

Effortless English

Effortless Success Chapter 4

Hello, welcome to Chapter 4 of Effortless Success, the e-book. Let's get started. So you have figured out the problem you want to solve, you've got your demo product or service, and you're advertising now. Hopefully you're doing niche advertising and you're doing permission marketing. Now if you're doing all of those things, you should be getting some customers, yay! Right, that's the beginning. Now maybe you don't have many, maybe you're making very, very, very little money. That's ok because this is really where you go from demo to successful business. Demo is the starting point, you've got your permission marketing, you've got your niches, and you've got a few customers coming in. So what's next? What's the next step?

Well the next thing you need to do is create a community. You need to create a community of customers. First let's answer the question of why. Why do you need to create a community of customers? Why not just they come, they buy from you, and they leave, yay, and that's all? Well because you need a community for communication, for connection. You need a community so that you, the business owner or you the employee in a company, can learn from the customers. Without a community of customers, you can't learn, you can't improve.

You have to have a way or ways for customers to connect with each other and with you. That's how you learn quickly. You learn what they like, you learn what they don't like. You learn what you're doing well; you learn what you're not doing well. You also start to learn who your best customers are. You learn which ones are really excited and great and love what you do and they're passionate about what you're doing, even if your demo is not so great quality, but it connects with them for some reason and you'll start to see patterns. You'll say, "Oh wow, younger, single guys really seem to like this product a lot." A lot of times it will surprise you.

You won't even have thought about it before but you'll start to notice certain kinds of people really seem to like your product and another thing you'll notice unfortunately is that you'll find groups of customers who really are not so good. They complain all the time. They have a very negative attitude. They really do not fit your service or your product. Well that's ok too because you're learning something. You're learning that's not a good niche for me and hopefully you find some patterns and you realize, ok, certain type of people really don't seem to like what I'm doing but other kinds of people really love it. So of course you're going to focus on the people who really love it and you're going to try and reach them more and more and those are the ones you're going to listen to.

Don't listen to the complainers who are just complaining and being very, very negative. There's a big difference between someone that's just always complaining, always being negative just to get attention just because they're unhappy and there are a lot of people like that in the world and some of them are going to be your customers. My best advice to you is ignore them. Don't waste your time with those people. They can never be pleased and you don't want them as customers. You do not want to attract more people like that so don't listen to them. The people you want to listen to are the ones who are generally very positive, very excited. They love what you're doing but then they

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give you some suggestions how you can improve or they might tell you something's not working and you'll know the difference. It's very obvious which people are generally positive and exciting but giving you good feedback and which people are just generally negative complainers. So don't listen to the negative complainers but do absolutely listen to your best customers, the ones who are the most excited, the most interested, the most energetic.

Now those guys are going to give you great suggestions. They're going to tell you, "Oh, I love this, this is great." Do more of that; whatever they say they really love, do more, do it better. They're also going to give you ideas for improvement, "Oh, why don't you do this? Why don't you do that? Try this, try this." Well, listen to them. Take some of their ideas and just try them and again, do it in a demo form. It doesn't have to be perfect and finally they're going to give you ideas for improvement. They're going to tell you little ways and big ways that you can improve your product, your service, and even your marketing and that's the magic.

If you just keep listening to them and you just keep trying the things they suggest any maybe try your own ideas also and then tell them, "Hey I have a new idea, I'm trying it, what do you think," and they'll give you their opinion and if they get really excited, then you know, "Aha, this is a good one." For all this magic to happen and this is really where the magic happens, this is really where the success happens in a business. It's this process of a community of customers working with you to make your product or your service better and better and better and better and better and better, constantly improving forever.

If you can create a community with your customers, if your customers become part of your company in many ways and you're not paying them, they're paying you in fact, but if you can still get them as part of your business and you know in fact you do pay them, you pay them with appreciation, you pay them with attention, you pay them with maybe some bonuses, some freebies. I give for my very, very, very best customers; I usually give them my new lessons for free. So if I have a new lesson set coming out and I just finished it, I'll often send it off to my really, really great customers, the ones who are always helping and giving advice and they're on my forums all the time and they're doing great things. They get my lessons for free; just a secret there, but only the very best ones.

So how do you do it? I guess that's the next question right? How do you create this community of customers? How do you get customers joining in with you in partnership with you? Well there are a lot of different ways and some are very low-tech and simple and others are more high-tech and still pretty easy to do. Let's talk about the low-tech ones first. Let's imagine you have an actual physical business, meaning it's not an internet business. You have a building and you sell something and I'll use an example of a small used bookstore, a little tiny used bookstore.

Now if you know anything about the publishing industry and about the bookstore business, you know that little small independent bookstores are in big trouble. They're being destroyed. They're being put out of business everywhere, especially in large countries where they have these big chain bookstores coming in like Borders or Barnes and Noble and the other thing that's destroying them is the internet, Amazon.com. I have to say I love Amazon.com because it's so easy to find books there. But because of Amazon.com and because of these giant bookstores that are coming up all over the world, little small independent bookstores, man they're dying. They are dying. Here in San Francisco, they're closing, all of them. They're all going out of business one by one.

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Except, I know of one exception, a very interesting exception in Kyoto, Japan there's this little tiny bookstore called Green E Books and they have been around for years and years and as far as I know, I don't live in Kyoto, but as far as I know, they keep sending me emails so I think they're still alive and still surviving and I think the reason is they have created a community of customers. They've done it in a low-tech way. How did they do it? What they did is they made their bookstore a community gathering place. They made it a place for people to come and meet and join, not just buy books and leave. How did they do that? Well they have parties, every month I think.

I don't know, I'm on their email list because when I travel to Kyoto and I got on their email list and they just keep sending me emails. They're always sending me emails about these parties. They're always having these crazy fun parties, wear weird colors or costumes or whatever. But that helps create community right? That gets people coming to the bookstore. Now the bookstore is not just a bookstore where I buy books. Now it's the place where I meet all my friends and have cool parties. It's this really interesting place that I like to go and just hang out. That's what their customers think. They also have speakers. They invite special speakers but not just normal kind of speakers like maybe a big bookstore would do. They get really interesting maybe even strange people to speak at their bookstore.

So now the bookstore is a learning place. It's a place you go to hear interesting people talk about interesting ideas and meet other interesting people in the audience. So the owners of Green E Books, the managers of Green E Books, well of course at these events they socialize with these people, with their customers, and of course over time they get to know them and the customers are going to make suggestions, "You should do this, you should do that." They're going to tell them what kind of books they like, what kind of things they're looking for. In addition, they create an emotional connection to the bookstore with their customers.

Now it's not just the place where you buy books because if it's just buying books, well they can get on Amazon, they can go to a big bookstore. They probably will because it will be cheaper. But if they have an emotional connection to his little bookstore, if it's this cool funky place where they know the people who work there or they know the managers, the employees, the owners, where they go for all these interesting parties, well then Green E Books probably is the first place they go when they want to find a certain kind of used book and that's another one of their secrets.

They are a niche bookstore. They don't try to sell everything because they're too tiny. They sell books of interest to foreigners, to travelers. They have a lot of books in English, things like that. So that's one way you can create a community in a very low-tech way. If you have a physical space, your store, make your store a cool little gathering place. Don't just sell products. Of course, with a restaurant or bars or things like that, they already have this kind of social idea.

But you could even do it with a hardware store. I've known of little tiny hardware stores, I'm trying to think which town, I think it was in my hometown of Athens, Georgia, there was this little tiny hardware store and again small hardware stores are in trouble because these huge hardware stores are putting them out of business. But this little one had all these cool little classes that they taught. They were constantly offering classes about how to build, I don't know what they taught, how to build chairs, how to fix up your house, how to paint your room.

They made their little hardware store into an education place. They created community. They start-

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ed having regular contact with this community of customers and of course the kind of customers that come to classes to fix up their house are the same kind of people who buy tools and paint, right, because they're going to be doing something to their house. They need what you're selling. So they created a community. You can do it with almost, if hardware businesses can do it, almost any kind of business can do this. So you create social events at your local business and you start interacting and socializing with your customers. That's one way. That's the very low-tech easy way. But don't stop there. I encourage you to do a lot of different things.

Another very, very fantastic way to create your community is with an internet forum. Now most of you probably know an internet forum is a place where people go and then they discuss various topics and so the forum usually has some kind of focus. So my business has an effortless English forum. There's a forum for all of my members. So they go there and discuss things about learning English and they also just discuss general life things. A lot of them write personal diaries in English of course so they're practicing their English but they write about their lives, what's happening in their lives. It helps them practice English but it also helps them get to know each other.

They learn about each other that way and over the last year or so a lot of them have been making friends with each other and in fact now these forums are starting to grow and grow more and more and now one of our members, one of our super members in fact, is planning a gathering, a party in Europe. So a lot of the members are going to go and meet in Europe and have a party and I'm gonna go and meet them. So that's great.

So this community is developing, it started on the internet but now it's actually going to happen live, in person. Maybe this, I hope this will continue growing and we'll start having all these little parties and gatherings with our customers all around the world and the customers are planning it. I'm not planning it. This all started with this so this is a real community of customers and they are doing it. So we are working together as a team. So get some forums started. It's really easy. You can do a search on the internet for free forums or forum hosting, something like that. There are several different companies and services you can use. But just start some forums on topics related to your business and then tell your customers about the forums. So every time they buy something from you, either email or give them information about your forums. Say, "Oh you're a customer so you can get on these forums.

You can ask questions, help each other out," and of course you read those and that's where you can get a lot of ideas. You can also write on the forums yourself. I do this all the time now. Whenever I have an idea I'll put it on the forums and I'll say, "Hey I think I might do this," or, "Hey, I'm going to try this," and then I always get a lot of customers, they'll tell me their opinion, "This is great or this is stupid," or sometimes it's a mix. But it's great for me and it's great for them because they are now strongly influencing the new products that we're making. For example, this one right here, this Effortless Success, this success mini-album for English, is a result of my members asking for it. Business English was a big, big, big request on my forums. They were constantly asking me for business English and so that's why I created these lessons and they've requested several other kinds of lessons which we're also working on.

So forums are another way to create a community. Another way to create a community is with a blog, B-L-O-G. Most of you know about blogs by now. You can go to blogger.com and get a free blog and a blog is kind of like a diary online but it's a focused diary. The best ones are focused

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diaries, especially if you're in business. What it is, is you the owner, the manager, or maybe even you as an employee of your company, well you're going to write about things related to your business. You can give advice for example. So, on my blog I write about advice, sometimes I give advice about learning English. You can also make announcements about upcoming new products or you can just write about your ideas for new products or new services.

You can also share problems that you're having. It's a great way to communicate, "Oh we're sorry, we're having problems with this product or service. We're trying to fix it." So it's kind of a way to communicate with people. So it's basically a website that's like a diary and everyday or every week or every month, whenever you want to, you write about your ideas related to your business. Now the cool part about this, the part that makes it a community is that there is a "Comment" function. So people, hopefully your customers or potential customers, they read your little blog article and then they can comment, they can give their opinion about what you wrote. Sometimes it's negative, sometimes it's positive, but it's still interesting to see what people say, how they respond, and over time, more and more customers will start to read your blog and more people will comment. Maybe in the beginning not many, but eventually more, and more, and more and this is another way you get feedback, you get ideas for improving your demo business and making it better, better, better, better.

There's lots of different ones; those are kind of the major ones I think. You can also do things like MySpace, I'm sure a lot of you have heard of MySpace. You could create a MySpace page for your business. I don't do this. I don't know why I really don't like MySpace for some reason. I just don't enjoy using it so I don't do it but a lot of people do so if you like it, try it and get a MySpace page and again your customers can become your friends, they can choose you as a friend, you can choose them as friends and then they can comment to you about ideas, suggestions, etc.

So I think you've got the major big idea and here's the major big idea of this chapter. The major big idea is this; do not have a wall between your business and your customers. Rather, make your customers part of your business. Create a community of customers and you also be a member of that community. By doing this, you will learn tremendously and you will improve your product or service much, much, much faster because you're not working alone. You're not even just working with the people in your company. Now you have all those customers out there helping you or at least the best ones and that's amazing.

Now if you'd like to read more about this, I do suggest a few books. One of my favorite books on this general topic is a book called Wikinomics, strange word, and it's spelled W-I-K-I-N-O-M-I-C-S, Wikinomics, and Wikinomics is about this idea of large groups of people, customers, helping to create your business. So it's not just you, not just your employees. It's your customers working together with you, creating together. Another interesting book is called Citizen Marketers and that's the idea again that your customers are your citizens and they can help you not only improve your product or service, they can help you improve your marketing. In fact, they can even do your marketing for you if they really love you and they really feel part of a community. They will start to do your marketing for you. So create a community, low-tech, high-tech, both, doesn't matter.

But your task now is create a community of customers. Alrighty, see you next time.