



How to build a following?

Why?

Without an audience you have no one to sell to. Without an audience you have no business.

You can have the most amazing life changing, death defying product or service in the world but if no one knows about it you're not going to survive for long.

The trouble is most people (and you may be one) launch their new business without having first built an audience.

It makes no sense!

After the initial excitement of launching your brand to family and friends dies down the silence becomes deafening.

You join the millions of other small businesses wondering where your new customers are going to come from.

Building a customer base suddenly becomes the most important task in the world.

If you build an audience and a following before you launch your product or service you can have hundreds, if not thousands, of potential customers who already know about you and your product.

It makes perfect sense.



When?

The simple truth is - start building an audience today and 'don't stop'.

In the beginning you're simply a product no one knows and a name no one has ever heard of.

You will not get rich overnight and the world will not be beating a path to your door in the morning.

Build your audience/following first

To reach your audience you must have an audience in the first place.

To build an audience you need to attract an interested and potentially loyal following of people.

If you haven't started your business yet then now is the perfect time to begin.

If you have already launched your own business then today is definitely the time to start building an audience.

Most people think you should 'create your product first, launch your business, and then build your audience'. WRONG, wrong, wrong.

How?

Create genuine relationships with your target audience.

In 2016 this means social media: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and Snapchat, to name but a few.

However, building an audience is hard work; we live in an age of information overload and attention span is limited. And you will need to put in the hours if you want to succeed.



You'll be surprised a just how many brands don't do this.

This is why what you say and how you say it is so important.

The secret to creating a loyal following is to:

1. Listen
2. Engage – **Be helpful, be generous**
3. Connect – **Be honest**
3. Build relationships – **Be inclusive**

Listen

All brands speak, some shout and some preach. Great brands listen first.

If you don't know your customer how can you expect to sell to them?

Connect - Don't (con)nect

As in life the worst thing you can do is start a relationship with a lie.

Brands just like politicians and institutions are mistrusted by default and in too many cases rightly so.

People see through the fake brands, the bandwagon brands and the dishonest brands.

Be honest

In the world of social media brands have nowhere to hide. Brands that tell a genuine honest story build a genuine following.



"If you make customers unhappy in the physical world, they might each tell 6 friends. If you make customers unhappy on the Internet, they can each tell 6,000 friends." – Jeff Bezos The CEO of Amazon

Be generous

Unfortunately many new businesses still think that a free 'trial month', or 'discount coupon' offer is enough. It's not.

Some brands understand the power of generosity; they understand the power of tapping into a common interest rather than self-interest.

But most churn out self-serving marketing tricks and customers know it.

Be inclusive

We all like to be part of something (most of us anyway).

To be part of a cause or a community whether it is virtual, digital or physical. We want to be engaged, we want to contribute to something meaningful. We don't want to be cynically manipulated.

Too many brands, like politicians, sell to us behind a mask of sincerity; they don't walk the talk and the bigger the brand the more effective the mask.

Build your business and your brand on honesty, compassion, generosity and a common interest and you will then turn followers into customers and customer into ambassadors. Your cause will become theirs.

Brands that stand for something have a better chance of creating meaningful connections with their customers and followers.



Get naked

"In a time of deceit telling the truth is a revolutionary act." - George Orwell
So get naked with your brand and start connecting.

Here are 5 ways to connect rather than 'con'-nect with your customer.

- 1. Talk to - not at**
- 2. Focus on common interest - not self-interest**
- 3. Inspire - don't sell**
- 4. Don't answer criticism with silence**
- 5. Engage in conversation - don't preach**

People follow the innovators, the ones who have something new to say or a new way of saying it. People don't follow the followers.