

# *5 Tips for Creating Your Community*



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As an entrepreneur, you know you need people to buy what you're selling. That's kinda the point, right? So, you need customers (I know, you're thinking, "Thanks for the advice, Captain Obvious."). The one time sale is pretty easy, but how do you keep people coming back for more? The answer: Build a community.

Why am I using the term "community" instead of "target market"? "Target Market" is a very cold, impersonal term. Of course we want to target the specific group of people who will buy our products and services, but we need to build rapport with these people, and "target market" doesn't remind us that we need to do that. The word "community," on the other hand, means you have a connection with your clients and customers. And the most successful entrepreneurs have a genuine bond with their audience (who also just happens to be their target market). Relationship building is key when you're creating a band of loyal followers.

So how do you do that? Here are five tips to gain exposure and create a community of people who will share your products and services with their friends, give you great reviews and buy from you over and over.

## 1. BLOG

Read just about any book or article on becoming an entrepreneur or building your business, and you will be told that you need to blog. You need to share valuable information about your industry to show that you are an authority on issues of importance in your industry – and you need to do it often. If people think your information is worth reading, if you're constantly reaching out to your audience and GIVING them this information, you are building a trusting relationship. Your community believes that you truly care about them. Don't forget to hit the pain points of your community and give them advice to overcome obstacles. This will warm them up for when you start your email campaigns and other sales promotions.

Starting a blog is relatively inexpensive – and it is a necessary expense. However, make your blog easy to find. [Word Press](#), one of the most popular website and blogging tools, will let you set up a free blog, but it might be in your best interest to set up your own website and download Word Press to it. That way, you get to choose your domain name. Go Daddy, Blue Host, Host Gator are just a few of the reasonably priced website providers. Download Word Press onto your site, and you can easily create several pages of content. It's super easy to use, too – which is a real plus if you're non-technical.

## 2. KEEP YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA... WELL... **SOCIAL**

Although social media is a great way to promote your products and programs, it is also a fabulous way for your community to get to know “you” and show your individuality. [Tonya Shadoan](#), International Marketing and Image Consultant states in her book *Don't Let the Blonde Hair Fool You*, “People don't buy your product... they buy YOU.” So, flaunt your best personae. It's OK to be real and to post personal photos and stories, but don't forget that you are using your social media to sell yourself. Keep a separate Twitter handle and Facebook Fan Page or organize your friend list so that not everyone sees your rant about an annoying client or your frustration with a price haggler. You also don't want to over-market your product. If your fans and followers think you're just using their “like” so that you can market to them, they will unfriend you faster than Facebook stock tanked.

Update your status with the story about the latest item that your toddler decided to flush, or the hilarious statement that your 10-year-old's hilarious observation. Just try not to offend your ideal audience – RELATE to them. The idea is to get your target audience to say, “He/She understands ME.” That builds trust, which is vital to creating your community.

### 3. BUILD A LIST

Even if you don't have your website ready, you should start building your mailing list immediately. After all, if you don't, who will be your community? You can build your list a couple of different ways (use them both for greatest impact!). The first way would be (and I got this idea from my hero, [Christine Kane](#)) to send an email and/or a letter to everyone that you know. Let them know what you do, who your ideal client is, and what you can do for that ideal client (your skill set).

The second way is to offer something free in return for their email address. This report is an example of giving something of value in exchange for getting contact information. Now, when I have a new blog post, newsletter or promotion, I have your email address and I can share that information with you. Just be sure to choose a mass email program that allows your contacts to easily unsubscribe. You don't want to get blacklisted (we'll discuss more about that in a future blog post).

But the bottom line is you need to have people to share your (valuable!!!) information and products with. You can write a killer blog post, but what good does it do for your business if no one sees it?

#### 4. HOOK UP (but not in the college party sense)

Pretty much anyone will tell you that it is extremely powerful to your business to get on the “good side” of others who do what you do – especially those who have made it BIG. If you’re a musician, just think of the impact Cari Cole’s review of your latest song would have on your business. If you’re a wedding planner, think about how killer it would be to have Colin Cowie mention your name in a blog post or to retweet you. Being noticed by the big names will not only get you exposure to their lists, but it will give you credibility.

So how do you do get the attention of the stars in you industry? Simple: repost, share and retweet THEM. If a “big name” sees that you are retweeting or reposting them frequently, they will check you out. If they feel what you are saying is valuable, they will retweet you and repost you, too. But they’re not going to know that you’re out there if you don’t help to promote their goods. They probably have thousands of followers – so you have to do something to make them notice YOU. Just don’t overdo it – if you make what you are doing too obvious you could lose some of your own followers and the respect of those whose attention you’re trying to gain (nobody likes a suck up).

#### 5. DON’T BE A PHANTOM

The secret to building a community is not all about how many responses you get to something you post. You’ve got to give a little, too! Respond to those who are making the effort and taking the time to comment on your stuff. By responding to comments left about your blog posts, Facebook posts, Tweets, etc. (and responding in a timely manner) you are showing that you are in touch with your peeps.

Even if someone posts a negative response to you or your company, use it as an opportunity to show how great your customer service skills are. Approach these responses by apologizing that the customer had a negative experience. But there are some things to think about BEFORE you respond. *Is this customer’s negative reaction a true reflection of your business?* Maybe your company just isn’t a good fit for the person lodging the complaint. Maybe their bad experience was just an anomaly. BUT – is it possible that their assessment of the situation is accurate? Do you need to make changes to your policies or procedures? After you have answered this question, write a diplomatic response to the complaint.

Remember: Your community is your business’ lifeline. So use the Golden Rule when interacting with it and treat your peeps the way you would want to be treated as a customer. It’s a surefire way to build yourself credibility and an ever-increasing number of followers who use you and your products and services again and again.