**The 20 Channels You Can Use to Get Traction**

In [*Traction*](http://tractionbook.com/)(the book), we have a chapter on each of the 19 customer acquisition channels you can use to get traction, along with 5 key introductory chapters explaining [how to find](https://medium.com/marketing-102/the-bullseye-framework-for-getting-traction-ef49d05bfd7e) the 1 traction channel that will lead to explosive growth for your business.

Here we have enumerated all 19 traction channels and some of the people we interviewed for each, so that you can have an easy traction channel list to use when brainstorming [marketing test ideas](https://medium.com/swlh/32-fast-cheap-marketing-test-ideas-across-all-19-traction-channels-24e227c3a8e3):

**Influencer Marketing**

Getting highly influential people (people with lots of followers) to promote your product or service.

**Targeting Blogs**



Targeting blogs prospective customers read is one of the most effective ways to get your first wave of customers. Popular startups like Codecademy, Mint, and reddit all got their start by targeting blogs.

Noah Kagan, Mint’s former director of marketing, told us how he targeted niche blogs early on, and how this strategy allowed Mint to acquire forty thousand customers before launching.

**Publicity**



Publicity is the art of getting your name out there via traditional media outlets like news outlets, newspapers, magazines, and TV. We interviewed Jason Kincaid, former *TechCrunch* writer, about pitching media outlets, how to form relationships with reporters, and what most startups do wrong when it comes to publicity.

We also talked with Ryan Holiday, media strategist and bestselling author of *Trust Me, I’m Lying*, to learn how startups could leverage today’s rapidly changing media landscape to get traction.

**Unconventional PR**



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There are two different types of unconventional PR. You’re probably familiar with the first type: the publicity stunt. A publicity stunt is anything that is engineered to get media coverage.

The second type of unconventional PR is customer appreciation: smaller, more scalable actions (like holding contests or sending handwritten notes to customers) that both increase goodwill as well as generate press coverage. Alexis Ohanian told us some of the things he did to get people talking about reddit and Hipmunk, two startups he cofounded.

**Search Engine Marketing**



Search engine marketing (SEM) refers to placing advertisments on search engines like Google and DuckDuckGo, where online marketers spend more than $100 million *each day.*

We interviewed Matthew Monahan of Inflection, the company behind Archives.com (before its $100 million acquisition by Ancestry.com) to learn how Archives relied primarily on SEM for its growth.

**Social and Display Ads**



Display ads are the banner ads that you see on Web sites all over the Internet. Social ads are the ads on social sites, like those in our near your Facebook and Twitter timelines.

We brought in Nilkhil Sethi, founder of the social ad buying platform Adaptly, to talk with us about getting traction with social and display ads.

**Offline Ads**



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Even today, advertisers spend more on offline ads than they do on online. There are many kinds of offline ads — TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, yellow pages, billboards, and direct mail. All of these can utilized at almost any scale, from local campaigns to national ones.

Few startups use this channel, which means there’s less competition for many of these audiences. We talked with Jason Cohen, founder of WP Engine and Smart Bear Software, about the offline ads he’s used to acuqire customers.

**Search Engine Optimization**



Almost all Internet users turn to search engines for answers. Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving your ranking in search engines in order to get more people to your site.

We interviewed Rand Fishkin of Moz (the market leader in SEO software) to talk about best practices for getting tractin with SEO. Patrick McKenzie, founder of Appointment Reminder, also explained to us how he uses SEO to cheaply acquire lots of highly targeted traffic.

**Content Marketing**



Think back to the last few Web sites you’ve used and take a look at their blogs. In all likelihood, they’re infrequently updated and have few comments, or worse, are frequently updated and an avalanche of boring.

Compare that experience to reading a well-known company blog like those of Moz, Unbounce, or OkCupid. They write posts that receive hundreds of comments, lead to major publicity, and result in thousands of shares. This massive engagement leads to massive growth. We talked with Unbounce founder Rick Perreault and OkCupid cofounder Sam Yagan to learn how their blogs transformed their businesses.

**Email Marketing**



Email marketing is one of the best ways to convert prospects while retaining and monetizing existing customers. We interviewed Colin Nederkoorn, founder of email marketing startup Customer.io, to discuss how startups can get the most out of this traction channel.

Email marketing is a personal channel. Messages from your company sit next to email updates from friends and family. As such, email marketing works best when it is personalized. Email can be tailored to individual customer actions such that every email communication is relevant.

**Viral Marketing**



Viral marketing consists of growing your customer base by encouraging your customers to refer other customers. We interviewed Andrew Chen, a viral marketing expert and mentor at 500 Startups, for common viral tecniques and the factors that have led to viral adoption in major startups.

In the context of startups, literally “going viral” means that every user you acquire brings in *at least one other user*. That new user then invites at least one other user, and so on. This creates true exponential growth. Though difficult to sustain, it’s been the driving force behind the explosive growth of consumer startups like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp.

**Engineering as Marketing**



Your team’s engineering skills can get your startup traction directly by building tools and resources that reach more people. You make useful tools like calculators, widgets, and educational microsites to get your company in front of potential customers.

These tools generate leads and expand your customer base. Companies like HubSpot, Moz, and RJMetrics have successfully used this underutilized channel for rapid growth. We asked Dharmesh Shah, founder of HubSpot, to discuss how engineering as marketing has driven HubSpot’s growth to tens of thousands of customers through tools like its Marketing Grader.

**Business Development**



Business development (BD) is the process of creating strategic relationships that benefit both your startup and your parnter. It’s like sales with one key distinction: With sales, you’re selling directly to a customer. With business development, you’re partnering to reach customers in a way that benefits both parties.

We interviewed venture capitalist Chris Fralic, whose BD efforts at Half.com were a major factor in eBay’s $350 million acquisition of the company. He covered with us how to structure deals, find strategic partners, build a business development pipeline, and approach potential partners.

**Sales**



Sales is focused primarily on creating processes to directly exchange product for dollars. Sometimes hand-holding prospects can be necessary to turn them into real customers.

We interviewed David Skok of Matrix Partners — someone who’s taken four different companies public — to get his perspective on how the best software companies are creating sustainable, scalable sales processes. This involves creating a refined sales funnel that continually generates leads, qualifies them, and converts them into paying customers.

**Affiliate Programs**



An affiliate program is an arrangement where you pay people or companies for performaing certain actions like making a sale or getting a qualified lead. We interviewed Kristopher Jones, founder of the Pepperjam affiliate network, to learn how a startup can leverage this channel.

Companies like Amazon, Zappos, eBay, Orbitz, and Netflix use affiliate programs to drive significant portions of their revenue. In fact, affiliate programs are the core traction channel for many e-commerce stores, information products, and membership programs.

**Existing Platforms**



Existing platforms are Web sites, apps, or networks with huge numbers of users — sometimes in the hundreds of millions — that you can potentially leverage to get traction. Major platforms include the Apple and Android App Stores, Mozilla and Chrome browser extensions, social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest, as well as newer platforms that are growing rapidly (Tumblr, Snapchat, etc.).

Focusing on existing platforms means focusing your growth efforts on one of these megaplatforms, and getting some of their hundreds of millions of users to use your product. Alex Pachikov, on the founding team of Evernote, explained how their focus on Apple’s App Store generated millions of customers.

**Trade Shows**



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Trade shows offer you the opporunity to showcase your products in person. These events are often exclusive to industry insiders, and are designed to foster interactions between vendors and their prospects.

Early on, you can use this traction channel to build interest in what you’re building. As you get more established, you can use trade shows as an opporunity to make a major announcement, sell big clients, seal a partnership, or as an integral part of your sales funnel. We interviewed Brian Riley of SureStop, an innovative bike brake startup, to learn how it sealed a partnership that led to more than twenty thousands sales from one trade show and its approach to getting traciton at each event.

**Offline Events**



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Sponsoring or running offline events — from small meetups to large conferences — can be a primary way to get traction. We spoke with Rob Walling, founder and organizer of MicroConf, to talk about how to run a fantastic event.

Offline events give you the opporunity to engage directly with potential customers about their problems. Such events are especially important when your target customers do not respond well to online advertising and do not have a natural place to congregate online. Attracting these customers to one location or going to a place where they meet in person can be the most effective way to reach them.

**Speaking Engagements**



This channel works well whereever there is a group of people in a room that — if you pitched them right — would move the needle for your business.

Eric Ries, author of the bestselling book *The Lean Startup,*told us how he used speaking engagements to hit the bestseller list within a week of his book’s launch. We also interviewed Dan Martell, founder of Clarity, to learn how to leverage a speaking event, give an awesome talk, and grow your startup’s profile at such speaking gigs.

**Community Building**



Community building involves investing in the connections among your customers, fostering those relationships and helping them bring more people into your startup’s circle.

Companies like Wikipedia and Stack Exchange have grown by forming passionate communities around their products. In our interview with Jeff Atwood of Stack Exchange, he detailed how he built the Stack Overflow community that has created the largest repository of useful programming questions and answers in history.

**Advice**



When considering these 19 traction channels, try your best not to dismiss them as irrelevant for your company. Each traction channel has worked for startups of all kinds and phases. The right channel is often an underutilized one. Get one channel working that your competitors dismiss, and you can grow rapidly while they languish.