

## **INTRODUCTION**

The system this book is written for includes three components:

1. Exhibit
2. Experience
3. Evolution

Each phase makes up a system that's based on the goal of generating an audience through engaging content, nurturing that audience with more valuable content and then naturally reaping the benefits of your audience as an asset including:

1. A solid customer base you don't have to manipulate to sell to; it's a natural process of giving value and receiving money for the value you consistently supply to your audience that they can use to free themselves
2. A leveraging tool for you to benefit from and take care of however you see fit. Your audience frees you from dependence on anyone but the people who support you and invest in you—people who have bought into your brand

Throughout each phase the objectives of the system remain the same:

1. Generate
2. Engage
3. Nurture
4. Sell

I will use this book to establish the importance of maximizing the opportunity of the first impression, the exhibit and it's value in accomplishing our 4 constant objectives: generate, engage, nurture, & sell. The exhibit phase is simply anywhere we get the opportunity to make a first impression with our target market. There are two things we want to accomplish in the exhibit phase:

1. Finding and resonating with our target audience—the people we're looking for, and
2. Converting them from strangers to being invested into our community

It's important we emphasize this because that last thing we want to do as creators is spend valuable time, money, and energy on creating and posting content only to receive:

1. No engagement on that content
2. No audience growth in return
3. No sales in return

Creating first impressions that resonate with the intended target market is essential to building a brand. But before creating any content or offering any products, we must construct a psychological foundation for our brand strategy. Once we understand the ins and outs of our own branding strategy, then we'll be ready to move into actually building, executing and optimizing the experience.

In order to devise a strategy, we have to understand what factors we have to build our strategy. Human beings have two desires wired into us: to feel pleasure and to avoid pain. Therefore whatever we offer needs to align with one of these two desires. We're going to focus on providing solutions to problems that cause pain here. The best products in the world are simply things that solve the problems we have.

I want to start by posing a question for you. Use this to begin thinking about how to apply this information to your brand and situation. What's the transformation you offer?

## **BRAND STRATEGY**

A foundational concept for our brand strategy is what problem(s) do we solve? What are the pain points that exist in our target audience that we provide a solution for? This is especially important because it allows us to niche down—or into. It allows us to niche into where our market is, which is a more effective way to build an audience and brand than appealing to a mass-market (everybody). Why? Take this for example, if I own a meat company, is it smart to spend money investing in advertising in front of a large group that includes vegans? Or PETA? Or vegetarians? Or people from cultures that don't indulge in meat? Of course not. We want to get in front of as many people who are already looking for the solution we offer as possible. That's the central point of finding our niche. The goal is to find a niche and serve it with so much quality and value that our target audience shares our brand with their friends, creating the viral appeal and expanding our reach outside of our target market to whoever else happens to find value in our brand. Then, once we've found our niche market and resonated with them, we want to continue improving how we serve that target market/niche market even once expanded. To give up on our target market and serve the broader market that just hopped on board (bc of how well you serve your niche) is to quite literally jump off your own ship that took you from troubled waters to paradise. The mass-market likes you bc your niche market loves you. Don't disrespect that.

When we look at what pain points we want to address let's take into account the stages of awareness someone goes through before making a purchase.

1. Unaware - a person unaware of the problem they have
2. Problem aware - a person aware of the problem they have but unaware of a solution for that problem
3. Solution aware - a person aware of the problem they have and aware that there is a solution out there that exists
4. Product aware - a person who is aware that your product exists, just not sure if it's right for them
5. Most aware - a person who knows that your product is the solution to the problem they have—just waiting on the right offer

As you can see, the customer journey of awareness is driven by pain points. Do they know they have a pain? Do they know it's unnecessary? What about solving it? Understanding your audience's pain points allow us to:

1. Automate the purchase journey(s)
2. Create ads according to those pain points
3. Create content based on those pain points
4. Optimize your experience according to your audience's pain points

In finding pain points for your brand, we'll examine three things.

1. Pain - what's the pain that drives the people you want to serve?
2. Proof - what's the proof of that pain?
3. Resolution = what's the resolution?

Example:

1. Pain - taxes we pay don't seem to be spent well
2. Proof - potholes in the roads, education being defunded, etc
3. Resolution - an app that allows taxpayers to decipher where tax money gets spent relevant to the local needs in their community (word to J. Cole)

This exercise can be used for multiple pain points that exist in your target audience relating to what you offer, depending on how many pain points your product/offer solves. So now that we know how to find our pain points. Let's look at how to find our target audience.

Niche markets > mass markets

I spent a lot of time trying to advertise to as many people as possible with the mentality that I would find someone interested if I could increase the visibility of my product/offer. However what I've learned is that way of thinking can lead to obscurity quickly. Instead, I've learned to be as specific as possible about who I want to market to—more specifically, who I'm willing to spend money, time and energy creating for and reaching out to.

My goal is not to advertise to everyone. I don't wish to be the solution to everyone's problem. That's impossible. I'm not able to service every pain point of every type of person because we all have different experiences and traumas that shape who we are & what pain points we may feel & be triggered by—also in what ways we're triggered. Much of who and what we are as human beings is made up of our defense mechanisms & coping strategies in response to the traumas we've experienced. To suggest that I can realistically and more importantly—authentically—serve each and every experience is delusional at best. As a result, being clear on who I want to serve is central in devising a strategy, considering pain points, and creating an offer that speaks directly to who I'm serving. My intention when I brainstorm my target audience is plain: I want to disqualify who I don't serve by identifying who I do serve.

A target audience can be made up of one buyer persona or multiple buyer personas. Many people have different ideologies on how many buyer personas a brand should have, it's a subjective idea. My brand has 2 buyer personas personally but I don't see anything wrong with only having one either—in my opinion the fewer the better. The reason being your message is

more consistent and focused if you only focus on one type of person. A buyer persona is a dynamic profile of the human beings you plan to serve who exist in your target market. I describe it as dynamic because it's a profile that you must continue to make better and improve on once you establish it by using the data you receive based on the decisions you make. Brand personas are basically customer avatars that you imagine you serve. Avatars/personas share similar pain points that your brand provides a solution for. For example a headphone company could have a few avatars/personas if that's who they decide they want to serve. One could be an 18 year old male who skateboards, listens to Pharrell and plays online video games. Another one can be a 36 year old office worker who listens to audiobooks. Another can be a 60 year old woman who is a fitness freak. Avatars/personas are made up of both demographic information and psychographic information.

Demographics include characteristics like age, gender, race, income level, zip code, etc. Demographics provide limited value to us in what we know about our target audience. Demographics don't give any information on what someone spends their free time doing nor do they give us much information about who someone is. Demographics don't tell us how likely someone is to read a book instead of watching a tv show. Demographics don't give us an idea of what type of beliefs or values someone has. And these types of characteristics hold the most weight in strategizing where we want to build an audience and brand by authentically relating to and serving the pain points of people. Psychographics are what we're looking for to seek a more complete model of our market in partnership with the demographic information.

Psychographics include things such as does the person go to the theatre to watch plays? What music do they listen to? What websites do they visit/products do they buy? What restaurants do they enjoy eating at? Do they like sports? Do they volunteer with nonprofit organizations? We use this information to compile an estimated idea of what problems in life our target audience is facing and what emotional results they seek. And then we ask what happens if these people don't find a solution for their problem? Then we bring it full circle with what is the solution to their problem? As we mentioned, this is a dynamic model that must be tested and optimized continually based on the data we receive according to what works and what doesn't and for whom.

Understanding our personas allows us to talk to our target audience in their language and tone, in addition to identifying the common pain points that exist. It's my intention to clearly articulate the pain points of my buyer personas so that I can communicate to them in the most clearest way that I can solve their problem—and ALSO to communicate to everyone else that I am not the solution to their problems. Buyer personas are valuable to be cognizant of when writing copy for your website, advertising, emails and social media too. By the way, copywriting basically just means writing text on things that are considered advertisement or publicity.

Knowing the human pain points we want to focus on allows us to explore the solutions we can offer. We market the solution(s) we decide on by being specific on who we want to serve who suffer from those pain points.

We build our offer around the pain points and target audience we serve. We want our offer to communicate clearly to our intended audience that this product is for them by speaking to their experience, not by telling them it's for them. People doubt what they're told but trust what they conclude. Nobody wants to be told what to do or what's for them. We want to make our own decisions that we feel work best for our own situations on our own accord. As creators we gotta talk in their language and walk in their shoes to authentically serve the pain point(s) they feel and communicate that fact so that it resonates and inspires them to take action. What transformation is my audience seeking as a result of the pain points they grapple with?

People buy results not products. No one buys a hammer just to knock on a bunch of nails, ppl buy hammers to build ideas. The offer must speak to the transformation your brand creates for them. Speak to the pain point and communicate what it looks like when the solution is found. Once we find people who respond to that, then we've earned the right to ease into explaining how our product is the "how".

An offer is everything someone pays for, not just the product being sold. It can be the product plus the free shipping they get with it, it could be a bundle of products, it can be the payment plan that you offer, it could be the product plus the free complimentary benefits or products that come with the product, or it can be the follow up consultation you offer with your product, etc. The offer is the value the customer gets when they decide to purchase from your brand.

All these factors culminate to form your brand perception to your consumers. This is how we psychologically resonate with people who can benefit from the value we provide—not by saying we are but by being what it is. These foundational concepts allow your brand to stay consistent in it's messaging and purpose with a clear focus and less blurred lines.

## **BRAND PROFILE**

Now that we understand who we want to serve and how we can serve them and their pain points, we look inward to ourselves. Our brand profile is the story we build our brand on. What's our why? What's our brand vision? What's our brand mission? And lastly, what's the tone/personality traits of our brand?

Simon Sinek's Golden Circle TedTalk is one of the most valuable pieces of content I've been introduced to in the last decade. He talks about how the most common way brands or companies typically sell is to tell people what their product does, but a much more effective way to connect with human beings is to communicate why it was made in the first place. Much of the marketing we experience is feature based—where the features of the product is the center piece. What Simon articulates is that a much more effective way of reaching and connecting with an audience is to tell people why their product does what it does. Focusing on the benefits of the customer more than the features of the product being sold to the customer. Focusing on the person more than the product. As human beings, all we care about is what's in it for me. Who cares what the product does? Humans are wired to do what's best for ourselves and our own self preservation. Everything we do is for ourselves whether we want to admit it or not. All we care about is what your product can do for me—not what your product does. People don't

buy hammers to slam the newest, shiniest nails. Again, people buy hammers to build their ideas.

Our why is the fundamental concept behind our brand. Our why is communicated through action—not by a banner with the words spelled out. Your why should begin with “To..” establishing the reason for your work and transition to “...so that...” explaining the result you intend to create.

*Example:*

*To confront myself over and over again so that I can free myself by creating authentic work that inspires other people to seek truth to free themselves*

Our “why” plays a significant role in our own psychology as we go through the volatility of being a creator. Highs come with lows, and if we don’t understand what we’re doing this for, we run the risk of burning out when we meet adversity. This may take some time for you to sit and develop a clear idea for yourself, but nonetheless it’s worth it. And mind you, this is another dynamic idea that you will continue optimizing throughout your entire life. I personally suggest figuring this out for yourself before thinking about what it looks like for your brand.

Our brand vision is where we see our brand being in the future. It’s the goal we’re trying to reach—our North Star. Where do you see your brand in 5, 10 years? What is it doing? What is it’s purpose in relation to where it is now? What/Who do you want to be?

Our brand mission describes how we get to our vision and make it a reality. What do we do that provides a measuring metric for our progress on our way to our goal? What are we dedicated to doing consistently for our community that will get us to our vision?

Lastly, our personality traits. Pick 3 personality traits/emotions that form your brand’s tone. Ex: inclusive, brave, inspiring (Nike) We want to pick personality traits that resonate with our audience’s pain points. This will allow us to speak to our audience in terms they resonate with when you solve a persona’s specific pain point.

From these three personality traits we can base our 3 brand colors. Align your brand colors with the emotions/personality traits you’ve decided to associate with your brand.

Your story. Articulating your story is valuable because it’s the introduction your current customers will give to your new customers about your brand. It’s the story your customers share with their friends to spread your message. Having this information articulated and understood internally is the first step to making it recognizable and resonating with your audience.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY**

Articulating what our brand strategy and profile looks like is a key factor in establishing first impressions that increase the likelihood of converting who you’re looking for. First impressions

essentially occur in one of two places—online or in person. Due to the differences in brand strategies—especially in the midst of a pandemic—we'll focus on online exhibits for now, specifically social media. Social media is a valuable tool for organic reach and growth. By organic I mean free. Social media offers a platform for us to:

1. Establish our brand and strengthen brand perception
2. Expand our audience/community
3. Make sales

First thing to note here is that it's likely neither me or you own any of the social media platforms we find strangers on. Therefore, we have no control over what happens to it nor do we own the information on it. This is an important distinction because our audience is our leverage. Our audience is our asset. Attention is currency. And having people who are bought into your brand and invested is the golden ticket that everybody wants. For this reason, it's important to establish how you will build your audience in a way that you own the information of your audience—the information they've given you consent to and their behavior in your system that they've opted into. Social media is the source that we use to migrate who likes us enough to our own community. Social media is the grocery store and your platform is your house. My preference is an email list. Create leverage. As Ryan Leslie said, your equity is your audience.

You want to be sure that if America bans TikTok, you're unbothered bc all your TikTok followers are also on your email list. So if TikTok gets banned tomorrow, I can still communicate to my audience just like before. The last thing we want to do is generate great brand recognition on a platform with a large following, then lose it due to a decision the owners of the company made so that they can be in a better position. There's nothing wrong with them doing that—it's their platform they built. This is why we have to focus on driving people into our own community where we have an audience of our own that we can always communicate with and sell to with the experience we create. This is the ultimate asset that we're trying to foster. We're trying to develop an audience that we can grow a relationship with over the long term on a platform or in a way that we own and draw information from to improve on. Data allows us to continuously test and optimize the best user experience for the people who invest the most in us.

I want to also emphasize the distinction between vanity metrics and sustainable results. Vanity metrics are the likes and followers you get on a platform you don't own. They're the little red notifications on your Facebook feed. They feel great (shoutout to the dopamine) but they rarely indicate valuable insight. Don't get me wrong, a new follow is a great indicator that you are being seen. A notification of someone liking your picture, sharing your post, or comment on what you have to say is great engagement—all day. But what's more important is how many people who liked your post are also subscribed to your mailing list? How many people who follow you have bought from you? Vanity metrics can lead to very valuable results, absolutely. However it's important to prioritize our insights according to their effectiveness in achieving our desired results. I prefer to have a mailing list of 200 dedicated people who are heavily invested in the solutions I offer than an Instagram following of 600,000 people who don't care about the solutions I have to offer. Make sure your metrics align with your goals.

In our social media strategy, we must be sure to strategically place CTAs (calls to action) in our content that make it clear to our audience what next step to take to get more involved if they decide to. Calls to action are what connects the impressions on the platform to the action resulting in a conversion to your community. They are the portal into your experience and system. It clearly instructs our potential community what to do if they want to join or take action after experiencing our brand in the exhibit phase. Social media platforms are a breeding ground for CTAs due to how visible your content can be to strangers all over the world. CTAs are the “watch this full video on my YouTube channel” at the end of a video a brand may have posted to twitter. CTAs are the “leave a comment for a chance to be one of the three pinned posts” at the end of Gary Vee’s videos. CTAs are the “buy the post trump pack now, we have 37 left” that you may see in Derrick Grace’s videos on Instagram. Calls to action don’t always have to be calling someone to buy something. It’s simply communicating the next step to take in the experience you’ve created. A CTA’s purpose is simply to instruct someone through a funnel or journey. Should they subscribe to your list? Should they buy a product? Should they follow you on social media? Should they share this with their friends? Be clear on what you expect from your audience so you can allow them to decide if they want to be your audience or not.

Staying consistent with our messaging and visual aesthetic—hence why we built our brand strategy and profile as the foundations—is vital as you guide your audience through your system. This allows us to remain consistent each step of the way. In an effort to create a strong brand perception in a customers’ mind, it makes a difference for customers to go through your system in a seamless, natural way that harmonizes the relatability of your content with who you are as a brand. Same thing with people. We feel more comfortable around people who have similar interests as us who consistently show up as their true selves, not changing every time someone else comes around or when certain things happen. Each new experience we have with someone is both an opportunity to strengthen the relationship or for it to weaken. Confidence is the ability to hold onto truth. It’s important we take the time to be thorough with our brand strategy and profile so that it’s truly something we can consistently live up to in an authentic way.

## **FORMS OF MARKETING**

Content marketing and traditional marketing are the two main forms of marketing I’ve had experience with. Content marketing is considerably different from traditional marketing. Traditional marketing is based on interrupting a potential customers’ life. Content marketing is based on aligning with your target audience and asking permission to move further along to develop the relationship. Traditional marketing is why millennials (well, this millennial) now despise click bait and spam messages. It’s meant to interrupt you with an offer “you just can’t resist” that you absolutely can and probably will resist. Traditional marketing is Super Bowl ads that get shown to as many people as possible with the hope that it’ll go viral and the law of large numbers will magically result in a customer base willing to spend money with you. Content marketing is marketing that appeals to who your target audience is and what they’re interested in. Then slowly introduces them to new ways they can engage with your brand, as long as they (your target audience) consent to actually wanting to.



Content marketing represents a perfect example of how many ways a CTA can be used or not used at all. Content marketing is generally thought of as simply providing and creating value for your community through creating content that aligns with:

1. The pain points of my audience
2. The solution I have for those pain points
3. The buyer personas I have created that my brand strategically caters to
4. The 3 emotions/characteristics associated with your brand profile

It's not directly selling anything or asking anyone to purchase, it's simply bolstering the brand perception in a potential customer's mind with the hope that the connection between them and your brand develops stronger and stronger. It's simply giving. We clearly communicate the call to action, according to our objectives and their level of awareness, to those who are ready to move further along down the funnel in your system. This can mean posting a video giving tips and tricks to your customers with the caption simply saying, "did you know this?", and then offering an email opt-in for them to be emailed a free guide at the end of the video. It's like asking for a someone's phone number. Just asking for the number is weird. Why do you want the number? What do you plan on doing with it? Have you introduced yourself first? Have you taken the time to get to know each other enough to know if the phone number is actually worth asking for?

Direct marketing is actually asking for the sale once the audience is warmed up to you. Direct marketing is making the offer and call to action clear to the customer where they can decide for themselves: yes or no. Direct marketing is those sales emails you get saying SALE ENDS IN 59 SECONDS every couple of weeks.

The content marketing strategy (not the traditional marketing strategy) includes both content marketing and direct marketing. Content marketing **generates** interest and new prospects, **engages** those interested prospects using valuable content that includes CTAs asking for permission to move to the next step, and **nurturing** those who have decided to take that action. Direct marketing is then used to **sell** to those who have warmed up enough to our brand via our content marketing. A good rule of thumb I've learned to follow is 80% content marketing and 20% direct marketing.

Because 80% of my time gets spent on intently creating content to generate, engage or nurture my community, I don't feel any kinds of ways about selling to them when that time comes for the 20%. A lot of ppl feel hesitant to sell or even ask for a sell—sometimes even to ask for someone to take a certain action. I've felt this myself when I was selling insurance, working in telecommunication call centers, and many more sales jobs that I hated. But once I started creating my own ideas and really doubling down on why I'm creating and who I'm creating for, I started putting my effort into creating ideas that serve them. Since I could relate with the people i was trying to serve I simply put myself in their shoes and talked directly to my past self. Once I did that, I knew I'd created something that was valuable for them therefore I had no reluctance in selling anymore because I believed in the product from experience. It was hard for me to believe in the offerings of some Fortune 500 company who at one point sold life insurance

policies to slave owners on the lives of my ancestors—the people they manipulated into slavery. I do however believe in life insurance wholeheartedly—it's the only insurance we're actually guaranteed to use. But that's another story for another time. I didn't believe in cable television and a telephone landline in the year 2020. I cut my cable back in like 2014. And that's why I wasn't good at selling those things. But when I started creating what I would've found valuable before I learned it, for people I saw myself in — selling became simply a part of the process to me.

In our content marketing strategy we want to develop a relationship with our customers, not just sell to them one time and never serve them again. An example of our goal can be found in Seth Godin's book, *Permission Marketing*. What I don't want to do is go up to every woman at a bar, asking her to marry me until I find one who is desperate enough to marry a stranger. That's probably not good for either of us. And probably won't last very long. It's more effective (and less weird) to seek out a woman who seems like she's into the same types of things I'm into. Then, when introducing myself, my goal is simply to see if it's in both of our best interest to move to the next step—education (getting to know each other) where I then might ask for permission to get the phone number to set up a date, then permission for the 2nd date. And this repeats until the relationship is developed to where we decide to take it to the next level when it's in the best interest of both parties.

We want to be strategic when creating content by being intentional with two concepts: 1) speaking to the different parts of the awareness journey a customer may be at and 2) our objectives we want to accomplish with our content. When people first discover us they are cold prospects, it's our responsibility to warm them up to our brand with the value we provide to them.

There are 4 essential reasons I personally create content that act as the foundational objectives for our entire system:

1. To generate interest/people into my community
2. To engage with the people in my community
3. To nurture the people in my community
4. To sell to the people in my community

We can also add an honorable mention of referrals/word of mouth. I also create to get my community to share with their circle of influence to expand the brand. The reason I name it as an honorable mention is because if I can take care of the 4 that I listed with high quality and value—I believe word of mouth will take care of itself.

Like we talked about before, on social media your audience could be at various stages of awareness. Some could be new followers excited to see what value you will provide them, others have been solid followers for years and enjoy the value you have consistently provided them. This is why most of my content on social media is content marketing—the content is created to generate new interest and people while nurturing/engaging who have already decided to join my community. For example, I do a weekly podcast that I post to my Instagram,

Facebook and YouTube. This piece of content in itself serves both the purpose of generating new people into my community who just discovered it, and nurturing/engaging with people who are already in my community, assuming they follow me on socials. And if not, I take it a step further with a weekly email that nurtures everyone already in my community to stay on top of their minds and let them know I'm still creating value for them even after they've taken the action I called them to. It never stops. It's a recurring cycle of value.

The benefit of articulating this is to be intentional with our content—to know why we're creating what we're creating. We determine our lead indicators (processes/roots) and adjust/optimize based on lag indicators (results/symptoms).

My lead indicators in the above example are

1. Releasing a podcast every week 45mins-hour long
2. Having a guest on each episode
3. Splitting them up in 5 pieces to post on IG w a CTA drawing ppl to subscribe for weekly updates
4. Posting them with captions that allow me to share my thoughts

My lag indicators are:

1. How many new subscribers am I getting in my community who signed up for those updates?
2. How many people DM'd me asking for more info or engaging with me?
3. How many people asked questions or left thoughts in the comments?
4. How many shares and saves did each piece of content get on IG?

There can be more but this is just an example of course.

## **CONTENT STRATEGY**

You are what you eat. You are who you hang around. You are what you watch. You are what you listen to. You only get out what you put in.

All redundant ways of saying, if you want to create great content, you must consume great content. Upgrade your thinking, update your content. Our information diet is one of the most essential items in our content strategy because it's a foundation for the content our brand releases. If you read and listen to the most common resources that everyone else listens to and reads, you'll find yourself posting the same content as everybody else. Plus, understanding all angles from different people and sources helps you sharpen your own perspective.

I find great resources and information in books, courses, movies, interviews, etc—everything can be a resource when mindful. For example, I was learning about target markets one time and how important it is to carve out a target customer that I can picture myself talking to every time I write a caption or post some content. That triggered in my mind another time when I was watching the James Baldwin and Nikki Giovanni conversation back in the 1980s, when Baldwin

said he writes for the kid who is unaware of the world that he is in but will one day be introduced to. He said his goal every time he writes is to picture that kid bc his intention is to show him the world while also liberating him from it. You won't find many brands talking about target markets using the brilliance of James Baldwin—although more should look to James Baldwin for a lot more than just target markets.

Developing the discipline and systems necessary to consume the right kind of information on a consistent basis is crucial. Make no mistake it's definitely a difficult task with how accessible that next hit of dopamine is in the form of Netflix n Chillin or scrolling some social media feed. But nonetheless, if it's important enough we must find a way to incorporate this change into our lives so that we can achieve our goals and build whatever ideas we have in our minds. Furthermore, Netflix can provide just as much value as some other sources. Consumption variety leads to creativity. Everything can be content. Just be aware that most forms of consumption is not about being informed—use your discretion.

In addition to consuming the right kind of information it is also important to process that information in a healthy, constructive manner. Knowing what information to consume with nowhere to process it is a battle halfway fought. We must also store the good ideas we consume, digest those ideas and internalize them to make them our own. I once worked as a financial professional and was instructed to learn a specific pitch to tell my potential clients. A key point I remember being told was to “memorize, internalize, then personalize”. This is the point of information processing. We must find a way to take ideas that are outside of ourselves and digest them within ourselves to align them with our experience and perspective.

In my own experience, throughout the week I personally take note of valuable pieces of content and information I see on social media, books, interviews I watch, and different courses I take. Then, every weekend I'll sit down to go through this information and decide if or how I can use it. From there, I sift the information into various files and folders for the certain purposes I have for my content within the system I built. Then, when I sit down to create my content, I take from these files and create with it. When my audience sees the content, they have no idea all this work went in behind it—and they shouldn't, it doesn't matter—though I graciously explain the process to those who do show interest. The point is, your audience wants good content. And it's our job as a brand to do what it takes to provide that to them—it's what we chose. “Nobody cares about the labor. Show me the baby.” I personally use Evernote, Pocket, Twitter bookmarks, IG saved posts & my iCloud for this.

After we've gathered and processed the information we need, planning and strategizing our content is our next task. This is a pivotal part of the process. Before creating anything, here are some valuable questions to consider for your strategy.

- Who is the competition?
- How can I expand off of what my competitors are already doing?
- What do people who share the beliefs and values of my brand want to see?
- What knowledge/education do I want to share? How should I share it?

- Do I want to make my own content or do I want to gather content that other people have made to post?
- How many times a week do I want/have time to post? What's best for my goals?

Taking the time to articulate these answers for your brand provides a baseline to build on as you look into how to put together your content strategy. As we discussed earlier, content marketing and direct marketing are our two main tactics in our marketing strategy. So when we strategize how we plan on creating we're forced to ask ourselves—what's the purpose of the content we plan to create?

Let's talk about the journey most users experience when discovering you on social media. We can summarize it with this funnel model:

1. Impressions
2. Engagements
3. Profile visit

Here's a more detailed version of that same model that turns strangers into followers:

1. Discovery - comments & retweets & explore pages (inspire new people to visit your page)
2. Bio/Banner - make the first impression, use to differentiate
3. Pinned Post - represents your personality & tone, should complement bio/banner
4. Timeline scroll - selectively curate, don't be afraid to delete what doesn't work and/or repost at a different time. Sometimes its not that the content is trash, it's just that the right people haven't seen it. Find your balance and rhythm.
5. Follow - user finds you valuable enough to follow

This is how I envision my potential followers discovering the content when I create it. My main priority with my social platforms is to offer my audience loads of engaging free value in hopes of converting them into my community with a sales offer here and there—remember, 80/20 aligning with our system objectives. Now let's go back to the stages of awareness that exist within the journeys we just talked about:

1. Unaware - a person unaware of the problem they have
2. Problem aware - a person aware of the problem they have but unaware of a solution for that problem
3. Solution aware - a person aware of the problem they have and aware that there is a solution out there that exists
4. Product aware - a person who is aware that your product exists, just not sure if it's right for them
5. Most aware - a person who knows that your product is the solution to the problem they have—just waiting on the right offer

With this information we can now consider what types of content are useful for us to consider using in our strategy. Of course different platforms offer different types of content. But the common forms are:

1. Video
2. GIF
3. Text post
4. Carousel/multiple graphics/image
5. Livestreaming
6. Stories

I use each of these forms in my content. However I think it's less important to focus on which form of content you want to use and more important to consider where it fits with your intention for the piece of content. Is the purpose to inform/educate? Is the purpose to get engagement? Is the purpose to generate an audience for an event? Is the purpose to get people on your mailing list? That's where I think the value of our content comes in, being clear about our intentions. Being clear on the goal and intention of the content you create is half the battle, the other half has already been done in our information diet and processing system. Being intentional means doing the work to put together a strategy. There are a lot of different forms of content we can use in our strategy. Which forms we decide on ultimately depend on your preference and specific strategy.

An important tool to consider in your content planning strategy is content repurposing and multiplication. Create once, sell twice—or publish twice, or as many times as you'd like. What I mean by this is to use one piece of content to create more content. Here's a hella valuable way to do it that I learned from Olivier Cantin. Every piece of content can be communicated in one of 4 ways:

1. Actionable
2. Aspirational
3. Analytical
4. Anthropological

Here's an example.

Content topic: Leadership & influence

1. Actionable: Read a chapter of the book *How To Win Friends and Influence People* once a day and take accountability for the faults and flaws of your organization while actively sacrificing your own time and energy to fix them
2. Aspirational: Before I realized the importance of leadership and influence I blamed everyone else and really didn't care much about the end result of what I was involved in. But after I learned, the relationships within our culture have dramatically increased and we've doubled our annual profits/\*insert your desired return\*.

3. Analytical: In order to learn you must first ask yourself why do you want to lead? After you figure out your why, you then must ask yourself what you need to do to be a leader and win the respect of your colleagues to be in a better position. Then you should do steps 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.
4. Anthropological: Here's a story about how Jackie Robinson led America and the MLB to get over itself and influenced a lot of the same people who once hated him for no reason, etc

All these are examples of ways we can take one topic or piece of content and repurpose it into different types of content through whatever mediums we decide to use. Creating content can be a very time consuming process, not to mention the toll it takes on the mind and even sometimes the self esteem. If coming up with your own ideas and creating content out of them, or if feeling the pressure of being vulnerable with this judgmental ass world is too daunting, it's fine—remember, like the late great Nipsey Hussle reminded us, issa marathon. No need to recreate the wheel and put yourself under unnecessary pressure. You taking the initiative to do this provides enough pressure to push through as it is. Use other people's ideas, steal like an artist.

Use magazine titles. Use the latest news story that your timeline is arguing about. Use that life changing event you experienced back in elementary without mentioning that it's about you. Use that line you liked from the latest Hulu series you watched. You can talk about leadership lessons from the new episode of Scandal. You can get ideas from the outrageous BuzzFeed headlines/lists. The ideas are out there and within you. The more you engage in the creative process the more natural it will feel and the more you'll learn the tips and tricks of your mind and yourself to be able to navigate this tedious process. It takes work. There will be resistance. But it's not impossible at all. Resistance has often been the sign that I struck gold—or can strike gold if i continue in spite of it—in my experience.

After creating, repurposing and multiplying our content, it's time to test it out. Which brings me to my next point, we owe our audience everything. \*cue corny acceptance speech\* “Without our audience, we wouldnt be here” and it's true. What this means is we have to find a way to calibrate our vision and strategy with the feedback our audience/followers list gives us. This doesn't mean to abandon your strategy and plan if your audience asks for something outside of what you initially provide. This means that we should use our feedback loops as ways to become better. The people you serve will tell you how to serve them if they feel like you care. It's important for us to seek this feedback, even feedback we may not necessarily agree with, to both understand what others think and what emotions they respond to but also to better create, understand, and articulate our own perspective. “Be stubborn on your vision but flexible on the details.” A definite repurposing strategy is to double down on what your audience tells you works. That's gold. You can also repurpose content you've already released. Testing ideas by posting samples on social media never hurt anyone either—expand on what people respond to and re-think what they don't.

The important thing is to simplify everything. The complexity of something does not mean that it inherently has more valuable information. That correlation is a falsehood that comes from academia. Simplifying the solution and information for your target is key. People want to learn. They aren't unaware of your solution bc they don't want it, are too lazy or are too stupid. Not in the slightest bit. Nobody knows what they don't know. And due to human beings having families to provide for and bills we typically have to spend time working a job to pay, we don't exactly have all the time in the world to learn everything you know about how we can improve our situation. That's your role. To get us the information we need to free ourselves in an accessible, simplified way that we can apply and run with.

Another important use of social media is getting in front of potential new followers--especially for someone who is just getting started on social media. Someone with a new account with no followers can post the most valuable content in the world, but if there's nobody there to consume it, be impacted/transformed by it, and act on it—it doesn't do us much good. So here are some ways I've learned to get in front of potential followers to grow your follower base.

When people like Kanye West tweet, the impressions go through the roof. One strategy I've learned is to set your post notifications on to whatever popular accounts whose follower base typically aligns with the interests of your brand. Then, when that account tweets, rush to tweet something relevant to the tweet that provides value in the language of your brand. It doesn't necessarily have to be an offer or a "tooting of your horn", it could simply be engaging content that inspires other people who see the tweet to be interested in learning more about your account. Same goes for viral tweets. Getting to them in a prompt manner and creating engaging content/ideas inspiring scrolling spectators to take a deeper look increases the chances of them following you. It's a numbers game, peep the law of large numbers.

Also, simply leaving valuable comments on popular posts/accounts you follow is another method. It's a social media platform for a reason. I had to learn this because I don't see myself as a very social person so I assumed everyone else is the same. However that's not the case. People want to be social. They look to be engaged with and they want to engage with others. The only real suggestion I have to add to this is to make sure you're being authentic. It can be easy to get caught up in doing what works aka doing what other people respond to/want you to do. There's a delicate balancing act in sticking to your vision and being flexible on what works and what doesn't. The quickest way to burnout and feeling unfulfilled is to focus only on what other people expect from you. However on the other hand you can't be so self-indulgent that you completely dismiss your invested audience's wants and needs as less important or as "haters" when they give you feedback. There's a time, place, and form for everything.

Another way to get new followers is spending 5 minutes commenting on pages/accounts you don't follow before posting your own piece of content. This doesn't mean the cliché copy and paste posts. I highly believe in personalization. It doesn't have to be a book, just make it relevant to the person. Nobody wants to be treated like a robot. I myself ignore every chain letter or message that smells like copy and paste to me. Be personal. Be authentic. Showing love before posting your own content increases the likelihood of them following you. If they see



your comment then go to your page and see brand new content that speaks to their experience it may inspire them to follow you.

In addition I want to share a tactic I've found to be valuable not because it necessarily generates more followers but bc it generates more value for the people who already follow me. When someone likes a piece of my content and decides to comment on it. I sometimes like it or favorite it, then wait a couple hours to respond back with a comment thanking them or engaging with them. Why? Speaking for myself, when I'm at the gym playing pickup and come back to my phone after a couple of hours, that little hit of dopamine I get when I see notifications waiting on me makes me feel good. That's the simple goal here. As opposed to doing it all at once which could very well still be valuable, I try to spread it out when appropriate in hopes of it being more impactful, even if only by a little bit.

Of course being controversial or trying to go viral are also ways to gain followers but those aren't my style so I won't speak too much on those methods. Not to mention, rarely do viral tweets end up in more followers. Quality over quantity. On the other hand, providing actionable advice may not get a lot of followers but it does create high quality followers who are looking for information to use and act on and of course essentially, pay for.

Getting followers comes down to positioning ourselves as a leader within one of these spheres of human desire:

1. Health
2. Wealth
3. Relationships
4. Success
5. Peace of mind

Establishing your authority is essential by showing people that your solution works and this is really who you authentically are/what your brand is. What makes that even more effective is to be able to reinforce that authority with credibility, showing that there are people who agree with your claim.

Making a claim is only valuable when other people reinforce that claim for you from experience. Unless you're looking for an audience that doesn't care about the truth—which I'm 100% not in the business of. A simple system of doing this looks like the following example:

1. I am \_\_\_\_\*insert what you do/your brand does\*
2. This is what I'm working on/worked on, \*include some specific information required to accomplish what you do that only people who know what you do would know\*
3. UGC (User Generated Content), show other people reinforcing what you claimed and showed. This can be done through screenshots, testimonials, live event footage, or user generated content that they decided to share with you bc of how dope your brand is

Lastly, I want to leave you 4 actions you can take to grow your follower base o social media:

1. Create high value, shareable content consistently
2. Treat current followers like individuals
3. Engage communities where your target audience is
4. Collab w other creators

Writing captions—as simple as it seems—have provided me with more than a few headaches and a fear share of anxiety. When writing any type of copy—whether it's on your website, in your emails, or in a social media caption—it's important to ask ourselves, what is the purpose of what I'm doing? What am I trying to accomplish? In all actuality, as much as I hate it and possibly you hate it—most copy we write on social media as a brand is to persuade and influence. With that being said, here's a simple template I try to follow when writing captions—or any kind of copy for that matter. Following this formula allows me to organize my thoughts into a digestible structure that I can fill in with my ideas for the content I want to produce. It can be summarized into an acronym, AIDA, which stands for:

1. Attention/Awareness
2. Interest
3. Desire/Decision
4. Action

The first step is drawing attention and awareness—a hook if you will. People need to know who you are and that you exist, or that this idea that could be valuable to them exists. Oftentimes I do this in the form of a question that I know will resonate with who I'm writing for. It can also come in the form of some major claim or outrageous statement that pulls people in to read more of what you have to say.

The second step is generating interest. Getting them interested by offering more information on the hook you gave them. I dive a bit deeper into that initial idea that acted as the hook to give people something to chew on with some substance. Those who are interested move on to the next step—or down the funnel to decision/desire.

This is where I get to what I'm posting about or offering. Here I'll explain the podcast episode I'm posting about or I'll provide an offer that's as frictionless as possible. What does that mean? A frictionless offer or low friction offer is an offer that provides double, triple or even quadruple the value that it costs someone. It shouldn't cost much at all. It should be an offer that's a no brainer for your target market. This offer is not to make money that you can live on. This offer is for you to qualify people who are 1. Interested and 2. Willing to take the next steps with your brand—whether that be taking your offer or deciding to watch your video or listen to your podcast.

Lastly of course, action. This is the call to action that we talked about. We've drawn them in, got them interested, provided a desirable offer that gives them the opportunity to make a decision, then we show them how to make the decision if that's what they decide to do.

Again, I use this model as a frame of reference for damn near all the copy that I write in my system. And while we're here—I believe copywriting is one of the most effective skills someone can learn. Understanding how to communicate through storytelling/writing is effective in so many ways and so many people need someone and/or will need someone who can achieve this.

## **CONCLUSION**

Dont be entitled. Nobody owes it to you as a creator to respond to your work. Just bc you build it does not mean they will come, and trust me they won't if that's all you do—unless you're Drake. Understand that this is a long game. There's a lot of work to be put in to make this work. One way I remind myself of this is by being mindful of the fact that I need to get better everyday. No matter what responses, love, hate, or feedback I got yesterday or how good or bad things went, I need to put my head down and get back to work today. Nobody owes it to you to share anything of yours. Nobody owes it to you to buy anything—besides we're doing this to help people right? Right. So why not focus your energy on finding people who want to be helped, gaining more and more knowledge to actually help them and making better content to communicate to them the you can help them. Stay focused on the goal and stay cognizant of your intention.

Take care of your self and your mental health. This social media shit is a trip. The amount of dopamine it gives us is in no way normal for our human brains. Use social media don't let it use you. Find your rhythm in your own discipline and stick to it. Only you know what's good for you. One thing that's helped me is to be mindful of my spirit throughout the day. When I wake up and jump straight on my phone and start scrolling my day starts off terribly and it's a steep uphill battle for the rest of the day to gain control back of my mind. What's helped me is to stay off of my phone for the hour I wake up. Replacing this early morning scrolling with reading a book, journaling, reading over my goals/principles, doing push ups, practicing mindfulness, doing training/taking courses—all these things start my day off in such a better tone than scrolling through social media. The thing about social media is it rushes millions of thoughts into our heads that aren't even ours. This throws me off completely. This is one thing that I really try to focus on bc if I don't stay mindful of my time and focus on disciplining my self and my mind, I can get lost in the scroll real quick and before I know it I've wasted precious time I could've used to do my work or get ahead or really just be more productive. Like I said, use social media don't let it use you.

Be patient. This takes time. You'll figure out your flow and style. This is a long game. Being successful is the ability to sustain a high tolerance for failure. Failure is an essential ingredient to success, not the opposite of it. I no longer hope to get to a place where I can't fail, my only goal is to fail better. I can't emphasize enough how important it is to get rid of all those thoughts about how perfect you have to be and how much you're not there yet. This game requires you to shed that veiled insecurity we justify to ourselves by calling it perfectionism. Take the time to know your why and continue to remind yourself of it. That's why knowing your why is so important. The game has lows and it has highs. Most people quit when they hit the lows and

things aren't going how they want them to. Me personally—I would've been quit had I not taken the time to look within myself and be real with myself by asking—why am I doing this? What's my intention in all this? All the superficial shit goes out the window when shit get real. Again as the late great philosopher Nipsey Hussle once said, "when it hits the fan you get to find out who you are".