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Triple Your Online Audience Organically

How to 3× Your Target Audience in 1 Month without Advertising

"Getting an audience is hard. Sustaining an audience is hard. It demands a consistency of thought, of purpose, and of action over a long period of time."
- Bruce Springsteen

Why Grow Your Audience?

The question *"Why grow your audience?"* might seem like a silly one to ask, after all, it is basic human nature to want to be noticed. This is even more important when running a business, as getting noticed is the first step in a customer's conversion from being a stranger to purchasing your product or service.

We have audiences in the physical world, those we meet up with, run into, and have been a part of our pasts. We also have audiences online:

• Twitter followers

• Facebook friends

• YouTube viewers

• LinkedIn connections

• Pinterest followers

• Instagram followers

The list of social networks is constantly growing, and without a dedicated team of marketers, it is impossible to optimize each one of these channels. What we are left with, then, is the need to optimize our online marketing strategy. We need to seek out the channels that will help us realize our

business goals, whether those are attaining new clients, brand recognition, or promoting a message.

A recent study reveals that businesses with over 1,000 Twitter followers generate more than 800 new website visitors a month[1]. Now, a website visitor is only as good as a conversion on your site, but that's the subject for another eBook. For now, let's focus on how to get that 1,000 Twitter followers, and beyond that, how to multiply that number over and over again, and extend that reach to all of your social network profiles.

Your Profile: The Elevator Pitch

An elevator pitch is a summary of your business offering that you can theoretically explain in 30 seconds, or about the amount of time you have with someone on an elevator. To be honest, I've never pitched my services to anybody on an elevator (the music is just too good to interrupt), but I have had to explain myself to someone who doesn't have much time to hear what I have to say.

Our social media profiles are the online equivalent of an elevator pitch. For example, whenever someone clicks sees my Twitter profile, they are provided with a profile photo, a cover photo, a short blurb of text:

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[1] http://offers.hubspot.com/2013-state-of-inbound-marketing

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When creating the text for your online profile, put yourself in the shoes of your target customer. What would they be interested in knowing about you? What types of people do they like to connect with? If you had one sentence to share with them, what would it be?

Now, the above example is a Twitter profile, but the same can be applied to any social network's profile. For my Twitter profile above, I included the following text:

> *Software Engineer, #Micropreneur & #Bootstrapper. Co-founder of @harpoonapp with @shapingthepage. Blogging at ryanbattles.com.*

The first sentence was included to let people know what I'm interested in, and what type of entrepreneur I am. With these words I've noticed that my following has grown mostly with other entrepreneurs and developers. I then go on to mention that I co-founded a product, and provided a quick link to that product's profile on Twitter, as well as that of my co-founder. This not only gives credibility to me as an entrepreneur, but also encourages connection with someone else my new followers might want to connect with. Finally, I

provide a link to my blog, with the goal that people will click through and find the content worth engaging with.

Note about Twitter: Even though my profile says "ryanbattles.com" outside of my profile description, for many views within Twitter, your profile description is the only text provided, so I have added a link to my page there as well in order to increase exposure.

At this point I feel a little sheepish harping on and on about what I did with my Twitter profile, but I share this example because tweaking my profile, and using the methods that I'm about to explain in the next sections, I've increased my Twitter following by over 3 times within a month. This has led to many more retweets, mentions, visitors to my blog, email subscriptions, and even search result improvements. The steps that I took are not hard to repeat, and I share them with you in hopes that you too will be able to experience the boost in engagement with your business.

Getting Noticed

So, now that you've tweaked some social media profiles to cater to your intended audience, it's time to get some eyeballs on those profiles. Fortunately, social networks make this easy with their notifications systems.

Connection-based Social Networks

Connection-based social networks (ones where you have to mutually connect to each other) like Facebook and LinkedIn send notifications whenever you request to connect with another person. With these networks it is generally bad practice to spam request connections with people that you don't actually

know, but that doesn't mean that you can't connect with strangers, you just have a plan a little better.

With connection-based networks you should have a reason for connecting with someone you don't yet know, and your request message goes a long way in helping with that.

For example, on LinkedIn, I've connected with a few targeted individuals with something like the following:

> *Dear [connection],*
>
> *I've stumbled across your name a few times recently while [reading blog posts, engaging with community groups, reading my friend's tweets, whatever] and I would like to have you join my professional network. I enjoy connecting with like-minded individuals and hope you'll consider this request.*
>
> *Sincerely,*
>
> *Ryan Battles*

The majority of folks who have received that letter from me have gone ahead and accepted the connection request.

The biggest benefit of growing a following with connection-based networks is that those people are the only ones that will ever see your updates (since most of these networks keep the status updates visible only to your connections), with the exception being if someone "likes" or "reposts" your content to their connections…which can be a great way to get introduced to new audiences.

Follow-based Social Networks

For follow-based social networks, growing an audience is a little easier. For example, on Twitter, people receive notifications whenever:

• You follow them

• You favorite their tweet

• You add them to a list

• You indirectly mention them in a tweet

• You direct mention them

While I would not recommend direct mentioning people for marketing purposes, the rest is fair game if used appropriately.

First of all, following people is one of the easiest way for people to come take a look at your profile. In many cases, if your interests align with theirs, they will follow you back. Tools like SocialBro[2] and Just Unfollow[3] allow you to search for Twitter users with certain keywords in their profile description, or people who follow another Twitter user that might be similar to you. In my case, I guessed that people who were followers of a particular podcast, or a particular conference, would also be interested in connecting with my profile. I made sure when I started following people from a particular account, that my Twitter profile matched up to the same set of interests.

It is important to mention that I didn't do anything to deceive anyone, I just tweaked which foot I put foreword. For example, if I am targeting developers, I

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[2] http://www.socialbro.com/

[3] http://www.justunfollow.com/

say that I am a developer and entrepreneur. If I am targeting bloggers, I say that I am a blogger and entrepreneur. These subtle changes to my profile made people way more likely to go ahead and follow my profile, and click through to my website.

One of the negatives of following a bunch of people with Twitter is that others can see your follow count. Having 1,000 followers when I follow 20,000 people actually shows that most people find me not worth following. Fortunately Just Unfollow and SocialBro make unfollowing those who don't follow you back a simple process. I would just recommending giving people about a week to see that you've followed them, check you out, and make the decision to follow back or not. I should also mention that Twitter has banned people for mass follow/unfollow behavior, so if you do use this tactic, keep it to a limited number of people per day (about 100), and most importantly, make sure you really are targeting people who would be interested in your content, and who would find value in following you (and you find value in following them).

To get around the whole follow/unfollow limitation, you can leverage Twitter lists to a similar effect. SocialBro claims list management features, but I've personally been using TacticsCloud[4] to search for Twitter users, and then export them to a list.

For example, I wanted to target bloggers in Ohio to connect with. I created a list called "Bloggers in Ohio", by filtering keyword "Blogger", and location "OH OR Ohio". This notified a few hundred Twitter users that they had been added

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[4] https://tacticscloud.com/

to a list, and many of them followed me back. In fact, many of them even found the list useful and followed the list itself!

Utilizing mentions and favoriting tweets can be a great tactic for engaging with purpose, which I will explain next.

Engage With Purpose

Every trick in the book to gain followers on social networks won't do you any good if you can't engage that audience, and provide relevant content. You will find that many people will unfollow you or "mute" you if you come across as spam, or if what you are sharing isn't relevant to their interests. This is why it is important to target your audience carefully with the previous steps.

So how do you engage with purpose?

I used to think that this meant sharing relevant links that you find interesting. Harnessing the power of Buffer[5] I was sending out about 10 useful articles throughout the day. While a handful of people let me know that they loved the content that I was sharing, some people also let me know that it was a bit too much article sharing. People wanted something more genuine, and less automated.

I do still share articles, but I make sure that I add a personal message to each one, typically mentioning the author's twitter handle so they will be notified, and others can follow them if they find the article interesting.

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[5] http://bufferapp.com

I have discovered that my audience also responds well to quotes. I tweeted this quote from Seth Godin and it was retweeted and favorited by so many that it has become one of my top performing tweets:

> *"You are not your resume, you are your work."* -Seth Godin

People love to share quotes. You can use a service such as Share as Image[6] to create graphical quotes for people to share on Pinterest as well as any other social network for even more engagement.

By far the best type of post that you can share on social networks is one that genuinely helps someone else out. Why is this? Call it karma, reciprocity, or serendipity. It just really works.

You can help people out by reposting something that they have posted, by sharing a link to their article, book, presentation, website, etc. You can help people out by watching for questions, and providing them with an answer.

By helping people out, they just might start to like you. If they like you, they just might help you out by sharing something that benefits you. This might not even have to happen on the same social network. Someone might happen to mention you to a friend in restaurant, even though you helped them out on LinkedIn.

An important thing to keep in mind with this is that it is not like keeping score. You simply need to be helpful, and then get on with your life. Don't expect anything in return or you will be frustrated. Don't worry, your efforts, if genuine, are not in vain.

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[6] https://shareasimage.com

Let's Keep in Touch

Growing your audience is just one part of launching and growing a product-based business. Over the years, I've discovered how to validate, build, and market a product with the goal of replacing my income from clients and employers, with recurring income from a product.

If there's anything I can do to help you out with your next step as an entrepreneur, shoot me an email at ryanbattles@gmail.com. I'd also love to connect on Twitter: @ryanbattles. Let me know that you read this eBook so I can be sure to follow back!