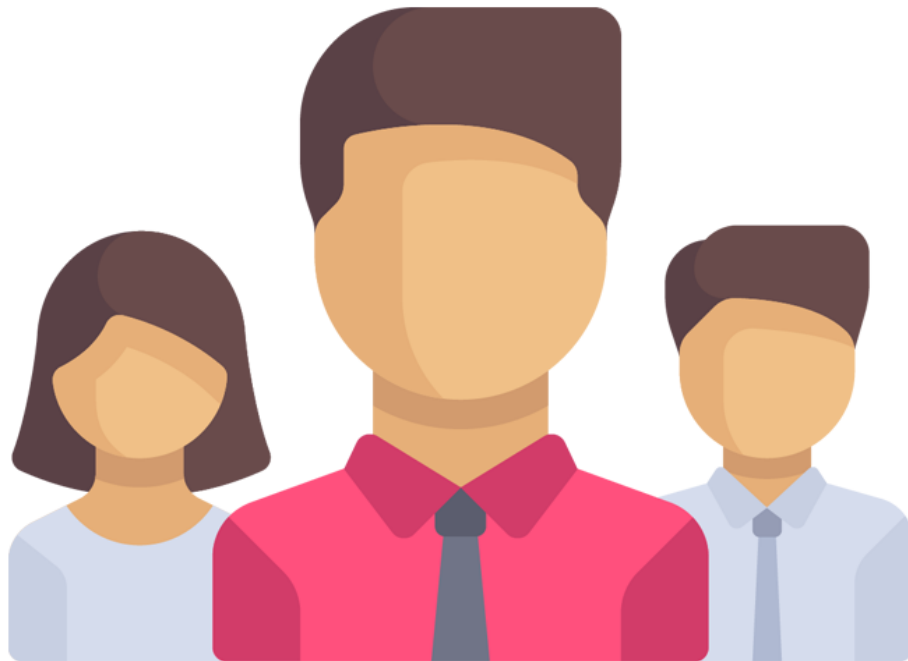


“The essential guide to building an audience”

BUILD YOUR *Audience*



**The Simple Blueprint To Building a
Raving Audience In Your Niche**

Disclaimer

This e-book has been written for information purposes only. Every effort has been made to make this ebook as complete and accurate as possible. However, there may be mistakes in typography or content. Also, this e-book provides information only up to the publishing date. Therefore, this ebook should be used as a guide - not as the ultimate source.

The purpose of this ebook is to educate. The author and the publisher do not warrant that the information contained in this e-book is fully complete and shall not be responsible for any errors or omissions. The author and publisher shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by this ebook.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
What You'll Learn	7
1. The Difference	9
How So Many Get it So Wrong.....	9
Why This is So Wrong and What the Alternative Looks Like ...	14
2. Build Your Brand.....	18
The Buyer Persona.....	20
3. Polish	23
More Ways to Add Polish	25
4. Channels	28
YouTube	28
Email Marketing	30
Social Media	32
5. Growth.....	35
Communities and Social Sharing.....	36
Networking.....	37
SEO	37
Conclusion.....	39

Introduction

Building an audience should be the first step for any serious online business.

The objective here is to create an audience that is not only large but also highly targeted and highly engaged.

That means that you shouldn't be interested in just creating the longest possible list of people reading your site, but should instead focus on creating a list of people who are fascinated by everything you say, who hang off of your every word and who are eager to get *more* of your content in any way possible.

Creating an audience like *that* means building an audience that will grow in a self-sustaining and self-perpetuating manner. It means building an audience of people who will actually want to buy from you. And it means building an audience that will stay with you for a long time.

And without wanting to sound hyperbolic, it is *absolutely true* that huge, engaged audiences like this represent the single differentiating factor that sets the most successful brands in the world apart online.

Think about it. What are the biggest sites and brands in your niche online right now? Which are the competitors that you *wish* you could be?

For a fitness site it might be something like Bodybuilding.com or BreakingMuscle.com. For an online marketing site it might be ShoeMoney, MOZ, SmartPassiveIncome or Search Engine Land. For a site about self-improvement, it might be Tim Ferriss, or perhaps the Bulletproof Executive.

So, what is it that sets these sites apart? Why are they more successful than your brand?

Simple: they have *vastly* larger audiences than you do. These sites have hundreds of thousands of followers. People who would consider themselves genuine fans. People who will visit their site every single day and who will *trust* what they have to say.

If a small niche site posts news about a new product, then it won't have the platform to reach out to with. Perhaps 100 people might see that product over the course of a month and seeing as your average conversion rate for a sales page is about 1% *at the generous end* you're talking a single sale.

You could get more people to see your site, sure. You could set up an ad campaign and get lots of people to click on it to bring them to your site.

But then they would likely just leave. Why? Because they're not *your* audience. You have exposure now but you still don't have an audience.

I always like to paint a picture here of a watch salesman. Imagine that someone comes up to you in the street, opens their coat and then offers you to buy a \$1,000 watch. Would you? No! Because you don't *trust* that person. You know nothing about them. You've never seen them before. Even if the watch is stunning, great value and exactly what you're looking for.

But now imagine that you have done lots of business with a local jeweler and you now know and trust them well. You're on their mailing list and you know the person who owns the shop and recognize the brand. You're passing in the street and then you see the same watch in the window. Now there's a chance you *might* buy. Because you're already a customer. And it's the same thing with a website that has an audience.

Another example I like to use is asking someone on a date. Imagine going up to a random woman or man in the street and asking for their number. How's that likely to go down? They probably won't give it to you and you'll be lucky not to get slapped!

But if you spend the time chatting with them and building rapport, then you are much more likely to be successful.

This is the difference between a platform and an audience in blogging or internet marketing. This is why you absolutely need to put the time in to not only be able to reach out to a huge number of people, but also to be able to count them as a genuine audience: as fans or as followers.

What You'll Learn

In this guide, you're going to learn precisely what it takes to build this kind of audience: to have a huge number of people eating out of your hands and eager to hear what you have to say next. Eager to *buy* what you have for sale!

This book will give you the edge over the competition by showing you where so many brands go wrong when it comes to building an audience and what you can do differently. You'll be given a blueprint to follow that will take you from zero to hero – with legions of loyal readers at your beck and call. So, whether you're a small business looking to grow into a *massive* business, whether you're an entrepreneur who wants to earn money doing what you love, or whether you're marketing other companies: you'll find precisely what you're looking for here.

You will learn:

BUILD YOUR AUDIENCE

- What makes certain brands so successful when it comes to building massive audiences
- How to create your own audience, starting from the beginning
- How to inspire trust and authority and why this is *crucial*
- How to create a brand that people can believe in
- How to gain more exposure to widen your audience
- How to target your audience and engage with the right customers
- How to communicate with your audience and keep it growing

And much more!

1. The Difference

The best place to start is with the broader overview and from there we can hone in on more granular detail. In other words, I'm going to give you the big picture, so that you know your objective and you know the overall strategy. We'll then be able to deconstruct the end point we're looking for to see how we get there.

Okay, so I mentioned earlier that this book would give you an 'edge' seeing as most people go about building their audience the wrong way. I absolutely meant that – it was *not* just marketing talk.

The point is that most new brands have a completely misguided approach to how they go about marketing and promoting themselves and this mistake absolutely cripples any chance of success. That's what we'll be addressing here though and in doing so, we'll hopefully be able to ensure that you don't take a similarly misguided approach.

How So Many Get it So Wrong

So how do so many businesses get it wrong? What is so incorrect about their approach?

The problem comes down to care and attention. That is to say that to put it politely, a lot of businesses view their digital marketing efforts as a ‘get rich quick’ scheme. Think of all the different marketers that you have encountered on your trips around the web. How many of them do you feel are trustworthy and offering a great product? How many do you feel are just trying to get you to spend cash on a sub-par product?

How many times have you had a web page pop up without your intention and tell you about this fantastic opportunity to earn millions while working from home.

“I couldn’t believe it!”

Announces some awkward, unpolished voice.

“And neither will you! Soon you’ll be earning hundreds of thousands of dollars a day working from the comfort of your home.”

Well guess what? Surprise, surprise you *shouldn’t* believe it. When you part with your hard earned cash, what you’re most likely to receive is a shoddy PDF and perhaps a couple of random videos.

I’ve helped companies to sell some pretty awful products in the past (I’m not proud of it!). One time I got to try out the product –

which claimed to be the turning point in people's lives – and it turned out to be a series of videos that were made purely from screen captures without so much as a some narration. It was literally a video of a guy clicking some things on a screen in order to log into a profile and sign up to an autoresponder. Absolutely terrible value for money.

And it's not just the marketers that take this approach. Many webmasters and bloggers are just as guilty and this is where you might start to put your hand up too.

Because as a writer, this is another type of business I've worked for:

Someone who chooses a niche because they think it offers a good opportunity (not because they have any passion or interest for the subject matter). Someone who then hires a bunch of writers (that's where I get roped in) and gives them a bunch of generic titles.

Let's say the subject is fitness, so the site owner will come up with some topics off the top of their head like:

“How to Get Great Abs”

Or

“How to Lose Weight FAST!”

The articles couldn't be more generic, less interesting or more out of touch with the interesting stuff that is actually going on in the industry right now. It's a bad start...

Worse is that sometimes the site owner will do so little research into their niche that they'll give me titles that are *factually* inaccurate. I had a health blog recently that asked me to write about 'The 16 Symptoms of Prediabetes'. Well seeing as prediabetes is asymptomatic, that's pretty difficult. Another recently asked me to write about how you could build great biceps with press ups. Well, seeing as press ups target the triceps and pecs and *not* the biceps... You get the idea!

So why do these companies pick those titles? Simple answer: they either saw them on another site, they did some keyword research and found that other people were searching for the topics, or they pulled them out of the air without giving it any thought.

Choosing a title based on a keyword is the most popular example and it *seems* like a good idea. After all, that means people will search for it and they'll find it.

Small Businesses Are Not Exempt!

But perhaps you're reading this as a small business owner and thinking it doesn't apply to you! After all, if you don't write content for a blog then you can't be guilty of generic titles.

But the same cynical approach and lack of care and attention *regularly* goes into business efforts. In fact, many businesses are even more guilty of this. Take for example those businesses that want to promote themselves online through social media and do so by writing *the* most generic posts imaginable.

I worked in marketing for an EPOS provider (Electronic Point Of Sale), which essentially means that it built till systems for other companies. They insisted that every post I should make on their blog had to read like this:

“Our EPOS system is the best in the industry... bar none!”

“Find out why companies LOVE our new EPOS system!”

Again, makes sense on paper. After all, it's a business site, so of course it's going to promote its products. When they eventually did get me to write on their blog, they had me writing posts on EPOS systems and EPOS systems alone. The site itself was bland, white and dark blue and with zero character or anything to set it apart.

Visitors visiting the site would have this single message communicated to them:

“This is a business site. A business site with a low budget.”

Not good.

Why This is So Wrong and What the Alternative Looks Like

I'm not saying that you're guilty of this, I'm saying there's a chance you might be *somewhat* guilty of this. You have approached your business like a business person: you've chosen a niche, looked into 'what's hot' and you've paid the minimum to get something set up. Now you're going to promote your ass off and make sure that people see what you're selling.

So, what's wrong with that?

Simple: it doesn't build an audience.

Remember how I told you to look at the most popular brands in your niche? The most popular blogs and sellers? How are they different from the approach that we have just described?

Most likely you'll find that they have beautifully designed websites. The sites will likely use crisp, HD graphics with vibrant colors and

big images. They probably have large UI elements, a simple navigation and a strong logo and colorscheme that brings everything together. Your audience should land on your site and think that this is a site with a big budget, that really cares about its customers and that knows what it's doing.

You need to land on a site and think that it has some kind of *passion* for what it is doing. And you need to be able to see and feel the investment.

Think about the sites that you have subscribed to yourself. These are likely sites that somehow set themselves apart with an interesting message, unique content and a great look. They most likely are *not* sites that were set up with the sole intention of making a quick buck.

Would you really follow a social media channel that did nothing but write about how good its product was? What would be in it for you?

Would you really subscribe to the mailing list of a website that was *already* spamming you before you even got past the first page?

The answer is no. And this reveals the simple truth: if you want to build an audience, you can't rush it. You can't take short cuts. You can't cheat.

The *only* method for building a massive audience that is worth pursuing is to create a channel or brand that is:

- Unique
- Interesting
- High quality
- High value
- Professional

And if you're going to do all that, then you need to have passion for the topic you've chosen. You need to understand the subject. And you need to love doing what you're doing enough to actually put all that time and effort in.

Because you know what? Building an audience is not something you accomplish overnight. Again, ask any big name vlogger, blogger or business owner. They will *all* tell you that they started out writing blogs that no-one read, selling products that barely anyone bought or making videos that no one watched. The only thing that kept them going at this point was *genuine* passion for what they were doing.

Here's another thing to consider: if you create a fitness site and you have no interest in fitness, then the content that you create is not going to make any big impact. You're not going to be able to impress the target audience that you're trying to engage.

Think about it: if you have a fitness website then who is that going to be aimed at predominantly? Fitness enthusiasts. So, if you write a poorly researched blog post on press ups, what value do you think it's possibly going to offer to someone who has been working out for years? Someone who perhaps trains daily?

Of course, there's also a specific blueprint to follow which we'll be looking at in this book. But it's that passion that will help you to execute said plan and that will keep you working through it. And it's the passion that is going to help you do it *well*.

2. Build Your Brand

So how do you go about creating that channel that you're going to be so excited for?

It actually starts with your brand. This is what will help you to create a topic that you are truly excited about and it's also what will help you to create a channel/business/blog that your audience can get equally as excited about.

If you already have a business and you're struggling to get your online presence up and running or to build that engaged audience, then nine times out of ten a rebranding is the first and best thing you should do for your company.

If your site is just screaming: generic business! Or: generic fitness website! Then you need to start over right away and start giving people a *reason* to follow you.

And that starts by showing that you have passion and enthusiasm for your own brand. Because let's be honest: if you don't seem to care about your own site then why would anybody else?

So, you need a rebrand and that starts by deciding what you want your mission statement to be. A mission statement is essentially a statement of intent. This is a simple summary of not only what

your site is about but also what it hopes to achieve. What is it going to offer to people that they can't find anywhere else? Why should they follow you?

Consider Simon Sinek's 'Golden Circle' when creating this mission statement. Simon describes a circle that is made up of three layers – an outer layer, middle layer and inner layer. These layers are defined as 'what', 'how' and 'why'.

If your business has a generic brand right now, then chances are that you have considered the first layer and maybe the second but not the middle. You need to find *why* you're doing what you're doing and why what your doing is important.

So, if you're a fitness blog, then the 'what' is fitness information. The how is that you are informing people about getting fit via written content. The 'why' is what sets you apart though.

Perhaps you blog because you want to give bodybuilders a source of information and a spirit of community. Or perhaps you blog because you want to help the average person believe in themselves and get fit.

Likewise, if you sell an EPOS system, then choosing your 'why' might mean deciding that you want to empower small businesses. Maybe you want to bring smarter technology to the typical commercial experience.

Whatever the case, having a why will give your followers a reason to be interested in your brand. You're giving them a reason to follow you and to care about what you have to say. You have a purpose, a mission and a passion and *that* is what is going to make people want to follow you.

And this 'why' is also what will allow you to start offering more interesting and giving people a reason to follow you.

Because if your 'why' is to bring modern technology to small businesses, then suddenly you can write with passion and interest about a whole selection of different topics – internet marketing, mobile apps, virtual reality, AR and more. And although it is beyond the scope of this book, it can even start to give you more ideas for products.

The Buyer Persona

You might be wondering why we're focusing so much on brand and on quality content when it comes to building an audience. The answer as I hope you've worked out by now, is that you're trying to create something that people genuinely *want* to follow. Something that is genuinely interesting for people.

But just to tie this a little more closely into the notion of building an audience, let's see how the audience itself should define the brand.

Because what you need to recognize next, is that your site or your business is not for everyone. As much as you might like to try and reach the widest possible audience, that will be definition make you generic. And when you're generic, people will be indifferent to your brand.

Why is Apple so successful? Because it knows its audience. Instead of trying to appeal to everyone, it has chosen to create premium products that are for artistic professionals. In doing so, they have alienated a portion of their audience (people who want more flexibility in their technology, people who want to spend less) but they have made sure that what they're doing appeals as much as possible to the audience that they *are* targeting.

Your aim should be to do something similar. In other words, don't try to appeal to everyone and anyone who might land on your site. Instead choose a selection of people who will respond to the mission statement you have and then focus on them.

Doing this allows you to know more about your audience. That in turn allows you to know what they *want* and then that means you can cater to that desire and you can create something they'll be ravenous for.

It is MUCH better to have a small audience that loves your brand than a massive audience that doesn't care.

BUILD YOUR AUDIENCE

Okay, so with that in mind, you are now going to actively profile your audience. This means you're going to create a buyer persona, which in turn is going to act like your ideal archetypal customer. This is the person for whom your products are practically made. This is the person that will be most likely to become a fan and to become a buyer. Create an imaginary biography: how old is this person? How much do they earn? What gender are they? What are their other hobbies and interests?

Now you're going to create a website that is *for* that hypothetical person specifically.

3. Polish

Am I saying you can't create a business or a blog unless you are a passionate fan of the topic? Am I claiming it's not possible to be successful with a business you don't know all the ins and outs of?

Not at all. It is fine to go a detached route but if you're going to do that, then you still have to have passion and care for what you're doing. You need to respect the audience and the niche and you need to *invest* in the idea. Investing in the idea is going to mean spending money and time on it and finding other passionate people to work with.

In other words, you need to build a team. That means finding talented artists and designers to create the website, it means finding a talented writer who is passionate about the specific topic you've chosen and it means investing lots of money into the site that you want to build.

Doing this is what's going to make the site look professional and that in turn is what will build the trust.

For instance, to create the best possible brand you need to make sure you have the best possible logo. That does not mean doing it yourself unless you happen to be a professional designer. It means being involved in the design process and having input over

what you want it to look like, but it also means hiring someone who is a professional logo designer and who has the experience and the tools to make something amazing.

There is a huge difference between going to a site that has a crisp logo that really speaks volumes as to what the site is about and who it is for, versus visiting a site that looks grainy as though an amateur made it in MSPaint!

So along with your rebranding and finding the right mission statement, the other thing you need to do is to invest a little money. Why not take out a PayPal Business Loan if you need the funds? Then just invest that money into your site and make sure it looks truly polished. Compare it with the site owned by your top competitor and ask yourself if it is genuinely as good quality. If not? Back to the drawing board.

The objective now is that when someone lands on your site they should instantly see that you are doing something new and interesting, that you are highly professional and that you have the funds and the resources to do things well. After all, if you can't design a website to have high quality images and a great layout, why would someone trust you to produce a good product or service for them?

More Ways to Add Polish

What are some other ways to add polish and give your site that trustworthy, professional sheen?

One good option is to invest in some quality video production. A high quality video has the potential to make a massive impact and to get people to sign up to a mailing list or just decide that they are interested in your brand and want to learn more.

That's because a video can bring someone in and engage them in a way that few other types of media can. But at the same time, when you create a high quality video, people can see the budget. If it is filmed in HD, if it uses professional editing and if it has a smart jingle at the start, great bottom thirds... all of this will create the feeling that the audience is watching something created by a serious player in the niche. This is something that a kid in his Mum's basement could not produce and therefore it is something that instantly increases trust.

As for the site design, at this point this *needs* to be mobile friendly. It needs to load quickly and it needs to make it incredibly easy for someone to get around, to make bookings or to order products. Imagine that they're in the queue at an airport and they want to browse your site in the queue on their mobile with one hand. How is that experience?

Because if your site isn't absolutely perfectly pleasant to use, then you WILL lose interest and customers.

This is also when you need to start adding social media pages. These give your visitors more ways to become followers once they're impressed with your brand and your production values. But it's not just about having those social media accounts, it's about making sure that they have the same cohesive design and sensibilities that the rest of your brand does. That means your Instagram, Twitter and Facebook should all have the same name and URL as your site. If your site is 'www.fitnesssite.com' then that means your Facebook should be 'www.facebook.com/fitnesssite'. This doesn't just make it easier for people to find you: it presents a united, cohesive and well-thought out strategy that will be instantly more appealing as a result.

Content

For blogs, the content needs to be excellently written. It needs to be engaging, it needs to be error free and it needs to really sell the 'dream' – the value proposition – that gives your brand its *emotional* appeal. The same goes for the blogs attached to a business site.

This will give you a new way to find new customers - through SEO – but it will also be what gives them a reason to go from one time

visitors to followers. Usually, it will take a few encounters with your brand for someone to decide they want to sign up to the mailing list or follow you on Twitter. You need to ensure that each one of these encounters impresses so that they will become closer and closer to wanting to sign up.

The same goes for your social media. If you want someone to follow you then you need to incentive that. I'm not talking about offering free giveaways here (which will encourage people to sign up or follow and then never read anything you have to say!). Instead, I'm talking about offering something that is genuinely interesting and that is as such an incentive in itself. So instead of posting about why your business is great, you're offering useful advice for businesses and you're getting them excited for your brand by talking about things that matter to them.

4. Channels

So now you have everything looking the part and you have a brand that people want to follow, you need to keep providing them with excellent content and you need to give them ways to go from visitor to follower.

We've already discussed a little about social media but here we're going to go into that in more depth by focusing on each platform. At the same time, we'll be focusing on some other channels you can use to get word out...

YouTube

I'm going to start with one of *the* most powerful ways to build an audience that is overlooked by countless businesses.

Remember how we said that a video could be highly engaging while also demonstrating the best your business has to offer? Then imagine how successful you could be if you were to focus lots of effort on marketing through video specifically. That's what you'll be doing if you create a YouTube channel as a way to build your audience.

Now, when someone encounters one of your videos, they are going to be blown away not only by high production values but

also by the passion and energy that you show on screen. People follow things that they are emotionally invested in – and video makes it *much* more possible to convey and build emotion.

There are countless examples of massive brands that got their start thanks to YouTube: Jonathan Morrisson, Bored At Work, Elliot Hulse, The Hodge Twins, Pewdiepie and many more. But there are very few examples of blogs or businesses that use YouTube properly.

To use YouTube correctly, the best strategy is to create a channel that offer high value content relevant to your niche – just as you would with a blog. You'll present this in a way that is engaging, entertaining and informative and you'll invest in a good camera, good lighting and good editing software. Scared by any of that? Then hire someone that can do it for you.

If you don't want to go on camera, you don't have to. Channels like ASAP Science or Mr. Sunday Movies show that slideshows and animations can be just as successful with a little added narration.

What's important is that you do your SEO right. We'll touch on SEO briefly in this book but note that SEO is much easier and more effective on YouTube. Create videos that use popular search terms in their tags, write long descriptions and think about other videos that are popular and topics that get a lot of traffic.

This way you can encourage your videos to come up as suggested next videos, or you can get them to the top of popular search terms.

YouTube involves more investment. It is harder. And it will be a lot of work with relatively little payoff to start with. But this is what turns so many smaller businesses away from it and that is actually a *good* thing for you. It's good because it means that your site is going to be able to stand out simply on the merit of having a YouTube channel. Put in the time and effort and for motivation, check out a channel like Charisma On Command that tried for a long time to gain traction on its blog and then only took off once it invested in YouTube.

Note: On YouTube and on all these platforms, consistency is key. Post regularly and do not go long stretches without an update.

Email Marketing

A lot of sites and brands will tell you that email marketing is their single most important tool for growing and engaging their audience. Is this true? Yes and no.

The great thing about email marketing is that it gives you a very direct route to contact your audience and you won't be relying on any intermediate organization like Facebook to decide whether or

not your posts get seen. People check their emails daily and they are even notified when they receive new one.

What's more, is that email feels very personal. This means that for some people, signing up to a mailing list will make them feel instantly more committed to your brand and almost like VIPs. This is a great way to build engagement, to get people to actually respond to your messages and to get them excited for your upcoming announcements and projects.

But email is also something that a LOT of people overlook. People are naturally reluctant to give out their email addresses and many people will quickly get resentful when you keep messaging them. It's also a less flexible, multimedia and dynamic form of communication.

Email marketing tends to work better for specific types of brand. In particular, it works *very* well for services providers and especially if you have been in email contact with your clients. Building up a client list will allow you to send out email bursts to everyone you've worked with advertising discounts or mentioning that you are available for more work. Because they're used to corresponding with your email, they'll be much more likely to pick up.

Likewise, email marketing can be successful for very personal brands. If you have a brand like Pat Flynn's Smart Passive

Income, then people will feel as though they know you and thus they will be more interested to receive an email from you in their inbox.

To build your mailing list, sign up for an autoresponder. Then make sure to place it in your sidebar but also at the bottom of the posts. Most importantly, describe in your content itself what your mailing list is all about and why people should be interested in it. In other words, don't just leave it there and hope they'll notice it – actively promote it right within the content they came to see!

Social Media

Finally, keep posting on social media. That means Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at least and probably Google+, Pinterest and Tumblr. Google+ is particularly worthwhile if only for the potential SEO boost it offers.

The aim on social media is to post frequently and again to make sure that you are offering useful content. This will vary slightly from channel to channel.

Instagram of course is highly visual. This is all about selling a particularly lifestyle or dream, as many Instagram celebrities nicely exemplify. Upload pictures that will allow people to imagine that they are fitter, sexier or more successful. Or if your brand goes deeper, show them exciting uses for interesting technology,

show them beautiful travel destinations or show them people in their creative element.

In short, Instagram is where you communicate the emotion that drives your business and that will motivate your target persona. Keep in mind that it is emotion that motivates action – and action includes signing up for a mailing list!

Twitter is a place where you can share interesting asides and useful tips. This channel works particularly well for personal brands as it lets you invite your audience into your daily life a little. Share your workflow, what you do in a day, where you are... If you travel on business then you can Tweet about the amusing food you're eating or you can Tweet about the destination. This helps to build more closeness and therefore trust with your audience.

Finally, Facebook is a useful place to share information of both kinds but also to communicate with your audience. Remember, communication is a two-way street and this is a very powerful way to answer questions, to get people interested in your brand and to encourage your page to spread through real-world social networks. Facebook is a great place to crowdsource ideas, to run campaigns and competitions and to generally get the audience to participate. This is also really good for sharing content on your site and especially if you can come up with some grabbing headlines and titles.

Note that only a small percentage of Facebook posts will be shown to all your followers. Don't worry about posting too frequently then!

An important tip for encouraging success on your social media is to make sure that your website and your social media are linked. Social media will build your viewers because each time that someone likes your page, their friends will see it. That in turn means some of those new viewers might become followers and that might expose it to *their* friends.

So simply adding social media buttons to your homepage and social sharing buttons on your articles will encourage a virtuous cycle where each new visitor means new followers and each new follower means more visitors!

5. Growth

If you're now doing everything I've explained in this post, then you will steadily grow. This is almost inevitable: a site that has genuine passion and something unique to say and one that has been beautifully designed; this will automatically generate readers and they will be likely to share with their friends and other places online, thereby helping you to gain more and more followers.

But if you aren't actively promoting your site as well, then this is still going to be a slow process. Posting to your site alone and sharing it on social media will probably mean you generate some traffic from Google (due to long-tail keywords) and from the occasional share.

But this alone is going to take years for you to gain the momentum you need to start thriving.

And that's why it is absolutely crucial for you to actively grow your audience too. You've built the perfect net, you just need to start waving it around in the right places.

Here are some tips that will work as growth hacks – and they're things that a lot of other blogs won't ever consider.

Communities and Social Sharing

One of your very best options for promoting your blog is to post on social sharing sites and forums. That includes the likes of subreddits, Google+ Groups, Facebook groups and online community forums.

A single post on one of these can gain huge exposure for your site and get the system you've created churning over perfectly. But there is a right and wrong way to go about this.

If you sign up to Reddit, find the relevant sub reddit and post your article there, then it may get met with distrust and it might get badly downvoted. Even if the article is great quality! Why? Because you are clearly promoting yourself. This doesn't go down well *anywhere* and particularly not in a supportive, tight-knit community. The solution then is to focus on building trust in that community first. Spend time there. Get to know people. Mention what you're trying to do. Learn their likes and dislikes. Built authority.

Doing this means you'll now have 'friends' in that community and anything you share will be hugely more successful. Those people are also more likely to share your posts elsewhere and in general, having the force of an active community behind you can make a gigantic difference.

Another tip is to consider tangential niches. If you have a fitness site and you post in a fitness forum, you're competing with a heck of a lot of information and you won't stand out. But if you write a blog on martial arts and fitness and share it in a martial arts forum, suddenly you have something more interesting and unique. And you have an entirely different audience that you hadn't reached before. Consider your buyer persona and use this to know what *e/else* your audience might be interested in.

Networking

There's no way around it: if you want to rapidly build an audience online, then the single best way to do that is by networking and speaking with other creators and other businesses. Find someone that has a large number of followers and offer to work with them so that you will both expose each other to your respective audiences. This is the only way to create exponential growth, so reach out to those people, speak with them and tell them why you're keen to begin your partnership. Don't aim for the top right away though: start with influencers that are at a similar level to you and then work from there.

SEO

Finally, I just wanted to end with a note on SEO to say that while this is a useful tool, you should never let it dictate your actions. The reality? Getting to the top of Google for a highly popular

search term is nigh impossible unless you have a giant budget. And if you want to build an audience then you need to write *for* that audience.

So consider SEO yes. Allow it to influence the odd post. Think about more niche topics that will speak to your audience and find out what people are looking for. But don't rely on this method to build your audience.

Conclusion

This is your complete blueprint to building a massive audience online. Wasn't what you expected? Precisely! And that's why so many blogs, businesses and brands go wrong.

The key to gaining an audience and gaining an audience that actually cares about your brand, is to make sure you know who that audience is and understand what they want. You then need to invest genuine time, effort and passion into creating something amazing for them. Something you are proud of and something they will be excited about. You need to know your why. You need to spend money. And you need to set yourself apart as unique and interesting.

From there, it's a simple matter of finding your audience in the right places, posting regularly and believing in what you're doing.

Want the simplified version? Then here goes:

- Decide what your business is all about
- Rebrand
- Spend money making sure your site looks amazing
- Write passionately and regularly, or hire people that can
- Create the platforms and channels you will communicate with your audience through

BUILD YOUR AUDIENCE

- Ensure maximum synergy between your channels
- Strongly consider YouTube
- Network and be active in communities
- Repeat!

It really is that simple!