

SUBSCRIPTION ENTREPRENEUR



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

EP 150: Revealing The Secrets Inside A Growth Marketer's Playbook with Andrew Lee Miller

"If I was starting a business today, obviously, like I said, in the very beginning, the first thing you start with is that marketing foundation. So, I want to make sure that I have all of the marketing opportunities inside of the product handled and all of the products set up. That's the first thing you want to make sure you have done so that when you drive people to the top of your funnel or when they convert that it leads to a one to many approach. Every new customer you close brings more new customers and virality is achieved."

INTRO:

You're listening to Andrew Lee Miller - my special guest on today's episode of The Subscription Entrepreneur Podcast.

If you're looking for real-life strategies you can use to grow your online business even if you have a \$0 marketing budget, I have a feeling you're going to love my conversation with Andrew.

You see, Andrew is an experienced growth marketer who has helped everyone from early stage startups to bootstrapped entrepreneurs create serious growth in their businesses.

Andrew's mind is full of valuable tips and tactics that you can use today to create growth in your own business. We're lucky to have him on the show and I'm grateful he was so willing to crack open his "growth hacking playbook" for you.

In our conversation, we cover everything from specific ways you can get your first paying customers to how you can create a press release that can bring tens of thousands of new visitors to your website in a single day.

You're about to discover a ton of valuable ideas, tools, and resources in this episode... but don't worry about taking notes. You can find links to every single resource we mention in this episode over at SubscriptionEntrepreneur.com/150.

So without further ado, let's get to it!

I'm your host Eric Turnnessen and this is Episode 150 of The Subscription Entrepreneur Podcast.

Eric: Hey Andrew, welcome to the show.

Andrew: Thank you so much, Eric. Excited to be here.

Eric: Well, I'm excited to have you, excited to hear about all of your wisdom and share with our audience. As we normally start these things, can you just tell us a little bit about your background and give our listeners kind of high-level view of who you are and what you do?

Andrew: Absolutely. So, my name is Andrew Lee Miller, also known as Andrew Startups, and I've been focused on early stage startup growth and marketing for the past 15 years. I started with about eight years in the trenches working with various early stage companies. I drove three multimillion-dollar startup exits as a head of marketing. After the last one, which was in 2016 in San Francisco, I started a consultancy focused on helping alleviate the growth problems that a lot of companies make right after raising their first round of funding.

So, the company is called GrowthExpertz. We work with companies when they raise funding to help them scale paid and unpaid channels for about six months, right after they raise money, so they don't make a lot of these same mistakes that I've seen other companies make. Then I also have a program called Andrew Startups that's focused on helping bootstrap companies with coaching, and an online course that really teaches them no budget growth hacking. So, those are my two major passions, and I lecture around the world and do a lot of stuff to basically help founders and entrepreneurs build their businesses.

Eric: That's awesome. When you're working with your clients, what's some of the first few things that you do to kind of get your bearings and understand where the sticking points might be?

Andrew: I think it always starts with research. So, I'm building a strategy, first and foremost, and that is compiled of three major things. So, one are the strategies that the founders have already worked and used and the data is proven that works to grow their business. So, I'm taking over those, looking at that, analyzing previous data. Two is industry specific and niche specific channels. After doing research on their market, their competition, their target demographic. Then the third are my proven tested channels that I know will work for this company.

So, I'm building a strategy and then I'm also doing what I call building the marketing foundation. So, we almost always start with product development. I think 90% of startups fail because they prioritize marketing either too soon or too late, and usually when it's too late, it's in the sense of marketing entirely in the product. If you're building your product right now, and you're not focused on marketing, or you don't have a marketing person involved, you're missing a lot of opportunity to add virality to your product to push people to refer when they're happiest, at the aha moment to engage people and add opportunities for notifications and things like that. So, those are the two areas where we start.

Eric: Now a large portion of our listeners are online entrepreneurs and creators who are building content-based businesses, which means that they're selling online courses, access to private communities or other types of subscription products. What advice do you have for

people in this space who are looking to grow their reach engagement audiences and businesses without a huge marketing budget or any budget at all?

So much advice... I think like overarching theme, to be successful with that kind of business is always be creating value. A salesperson says, always be selling, you're always be creating value. So, always, before you do anything marketing wise, you step back and you think, is this valuable enough for my target demographic. If it's not, if you don't think it has a ton of value, almost to the point where it's counterintuitive, like you're giving away too much value, the content creators that I know that have the largest online presences, they give away everything.

It's segmented, it's fragmented. You don't have to worry about putting stuff behind a paywall, or like, oh, I'm going to give away too much, people won't convert. It's totally the opposite. The more you give away, the more they're creative, I mean, confident that you're creating value behind that pay wall and the more people will subscribe and create a legion of loyalty behind you. So, I think the number one lesson or advice I give is just really focus on creating value over everything else.

As far as like one individual marketing channel for a content creator, I think PR is a really big and overlooked opportunity for people to grow without spending any money. You might not necessarily have generated a million dollars from your business or helped a million people. So, you might be listening to this and think, oh, Andrew, I don't have any opportunity to generate headlines is what I do, but if you're truly out there trying to help people, there are people that have a large audience of those people that you can help and your story will be valuable to that audience.

It's about crafting that story that's valuable, and then getting out and getting in front of those people and that's pretty much what PR boils down to. I think it really doesn't take anything but blood sweat and tears and a lot of time investment, but one really good article can really grow your following and get you in touch with a lot of people that you can help.

Eric: Okay, so when you're saying PR, you mean specifically writing articles about what you do, and then specifically tailored for a certain audience that you think would fit your product or service?

Andrew: Kind of. So, if you're writing articles, that's more of like a content marketing approach, but I mean, writing a press release. So, PR for anybody listening means public relations. Depending on where you live in America or abroad, it's between five and \$10,000 a month for a PR agency, and they pretty much do three solid things. They work with you to craft that story. They build a list, a targeted strategy for outreach to people who have those audiences that you need to get in front of, and then they create and foster those relationships and distribute that press release.

That's really all it boils down to. So, you can do that all yourself pretty much on your own. So, you first start by crafting that story. So, if you are a health and wellness course provider or

content creator, you write a press release about how, during COVID it's so much more important for entrepreneurs to focus on their health and wellness and you're leading the way or something around those lines. It's not just, I need to get free marketing.

Marketing in general, for me, it's, I'm always thinking about how can I create more value for these customers. It just makes marketing so much more of a two-way street. I'm trying to help you with this product or service. So, the same thing goes with your PR. I'm trying to help this person who has this large publication, this large online audience, this podcast, whatever it might be, television channel, and I'm trying to help them because I have this great story. So, it's how do I create value for that person with this press release, and then I need to get it and put it in front of them.

Eric: Would you consider PR a long-term strategy like a brand development strategy? How quickly do you see the payoff coming from PR efforts?

Andrew: Within a month. It's definitely something where the turnaround is pretty quick. So, in month one we're crafting a story for, so for instance, with my company GrowthExpertz, we do this for several funded startups. It takes a week to two weeks to come up with the ideal story and get it written and approved by the company, all that while we're developing a list and obviously, I have my own proprietary list. It's about 1,000 different emails of reporters, writers, TV hosts, et cetera, podcast hosts, which is why I'm here, by the way, as well. You were on that list, and it worked.

Again, it's all about creating value. So, I wasn't like, please put me on. I'm like, oh, I think this would be really valuable for your audience. So, in month one, we've crafted that story and we've started reaching out to the largest top tier publications and it's really all about timing. Startups also and starting your business is a lot about timing. If you're starting your business right now, this could be an incredible unprecedented time to start a new project yourself for low cost and get it out there and start helping people, as opposed to if you started it in January, and then you hit COVID time, two months into your business, you got hit with some tough timing, you need to wait it out.

Timing is really important and it's really just about putting that message out to as many valuable potential people as possible, and really seeing what happens and who it resonates with but I definitely have had very quick wins. In the last couple months, I've gotten clients and Forbes, TechCrunch, Inc magazine, big startup publications, and one really big nationwide article can absolutely increase the long-term effects for a business, but it is also a long-term strategy.

We maintain those databases of PR contacts for years and we're just constantly massaging that relationship, reaching out to them, see if they need us for a contact, like trying to help them stay in contact and some people from like, New York Times and Washington Post can continuously reach out to me not even for myself. They're like, hey, I need this. My deadline is

on Tuesday. Do you know anybody who could comment on Roblox video game recently? I was like, absolutely.

Andrew: I just literally posted it on my Facebook, do I know anybody whose children play Roblox video games? Got them someone, doesn't help me at all but that person will then remember me. So, it's like a CRM, it's just relationship management and just staying in contact with those reporters.

Eric: Well, in processing this through my own mind, I actually look at it as a different perspective. You're saying offer value, and I think yes, and also, another way to look at it is be valuable, and be visible. Because I think some people you tell them offer value, they'll think way too much about it and they'll think outside of themselves, you have to consider what do people want, of course, but you can't think too far away from your own natural offerings. Otherwise, then you've just become like a fake basically.

Andrew: Yeah, you're just settling at that point, you're just creating what you think people want.

Eric: So, you need to be valuable, but then that's one half of it. The second half is now you need to be visible because so many people have value to offer, but nobody sees them. Nobody's able to, the distribution and the visibility, what you're talking about with PR, the value of it is it you get distributed and visible.

Andrew: Totally, and that's a big message when I do public speaking is that if you're working on something that you truly believe is valuable for people, then you should be really aggressive with your marketing because you're not trying to sell, you're not trying to get money out of people. Your motivation is to help more people. So, your job is to get it out there and put it in front of people, because you want to help people and I think that helps founders and early stage entrepreneurs, really make sure that they're working on the right project.

If you're listening to this, and getting up in the morning to build a press list for your project or write a press release is daunting and annoying for you then you might not be working on the right thing because the passion needs to be driving you and the amount of value you have to unlock and be visible, should really drive you. So, that's a really good meter at the early stages of your business. Like, could I be married to this for the next 10 years? Do I really think that this is helping people PR is all about just getting that value out there and being visible? Definitely.

Eric: Now, I imagine, not all PR firms are created equal. So, if one gets your message and like, okay, great, let's go find a PR firm. How do they navigate finding the right partner to work with?

Andrew: So, I think that startups should never really work with a PR firm. I do PR as a service inside of other things for startups. We would never market ourselves as a PR firm or an SEO firm. Just because I think like those things, we do those in house with companies. So, my company, people throw around the word agency, but I don't really like that because an

agency's job is to maximize revenue and total client base and I only work with a couple people at a time whose projects I truly believe and we join their Slack.

We work with them 24/7, the founder text me a Sunday at 12 o'clock at night with an idea and I would never be like, oh, that's out of scope. So, I rallied against the idea of hiring PR firms for a really long time, but over the last couple of years, I have really seen the massive legs of PR for growing a business. So, I've dove a lot more into it myself and we will recommend a couple companies to hand it off to if the company is scaling internationally.

We're a data driven team at GrowthExpertz and if we think that more effort is needed, then we can apply to a certain channel, then will recommend that people hire internally or hire an agency but figuring out what PR agency comes down to is basically their previous track record. So, look at the case studies. Have they worked with relevant companies to yours, relevant industries and then basically what does their Rolodex look like?

So, you can easily email a company, hey, what kind of contacts in health and wellness do you have in the media? They'll shoot you the names of the publications, they should be pretty honest with you about yeah, we have existing relationships with 70 potential media outlets in that space. Then that's how you really see, because that's what it is you're paying for the short learning curve to getting in front of those people rather than doing it yourself.

Eric: So, do you think services like PRWeb and other websites that claim they can distribute a posting or something like that or a value in any way?

Andrew: If you have the budget and you have the previous data that PR has really worked for you, it is worthwhile to pay to promote on like Cision or any of those other larger PR posting sites. I have over the years compiled just a free list of like 10 or 12 websites where you can post your press release on and if you're listening to this and you want that list, I will happily give it to you for free. You can message me. I have never paid for a promoted press placement.

I do find that if you put in on the free websites, you get a lot of inbound traffic and for me, it's all about the targeted outbound. So, if I have 900 publications, 200 of those are going to get manual organic one by one emails from me and my team at a certain time saying, here's the value we have for you. The other 700 are going to get five or six email drip series and that's going to provide a tremendous amount of PR opportunities for the client, usually 10 to 15 placements within the first two months. That's more than enough.

Then if we have data that we want to carry forwards, then we can go and put some more money on it and do those pay post placements but we haven't. Usually the companies that do that are either doing something at the corporate level. So, a corporate acquisition or something, they'll pay \$400, a new VP or CEO being put in place because they want the really large business publications to look over that and then write those articles.

Eric: Now, earlier you mentioned part of the piece to this puzzle was understanding your demographic and I think we basically breezed over that as a prerequisite but I think that that's something that not everybody does understand. So, do you have any insights to share with people on, what level of depth do they need to understand it and some of the things that they can do to get there.

Andrew: I actually use this term called absolute target demographic. When you're starting out in the early stages, a lot of founders will have a very wide-angle view of who their target demographic is. I think you should really focus on the low hanging fruit of your target demographic, which is what I call the absolute target demographic. Like your best-case scenario, who does this create the most value for, one target inside of your target that you know will be the early adopter.

They'll wake up at six in the morning and use your content as part of their morning routine or they'll be the hyper referrers or they will be the people that will wear your T shirt and wear your merchant, buy anything that you put out. So, who is that target, where do they sleep? Where do they eat? What do they buy? As ridiculous as it sounds, it helps to create a faux persona for that absolute target demographic, print it out, put all the logos of the companies that they love, follow those companies on Instagram or whatever and just get an understanding of putting yourself in the shoes of that person and really just constantly thinking about how can you create more value for that person in the beginning.

Then once you have done so, then you can start to elaborate on that target demographic and add some layers to it and throw some more people in that pool, but if you're starting out right now and you have less than 500 monthly subscribers or something, really look at the subscribers you have and figure out, what are the common characteristics of the most active, the highest LTV people and then paint a picture that way of the what I call absolute target demographic to start.

Eric: I think this leads nicely into the next topic of conversation, which is, something you teach your students and the companies you work with is how to create growth in different marketing channels. Now, we've talked extensively at this point about PR, but you also talk about other channels like content marketing, social media. Can we go into some of those other different marketing channels and tell our listeners a bit about some growth hacks that they can use in each one?

Andrew: Absolutely. So, I think content marketing is, unlike PR, really long-term strategy and the number one mistake that people make is expecting it to have a quick return. Content marketing is all about helping people, again, and it is about getting you visible out there. You cannot really expect tons of traffic, tons of conversions from anything that you're doing content wise within the first few months. So, the first piece of advice on content marketing is be consistent, be valuable. Again, you're going to hear me say that so much.

It'll sound annoying on this interview, but if that's the one thing I can smash into your head after this then that's it but also, it's be patient and do it for them not for you. I spent all year last year focusing on content marketing, took till August to really start getting like over hundreds of organic visits per blog post or per piece of content. Then the secret there for maximizing the return on what I call return on time investment for content marketing, is just re-sharing that content.

Buffer, which is the most famous social media scheduling tool, did a massive study across I think 20,000 companies, I want to say four or five years ago about re-sharing content and they found that people get on average 85% as much engagement, re-sharing the content two and three times as they did the first time. So, definitely, a lot of companies spend a ton of time making the content and they don't spend a ton of time getting it out there. So, one thing is re-sharing the content, but also, it's focusing the equal amount of time on content distribution.

So, one of the things I teach in my course is about creating a content distribution checklist, and that's an ever-growing amalgamation of all the places where you find along your way that you can seed your content to your target demographic that will be valuable. There's two buckets in that content distribution checklist. There's the free places. So, Reddit sub groups, Facebook groups, LinkedIn groups, Flipboard, StumbleUpon, sharing on your social media, using Hootsuite or TweetDeck to find people that are posting something that qualifies them for your content and ceding it to those people individually.

Then there's the paid places that after a piece of content proves to be viral or engaging or valuable when it's shared, if you have a budget, you can go on sites like Taboola or Outbrain, which I believe have just merged to make the world's largest content marketing platform. You can spend very little money, five, 10, \$15 and promote your content on those platforms as well. So, I think the second piece of advice for content marketing is to, if you spent a week creating the post piece of content, spend a week or equal amount of time distributing that content, and you will see content marketing take off pretty quickly for you and that's the number one area where people fail.

Social media and content marketing are very tightly intertwined. You almost can't have one without the other, you need valuable content that you're creating for your social media to really grow and you need your social media to promote the content that you're making. So, I think they go hand in hand. Again, the overarching sentiment for me with social media is really about creating value for people. So, I think the number one thing that people do wrong with social media is, oh, shit, it's Wednesday, I need to post something.

Oh, let's just take a picture of our team and post it and it's not valuable enough. Eric's laughing because he doesn't do that because he's in another state altogether. You guys are all remote, so it'd be really hard to take a screenshot of a Zoom maybe but it's better to go silent than to post something that's not valuable. I had a client the other day. I mean, we don't really focus on doing social media for our clients. We'll create the pages, start their strategy, guide them on some content.

Then after that, they really do it themselves and the reason for that, about this client, they're doing iron shaft battles together as a company remotely and they posted those pictures and it got like one 10th engagement of the actual valuable normal stuff that they're posting. I sent a DM to the founder, like, "Hey, this is this kind of stuff I told you not to post. I know you think it's cute, but you have an expensive product. If you want to write a blog article about that, it might be cooler, maybe do it in your stories."

Anyway, social media, it's all about being valuable. Another thing, a second lesson with social media is I teach that there's two types of social media marketing, and I'm the first person to ever coin this. I've written the first ever blog posts on off page, social media marketing, and that is all the stuff you do off of your pages. So, there's on page social media marketing and off page social media marketing and the two are very different. Because at the early stage of your business, if you're a creator that's listening to this, and you have under 500 total social media followers, you're spending X number of hours creating content, that's only going to get seen by 10% of your audience, and only engaged with 0.5% of that audience.

You're not going to see a lot of conversions and in the beginning, I want your marketing to be focused on obviously, helping people like I've said, but also driving your business growth. So, you need to focus on the channels that will lead to discovering a strong return on investment or that hyper growth channel later on. So, in the beginning, I think it's important for companies to show that they're active and post regularly with something valuable. Use the hashtags that you've deemed that are relevant to your target demographic, et cetera, et cetera but I would like you to spend more time going off your page into groups, into monitoring tools to identify people who are talking about, I keep going back to like a health and wellness business right now because I know it's so valuable for people.

If someone's posting on Instagram about how depressed they are, that person's self-qualified for needing your services. So, you can go and you can seed them with your content, tell them about your services, et cetera, et cetera. I think that's a more valuable return on time investment for your social media marketing in the early stages. Even if they just respond and follow, they're going to fall in love and find out about all the value that you create and it's more likely to convert someone over time.

I try to teach social media practitioners or people doing social media that getting a follower is the new email subscriber. So, prior to 2011, with the Groupon and daily deal companies, nobody really cared about building their email following. Over the last 10 years that's become one of the most valuable conversions that you can have and I think that social media followers will grow to be similar value. Right now, it's we don't care about likes and stuff for most companies, it's all about people clicking the link in the bio. The whole idea is it's a low threshold conversion, they can follow you and then fall in love with your content over time and convert. So, I think that focus on finding those people and bringing them to your pages rather than really struggling to post really good stuff all the time.

Eric: Yeah, I totally agree with you on the email marketing thing. We actually for people are interested in deeper dive on that we had Brennan Hopkins on one of our episodes, and we talked the entire episode about the benefits of email marketing. Check that out. I just want to take a step back here because from my experience, I just want to share like this is the kind of interview that's the best for me because I call it the Energizer Bunny interview.

Andrew: I get called that a lot, actually.

Eric: One of my guests, Miles Beckler is the same way. You're just so chock full of information and tactics and strategies. It's just like I just have to, exactly, you're walking the walk, being valuable. So, guests can understand my situation. I'm just sitting like drinking tea, I just ask a question and that's it. What I will say too, is part of the thing. And I feel this with miles as well as like, there's so much value. It's so easy as a listener to be like, wow, holy crap, trying to write everything down and figure out where to start and what to do.

Because if you're a content creator, especially people, we were actually talking about this earlier before the interview, especially people who, especially now are finding that they were in a business, like yoga, or meditation, and these aren't necessarily business minded people, but they're feeling called and maybe push to get something online right now and it's just such a vast world. What advice do you have, like how can people take this whole journey in stride, get started, and not get tripped up in all of this possible things that they can do?

Andrew: That is the number one question I get when I do in person training. Prior to all this, I would do like weekend seminars in Thailand, Dubai, New Delhi, India, South Africa, et cetera and we'd do a nine-hour deep dive into each of these channels and people go, that's great Andrew. What the hell do I do first? The answer to that is, one, what you think you can get done without any external resources. So, what seems like low hanging fruit to you? What do you have skills in? What do you automatically feel drawn to? What do you feel like you have the resources to do without needing a developer or any engineering time at your company, et cetera.

Then the second thing is, what do you feel, or you could do a little bit of research on this, but what do you think will actually move the needle for you? It really depends on your business. Do you need sales first? Do you need to grow your social media? Do you have a runway that will buy you three, four months to focus on SEO knowing that the SEO is really going to provide massive results later on because I say content marketing takes three months, SEO takes six and PR takes one.

So, if you're really looking for a really big result, you can't just say I want to do PR, because you'll be running uphill, if you don't have that interesting story that creates value for your target demographic right now. So, you go to the drawing board, do a shallow dive into some of these channels. You see, oh, actually, we have a really incredible story that we can leverage for PR. I think we should focus on that.

Or you know what, no, our thing that we're working on, we've got a year of product development still in front of us. We're not going to worry about PR right now. We had a incredible call with a vegan protein powder, potential client that just raised \$4.5 million. I was like, it's a perfect scenario. They're all product people, it was a five-minute pitch, and the guy was like sold, but three months from now, we're still not ready to blow up.

Then my response to that was, well, then it's a perfect time to start working on SEO and content marketing, because that's not going to blow up for a while and he was like, oh, that really makes some sense. So, we're Working on starting with a part time engagement around those channels. So, I think that take the 20,000-foot view of your business and look at your goals and your target demographic and what I said about those channels and social media also, I mean, you're looking at 30 to 90 days before it really starts to be a traffic generator for you.

Because people need to trust in your business, you need to get your messaging down, you need to figure out which channels work for you, which call to actions work for you, which verbiage and landing pages even work for you. I think that just take the 20,000-foot view, there's 19 total Traction channels. You can literally Google 19 Traction channels blog post, and you'll see the blog post from that book, Traction. I think it was the founder of DuckDuckGo search engine that wrote that book.

That is the definitive, in my opinion list of all potential marketing channels. So, you could just look at that blog post and write down your own ideas for what you would do for your business for each one of those and then you stand aside and you look out and you go, okay, I think we'll start with that and what I do, or what I recommend to people is make a marketing calendar and give yourself one task per day for marketing, to make it feasible and make it manageable.

As the chief everything officer of your project and your business, you want to give yourself like one hour a day of marketing, I think in the beginning, because if you try to do five hours a day, then something else will get neglected. It won't be sustainable. Then last but not least, if you're doing something that's really valuable, get an intern. I have three unpaid interns right now that are working on commission and I am spending an hour each one per week just on training them. I don't have any incentive. It's whatever they want to learn, any marketing channel, they all have my course as well and coaching program for free.

I have massive value for them. These kids go on to do totally different things than when they started out in the internships. So, again, it's all about creating value. So, I do mention that they're unpaid interns, but I really focus on creating tremendous value for them, but they're on summer break and they have 40 hours a week easy and that's what they want to do is work and learn. So, I think that, if you're having trouble on executing the marketing stuff, or if you're over 40 and not interested in learning social media right now, I'm just throwing that number out.

It's just a number, but for me, a lot of founders in their 40s and 50s are like, I don't want to learn about TikTok marketing, Andrew. I'm like me neither but unbelievably, it is really high converting tool if your project is focused on 10 to 25-year olds. So, as a marketer, I need to

know it. So, get these interns, bring in this young lifeblood into your business and just really focus on creating value for them, and they will help with the execution.

Eric: Yeah, and I love that approach, too. Because it's like, yeah, you're not paying them but it's kind of like to give the man a fish versus teaching him how to fish. I mean, yeah, they're not getting a fish from you, but they're going to be able to catch a lot of fish later. Two things that came to me while you're talking through that is one is, just that I also want to reflect because I see this so much in accomplishing anything when you're faced with a big task, a mountain to climb, super important to chunk it down.

Like you said, an hour a day for marketing and consistency, because it's so easy to look at the big mountain you're trying to climb and get overwhelmed and then not do anything or be like, okay, today is the day and I'm going to do five hours, but then you burn out. So, it's really important that one-hour consistent practice, because within three weeks, now you've developed a muscle and now an hour a day and three weeks, you've got 21 hours' worth of work put in.

It builds up and it's sustainable, and maintainable. So, I just want to echo that point. The other thing was, that's interesting, and you're talking about, that people don't often think about is this concept of pacing. You were talking about this client, the vegan powder client, and how they're not ready to blow up basically, like they're not ready for a certain level of success, is I think what you're getting at, production wise or manufacturing may be part of that.

With every single business, there is going to be this idea of readiness. Like, what are you ready for. The common thing is like, well, I want to get from zero to 60 as fast as possible, but the fact of the matter is getting too much too soon can take the whole ship down. Can you talk a little bit about how you approach the understanding of readiness and how you would adjust strategies based on that?

Andrew: Well, I'm not going to lie, that is still a learning experience for me. With GrowthExpertz, for me, it's normally I'm looking at what has the company done previously? What are their growth goals? What is their team like in their background, and I'm usually most valuable for companies that have no marketing background. It's a first-time founder of tech background team, that they were going to spin their wheels for three to six months, even on just trying to hire and marketing and my goal is to not only launch these strategies, figure out their core KPIs, but also train the team on being able to better speak the language and manage their internal marketing team when we build that out.

I'm not going to lie, it's still a process. I've been doing this for five years as an agency and we have had a couple issues with timing because the company thinks they want to grow. Then when we get in the weeds, we see the products actually not really ready and users are not super happy and delighted, as the company had told me previously. So, I think the first thing to do before you say you're ready to scale is actually make sure that the data reflects that.

You don't need to be a data scientist. It's, do people refer this? Do people stay for a very long lifetime with us? Do we get 80% positive satisfaction from the pop up that asks people is it smiley face or is it sad face. We need to have that organic data before we go to supplement that with my services or paid advertising or PR. You only get really one shot with TechCrunch or a big publication and if you get that out there and when I drive 50,000 people to your homepage or your website and the website crashes or the app crashes when we get people to install it, the last app we got in TechCrunch, we got 45,000 installs in a day on the app, and the app did crash and it was super embarrassing.

That was from a multinational company with millions of dollars behind that product, which we also work with corporate incubators as well, which you're probably not this audience but I do love doing that. I think that timing is really everything. You've got to be able to just take a step back and be like, are we really ready to grow all the way? Okay, cool. Let's hire Andrew and his agency. If not, let's start part time with an intern and that's the whole reason I started this slow growth coaching program.

It's for the bootstrap companies that not only don't want to spend a ton of money on marketing, they don't want to spend \$50,000 a month on paid ads and have that kind of traffic. They would rather grow slowly and organically and we work with a lot of accelerators and incubators to help their startups grow using a lot of the strategies we've talked about, but you can grow with no spend. You can grow organically through pretty much every channel and it's important to do so in the beginning to really figure out, like I said earlier, what channels were, what landing pages were, what words work and what call to action. I think figuring those things out, make me more confident that you're ready to really scale.

Eric: I think businesses have different personality types based on the people who are on the team. I know for myself, starting MemberMouse, being a first-time founder, a technical background, it was definitely, by the nature of who I was, a slow growth thing. Also, like I wasn't focusing on marketing for like the first three years. So, I think some people do need to learn by going through those epic failures. Because the thing is like, it's tricky to know what to believe.

You can get in these echo chambers as a team and think you're ready, and then do the thing and then find out that you're not, but you couldn't have found that out unless you actually put it out there. So, that's why I think what you're saying and being honest about I don't think it's ever going to be 100% because there's this element of you don't know, there's so many variables to this equation.

Andrew: The whole reason I started my "agency" GrowthExpertz, is because I saw companies making this mistake with full time marketing hires a lot. Almost 100% of the time when they raise money, they think, oh, now we can hire a marketing director or a VP of Marketing, but they don't know all the marketing foundational stuff that I said. They don't know what channels that person needs to focus on. They don't know what their lifetime value is. They have no clue what a customer acquisition cost is going to look like. They don't really even know what type of marketer they're looking for.

So, I think and I've had a lot of venture capitalists refer me and mentioned that they agree in their experience, that it's better to start with an agency, for a couple months figure all those things out. Part of that is really just getting the confidence in the team that okay, maybe marketing, we weren't ready. So, we'll figure out in three months that the product actually, we're getting a lot of data now from users that we need to go back and iterate more.

You saved yourself, not just yourself, you saved a human life, changing a human life and bringing them onto the team. So, I think that it's important to dabble and try things out before you jump all the way in. In life in general, that's good advice, I think.

Eric: Yeah, for sure. Going back to our kind of overarching marketing channels, we've talked about PR, SEO, social media, content marketing, and distribution. What about influencer marketing?

Andrew: So, influencer marketing is great. It has come up over the last two to three years, three to four years maybe and in the beginning, it was a total Wild Wild West, especially in California where I operate. You had people with large followings charging \$3500 a post, doing 10 posts a day, not even kidding and really giving no value back to the businesses. It was just like, get it in front of people and that's right, and now we're a lot more intelligent and knowledgeable and we know that there are some solid KPIs around engagement that you need to look for.

It's no longer the total follower base. It's really the average engagement. Another KPI is how relevant is that person's content and their audience to your target demographic? Then the third thing is how often are they posting about other brands. So, look at those things and then you can evaluate a value of that person engaging with your content based on that. If you go back to what I said about your target demographic, find your absolute dream target influencers, then break them into categories based on size.

So, you've got your 20,000 and under following, and those people will usually do it for free plus free product, or even just vice versa, shout outs and whatever, creating content together, things like that. You've got your 20 to 100,000, which should usually be about \$150 or less to post with them plus product and then you've got 100,000 to a million which usually have rate cards and an agency management. To me, I like the micro influencers a lot more.

I seem to get a lot more engagement from those under 20,000 people, but it's a lot more blood, sweat and tears because you need scalability with those and you need a lot. So, there's about three different ways to go about influencer marketing. You can go through an agency who does all the work for you. They do everything. They strategize the content, conceptualize it, find the influencers, negotiate blah, blah, blah. They take 20 to 30% of the engagement themselves.

So, it's pretty costly and I'm guessing that most of the people who are bootstrapping and starting their project, don't have \$10,000 to spend on an influencer engaging test. So, that's

probably out the window. The second opportunity there is with platforms. So, influencer.com is the one I've used. There's AspireIQ. There's a couple other platforms out there. These give you the opportunity to find a bunch of influencers, they publicly post their engagement data and stuff.

Some of them have a paywall to getting onto the platform, but the exciting thing there is that you can get your message in front of a bunch of influencers. The people who have had the time and knowledge to sign up to these platforms usually know how to charge money and know what they're worth a little bit more. Not that I want you to take advantage of anyone, they're just going to be more expensive. So, the third approach is doing it from scratch all by yourself, which is exactly what I want you to do and I teach people how to do that from A to Z in my online course.

It's probably about like six different five- or seven-minute videos on how to do that but it's very similar to PR. It's building a list of targeted influencers, crafting a valuable message, reaching out to them in mass, strategically at different levels. Starting with the larger potential opportunities and then reaching out to the lower ones after that. Then following up in relationship management, it's almost identical to a PR strategy.

It's just knowing how to create value for an influencer, which is a little bit different than a reporter who's just wants to get a really good article out there. Someone who's starting their influencer career, beyond money there are things that are valuable to them, which is creating valuable influential content for their following. So, if you can do that better than another brand, there'll be more likely to take your opportunity even if it is less money than Nike or Herbalife coming in and offering them some money. So, I think that's the best tip I can give for influencer marketing, is to do it yourself and just really focus on how do I create value for these influencers with the story that I'm trying to tell.

Eric: That's awesome. Thanks so much for sharing that. An interesting question came to my mind as you were saying all this and it's to wonder, what were you like as a kid because...

Andrew: Bad. Very bad. Very bad. I come from a really small town which I'm lucky to be quarantined there right now because I'm usually outside of the country, but I was visiting family Before all this COVID stuff happened, but I'm from a small town called Dublin, Ohio. When I was growing up, it was only 3,500 people, probably similar to where you're at in New Mexico, right? Now it's 50,000 people and it's grown quite a bit, which is still really small, but a town where everybody has a piece of land, nobody's farmers are anything. So, it's not like that.

It's actually a CEO, tax haven. So, it's quite affluent and wealthy, but a lot of space, no crime, no traffic, and parents don't wash their kids at all. So, I grew up with miles and miles of rivers and streams and ravines and mountains and fishing and hiking and bomb making and all kinds of crazy, crazy stuff that you saw and I can't think of the movie where those kids find the dead body on the railroad track. There were no dead bodies here but it was like that was it.

We had little kid gang where we would literally bike like 10 miles and I don't know if I developed the high energy then, but I definitely had an outlet for it as a little kid and then once you become a teenager, you stop doing a lot of that and the energy gets funneled into some wrong locations. So, definitely was a troublemaker, and then got to college, got out of my small town, went to college and fell in love with business and international business.

Switched to international business and my whole family's entrepreneurs and found an outlet in startups to put that energy into. So, went from high school being demeaned for being super ADD and high energy to then working in startups and being like, oh my God, I found this outlet where you need a tremendous amount of energy. I think that's all you need to do with your marketing and your life and your business is just keep iterating, keep testing and then you'll find your niche, you'll find your hyper growth channel. For me, startups have been my home for the past 15 years because a place where the energy is super valuable and lauded, and that's how I survive.

Eric: I think that this is an important thing because, clearly your personality type and whatever gifts you have are very aligned with what you're doing. Not everybody can be like you. You just have access to and can collect and collate and store all of this different data and then use it to execute a strategy. Not everybody's like that. That's why I asked the question because you clearly have a uniqueness, and it's great to see.

It's great to see when people align with their uniqueness with the work that they do. Because so many people try to be somebody else, especially in business. All they're looking at is I want to make money and then they look at the people who are making money and be like, I need to be like that person. Getting back to the whole be valuable, offer value is the biggest work that people can do to be valuable and offer value is to find out who they are first.

Eric: Sometimes that can be through the process of building a business. It was that case for me too, but it was just interesting reflection.

Andrew: Thanks Eric. I appreciate that.

Eric: The last thing I want to ask you is if you were starting a content-based business tomorrow morning, what would be the exact steps you would take to find your first paying customers, and could you walk us through your go to strategies in your growth hacking playbook?

Andrew: Absolutely. So, the first part of that question was like, it seemed like is too wide open for me, but if I was starting a business today, obviously, like I said, in the very beginning, the first thing you start with is that marketing foundation. So, I want to make sure that I have all of the marketing opportunities inside of the product handled and all of the products set up. So, marketing foundation is all your social media, all of your messaging and email notifications that come from people going through your product, all of the opportunities to push people to refer and share.

So, that's the first thing you want to make sure you have done so that when you drive people to the top of your funnel or when they convert that it leads to a one to many approach. Every new customer you close brings more new customers and virality is achieved. Once that is figured out, the way to go out and get your first few customers is through social media, 100%. Use a tool like TweetDeck or Hootsuite, figure out the keywords and the key phrases and the hashtags that people are using to self-qualify or identify as your potential customer.

So, I'll go back to the health and wellness brand. Let's say you're starting a nutrition course and someone's talking about how much weight they've gained during quarantine. So, you search the term quarantine weight in parentheses on TweetDeck and you will see in real time everyone that's posting with the word quarantine and weight, worldwide, and you can then, in real time, answer them like, hey, I'm actually launching a course that will help you get that beach body back after quarantine. Here's a 10% off coupon.

So, the whole time you're focused on creating value, and you're finding someone who's complaining about needing to spring into action and you're giving them a way to create action and solve this problem. If you do that 50 times you will have three to five customers guarantee and I get across the board over the last 10 years, 40% response rate on that, and about a 10% click through rate roughly across any business doing that. So, if you reach out to 100 people, you're going to have 10 people very interested people going to your site, and you're likely to convert some of them with a discount. So, I think that's the easiest way to get 10 customers.

Eric: That's perfect. Well, I feel pretty satisfied with everything we've gone through. So, the final thing is, you mentioned you have a course I'm sure that there's a set of people who are listening to this that are like, okay, how can I learn more? Can you share with us some URLs where people can go?

Andrew: Absolutely. So, you can find me anywhere at andrewstartups.com or @andrewstartups on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, whatever. You can message me during this COVID time. I would be happy to give any entrepreneur a discount on the course. So, the easiest thing to do would be to DM me to get that discount on Instagram or email me@andrewstartups.com. Literally M-E@andrewstartups.com so I can give you that. The course is normally \$597. Now, I'll hook you guys up with a discount and maybe I'll even give a promo code to Eric and the team there and if you want to offer it at the bottom to all listener, that'd be really cool.

Then I also have a coaching program too. So, I think the number one thing that people have had problem with, like we talked about on this is the execution of all the things that I teach. So, in the coaching program, I actually get you an unpaid intern, like I do the job posting and do everything, get you an unpaid intern that is local to you. So, you can work remotely, but maybe meet up once a month with that intern. Like I said, the coaching program and the course is the salary for the intern.

We meet weekly for an hour, we run over on a problem to set the strategy, go over what you're learning, and then I'm available on email 24/7 to help you go through the course. So, that's what the coaching program is all about and that's been really successful for about 20 companies over the past year and a half. So, look me up at Andrew Startups and if you are a funded club that actually needs execution, its growthexpertz, with a Z .com.

Eric: Thank you so much for sharing that, and I love that approach of hiring the intern and training that intern. That's so unique, because there's a lot of people who will have you pay them an hourly rate to coach them on how to do something. I've actually hired some of those people, but when it comes to execution, it's like, well, that's great information, but... So, that's an amazing approach, and if you offer us a promo code, we will definitely put that in the show notes for people, as well as all the plethora of links and resources you mentioned in this podcast. We'll put that all in the show notes so people can access them. Thank you so much for coming on and sharing all this with us.

Andrew: Thank you guys so much, really appreciate the opportunity to create value. That's what it's all about. I think you guys have an amazing podcast and I'm more than happy to come back again and share some more value another time. Cheers.

Eric: Thanks, Andrew.

OUTRO:

Thank you so much for listening to this entire episode of The Subscription Entrepreneur Podcast.

Many thanks to Andrew as well for coming on the show and sharing so freely from his knowledge and experience.

I know we covered a lot of ground in this episode, so don't worry if you feel like you missed something.

You can find links to all the resources we talked about over at SubscriptionEntrepreneur.com/150.

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