



Newsletter Pro Turns 13 and the Plan Below Is My Gift to You!

Thirteen years ago, on Jan. 25, 2011, was the first day in business for Newsletter Pro. Newsletter Pro was originally named Solution Marketers. I didn't officially change the name until 2012.

Over the last 13 years, I've experienced many highs and many lows in business. I and some very talented team members built the company up from \$102K in revenue on Dec. 31, 2011, to an eight-figure-a-year business by Dec. 31, 2019.

Like many others, we got hit hard during COVID-19. Approximately from March 20 to April 20, COVID-19 wiped out \$2.5 million in revenue. It also crushed our growth. We had added \$750,000 in new annual revenue in Q1 2020, slightly above our goal for Q1, but over the next 15 months, we managed to add just over \$197,000 in new annual revenue. Crazy.

Now 44, I have been self-employed full-time for 23 years. Like all entrepreneurs, I've had to make numerous sacrifices for the business. It's part of the gig, or at least, that is what I used to think.

For example, this month I have two kiddo birthdays. My son Alexander (Lex), who is turning 13 on the 13th, and my son Tyler, who is turning 18 on the 24th. The day Tyler was born, I had to work on my dry cleaning business that morning before I could go to the hospital. I was crossing my fingers and hoping that I would get done before he arrived. Thankfully, I did.

I could rattle off numerous sacrifices of family time, personal time, friendships lost, and treasure wasted like all entrepreneurs can.

Somewhere around 2015, I finally asked, "Why can't I be an entrepreneur and significantly limit the amount of personal sacrifices I have to make?"

Fortunately, I've been able to make a massive dent in this issue, and as my gift to you, I want to share with you the formula that has worked for me with the hope that you will be able to use the same tactics in your life.

Mindset is the starting point for success; this is where you have to start. What I'm suggesting is a lifestyle change, and unless you embrace the changes here, you may not be able to buy back your freedom.

A primary goal of any business is to buy back your freedom. Your freedom is more valuable than money.

The next area I looked at was systems and processes. Without systems and processes, you are a slave to your business because everyone needs you to keep the business going.

One of the most important components to being able to create systems and processes that actually work is clarity. You have to be super clear on what

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needs to be done, the time frame for completion, and what success looks like. I can't stress enough how important clarity is.

The next step is to stop chasing and start attracting. In nearly all of the consulting work I've done, I see entrepreneurs chasing instead of attracting.

There are four keys to being successful with building out systems and processes that can run without:

1. **All systems and processes need to be documented thoroughly.**
2. **You need good people to run and manage the systems and processes.**
3. **You or another leader has to inspect what you expect.**
4. **You need to review and update the systems and processes frequently.**

Stop chasing shiny objects in marketing, gadgets, etc. They are not going to save you from all your business problems, no matter how much the salesperson claims they will. One of the keys to being successful in buying back your freedom is that you need to get used to many aspects of your business being boring. This includes marketing. I love boring marketing that works. In fact, it is my favorite type of marketing because it doesn't need constant updating or new ad copy, etc., yet it still makes me money! Increase the amount of inbound marketing you do. It is slower and more difficult at first, but in the long run, inbound marketing is more profitable and will provide better customers. Stop chasing the cheapest labor you can find and, instead, spend more and hire A players. An easy example of how this actually will create more profits for you are Chick-fil-A and In-N-Out Burger. In-N-Out's average retail employee makes \$20.02 per hour, and Chick-fil-A's average retail employee makes \$17.77 per hour. They both have some of the highest net profit margins in the industry.

The second-to-last step is to make your first of many lists that I call "Stuff I Don't Want to Do!" You'll make many of these lists on this journey, but the first time you make the list, it may be very long, and that's okay. Once you've made your list, look for anything you can move off your plate now. Then make a goal to move off as much as you can over the course of the next few months or throughout the year. Look at this list often and move that crap off of your plate as you build out the previous steps. As you move the stuff you don't want to do off of your plate, that will free up time so you can build out each of the following steps and ultimately buy back your freedom.

The final step is to create reporting and tracking so you can manage your business from anywhere. Ideally, this is a single page that provides you with all the up-to-date information you need to keep tabs on the health of your business.

As an added bonus, if you follow the plan I've outlined, you'll also drastically increase the value of your business. I know this from firsthand experience. In 2019, I had placed Newsletter Pro for sale. I received offers from \$15 million to \$20 million and was only required to stay part of the company for six months after the deal closed. One of the primary reasons for good offers and the short transition time was the systems and processes I'd built. At the time, the broker estimated that those systems increased my multiple on profits from 5 times to 7-8 times profits.



-Shaun

Boost Your Business: How to Keep Customers Coming Back For More

In the ever-confusing landscape of business, customer acquisition often takes center stage. However, the significance of customer retention cannot be overstated. For small to mid-sized businesses (SMBs), building lasting relationships with existing customers is a strategic imperative beyond simple transactions. Every business owner needs effective customer retention strategies to enhance customer loyalty, satisfaction, and of course sales.

What Is Customer Retention?

Customer retention is the process of engaging and maintaining a relationship with existing customers, encouraging them to continue their association with your business. Unlike customer acquisition, which focuses on bringing in new customers, retention emphasizes nurturing and retaining the customers you've already won over. It's a multifaceted approach that considers customer satisfaction, loyalty, and ongoing value creation.

The Importance of Customer Retention for SMBs

A loyal customer base contributes to consistent revenue streams. Your retained customers are more likely to make repeat purchases, increasing their lifetime value and providing a stable foundation for your business.

It can't go without mentioning that hunting down those shiny new customers is often more expensive than retaining existing ones. In fact, it's 6-7 times less costly to keep your current customers than to attract new ones. Investing in customer retention strategies can result in substantial cost savings compared to the constant effort and resources required for acquiring new clientele. Ultimately, this boosts your bottom line, and a mere 5% increase in customer retention rates has been shown to increase a business's overall revenue by 25%-95%.

Meanwhile, you can save on marketing efforts when your loyal customers become brand ambassadors. Satisfied customers become advocates, promoting your business through positive word-of-mouth. This organic marketing is invaluable for SMBs, as it fosters credibility and trust within the community.

Strategies to Improve Customer Retention

- **Personalized Customer Experiences:** Utilize customer data to personalize interactions and tailor your offerings to individual preferences. This can include targeted emails, exclusive offers, and customized content.
- **Excellent Customer Service:** Prioritize exceptional customer service to build trust and loyalty. Your team must address customer queries and concerns promptly and efficiently, demonstrating your business's commitment to client satisfaction.
- **Customer Feedback and Surveys:** Actively seek feedback through surveys and reviews to understand customer needs and preferences. You can use this feedback to make informed product/service improvement decisions.
- **VIP Loyalty Programs:** Implement loyalty programs that reward customers for repeat business and make them feel special. Offer exclusive discounts, early access to new products, or redeemable points to incentivize ongoing engagement.
- **Regular Engagement:** Stay top-of-mind with regular engagement through newsletters, social media, or personalized updates. This engagement can include relevant content, industry insights, and exclusive offers to keep customers engaged and informed.
- **Community Building:** Foster a sense of community around your brand. Encourage customer interaction through forums, social media groups, or events, creating a shared space for your customers.
- **Post-Purchase Follow-ups:** Send post-purchase follow-ups to express gratitude and gather feedback. You can also offer after-sales support or resources to ensure customer satisfaction.

Customer retention is a cornerstone of sustainable growth for SMBs. As the business landscape evolves, small to mid-sized businesses like yours can still thrive just by merely recognizing the value of nurturing lasting relationships with your customers.

THE WORD

"He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, or by a weaver — by any sort of workman or skilled designer."

Exodus 35:35

How to Cultivate Positive and Influential Leadership

The Key Elements of Effective Leadership in Any Business

Leadership is the backbone of any successful business, and effective leadership is paramount for small to mid-sized business (SMB) owners. As the ship's captain, your leadership style directly influences your team's productivity, motivation, and overall success. But being a leader isn't just about calling the shots. You need to be someone who facilitates growth, innovation, and teamwork. The real question is: how?



Embrace a Growth Mindset

Leadership begins with the right mindset. A growth mindset, as coined by psychologist Carol Dweck, is the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through dedication and hard work. When you think you can become more successful or intelligent, you understand you can get there through effort.

SMB owners should embody this mindset and encourage a culture of continuous learning and improvement within their teams. Companies with a growth mindset culture can experience higher levels of innovation, employee engagement, and overall success.



Keep Communication Open

You can't just be leading from the shadows. Clear and effective communication is the cornerstone of successful leadership, and to do so, you need to connect with your team. SMB owners should master the art of communication, ensuring their team understands the business's vision, goals, and expectations.

These open lines of communication foster trust and transparency, which are vital elements in building a positive workplace culture. You want your employees to feel comfortable voicing new ideas, helpful suggestions, and potential improvements.



Prioritize Employee Well-Being

The well-being of your team directly impacts their performance and job satisfaction. Prioritize employee well-being in any way possible, like improving work-life balance, acknowledging achievements, and addressing workplace stressors. According to Gallup, the well-being of your team members directly impacts your bottom line via number of sick days, quality of performance, and turnover rates. When you take care of your employees, they'll take care of your business.



Lead by Example

Your leadership sets the tone for the entire organization. Lead by example, demonstrating the values and work ethic you expect from your team. When leaders model the behavior they want to see, it promotes a culture of accountability and commitment.

Think about it. Would you come in early every morning even though your boss continues to show up at noon? Would you care about the organization you work for if it seems like your boss doesn't? When you lead by example, you set the standard, and your team will follow.



Encourage and Invest in Innovation

Innovation is crucial for SMBs to stay competitive in today's dynamic business landscape. Encourage a culture of innovation and creativity within your team. Provide opportunities for brainstorming, experimentation, and the freedom to explore new ideas without fear of failure. One way to ensure your team continues to innovate is through expanding their skillset.

Supporting your team's professional growth enhances their skills and contributes to organizational success. Invest in training programs, workshops, and mentorship opportunities. When you invest time and money into their development, they will return that investment for your business through innovation and improvement.



Establish Clear Goals and Objectives

A leader's role is to guide their team toward a common goal. Establish clear, achievable goals and objectives, providing

your team with a sense of purpose and direction. If you asked different employees what your company's top three priorities are this year, would they all respond with the same answers?

When you make your goals clear and have everyone on the same page, you can rest assured they are actively striving toward a shared goal, not simply getting their job done.



Adapt in the Face of Change

In today's fast-paced environment, adaptability is a key leadership trait. Be open to change, embrace innovation, and guide your team through transitions. You should be ready to pivot and shift your business' visions and goals at any given moment to ensure your company can weather unpredictable storms. Show your team that change is not the end of the world; it's an opportunity for growth.



Avoid Critical Leadership Mistakes

Effective leadership is crucial for business success, but certain mistakes can delay growth and quickly ruin team morale. Some critical leadership mistakes every business owner should avoid include:

- **Micromanaging:** When you hover over every detail, you stifle creativity and autonomy, which can lead to demotivated employees and poor performance.
- **Ignoring Employee Feedback:** If you disregard input from team members, you can cause widespread disengagement and missed opportunities for improvement.
- **Failing to Delegate:** Overburdening yourself with tasks limits your ability to focus on strategic priorities and growth.
- **Avoiding Difficult Conversations:** When you ignore problems or conflicts, you allow issues to fester, impacting team dynamics.
- **Setting Unrealistic Goals:** Establishing unattainable objectives can not only ruin employee morale but worsen your team's overall performance.

Becoming a better leader is an ongoing journey that requires continuous self-reflection, learning, and a commitment to growth. While it certainly takes effort, it will bring endless rewards from a loyal and dedicated team.



Discover the Secret Science Behind High-Impact Testimonials Proven to Boost Sales

In today's competitive market, testimonials are far more than just customer endorsements; they are

a pivotal tool for connecting with potential customers and driving sales. The effectiveness of a testimonial lies not just in praising a product, but in its ability to resonate deeply with the challenges and aspirations of your target audience.

The power of a testimonial starts with the problem it addresses. It's essential to identify and articulate the specific issues your customers faced before using your product. This step is more than just setting the context; it's about creating a connection. Your potential customers should see their own struggles reflected in these stories. The more relatable the problem, the more impactful the testimonial.

Following the problem, the focus shifts to the outcomes achieved by using your product or service. This is where the real persuasive power of a testimonial lies. It's not merely about listing features; it's about illustrating the change your product brings. Detail the tangible and intangible benefits experienced by your customers. Whether it's improved productivity, cost savings, enhanced well-being, or simple satisfaction, these outcomes offer a clear, compelling picture of the positive impact your product can have.

Emotional resonance plays a critical role in this narrative. Allowing your audience to feel the initial struggle or dissatisfaction of your customers builds an empathetic bridge. When you present your product as the solution, this connection makes the resolution more relatable and impactful.

Authenticity in these testimonials is non-negotiable. Using real quotes and stories from actual customers lends credibility and trust. Avoid over-editing; let the genuine experiences and voices of your customers shine through. These authentic narratives resonate more deeply, allowing potential customers to see real reflections of their issues and aspirations in the stories of others.

An often-overlooked aspect of crafting effective testimonials is directly addressing common objections. Whether it's concerns about cost, doubts about effectiveness, or hesitancy towards change, your testimonials should confront these head-on. For instance, if price is a hurdle, highlight testimonials emphasizing the return on investment or long-term savings. If efficacy is questioned, include stories that demonstrate the clear, positive changes your product brought about.

Creating testimonials in the above style will help your ideal customer feel confident that you understand their needs and that your product or service is the best solution.



Forget Boring Ads — Brands Are Building Tribes!

In today's crazy-competitive world, where everyone's vying for your attention, smart brands are ditching the old sales spiel and doing something way cooler: building their own little fan clubs. These aren't just your average Facebook groups (although those can be fun, too); they're spaces where customers feel like they're part of something bigger than just buying stuff. It's like finding your tribe but for your favorite coffee beans or workout gear.

Think about it: We humans crave connection, belonging. So, when a brand creates a space where you can chat with other fans, share tips, and feel like your voice matters, bam! Instant loyalty. You're not just a customer anymore; you're a VIP member of the cool kids' club. And guess what? Cool kids talk about what they love, right? So suddenly, the brand has its own army of cheerleaders, spreading the word organically. Talk about marketing magic!

So, how do they build these awesome communities?

- 1. Social media hangouts:** Forget stuffy boardrooms. The party's on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and all the cool places. These platforms are perfect for sharing memes, hosting live Q&As, and giving fans a chance to interact with each other (and maybe even the brand itself!).
- 2. IRL meet-ups:** Who says communities have to stay online? Throw a launch party, organize a hike with fellow outdoor enthusiasts, or host a workshop (think latte art classes for coffee lovers!). These face-to-face moments build stronger bonds and make fans feel like they're part of something real.
- 3. Unleash the inner storyteller:** Encourage your fans to share their experiences! Let them take over your Instagram for a day, run a photo contest, or even ask them to help name your new product. When customers feel heard and involved, they become even more invested.

- 4. Be the ultimate listener:** This one's crucial. Respond to comments, answer questions, and genuinely show you care about what your community has to say. Remember, it's a two-way street!
- 5. Secret handshakes and special deals:** Make your community members feel like insiders. Give them early access to new products, exclusive discounts, or sneak peeks behind the scenes. It's like having a VIP pass to your favorite club.
- 6. Let them co-pilot:** Who knows your brand better than your fans? Involve them in product development! Ask for their opinions, run polls, or even let them test new prototypes. They'll feel valued, and you might just get some brilliant ideas.

The ripple effect of a strong community:

When you build a thriving community, it's like throwing a pebble in a pond. The ripples spread far and wide:

Customer retention: The more invested people are in the community, the less likely they are to wander off. It's like having a built-in support system!

Referrals galore: Happy fans talk! Their word-of-mouth recommendations are way more powerful than any fancy ad campaign.

Brand love goes viral: When people feel connected to a brand, they want to share it with the world. Suddenly, your community becomes a marketing machine fueled by genuine enthusiasm.

In a world overflowing with choices, a strong brand community can be your secret weapon. It's not just about selling stuff; it's about building relationships, creating a space where people feel good, and watching your fan base grow organically. So, what are you waiting for? Go out there and build your tribe!





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I find myself reflecting on the incredible journey we've embarked on together with Fostering Christmas. I want to thank you for your generosity and commitment. You have played a pivotal role in bringing the spirit of Christmas to life for 154 children in the foster care system this year. I wanted to share with you one, out of the dozens, of thank-you letters we have received, as these letters are for you also.

It was nothing short of inspiring. Your kindness has not just brightened this season; it has made a lasting impact on the lives of thousands of children throughout the years, showing them they are valued, loved, and not forgotten. This has not only given them joy but also a sense of belonging and hope, which is the most precious gift of all.

I am profoundly grateful for your involvement and support. Thank you for being a part of this beautiful journey. Together, we have made a difference.

With a heartfelt thanks,

-Shawn