I had those already finished, I might switch over to two posts. Probably wouldn't do more than that just because when I say long-form, I put a lot of time into these. Two posts ago, I hired custom design work for it and it was 8,000 words, probably spent 60 hours on one blog post. Because I can get really good value from that, it makes sense to do less and get more from it, but you don't necessarily, you could kind of do a slightly lower quality, higher volume version, maybe do one post a week at more the 2,000-word range or something like that.

There's no definite right answer to it, you just want to be consistent with what you're doing. And I would say, one post per month, I wouldn't ever recommend to someone doing less than one post per month. And I probably wouldn't ever recommend to someone doing more than a post per day. I followed case studies over the years and I only know of one person who got better results from doing seven posts a week and they don't even... even after posting a case study about it being better, they switched back to five posts a week. And even that, it's not very practical to do that much content for most people, and you're talking about a pretty big investment to be able to do that at a high level.

So, it really just comes down to whatever you can post at quality, where everything you post is worth reading for the right audience, do that at whatever frequency makes sense for you.

**Eric:** Again, going back to this time on page concept now, are there any user experience things that help to play into keeping a person that page? I've seen people do things like they'll have the thing at the top of the page, as you scroll, it shows you how far you are through the article, or other things like that. Do you find that, that has any influence?

**Jacob:** I haven't done extensive testing on that, so all I can tell you is my own opinion on it, which would really just be that when you're talking about the really lengthy posts, having a scrollable table of contents I think can be helpful so people can kind of navigate where they want. And then within the copy itself, examples really keep people reading, because basically, the thing where you say, "Hey, here's a point, here's something you should believe," and then you go, "here's an example that supports that."

**Eric:** And when you do the examples, is there a designed way that you're doing that other than just bolding it? Is it a block quote? Is it...?

**Jacob:** Anything that visually differentiates it from the page is usually great. Or even, honestly, even if you don't do anything, you just say, "Enter new line. For example, enter next line." Just something that kind of establishes the, hey, we're going from my opinion to here's something that happened, or here's the story, or here's data, or here's a hypothetical example that shows you exactly how to apply what we just mentioned to your business. That type of stuff really keeps people on page. It really differentiates your content because not everyone's willing to do that.

And that, honestly, content marketing in 2019 kind of comes down to that. It's what are you willing to do that other people aren't willing to do? That's really the only way to stand out anymore because everyone's doing long posts. Everyone's kind of investing a lot in content marketing. So, to really kind of... to really do it and to grab kind of market share from people who are still playing the game relatively well, you have to do something that they're not willing to do, which is really the only reason that I just published a post called 102 Copywriting Tips because no one needs 102 copywriting tips. Let's be honest.

Those first 10 are probably the only thing anyone's going to remember anyway, but if I want to rank for that term, writing 102 tips, all of which, I would say, are worth reading, is something most people aren't willing to do.

**Eric:** I would agree with that. In this topic, I have two final general questions. What are the things that people are focusing on that they shouldn't normally with regards to copywriting or content marketing?

**Jacob:** Kind of more focusing on, on a beginner level or maybe more of a intermediate, advanced, established business level? Any particular one there or...?

**Eric:** Intermediate, advanced I think is more interesting.

**Jacob:** Okay. I think I would say, probably focusing a little bit more on workflow than on quality of the content. And part of it is just a situation where, and I know this from running an agency, it was part of the thing that made me not like running an agency, is to run a big business and run a large content marketing campaign, you have to be working on a schedule, you have to kind of be, your highest core value sort of becomes consistency, getting a consistent enough

quality is your main challenge. And while that creates good content, it doesn't really facilitate great content, content that really makes a splash or is really worth reading. And when we talk about certain industries where a lot of people are doing content marketing, you just end up getting all this stuff that's just so the same as everything else.

And so, I would say, being willing to maybe allocate, take some of the resources that you're devoting to consistency and volume and kind of allocate it more towards a less reliable but higher ceiling type of content, that can make a huge difference. Because consistency, everyone's focusing on getting that consistency, in the end, it only takes you so far.

**Eric:** Right. Okay. So, now, what about with regards to beginners? What things are they focusing on that they shouldn't?

**Jacob:** Beginners focus on everything they shouldn't. They focus on design and branding and formatting and they focus on looking the part, they tend to not focus on the meat of things. And when you're first building a business, honestly, the only thing that matters is clients or customers. It's basically getting more customers and clients and improving the quality of your offer. Those are the only two things that move the needle for a business. And so, when it comes to content marketing in particular, what matters is are you getting some content quality out and you hitting multiple stages of the funnel? So, people tend to get overly focused on top of the funnel, and when you're in that early stage where you're looking to hit enough customers and clients to stay afloat, you really need to be looking more at that mid-bottom of the funnel.

And you don't want to be playing the volume game at that stage because you're looking for that core tribe. You want to be focused on the things that get you a smaller number of people, the content is not going to attract thousands of visitors per month but might attract 20 visitors per month, 10 of which will become customers, or something like that. And so kind of thinking about those two things instead of kind of going through the whole launch a business checklist that everyone seems to go through. That would be what I would say.

**Eric:** It's similar mistakes that beginners make with membership sites too. They're focusing on what theme I should have, how are things going to look, how do I make things pretty, how am I going to lay it out, but really, they haven't thought about what's the offering, what content am I creating, can I actually create the content and can I commit to the schedule of content creation to deliver to people paying me a subscription, which you can do and test out on systems that are free. You could just do that on a blog or something like that, on a free blog-

**Jacob:** Absolutely.

**Eric:** ...and test yourself out. But they get all caught up in these other things.

**Jacob:** And membership groups, even more. Because it's not even just a single value add you have to figure out. You have to figure out a daily, weekly, monthly value add when you're talking about membership groups, so all the more.

**Eric:** Right. Now, when did you start your membership community?

**Jacob:** It's pretty new. We launched in September.

**Eric:** Okay, and it's called Write Minds, right?

**Jacob:** Write Minds, yeah.

**Eric:** Cool. Like write as in w-r-i-t-e...

**Jacob:** Exactly. A little word play.

**Eric:** Yeah. Tell us about the group. What have you learned about running a community membership group so far?

**Jacob:** So, the biggest and most painful initial lesson was onboarding. And honestly, I've worked with enough SaaS companies that I really should've known that and I should've spent more time thinking about it, but did not really think through onboarding and there's just so many problems created by that. Fortunately, no cataclysmic or fatal problems, but just stuff where, I know if I had done a better job of onboarding, better resources and more kind of thinking through... I think I always assume people are going to be just a little bit more intuitive and persistent than they tend to be or a little more aggressive in figuring things out for themselves.

But in reality, a lot of people just aren't built that way and you really need to take, really need to walk them through step by step and really help them envision what interacting with the group, engaging with the membership, how that experience is going to look for them. And so, I'm trying... we're opening up enrollment this week to a new crop of people joining us in January, and so I'm really, really trying to do a better job on this next round of nailing that.

**Eric:** So, in retrospect, what are some specific things you saw as mistakes that you made and how are you now addressing them, in onboarding specifically?

**Jacob:** Yeah. So, one of the simplest ones, we used Slack, and having a recommendation for how to set their Slack notifications. Because what ended up happening was a lot of people, they joined in, they left their notifications on all, and then they just got annoyed to the point that they stopped using Slack, and that's where all the interaction takes place. Or they got annoyed to the point where they turned it off completely and then were only joining in every other week, which was just as bad. That's a very simple one that had a huge impact. But then also, I tried to basically do a pinned, pin stuff on the core Slack announcement page. What I really needed to do and what I'm going to do is have a website page and introduction video that takes them through everything in addition to stuff on the Slack.

But just, the trying to facilitate onboarding through Slack, it's just not built for that. So, having something on... I'm having a Write Minds protected or a MemberMouse protected page for onboarding that will walk people through everything else.

**Eric:** Yeah, because that's the point. You got them to make that conversion to give you some money, but now, they just get into your site inside and if they can't figure out what they just paid for as quickly as possible, then they could easily just skip.

**Jacob:** Exactly. We had a pretty good chunk of people who just ended up never engaging at all, small percentage relatively, but still six, seven, eight people from a group of 30 who showed up and then just never engaged in the Slack because in large part, because the onboarding sucked.

**Eric:** That makes sense. Has there been anything that's been most surprising for you about running a membership?

**Jacob:** I sort of had this thought, but it's still been surprising to see it actually play out, but just the idea that you really build that core tribe of people who are not just there but really happy and passionate to be there. And we ran a competition, which was probably the idea I was most excited about implementing in the group was we ran a LinkedIn competition the second month of the membership. And it turned half the group into really passionate and really engaged members because it sort of gave a focal point to get everyone engaging on a daily basis for a limited period of time. And then after that, all those same people, they engage on a much more regular basis now, they've written testimonials for the group, they're really excited about it.

And so, I know, really, you just need that core group to build a membership around. It's just a slowly, ever expanding group of people who are really passionate about the value of the group. I knew in my mind, that's what I was going for. I thought we'd get there in the first launch period, but you never really know until you see it. So, that was slightly surprising and very validating to see that group take shape.

**Eric:** Yeah, it reminds me of the Benjamin Franklin quote, "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I will learn."

**Jacob:** 100%.

**Eric:** So, you get people engaged in the community and there's a great vibrancy as a side benefit that happens there.

**Jacob:** Absolutely.

**Eric:** So, I think we're getting close to wrapping things up here. Is there anything that we haven't touched on that you feel is worth mentioning in regards to copywriting, running your business, things that people may find a good takeaway?

**Jacob:** One thing that I've really loved about the current business model that I'm on is my focus is so, so simple and defined. I'm really clear on what I'm trying to do and I have a very clear set of objectives, and I've tried to do that with past business models and I've been able to do it somewhat successfully, but it's just, there's a new level of focus. And everyone I talk to who's doing things more successfully than me, it seems like that's always what they focus on is having that one thing, that one metric or that one goal that they're really focused on.

And I see it too even with all the way down to the new freelance writers I train, there's just so much information overload these days that most of the stumbling blocks is just getting focused on the wrong things or getting distracted by the things that aren't that main focus. I think if there's one thing I've learned over seven years through multiple business models, it's just that the more singular the goal, it's the same thing, the main advice I give for copywriting itself, the more singular the goal you have, the more effective you are at getting there, and the quicker you get there.

**Jacob:** So, whether it's business, whether it's the copywriting, if you can be real clear about what you're trying to accomplish and what your plan is for accomplishing it, things seem to work out.

**Eric:** Yeah, that's great advice. You mentioned that you're opening up the doors to a course that you're offering in January, would you mind telling a little bit about it? Who the type of person would be who'd be interested in that and what you're offering? And then where they can learn more about it?

**Jacob:** Yeah. It's a course focused specifically for freelance copywriting. Basically, it's designed to be a comprehensive thing that'll give you everything you know to become a successful freelance copywriter. It combines everything from my personal journey that I've learned, but not just myself, I'm connected with quite a few freelancers who have hit six figures via their own methods and their own styles and what their own different focus is and marketing channels.

And so kind of the goal is I've been trying to accumulate or bring in all the different paths you can take to establish a really effective freelance copywriting business so that whether the person taking it looks like me or has completely different strengths than I do and completely different weaknesses, they're going to have what they need because I've incorporated the journeys of all these different copywriters. And I have a really good ability to identify why something works, not just that it worked. And then help other people follow that same thing.

That's the goal. It's really I think do-it-yourself courses is really effective to helping people hit that first 4K per month and moderately effective getting up to that full 8K, six-figure point. And then from there, if you want to grow up past that, that's where I recommend people join the Write Minds community where it's more about being in a community of other people who are successful who can push you and give you new ideas and spark things like that.



**Eric:** Right. It's a whole new set of challenges that arise from having success.

**Jacob:** Absolutely. And it really, at that stage, it's never about a lack of information at that stage, it's just more about having the right focus over time. And so that's where I think a membership group is so effective.

**Eric:** Awesome. And where is this site that they can find out more about that course?

**Jacob:** Yeah. So, if they go to [jacobmcmillen.com](http://jacobmcmillen.com), they'll see there the little blueprint lead magnet, that kind of gives them the 30,000-foot view of really everything I cover in the course. It's the shell, it's the framework for the journey I take them through on the course and will give them a really clear picture of the journey they would take if that's the route they want to go. And then at the end of that, it gives them links to... they can get that for free, and then I'll give them links to the course or the group, depending on what's a good fit for them.

**Eric:** Awesome. And we'll include all that stuff in the show notes for people, so it's there.

**Jacob:** Awesome.

**Eric:** Really appreciate you coming on the show today and sharing all this information. Real pleasure.

**Jacob:** Yeah. Thanks so much for having me. It was a blast.

## **OUTRO:**

That's a wrap for this episode of the Subscription Entrepreneur Podcast.

I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to Jacob for coming on the show today and to you for listening to this entire episode.

To get links to all the resources we mentioned in our conversation, head over to [SubscriptionEntrepreneur.com/139](http://SubscriptionEntrepreneur.com/139).

There you'll also find the complete show notes and a transcript of today's episode.

Coming up next, we have a fascinating interview with an eco-conscious entrepreneur who builds his businesses – ***including a chocolate farm*** – in accordance with the laws of nature.

So, be sure to stay tuned and subscribe to the podcast on iTunes, Spotify, Google Play and Stitcher.

We'll see you next time!