UNLOCKING MARKETING SECRETS

SECRET SAUCE

THE ULTIMATE GROWTH HACKING GUIDE

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SECRET SAUCE

AUTHORS' NOTE

We'll use the words *we* or *I* throughout the book, without obvious reference to who is writing each section. We (Austen Allred and Vin Clancy) are both the authors, and we'd like to keep it simple.

To Feleicia, for standing with me no matter what's on the horizon.

—Austen

For all those at the start of their journey. Use this and free yourself.

—Vin

INTRODUCTION

We're going to let you in on a little secret: most marketing and growth hacking books are worthless. They're full of fluff and marketing-speak and a whole lot of useless advice that, if heeded, will leave you twisting in the wind indefinitely, wondering what you're doing wrong. It won't actually be your fault; it will be your teacher's.

Don't waste your time.

The truth is that marketing is pretty easy once someone tells you what you should be doing. The only problem is that no one wants do that. There's too much money in selling books about the veneer without ever giving up the actual secret sauce.

This book is not like those books, and it will probably be very different from what you're used to. This isn't a marketing book. It's a tutorial. It's a step-by-step, systematic dismantling and dissection of every channel and practice that *actually works*. Almost everything you'll read in this book is something anyone can do with a little bit of effort and without a significant marketing budget. When someone comes to you and says, "I have a new app, but I don't know how to get users," you will not only have a dozen different strategies that could work, but you'll also know exactly what it takes to implement each one of them. That's our goal with this book: in-the-weeds, ultra-practical, and actionable steps and processes.

After you read this book you will be able to sell units of and get users signed up for *just about anything*.

A WORD OF WARNING

What you will read in the coming chapters can be used for good or evil. The constant dilemma of most marketers is determining at what point something becomes "spam" or detracts from the user experience. This is an important conversation to have with yourself and the people you work with. Most good marketing tactics changed one degree become spammy and abusive, even when they deliver short-term results. We don't like to talk or think about that reality much, because it makes all marketing feel slimy and dirty.

Our responsibility in this book will be only to tell you what works. But we will continually recommend doing things that work long-term, because we want you to build equity in the Internet, not churn and burn the feelings of those who matter most to your company. You decide where you draw the line for your particular product, and you are responsible for being the protector of your own user experience.

Growth Hacking Won't Fix All Your Problems

With great power comes great responsibility. Growth hacking is a steroid. Used at the right time and in the right way, it can be extremely powerful. However, relying *solely* on growth hacking can be dangerous. You need to understand that even the best growth hacking team in the world will not save you if you have a product that people don't actually want. You might be successful in the beginning, but if the product isn't there, growth hacks will only take you so far. Otherwise, you'll scale up growth as a Band-Aid to cover all of the "warts" on your product, only to find that the warts are now infected.

Your product is the base number, and growth hacking is the multiplier. There are times when fixing the product matters more than all the growth hacking in the world. And there are times when you need the multiplier. Carefully consider each.

But when you're ready to grow, you'll find that this book includes tactics and strategies you can develop

with, iterate from, and improve upon even as future technologies and social media platforms change. In the process of implementing these ideas, you will become a truly superb marketer.

IT WORKS

What you're about to read works. We've seen it take companies from the brink of death to success, and we've watched it take companies that are doing OK and make them explode. We've watched twenty-something kids turn these methods into thousands of dollars per month in affiliate marketing revenue, and we've watched people who thought the world didn't care about their product find their tribe.

In this book, you'll find only the methods we've seen work firsthand. We've done it ourselves, we've watched others do it, and we have results that show it. We are driven by data and cold-hard facts, not fantasies or dreams of hypothetical growth.

It Requires Work

In our marketing experience, ninety percent of the work is figuring out what will stick. We created this guide to save you from the guesswork. But there *is* still a level of work required. No one can avoid that, and if you function under the delusion that good marketing is effortless, you're reading the wrong book. It takes a *lot* of hard, sometimes slow, and sometimes monotonous work.

But if it brings success, we use it. If it doesn't, we don't waste our (or your) time.

PICK A CHANNEL AND NAIL IT

This book will present and break down several different channels, going through the strategies that make them work. We recommend that you pick one channel first, and get that channel working.

The natural tendency for most people who will pick up this book is to try to do five different things at once and to do them all halfway. These methods don't work well if they're done only part of the way. You have to be all in. You have to be thorough. There may be times when things become monotonous and boring. That generally means you're on the right path. Don't give up or try to outsource or automate too early. Even the best marketers spend an absurd amount of time doing repetitive and boring things to get what they're doing off the ground. It just comes with the territory. Do the work, and you will see the results. There's simply no way around it.

BEFORE YOU SCALE

It's the tendency of everyone who wants to growth hack to start at a very large scale. Before they do anything, they spin up two hundred accounts and forty proxies and get ready to spam everyone from their barber to Warren Buffett. Marketers are the worst culprits for diving in before they know if there are any alligators camouflaged in the deep end of the pool. They want to scale, scale, scale before they even know if what they're scaling works.

Stop. Slow down. Do everything *manually*. Even if it's brutally "make-you-want-to-stick-meat-skewers-in-your-eyes" boring. You have to watch every process intensely in the beginning to know what is working and what isn't. You need to have your ear to the ground to understand what the feedback is. Do a small experiment, make it work on a small scale, and iterate quickly. Once you've really nailed it (and only then), start to scale. And scale *big*.

On Automation

If you're going to automate a process, make sure you know *exactly* what needs to be automated. One of the most common mistakes we see is that people try to automate or "bot" the marketing process from the very beginning, but the technique they choose is just a little bit off. Growth hacking is like writing code. When it works, it's powerful, but even one wrong thing can cause your program to not compile or to crash.

Here's another metaphor for those who don't write code: Choosing the wrong technique is a little bit like choosing the wrong departure gate at the airport. You'll be thrilled with the ride, only to find you got on the wrong plane and ended up in Phoenix when you intended to go to Pittsburgh. Make sure your process is running well before you push it too far.

In this book we do not recommend using bots or automation or other manipulation that breaks terms of service. Those absolutely do work and do eliminate labor short-term. They even work in the long-term if your process is *just right*. However, we couldn't in good conscience recommend them, knowing that some people would take it too far into the realm of spam.

When considering the long-term work you're doing, remember that you're building equity in the Internet. Every follower you gain and every e-mail signup you earn doesn't automatically go away. If you manage these relationships correctly, it will be worth it.

And with that, we'll move on to our first channel and method, hopefully creating a framework that will help you think about *all* future marketing efforts—even the ones that aren't spelled out in this book.

THE THOUGHT PROCESS

Imagine this scenario: A friend has just come out with a line of custom neckties. He sewed them by hand using fabrics he imported, scavenged from vintage couches, and unburied at the bottom of fabric remnant racks. It's all very hipster, and since he plans to sell these ties for eighty dollars apiece, he needs marketing advice.

Where do you start? How do you gain an audience of people who want to buy eighty-dollar, hand-sewn neckties? (Spoiler alert: He opened his online store two weeks later and sold $4,000 worth of ties the first day, with zero marketing budget. It has been his full-time job ever since.)

The answer may surprise you: we used Instagram.

We'll take you through exactly what happened within that channel, but before we get there, let's examine the process of identifying a channel and a strategy. We need to focus on the thought process and methodology of knowing what network and strategy to use.

BEATING THE SYSTEM

Many people view growth hacking as beating some sort of system. They figure out how to beat *one* system or find something that works on *one* channel, and then, holding that hammer, start to look at everything as if it's a nail. You've probably noticed this if you've ever talked to a search engine optimization (SEO) agency. "You're a hot dog stand? What you need is SEO!"

That's the worst way to go about it. It works well enough to get results but not well enough to learn what will get great ones. It also works poorly enough that your cost of user acquisition will be too high to justify paying for it.

Instead of listing the networks you know how to beat, break every marketing effort down into these three steps:

1. Understand who your customer is.

2. Find out where people like your customer tend to congregate.

3. Figure out how to make contact with them where they are.

Even though we ended up selling $4,000 of a highly niched product on day one because of Instagram, we didn't start off knowing we would use Instagram. That came as we explored the growth mindset.

THE GROWTH MINDSET

User acquisition is, above all else, a mindset. The tactics will always vary according to the circumstances of the network or audience you're targeting, but the thought process is always similar. We want to take you through that process from the beginning. By the end, you'll be able to pick it apart and reverse engineer it. Doing so will make it work on any other network and with any other product or service. (This is probably

the most important chapter in this book, so pay attention.)

User Acquisition

At the highest level, user acquisition (paid or unpaid) consists of two steps:

1. Creating something desirable enough that some subset of the human population wants it

2. Getting in front of those people in the right way

Preparation

We approach every user acquisition problem the same way you should break down any complex problem.

The first step is to stop and slow down. Do not go nuts creating accounts, posting, and optimizing. Instead, grab a piece of paper and a pencil and start breaking things down into smaller pieces until you have a clear road map.

As you're thinking through this, do not inhibit or suppress your thought process. You'll want every idea on paper to sort out later, and your mind is the conveyor belt bringing those things to the table. Stream of consciousness is great here; just let thoughts flow wherever they may go.

We're actually going to take you through our thought process for the case study at the beginning of this chapter, and you'll see how selling $4,000 of custom-sewn neckties wasn't a surprise to us. It made sense that it happened that way.

LEARNING TO THINK LIKE JOHNNY P.

OK, so we have a bunch of neckties that are a little bit crazy. They're not really my style. Who wants to wear a necktie that's been made out of fabric someone pulled off a used couch?

Johnny P. would wear this—that's who. He's always wearing weird crap like that. Vests made from a water buffalo hide, clothes some grandmother hand-knit in Venezuela, color combinations that shouldn't look good together, but somehow do . . . Johnny is kind of a weirdo. But he also dresses really well. Sometimes it's over the top, but that kid must put a ton of time and effort into the way he looks. Probably drops a ton of cash too. Yeah, he's the perfect person for something like this.

What is Johnny's day like? Who does he hang out with? What websites does he visit?

I know he's really into the international film scene. He's kind of a "design-y hipster"—big beard, cardigan, teardrop hats and all. And most of his friends are the same way. I assume they all like similar stuff.

How would I describe what Johnny is into?

Johnny is really into creating things—*things* being "authentic" and "real," almost anticorporate. *Craftsmanship. Artisan.* Those are the words I would choose to describe Johnny's interests. To him things aren't just meant to be used; objects have a heart and soul. Everything is art. Indie music, TV shows that most people wouldn't care to watch, and so on.

When I think "Johnny," I think of wood grain and thick wool. I think of restored apartments in Soho. Very Thoreau, yet in a weird way very inner-city. New York or San Francisco. Urban-Rustic. He's what would happen if you mixed *Into the Wild* and *GQ*. Is *Americana* a word for that?

I hate this word, but I guess you could call him a hipster. I don't know much about hipsters. Johnny may be offended by that label. I should ask him about it.

But OK, back to Johnny. What does Johnny do? What's his daily routine? What websites does he use?

He's not really a big Facebook fan. Well, at least he talks about how he hates it. Who knows how much he really uses it. He's always making fun of Pinterest too, which is interesting. You would think he'd be the Pinterest type. Definitely an iPhone guy—almost to a "make fun of Android" extent. He loves design. I wonder if he studied design in college or if he's just into that stuff? Did he go to college?

Oh yeah, I know that Johnny is on Instagram—all. the. time. That's probably because he's into photography. Most of the art and design types are, to some extent. I wonder if that was the original audience of Instagram—really artsy people who got into using the photographic filters? It was kind of like Hipstamatic, I guess. Did Instagram come before or after Hipstamatic?

Instagram—that could be interesting. So assuming that Johnny is on Instagram, he probably has a bunch of friends that are too. After all, Johnny isn't everyone, it's just his type we're looking for. How could I find them?

After at least thirty minutes of this kind of brainstorming, we can start "digging."

The Digging

All right, let's find Johnny's account. Who does he follow?

It looks like he follows only friends and family. Or at least, these contacts seem to be friends and family. I'm not sure whether they all are or not; he has a lot of friends that look and act just like him. These could be celebrities in his world for all I know. I'll check if there are any big accounts later.

What words does he use and what kind of photos does he post? How can I find all these people?

I could just look at the people Johnny follows. I know he follows me, but I'm not the target audience. Who else does he follow? Who are the big hipster Instagram accounts? Not like "Humans of New York" hipster; that's too mainstream.

Here's a picture of a lake. Hashtags #lake. Very understated. Not much going there, and not much to work with.

Here's one with him in it. Oh wow, he's cobbling his own shoes. Uses the #artisan hashtag. Let's check that out. Eh, this looks mediocre at best. The first few photos are someone making chain mail, remodeling their house, and so on. Not as targeted as I would have thought. Back to Johnny.

Family photo. Next.

Oh, very interesting. He's got on a suit from Goodwill Industries—which fits him really well. #Dapper— that's very interesting. That's very *GQ*. Not as artisan-y, but let's check it out.

Wow. These guys are all obsessed with clothes. Weird clothes. This dude made a coat out of hair extensions. That might be too crazy for Johnny, but oddly enough, it seems to fit our niche. Whoa, how does this photo have thirteen thousand likes? Let's check this guy out.

Yeah, this one is the type. He and Johnny would hang out and talk about clothes. This is the person we want. If we look at his posts, the hashtag I see again and again is #dapper. And there are millions of Johnnys using that keyword. Here they are—the perfect market of people we want to reach.

Perhaps it is a little bit tedious, but if you take it apart and look at where the stream of consciousness started, you'll discover a few things.

ALWAYS START WITH THE TARGET MARKET

One of the biggest mistakes we see people make is they *start* with figuring out how they can get a large reach. That's bad news. Start by figuring out the type of person you want to reach and where that type of person congregates. From that point we can figure out how to target and get our message in front of them. You'll find that this is often the easy part. We have to know who they are and what they like. Sending an e-mail to 15 million random people will probably be less effective than engaging in a real conversation with a

dozen of these folks. We just avoided a lot of wasted time.

1. Get in the mindset of the people you want to reach.
     Making assumptions and playing around can get you a long way, especially in the initial stages. We can do some testing to figure out where we went wrong later. The most enlightening thing to do is talk with someone who falls in your target market. (Ideally, you are that person. But for now we'll just stereotype and try not to be *too* broad when doing so.)

2. Find where the people you want to reach congregate.
     You'll want as large a group of your target market as you can get. You'll also want that target market to be as specific as you can. You can't always do that in traditional ways, like checking out the accounts they follow or finding a big intentional group of them.
     One of our favorite ways to track groups is by focusing on a keyword or hashtag that a specific demographic has unintentionally adopted.

3. You'll realize you already know how to reach them.

The interesting thing about following this process is that in doing so, you incidentally figure out what your marketing should look like. In this example, the words that stick out are *artisan*, *dapper*, and *craftsmanship*. Now we can go into creation mode with a greater understanding of how to build a world that our target audience wants to be a part of.

CREATION MODE

Our end goal will be to get in front of the market we've discovered. But more important, we have to create a home where they can land once we find them.

Looking back at the process, you found the look and feel we were going for—words like *artisan*, *dapper*, and *craftsmanship*. Once we had that for guidance, actually creating the content came naturally.

Not surprisingly, these photos were some of those that got the most likes and followers. You can see they all went for that artisan, handcrafted feel.

And now we know that many of the Johnnys of the world congregate on Instagram—just ready for us to pick them up. You'll learn more about how we marketed to this "tribe" in the next chapter.

INSTAGRAM

N ow that we've identified Johnny P. and his friends, let's figure out how to get in front of them. In doing so, we'll work our way through some of the fundamentals of this network and learn how to break down a channel as a growth hacker.

SETUP

This is where the fun stuff really starts.

Let's get back to Johnny, our hipster-type artisan and his quirky neckties. We found a million people who we think may want what we're offering, and we created a few great photos that will resonate with that very specific audience. We spent a lot of time doing this—taking unique photos, tastefully posed and crafted. Nothing makes up for a lack of authenticity.

Now we need to optimize the funnel to help people get to a point of purchase.

CONVERSION BACKWARD

Once your market is identified, the next thing you should do is find the point of conversion—the point where you know you've won or "converted" a website visitor. (It may seem like we're missing an important step—the tactics—but trust me for now.)

What is your point of conversion? Is it a sale? Is it a new user? Maybe you know you've converted a website visitor when he or she downloads a free e-book or clicks on a video to watch. Once you identify the point of conversion, you can work backward.

Let's do that with Johnny P. and our neckties:

- **Final Step:** In this case, it's fairly obvious—the conversion is a sale. Someone puts a tie in their shopping cart and checks out. Simple enough.

- **One Step Back:** Walking back from there, we have to get someone to the point where they're browsing the selection of ties.

- **Two Steps Back:** Back up more, and we're at the point where they learn who we are.

That's a fairly straightforward conversion funnel, and working backward was relatively easy. As our marketing funnel grows and branches, the level of complexity of our marketing effort will increase. There will be more supporting work that doesn't always contribute to the end result. But in the beginning, we're going to be like a mosquito—built to score and nothing else.

Now that we've identified the point of conversion, we have to help people know who we are, get them to the point where they can check out our stuff, and make it easy for them to buy.

It doesn't get any simpler than that, but our chosen channel—Instagram—does provide a few challenges.

CHANNEL IDIOSYNCRASIES

Instagram is a little tricky because no links are allowed in the posts themselves. If you really want to send people to a specific link, it's common practice to add the comment "link in bio" to a photo and change the link in your Instagram profile.

So we'll put a link in the bio. But looking at this, we're still a little skeptical that people will automatically click through and buy. That's a big step to take for a first-time user.

We may have to warm someone up and add a little urgency. Instead of going for a straight Instagram-to-store conversion, let's add an interstitial step. It now looks like this:

- **Final step:** Someone visits the website, puts a tie in their shopping cart, and checks out.
- **One step back:** They get an e-mail that the store is open and they have a one-day, 10 percent off coupon.
- **Two steps back:** Someone sees our account, looks at some of the cool stuff we have, and notices our link. When they click on it, a pop-up screen appears, offering 10 percent off when the store opens if they drop in their e-mail.
- **Three Steps Back:** We need to figure out how to get someone to check out our Instagram account.

FINDING A NONINTRUSIVE TOUCH POINT

So we now have our customer identified, a point of conversion found, and a funnel to conversion created. All that's missing is our customers. We need to find a touch point where we can reach out to new people, make them feel welcome, and smoothly tip them into our conversion funnel. Generally, these touch points are already available on the network you've started exploring, even if they're less obvious. So let's think about the functionality contained within the network we're using and really dissect it.

There are five obvious ways I can get in touch with a Johnny using Instagram:

1. Tag him in a photo.
2. Comment on one of his photos.
3. Like his photos.
4. Send him a direct message.
5. Follow him.

It seems pretty simple, but this is actually enough of a framework to work from. We just have to utilize as many of these as we can to reach all of the Johnnys of the world as effectively as we can.

Let's walk through them one by one to identify the promising ones.

Tagging in a Photo

This one seems spammy to me, and you have to be following the person first in most cases. Next.

Commenting on Photos

Very promising. Could be pulled off but would definitely take a lot of time and effort. I don't know if I

have enough time to write a thousand unique comments, although that would work. Let's keep this in our back pocket and look for something a little more simple.

Liking Photos

Liking photos is easy, and no one hates it when others like their photos. It's possible the likes will be buried amongst dozens of other likes, but I know that I notice when people like my photos, and I'll often go check theirs out in return. This isn't a bad strategy to get someone's attention.

Sending a Direct Message

Sending a direct message would work, but it would take a really long time to personalize messages. We want this to be a quick action, since we're going to take it thousands of times.

Following

The most obvious and easiest way to grab attention is following. You show up independently to your target audience for a few minutes, and they'll most likely check you out. If it were me, having more followers would be a great thing, so I'd almost feel like I owed you something for following me.

Let's take these things and develop a strategy with them.

Follow, Like, Like, Like

At this point, you'll want to pull out your phone, log into your account, and start playing. Take half a day—a whole day—it doesn't really matter. This is all part of the learning process. That's exactly what we did with our first Instagram experiment. Start playing with the channel and discover its boundaries. Reach out to people, make contact, and find touch points. Do so in a sincere and meaningful way, even if the process is arduous and time consuming. The difference between spam and initiating a conversation is the thought and effort you put into it.

After about a day of experimentation and testing, we found the method that works best for us. It's something we call "follow, like, like, like." The process is simple: Go to the most recent section for the hashtag you choose to target, and select the top picture. Follow that account, go to its photos, and like the most recent three photos. This shows the user that not only did someone who is similar to them follow them, but that person also dug a little bit and really liked what they found.

Here's the crazy part: When we did this, the follow-back rate approached 25 percent. Meaning, for every four people we followed, one would follow us back. Why? Because it was authentic engagement. We actually cared about the people we were following, and they could see that we actually cared about them. They weren't bothered to be contacted; they were honored and grateful.

Interestingly, from a growth perspective, we could see a decent amount of traffic going through to the prelaunch landing page we had set up, and we saw the e-mails filling up our list.

GOING TO WORK

We followed this process for a week before setting the product live, and by the end of the week we had ten thousand followers. In one week, with one simple process, all accomplished manually—and it's something everybody reading this could do. Each photo we posted was getting over three hundred likes, and other people were being tagged in each of the photos by their friends.

The content was great, and people really cared about what the company was doing. They joined our tribe and started fighting for us. And, perhaps best of all, it was all done legitimately, without (we hope) annoying

too many people.

It did get tiring spending literally all day liking photos on Instagram, but it was all worth it come launch day. As with most social media platforms, you need to be wise or risk being banned for using spammy techniques, so don't stop reading before you've finished this chapter, and be responsible about investigating Instagram's rules yourself before you launch your first campaign.

Targeted Following

If you're following a lot of people, there's a really good way to check if you are targeting your actions well enough: See if you actually enjoy your feed. If following certain accounts completely ruins the Instagram experience for you by filling your feed up with things you don't want to see, you're probably doing something wrong.

Be *very, very* selective about whom you follow. Make it a tight network and as directly targeted as you can.

Fool's Gold

Another big mistake we see people make on social networks is using the number of followers as the most important metric. There are plenty of accounts that will follow back just because you're there. If you're looking to pump numbers, you could even go through the #followback hashtag and get a bunch of follows from people who won't care about you and will never see your posts. Congratulations?

We're not looking for those kinds of followers. We want to generate interest and create a community around our photos, not get an ego boost that won't help us at all.

LAUNCH DAY

Launch day came, and, as stated before, the company sold over $4,000 of inventory. This had been a side-project up until that point, but the creator was able to quit his job and go full-time doing what he loved. He hasn't gone back since. He's been able to control growth at a level that works for him. As an artisan who insists on handcrafted products, he's been able to build traffic and revenue at a pace that allows him to maintain his goal of producing quality product without forcing him to abandon his own principles of creating truly handmade soft goods (as opposed to bulk-manufactured items).

As a marketer, there's nothing more rewarding than letting the makers support themselves by doing what they do best. In addition, we made the process easy and repeatable so he can manage his own Instagram account rather than paying a consultant to do it for him. That's another indication that this process generated legitimate results.

What we did seems obvious in retrospect, but I often wonder how many makers there are in the world that have a great product and no way to get the world to see it. My guess is the number is very high.

There are other methods to grow your Instagram account that work in addition to the "follow, like, like, like" method mentioned above. Since you already have the right foundation in place, we'll go through these methods (and others) much more quickly.

INFLUENCERS

Perhaps the fastest way to grow an Instagram account is to use already-existing networks of influencers in your space.

There are marketplaces where you can contract Instagram influencers by the hour or by the day to put

out promotional posts for you. Two of the biggest examples are Shoutcart and Instafluence. These work well if you know how much revenue you're going to bring in and are a little farther along in the process, but they can be expensive, especially in the beginning. Instead of using these networks specifically, we're going to reverse engineer that method and build out our own ad hoc influencer network to drive down the costs.

Rolling Our Own Influencer Network

One of the ways we're going to beat this system is by finding people with large yet untapped audiences.

If you have 1 million followers, you're probably approached for shout-outs several times per day. If you have one hundred thousand followers, you're probably approached several times a week (and more if you're on a shout-out selling network). If you are approached that often, you can piece together some market-based pricing and fees (using what people are willing to pay) for your shout-out service. What the price *should* be is expensive.

We want to find the people who don't know yet that it should be expensive. In my experience, those accounts with between fifty thousand and one hundred thousand followers are virtually *never* approached for shout-outs. Because of this, they have no price set for a shout-out, and we can often buy shout-outs from them for cheap.

I've worked with people who have paid as much as $20,000 for a shout-out from an account with 1 million followers. Yet I've purchased dozens of shout-outs from accounts with fifty thousand followers for five to ten dollars.

Let's assume, for a moment, we put in the legwork to find twenty accounts with fifty thousand followers and paid each of them $10 for a shout-out. We pay $200 to reach the same number of followers others are paying $20,000 to reach. A $19,800 savings by putting in a little more work and creativity—that's exactly what growth hacking is.

Your numbers may be slightly different, but $10 per shout-out serves as a good starting point.

Audiense

In order to do this, the first tool we'll use to find influencers is Audiense (formerly known as SocialBro). Audiense has a free trial that will help us find and target Instagram users by niche, sorting them by number of followers. In this case we would create an Audiense account, enter our niche (we'll say "fashion"), and see that there are 490,492 people we can target (at the time of writing).

Now we want to filter this for influential people—those with lots of followers—but still not so influential that they have a high price set for shout-outs. Let's say we want to target ten thousand to fifty thousand followers for this test. Once we do this, we'll have a neatly curated list of people to approach for shout-outs, and we can sort or filter them in any way we see fit. (We may, for example, choose to target only males, as we're selling neckties for men.)

It's time to start wheeling and dealing. This is the manual part where you'll have to find a way to approach people and see what works. Don't be afraid of it. It's the last mile of the marathon.

Affiliate Deals

Perhaps the best (and definitely the cheapest) way to structure these types of deals is to shoot for some sort of affiliate structure. If my production cost on a tie is twenty dollars, and I sell it for eighty dollars, let's agree to split the sixty-dollar profit with the influencers. That means we make thirty dollars for each sale. This is more difficult to set up and manage, but it aligns the incentives of all parties involved. If you have an influencer who sells five ties with one post, you can bet they'll be doing everything they can to promote

your product in the future.

In a later chapter we'll show you how to create a unique uniform resource locator (URL) for each affiliate that they can place in their bio. It will look like something like this: http://www.someurl.com/?utm_source=aff&utm_medium=instagram&utm_campaign=usernamehere. Using this kind of a URL, we can track e-commerce conversions by source and medium and know how many sales come through our affiliates.

In the Admin section of Google Analytics, we can also grant read-only access to our account for the affiliates to see. Just click "Admin," "User Management," and "Add Permissions" for an e-mail to "Read and Analyze."

Passing Likes

A fair number of big influencers may not want to jeopardize the authenticity of their account by posting blatant shout-out photos. For those, there is another interesting solution.

When looking at the notifications section of Instagram, there is the option to select "Following" and see all the activity of all the accounts you follow. If a big account doesn't want to sell shout-outs and generally doesn't like any photos, you *may* be able to convince them to occasionally like your photos for a much lower premium than you would have to pay them to post on your behalf.

Initially I was shocked at how many people will notice this by looking at the actions of the people they follow in their notifications. I've seen accounts pass as many as one hundred thousand followers in one month. People do use that section—a lot.

Regramming

Another method of growing your Instagram account is a little more experimental, but it's free. It's known as *regramming*. Simply put, we're going to find people who post photos in our niche that get a lot of likes, share their photos (with permission), and hope they draw attention to our account because it shows how awesome they are.

We might reach out to a big account and say something like, "Hey, I love your photos. I'm trying to start a hashtag of surfing shots called #youcanthandthissurftho. Can I regram your pic to my account? I'll give your @ handle a shout-out." Almost everyone will say yes. After all, you're offering to grow their exposure for free by tapping your audience. The interesting part is that many of these accounts will regram your photos in return.

What they don't realize is that by regramming your photo, they've also allowed you to inject your account into their feed. I've seen regrams from one account alone pass over fifteen thousand followers! It also carries with it the side benefit of getting closer to the influencers who drive traffic and conversions in a hashtag, but for our purposes this is secondary.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR INSTAGRAM POSTS

There are a lot of blog articles out there about how to create a great Instagram post. Most of it is common sense, so we won't delve too far into that. What we *will* talk about is the stuff that accompanies a post—the comments and hashtags. What surprisingly few people understand is how hashtags *really* work. There are a lot of people (and I mean *a lot*) who constantly go through hashtags as their way of finding new posts to see and new people to follow. The goal, given that such is the case, is simply to use the right hashtags so we get in front of those people. In essence, the more we post with a hashtag and the more hashtags we use, the more we'll be seen. So let's find the best ones.

A really great way to find popular hashtags is using . It monitors Instagram and gives you a list of the most-liked hashtags within a given category (injecting its own hashtags, which is a little annoying, but what can you do?). There's even a TagsForLikes iPhone app if you want to have these hashtags easily accessible.

What few people realize is that your posts don't show up based only on the hashtags in your original post, but they also show up for the hashtags in your comments. That means that if you really wanted to, you could sit there and drop in five different comments full of hashtags and push your photo to the top of hundreds of hashtags. The timestamp for your photo, however, remains the same, so if you really want to be seen you have to do it quick. You will get the majority of the likes from people who don't already follow you in the first ten to fifteen minutes you post a photo, so optimize for that.

CHEATER POSTS

There are two posts that work endlessly on Instagram, and they work better than you would ever believe.

1. "Double tap if you X!" (i.e., "Double tap if you need pizza more than a relationship in your life.") A double tap on Instagram shows you like a photo.

2. "Tag someone who Y!" (i.e., "Tag someone who needs this in their life" or "Tag someone who is a

great artist.")

It doesn't make much sense, but people will like and tag those posts all day. Yes, this works.

CREATING AND SCHEDULING POSTS

If you're not a designer, you can use Canva.com to create beautiful images that are exactly the right size for your social media channels. If you want to really be able to step away from Instagram, you could create one hundred posts in Canva and then use something like Hootsuite or Buffergram to schedule posting them. Both solutions are pretty cheap, and they'll let us line up posts long in advance.

Instagram seems to not be a huge fan of apps that allow scheduling, so these apps are sometimes cut off from the application programming interface (API). But I've never seen them put a user's account in danger so long as they're aboveboard. Apps like FollowLiker (bots) also work for scheduling but are more complex and appear to be operating against the ways Instagram would like to see them be used, so we won't recommend them here, even though they do work.

Now that we've strengthened our Instagram game, let's make sure we have somewhere for people to go that converts to sales or leads.

THE PERFECT LANDING PAGE: STARTING A LIST

Talk to any excellent marketer about their best performing channel, and they will invariably remind you of one important thing: the money's in the list. Generally what they mean is that the most valuable tool in a marketer's tool kit is the e-mail list. There's a reason for that. E-mail is almost like cheating. (As growth hackers, we tend to like things that feel like cheating.)

- Virtually everyone checks their e-mail.
- Most people get their e-mail delivered chronologically.
- The marginal cost of sending e-mail is practically zero.

All you have to do is send a message. It seems incredibly simple because it is. Sending e-mails that actually land in inboxes will grow in complexity as the size of your list grows, but thankfully the potential at that point grows too.

E-MAIL VERSUS FACEBOOK

Let's compare an e-mail list to something like Facebook.

Facebook

You might work for years, pushing content and eventually getting up to 1 million likes for your Facebook page—an admirable achievement. However, every time you post you're doing battle with Facebook's algorithm. Facebook will analyze how well your post is doing, and if it seems to be good enough, it will display your message to a fraction of the people who liked your page.

E-mail

On the other hand, what if you generated a list of 1 million e-mail opt-ins? You send an e-mail to all 1 million of them. Some may unsubscribe, but even if a small percentage uses some sort of e-mail bucketing, you're dropping a message directly into the place they work out of every day.

THE MONEY'S IN THE LIST

The secret of the e-mail list is one that many of the best marketers make a living from. You can run practically your entire company as a loss leader so long as you can capitalize on (and monetize) your e-mail list.

To show you how valuable e-mail is, let's walk you through the cost and revenue structure of a company that does *very* well. This is a real company, but we've left it nameless so as to not share any information the owners wouldn't want shared.

Company A sells a monthly recurring subscription for widgets that costs fifty dollars per month. The average lifetime value of a user is around one hundred dollars. (That's a lot of churn, but we won't focus on

that right now.) The owner of Company A has a team of affiliates that work for him who will bring him more customers for a set cost. They get paid a simple dollar amount per initial fifty-dollar purchase. What do you think his cost-per-acquisition is with the affiliates?

It's one hundred dollars per new user. That seems patently insane. Why pay one hundred dollars to make one hundred dollars?

His affiliates are thrilled. They drive loads of traffic to his landing pages, completely disregard offers from his competitors, and Company A wins a lot of the market as a result.

What the affiliates don't realize is that as they're driving as many sales as they possibly can to Company A, (despite the fact that the owner isn't making any profit from the sales), he is quietly building an *enormous* e-mail list. Every buyer, every almost-buyer that drops off after the initial landing page (where that potential buyer is asked for an e-mail address), and every interested person who requests more information becomes an e-mail address on that huge list.

Company A makes money on one thing: the e-mail list. His e-mail list in the first year grew by over *five million* people. Now let's use some industry standards and break down some math. (Note: These numbers vary wildly by industry.)

E-mail Math

In this industry an average open rate is generally around 30 percent. More important to our purposes, the clickthrough rates hover around 1 percent of that initial e-mail burst. About 15 percent of those who click through from his e-mail will end up converting. So on one e-mail blast, if he e-mails his entire list, fifty thousand people click through, seven thousand five hundred people buy, and using his value-per-user of $100, he makes a cool $750,000 with zero marginal user acquisition cost.

And he still has an e-mail list of five million people he can e-mail *at his will.* He can e-mail them again tomorrow if he wants to. There's a reason they say the money's in the list.

START TODAY

The difficult thing is that many of you may not have a list. That's OK, but you have to get started *today*. We are going to spend a few hours putting together the perfect landing page and then spend a few chapters driving traffic to it in a way that you can start today. Seriously, we want to see those e-mails coming in by the end of the day.

Building an e-mail list is like investing. Even if you start without much, watching it grow and compound over time becomes incredibly valuable.

Traditional marketers would tell you to put an experiment together, test, and iterate over the course of a few months. That's fantastic advice if you're Nike and have an $80 million marketing budget, lots of visitors, and tons of data. But chances are you have none of those things, so we're just going to get you started with the type of landing page that we've seen convert the best over time. We call it "the perfect landing page."

THE PERFECT LANDING PAGE

This landing page is based on thousands of experiments with all types of companies. Your product may be different—a mobile app, an e-commerce service, a web design agency—it doesn't really matter. Start with solid fundamentals and go from there, and you will save yourself an incredible amount of time and money.

You can create this page in a few hours, even if you're only marginally tech savvy. You can build it on

your own if you want, but if you'd rather put up a WordPress site with this page in a couple of hours, it will perform just as well.

LAYOUT

The general layout for a fantastic landing page is as simple as it is good. We're not going to show it to you yet, because we want you to get the elements down on paper first.

The difficult part is getting out of your own mind and figuring out what is compelling about your product. You're probably so involved in your product that you can describe it a million different ways. You could rant for hours or write research papers about why it's the best, but we need to take that and turn it into something that people understand when they know nothing about you.

To do this, we're going to use the remarkably effective technique of explaining what we do to a five-year-old child. The five-year-old doesn't care about your jargon and doesn't have any previous understanding of concepts you hope people already have. If you want to go back and add in jargon and common knowledge later, you can. But first break it down into something any child could understand.

Your explanation will need these elements:

1. *A really strong headline*

   This is your single sentence that describes what your product is. Imagine a five-year-old you've never met walking up to you on the street. Seeing you using your product, the child asks, "What is that?" Let your answer inform your headline. If this doesn't come naturally, work on it until it does.

2. *A complementary and supplemental subheadline*

   You just told the child your answer, and they now ask, "What does that mean?" Your explanation shouldn't be far from your subheadline.

3. *A statement about the major benefit your product provides (what problem do you solve?)*

   Another five-year-old walks up to you and challenges the justification for your product. "You don't really need that. Why would someone need your product?" Go off on a rant and tell them the main reason why your product benefits them. Take your strongest and broadest reason and make that your main benefit statement.

4. *Benefit bullet points*

   Take the next several things you told the stranger and turn them into bullet points.

5. *A conversion button*

   Imagine hosting your most excited user on a radio show about your landing page, and the announcer asks, "Now what are you going to do?!"

   The user screams the response: "Download the e-book!" That's your call to action. Take out the filler words and label your button, "Download E-book."

6. *Testimonials and data*

   This is what I like to call the "skeptical zone." This area is for people who are intrigued by what you have to say but aren't entirely sure and aren't ready to pull the trigger. Load this up with data and testimonials about how incredible your product is. Prime them to be ready to convert.

7. *The long conversion*

This is where you convert the skeptics. Use the same button as you did above, but this time use it at the bottom of the page. Arrange your landing page like this, and it will convert 99 percent as well as the landing pages I've seen people put millions of dollars into testing.

A Really Strong Headline

A Complementary Subheadline

Major Benefit Statement

- Add some bullet points
- that include benefits,
- all leading up to
- the very first . . .

Conversion Button

This Is the Skeptical Zone

Here we'll provide some data that shows how well what we're selling works. This is where we try to convince the skeptics, and it could be very long.

Add a testimonial

Or even two (ideally from recognizable people)

The Long Conversion

For mobile device users, just stack the elements on top of each other in the same order. That wasn't

difficult, was it?

THE LIST

If there is a place on your page where people enter their personal information, they should be added to an e-mail list. Whether they're downloading a free giveaway, signing up for a product, or signing up for a demo, make sure to add them to the list. Remember—the money's in the list.

This list grows over time. Even the smallest startups will begin to rack up tens of thousands of e-mails. In the next chapters we'll start driving some early traffic to these pages (if you don't have any already); get them ranking on Google, Yahoo, and Bing; break open Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and social news sites; figure out how to get an incredible cost per acquisition (CPA) for paid search; and start an e-mail drip.

[4]
SEO IN ONE DAY

O f all the channels we'll be discussing, SEO is the one with the most misinformation out there. Some of this misinformation is subtle, but some of it is widely spread and believed by so-called SEO consultants who actually don't know what they're doing.

SEO is very simple, and unless you're a large company, it's probably not worth hiring somebody else to do it for you.

HOW GOOGLE WORKS

In order to understand what we need to do for our SEO, let's look back at how Google started, how it's evolving today, and how to develop a groundwork from which we can get ranked on it.

The Early Days of Google

The idea for PageRank, Google's early ranking algorithm, stemmed from Einstein. Larry Page and Sergey Brin were students at Stanford, and they noticed how often scientific studies referred to famous papers, such as the theory of relativity. These references acted almost like a vote—the more your work was referenced, the more important it must be. If they downloaded every scientific paper and looked at the references, they could theoretically decide which papers were the most important and rank them.

They realized that because of links, the Internet could be analyzed and ranked in a similar way, except instead of using references, they could use links. So they set about attempting to "download" (or "crawl") the entire Internet, figuring out which sites were linked to most often. The sites with the most links were—theoretically—the best sites. And if you did a search for *university*, they could look at the pages that talked about *university* and rank them.

Google Today

Google works largely the same way today, although with much more sophistication and nuance. For example, not all links carry the same weight. A hit from an authoritative site (as seen by how many links a site has pointing at it) is much more valuable than a link from a non-authoritative site. A link from a top-ten, "dofollow" link is probably worth about ten thousand links from sites that don't have as much authority. At the end of the day, the purpose of Google is to find the best (or most popular) web page for the words you type into the search bar.

All this means is we need to make it clear to Google what our page is about, and then make it clear that we're popular. If we do that, we win. In order to do that, we'll follow a simple process that works *every single time* with less effort than you probably think is required.

Gaming the System

Google is a *very* smart company. The sophistication of the algorithms they write is incredible. (Bear in mind that there are currently cars driving themselves around Silicon Valley powered by Google's algorithms.)

If you get too far into the SEO rabbit hole, you'll start stumbling upon spammy ways to attempt to speed up this process (automated software like RankerX, GSA SER, and ScrapeBox; link wheels; PBNs; hacking domains; instructions to create spam or spin content; etc.).

Some of that stuff works short-term, but Google is getting smarter. It shuts down more and more spammy sites every day. Most of these sites don't even last a week before everything you've done disappears and your work evaporates. That's not the way you should do things.

Instead of Internet-based churn and burn, we'll be focusing on building equity in the Internet. So if you see some highly paid SEO consultant telling you to use software and spun content to generate links, or when you see some blackhatter beating the system, just know that it's not worth it. We're going to build authority and get traffic fast, but we're going to do it in a way that doesn't cripple your site in the future.

ON-PAGE SEO

The first step in getting our site ready to rank is making it clear to Google what our site is about. For now we're going to focus our home page (our landing page) on ranking for one keyword that isn't our brand or company name. Once we get that ranking, we can branch out into other keywords and start to dominate the search landscape. But for now we'll stay laser focused.

Keyword Research

The first thing we need to do is to figure out what our keyword is. Depending on how popular our site is and how long it's been around, the level of traffic and difficulty we'll get from this effort may vary.

The Long Tail

There's a concept we need to become familiar with, known as the "long tail."

If we were to graph popularity of keywords, with popularity being the y-axis and the rank order being the x-axis, we'd get something like a power law graph.
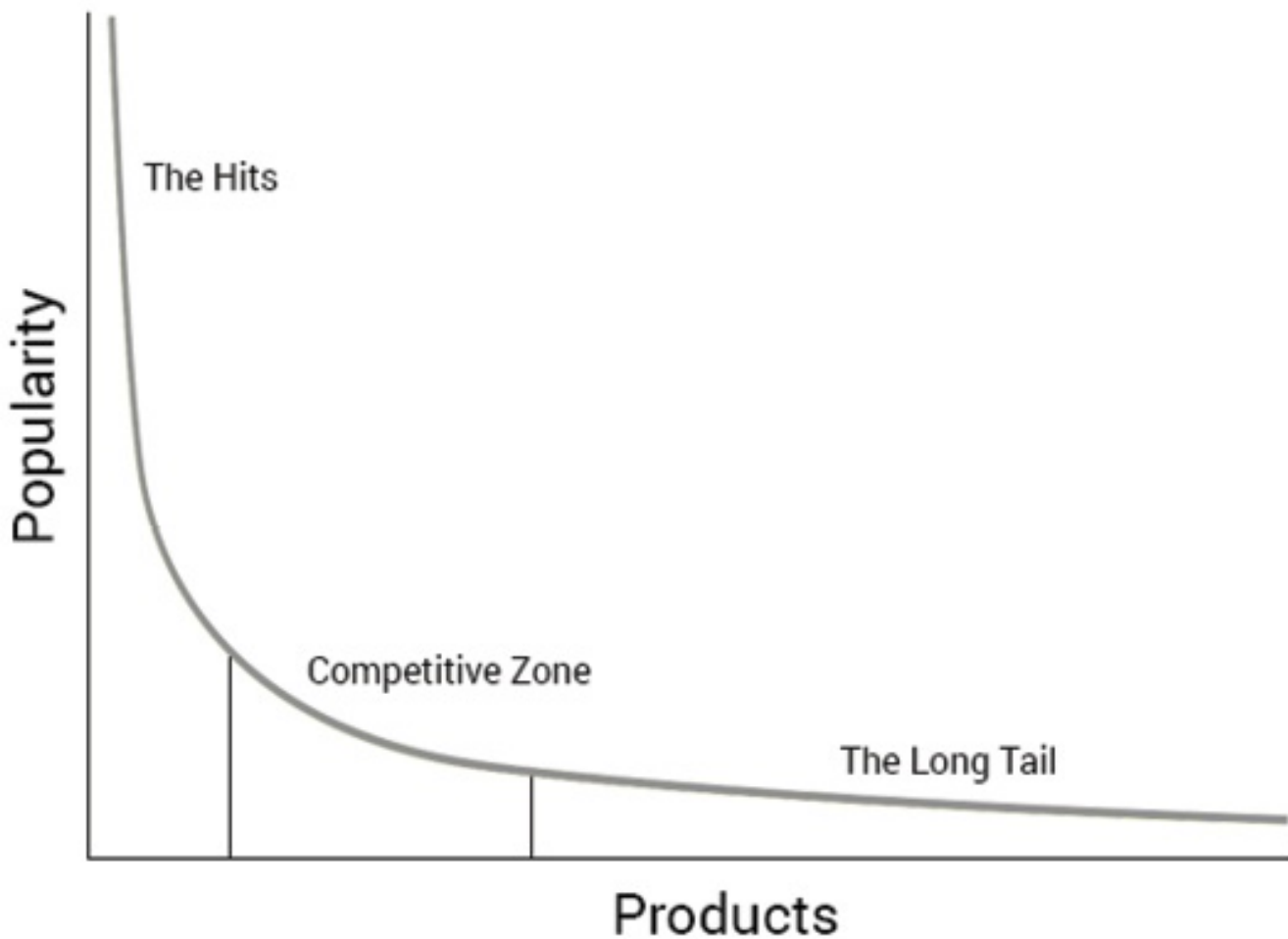
There are some big hits that get the majority of attention, and after that the graph falls sharply. The long-tail theory says that as we become more diverse as a society, the right end of the graph will stretch on forever.

Think of Amazon. They probably have a few best-selling products, but the majority of their retail revenue comes from a wide variety of things that aren't bought nearly as often as their best-selling products. Similarly, if we were to rank the popularity of the songs played in the last ten years, there would be a few hits that would garner a high number of plays and an enormous number of songs that have only a few plays. Those less popular products and songs are what we call the *long tail*.

In SEO this matters because, at least in the beginning, we're going to go after long tail keywords—very exact, intention-driven keywords with lower competition that we know can win. Then gradually we'll work our way to the left.

Our site isn't going to outrank ultra-competitive keywords in the beginning, but by being more specific, we can start winning targeted traffic with much less effort. We will refer to the keywords we want to use as "long-tail keywords."

Finding the Long Tail

In order to find our perfect long-tail keywords, we'll use a combination of four tools, all of which are free.

The process looks like this:

1. Use ÜberSuggest, Keyword Shitter, and a little bit of brainstorming to come up with some keywords.

2. Export those keywords to the Google Keyword Planner to estimate traffic level.

3. Search for those keywords with the SEOquake browser plug-in installed to analyze the true keyword difficulty.

Don't be intimidated. It's actually very simple! For this example, we'll pretend like we were finding a keyword for this book.

Step 1: Brainstorming and Keyword Generating

In this step we're simply going to identify a few keywords that seem like they might work. Don't concentrate too much on culling the list at this point, because most bad keywords will automatically be eliminated as a part of the process.

Since this is a book about growth hacking, we'll list a few keywords that would be a good fit for us:

- growth hacking

- growth marketing

- Internet marketing

- growth hacking guide

- growth hacking book

- book about growth hacking

- what is growth hacking

- growth hacking instructions

That's a good enough list to start. If you run out of ideas, go ahead and check out Keywordshitter.com. If you plug in one keyword, it will start spitting out thousands of variations. Try to get a solid list of five to ten keywords to start with.

Now we'll plug each keyword into ÜberSuggest. When I plug in the first one ("growth hacking"), I get 246 results. Clicking "View as Text" will let us copy and paste all of our keywords into a text editor and create an enormous list. Go through that process with each keyword you came up with.

Copy & Paste Your Keywords

growth hacking
growth hacking asia
growth hacking definition
growth hacking strategies
growth hacking book
growth hacking 101
growth hacking tools
growth hacking course
growth hacking agency
growth hacking ideas

Close

We'll assume you now have at least five hundred keywords. If you don't, start with something more generic and broad as a keyword. Ideally, you'll have over fifteen hundred options to work with after completing this process.

Step 2: Traffic Estimating

Now that we have a pretty good list of keywords, our next step is to figure out if they have enough search volume to be worth our while. You'll likely notice that some are so far down the long tail they wouldn't do much for us. For example, my growth hacking list came up with "five Internet marketing techniques." We probably won't go after that one, but instead of guessing about keyword effectiveness, we can let Google do the work for us. This will be our weeding-out step.

Google Keyword Planner

The Google Keyword Planner (https://adwords.google.com/KeywordPlanner) is a tool meant for advertisers, but it does give us a rough idea of traffic levels. Google doesn't make any promise of accuracy, so these numbers are likely only directionally correct, but they're enough to get us on the right track. You'll have to have an AdWords account to be able to use the tool, but you can create one for free.

Once you've logged in, select "Get Search Volume Data and Trends." Paste in your enormous list of keywords, and click "Get Search Volume." Once you've done this, you'll see a lot of graphs and data. Unfortunately, the Keyword Planner interface is a bit of a nightmare to work within, so instead we're going to export our data to Excel with the "Download" button and play with it there.

Now we'll decide what traffic we want to go after. This varies based on how much authority your site has. So let's try to determine how easy it will be for you to rank.

Go to SEMrush.com and enter your URL, looking at the total backlinks in the third column.

As a general rule, the maximum level of "difficulty" or "competition" (Google sometimes uses the words synonymously) you should go after will be determined by the number of links you have. This may vary according to how old your site is, who the links are from, and so on. Unfortunately, the keyword difficulty that Google gives us is based on paid search traffic rather than natural search traffic.

Number of Backlinks	Maximum Difficulty
<30	40
<100	40–50
<1000	50–70
1000+	70+

Go ahead and sort the data by difficulty or competition, and eliminate all of the stuff that is too high for your site. (Don't worry, we'll get those keywords later.) For now, you can simply delete those rows.

Exact Match

One important thing to note is that Google gives us this volume as an "exact match." This means that if there is a slight variation of a keyword, we'll see it if the words are synonyms but not if they are used in a

phrase. So the traffic will be underestimated from what you would expect overall.

With that disclaimer, sort the traffic volume highest to lowest, and from this data pick five keywords that seem like a good fit. Here are mine:

- growth hacking strategies

- growth hacking techniques

- growth hacking 101

- growth hacking instagram

- growth hacking twitter

These examples are all similar, but that may not necessarily be the case for yours.

Keyword Trends

First, let's use Google Trends to view the keyword volume and trajectory simultaneously. You can enter all of the keywords at the same time and see them graphed against each other. My keywords look like this:
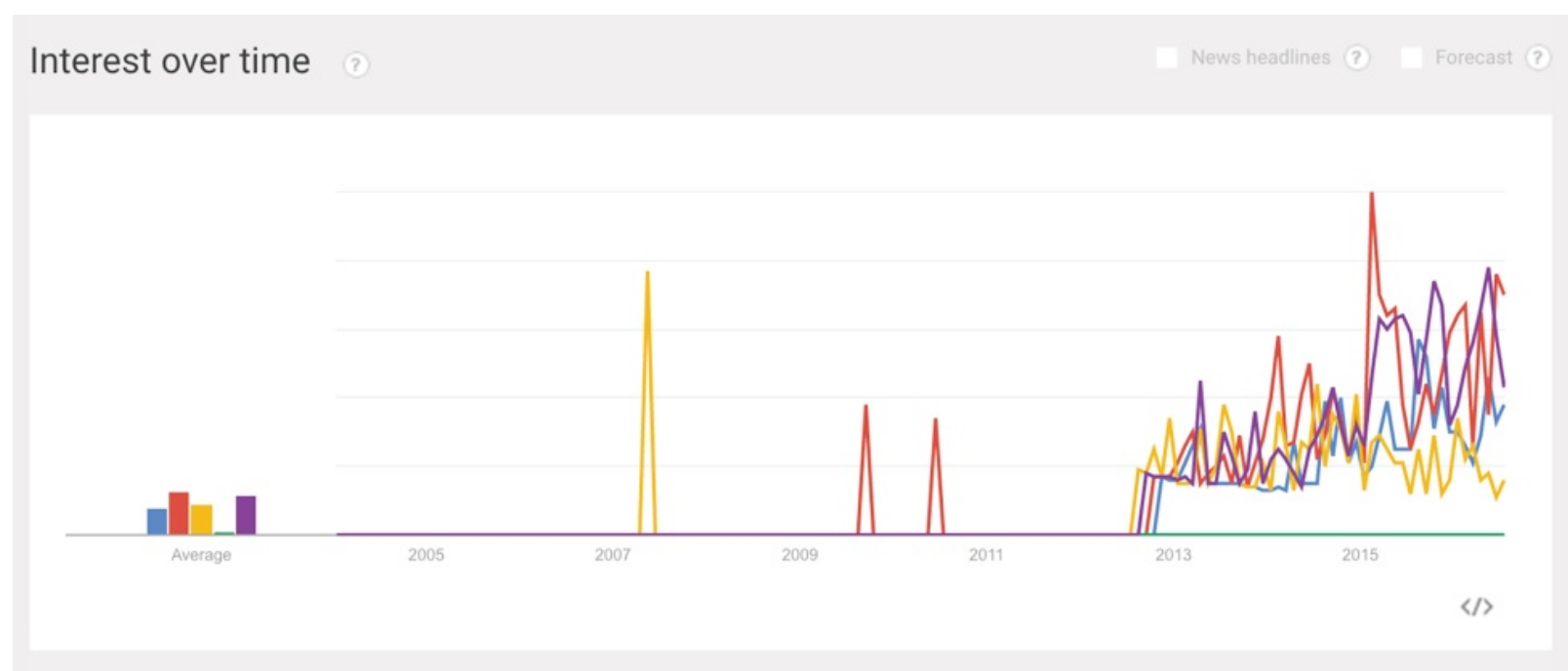
The ones I'm most excited about are "growth hacking techniques" and "growth hacking Twitter." Now we'll take a deeper look at what the competition is like for those two keywords.

Manual Keyword Difficulty Analysis

In order to analyze how difficult it will be to rank for a certain keyword, we're going to have to look at the keywords manually, one by one. That's why we started by finding some long-tail keywords and narrowing the list. This process gets a lot easier if you download the SEOquake plug-in. Once you've done that, do a Google search and you'll notice a few changes. With SEOquake turned on, the relevant SEO data of each site is displayed below each search result.

We're going to alter what is displayed. In the left-hand sidebar, click "Parameters," and set them to the following:

Now when you search, you'll see something like this:

SEOquake adds a ranking number, and the following at the bottom:

- **The Google Index:** how many pages from this base URL Google has indexed
- **Page Links**: the number of pages linking to the exact domain that is ranking according to SEMrush's index (usually very low compared to reality, but since we'll be using this number to compare, it will be somewhat apples to apples)
- **URL Links**: the number of pages pointing to any page on the base URL
- **Age:** when the page was first indexed by the Internet Archive
- **Traffic**: a *very* rough monthly traffic number for the base URL

Looking at these we can try to determine approximately what we need to do to overtake the sites in these positions. You'll notice that the weights of the indicators change. Not all links are from the best sources (direct page links matter much more than URL links), but if you experiment with this tool for a while, you'll get a pretty good idea of what it would take. If you have a brand new site, it will take a month or two to start generating the number of links to get to page one. If you have an older site with more links, it may

just be a matter of getting your on-page SEO in place. Generally, it will be a mixture of both.

We're going to optimize our page for this *exact* keyword, so we have a bit of an advantage. That being said, if you start to see pages from sites like Wikipedia, you will know it's an uphill battle.

Here are a few examples to help you see how you should think through these things, starting with the keyword *growth hacking techniques*.

1. 6 Growth Hack Techniques You Can Try Today - Entrepreneur

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/241142 ▼ Entrepreneur ▼

Jan 6, 2015 - One of the best ways to understand **growth hacking** is to, well, get started doing it.

G I: **122K**   ⃝ L: **0**   ⃝ LD: **491K**   ⓐ Rank: **1.37K**   🏛 Age: **December 26, 1996**   ⃝ Traffic: **2.39M**

Entrepreneur.com is definitely a big name, and *growth hacking techniques* is in the title explicitly. This will be difficult to beat, but there are no links in the SEMrush index that point direct to the page. (By the way, you might look into writing an article for Entrepreneur.com. If you were to do that, you could probably build a few links to that easily, even linking to your site in the article.)

2. 21 Actionable Growth Hacking Tactics - Yongfook.com

yongfook.com/actionable-**growth-hacking**-tactics.html ▼

In this deck you will find 21 different areas of startup marketing where you can employ **growth hacking** tactics. Little **tricks** of automation or hackery that help you ...

G I: **42**   ⃝ L: **41**   ⃝ LD: **206**   ⓐ Rank: **489K**   🏛 Age: **November 5, 2001**   ⃝ Traffic: **392**

Yongfook.com. Never heard of it. With 206 total links and not much traffic, I could pass this one up. It does have quite a bit of age, and *growth hacking tactics* in the title explicitly, so that would make it tough to beat, but it's passable.

3. The Definitive Guide to Growth Hacking - Quick Sprout

https://www.quicksprout.com/the-definitive-guide-to-**growth-hacking**/ ▼

Those who understand **growth hacking** will have a competitive advantage that is hard to overstate, and we wanted to provide a robust framework for thinking ...

G I: **10.1K**   ⃝ L: **12**   ⃝ LD: **39.5K**   ⓐ Rank: **8.33K**   🏛 Age: **June 12, 2006**   ⃝ Traffic: **50.7K**

All right, so Quick Sprout is relatively popular, has a lot of links, is a good age, receives quite a bit of traffic, and has a few links direct to the page (but not a ton). But the word *tactics* doesn't even appear here. This page isn't optimized for this keyword, so I could probably knock it out by being optimized specifically for *growth hacking tactics*.

Let's jump down to see how hard it would be to get on the front page.

Seventeen total pages indexed? Created in 2014? No links in the index, even to the root URL? This one's mine. I should be able to front-page easily. This looks like a good keyword. Now we just have to get the on-page SEO in place and start building a few links.

ON-PAGE SEO

Now that we have our keyword selected, we need to make sure Google knows what our site is about. This is as simple as making sure the right keywords are in the right places. Most of this has to do with HTML tags, which make up the structure of a web page. If you don't know HTML or understand how it works, just pass this list to a developer, and they should be able to help you.

On-Page SEO Checklist

Here is a simple checklist you can follow to see if your content is optimized.

- Your keyword is in the <title> tag, ideally at the front (or close to the front) of the tag.
- Your keyword is close to the beginning of the <title> tag (ideally the first words).
- The title tag contains fewer than the viewable limit of sixty-five characters (optional but recommended).
- Your keyword is in the first <h1> tag (and your page has an <h1> tag).
- If your page contains additional header tags (<h2>, <h3>, etc.), your keyword or synonyms are in most of them.
- Any images on the page have an <alt> tag that contains your chosen keyword.
- Your keyword is in the meta description (and there is a meta description).
- There are at least three hundred words of text on the page.
- Your keyword appears in the URL (if not the home page).
- Your keyword appears in the first paragraph of the copy.
- Your keyword (or synonyms—Google recognizes them now) is used other times throughout the page.
- Your keyword density is between .5 percent and 2.5 percent.
- The page contains "dofollow" links to other pages. (This just means you're not using "nofollow" links to every other page.)
- The page has original content not taken from another page and is dissimilar from other pages on

your site.

If you have all of that in place, you should be pretty well set from an on-page perspective. You'll likely be the best-optimized page for your chosen keyword unless you're in a very competitive space.

All we have left now is off-page optimization.

OFF-PAGE SEO

Off-page SEO is just a fancy way to say *links*. (Sometimes we call them *backlinks*, but it's really the same thing.) Google looks at each link on the web as a weighted vote. If you link to something, you're telling Google, "This is worth checking out." The more legitimate you are, the more weight your vote carries.

Link Juice

SEOs have a weird way to describe this voting process. They call it "link juice." If an authoritative site, we'll say Forbes for example, links to you, they're passing you link juice. But link juice doesn't only work site to site. If your home page is authoritative and it links to other pages on your site, it passes link juice as well. For this reason, our link structure becomes very important.

Checking Link Juice

There are a number of tools that check how many links are pointing to a site and what authority those pages have. Unfortunately, none of them are perfect. The only way to know what links are pointing to your site is to have crawled those pages.

Google crawls popular pages several times per day, but it doesn't want you manipulating it, so it updates its index pretty slowly. That said, you can check at least a sample of Google's index in the Google Search Console (formerly known as Webmaster Tools). Once you navigate to your site, on the left-hand side select "Search Traffic" and then "Links to Your Site." There's a debate raging over whether this actually shows you all the links Google knows about (I'm 99 percent convinced it's only a sample), but it's at least a representative sample.

To see all of your links, click on "More" under "Who Links to You the Most," and then "Download This Table." This, again, seems to download only a sample of what Google knows about. You can also select "Download Latest Links," which provides more recent links than the other option.

Unfortunately, this doesn't let us see much of the value of the links, nor does it show us links that have dropped or where those links are from. To see this, there is a wide variety of tools we can use. If you have a budget, we'd suggest Ahrefs.com, as they have the biggest index, followed by Moz's Open Site Explorer (you can get most of the data with a free account; if not, then it's slightly cheaper than Ahrefs), and finally SEMrush, which is free for most of our purposes. Majestic uses a combination of "trust flow" and "citation flow," which also works fairly well to give you an idea as to the overall health and number of links pointing to your site.

All of these use internal metrics to determine the authority of a link, but using them to compare apples to apples can also be beneficial.

Link Structure

HTML links look something like this: Anchor text, where *http://www.somesite.com* is the place the link directs you to, the title is largely a remnant of time gone by, and the linked text (think the blue words you click) is called the *anchor text*.

In addition to the amount of link juice a page has, the relevance of the anchor text matters. Generally speaking, you want to use your keyword as the anchor text for your internal linking whenever possible. External linking (from other sites) shouldn't be heavily optimized for anchor text. If 90 percent of your links all have the same anchor text, Google can throw a red flag and assume that you're doing something fishy.

If you're ever creating links (like we'll show you in later chapters), you should use something generic, like the site name or the full URL.

Internal Structure

Generally speaking, you don't want orphan pages (those that aren't linked to by other pages), nor do you want an overly messy link structure. Some say the ideal link structure for a site is something like this:

That's close, but it gets a few things wrong. First, you'll almost never have a structure that organized. Second, in an ideal world, every page would link to every other page on its same level. This can easily be done with a footer that feels like a sitemap or "recommended" pages. That allows you to specify anchor text and pass link juice freely from page to page.

Unfortunately, it's impossible to draw such a web without it becoming a mess, so you'll just have to imagine what that actually looks like.

We have just one more thing to go over before we start getting those first links pointing to our site.

Robots.txt, Disavow, "Nofollow," and Other Minutiae

Most of SEO is managing stuff that can go wrong. There is a lot of that, but we'll cover 99 percent of needs, and you can use a Google search if there's something really crazy we don't go over.

Robots.txt

Almost every site has a page at url.com/robots.txt. Even Google has one. This is just a plain text file that lets you tell search engine crawlers what to crawl and what to not crawl. Most are pretty good about listening, except the Bingbot, which pretty much does whatever it wants, no matter what you tell it. (I'm mostly kidding.)

If you don't want Google to crawl a page (maybe it's a log-in page you don't want indexed or a landing page) you can just disallow it in your robots.txt by saying "disallow: /somepage."

If you don't add a trailing / to it (e.g., "disallow: /somepage/"), it will also disallow all child pages.

Technically you can specify different rules for different bots (or user agents), but it's easiest to start your file with "User-agent: *" if you don't have a need for separate crawling rules.

Disavow

Google will penalize spammy sites, and unfortunately this causes some bad behavior from bad actors. Say, for example, you wanted to take out a competitor. You could send a bunch of obviously spammy links to their site and get them penalized. This is called *negative SEO*, and is something that happens often with highly contested keywords. Google generally tries to pretend like it doesn't happen. In the case that this does happen to you, however, you can disavow links in the Search Console, which says, "Hey, Google, don't count this one." I hope you'll never have to use it, but if you hire (or have hired) a bad SEO company or are being attacked by a competitor, that is how you combat it.

"Nofollow"

If you want to link to somebody but you don't want it to count as a vote (you don't want to pass link juice), or you support user-generated content and want to deter spammers, you can use a "nofollow" link. Google says it discounts the value of those links. I'm not convinced they discount them heavily, especially after the RankBrain rollout, but other SEOs are convinced they count for nothing, so they seem to deter spammers if nothing else.

A link can be given the property "nofollow" like this: Anchor text.

Redirects

If you're going to change a URL but you don't want its link juice to disappear, you can use a 301 Redirect. A 301 will pass a majority of the link juice.

Canonical URLs

With two pages that are virtually the same, you can add something like <link rel="canonical" href="https://www.someurl.com/somepage"> to say, "Hey, treat this page as if it were that page instead, but I don't want to 301 it."

And with that, we're ready to build our first links.

Link Building

Link building is where SEO really starts to matter and where a lot of people end up in a world of hurt. The best way to build links is to not build links. I've worked for companies in the past that don't have to ask for links; the links just flow in from press, customer blogs, their awesome blog posts, and so on. If this is an option (and we'll go over a couple of ways to make it more likely), you're in a great place.

If not, or at least not in the beginning, we're going to manually create a few. We're going to create them in legitimate ways and not hire someone overseas for fifty cents an hour to do so. That is a recipe for disaster, and I can't even count the number of times I've seen that take down a site.

Web 2.0s

   The easiest way to build high-quality links are what SEOs call *Web 2.0s.* That's just a way to say "social sites," or sites that let you post stuff. Tweeting a link into the abyss won't do you anything, but profiles, status pages, etc., do carry some weight. And if they come from a popular domain, that counts as a link.

   Some of the easiest to use are these sites:

- Twitter (in your bio)
- GitHub (the readme of a code repository)
- YouTube (the description of a video—it has to actually get views)
- WordPress (yes, you'll have to actually create a blog)
- Blogger (same here)
- Tumblr
- Upvote-based sites (HackerNews, GrowthHackers, Inbound.org, etc.)

   And here are a few that you can easily get after that (in getting these links alone, you'll be ahead of about half of the sites online):

- http://facebook.com
- http://twitter.com
- http://amazon.com (product pages)
- http://moonfruit.com
- http://about.me
- http://www.rebelmouse.com
- http://soup.io
- http://buzzfeed.com
- http://sportsblog.com
- http://digitaljournal.com
- http://imgur.com
- http://tripod.com
- http://sites.google.com
- http://pearltrees.com
- http://answers.yahoo.com
- http://wix.com
- http://www.purevolume.com
- http://www.savorthesuccess.com
- http://tribalpages.com

- http://topix.com
- http://gravatar.com
- http://www.dailymotion.com
- http://bleacherreport.com

If nothing else, you can start there and get a few links. There are always big lists of Web 2.0s you can find online, but keep in mind if you're going to build something out on a blogging platform, you're going to have to *really* build something out. That's a lot of content and time, but you have to do it the right way.

We generally keep a list of Web 2.0s in this file. Some may be out of date, but you should probably only build a half dozen to a dozen Web 2.0s anyway.

Link Intersection

Another way to find places you can build links is by using a link intersection tool. These find sites that link to Competitor A and Competitor B but not to you. Theoretically, if they link to both of your competitors, they should be willing to link to you. Moz, Ahrefs, LunaMetrics and others have link intersection tools that work quite well.

Now that we have a few basic links flowing, we're going to work on some strategies that will send continual links and press, eventually getting to a point where we don't have to build any more links.

YOUR FIRST DRIP OF TRAFFIC: BECOMING AN AUTHORITY SITE

Awesome—you have a site that converts well and your SEO is in place, ready for you to drive traffic. Now what? As you've probably learned by this point, a site that converts well but has no traffic flowing to it still converts zero traffic. We're going to fix that.

This section takes a lot of time and effort, and in the beginning you'll likely wonder if you're doing anything at all. Remember the class in college that was so difficult most people gave up, which effectively weeded out anyone who wasn't ready to major in that subject? Well this is the weeding-out chapter of growth hacking.

TAKE A LONG-TERM VIEW

The reason so many people stumble on this step is the same reason people stumble on so many steps that take any effort over time, such as losing weight, investing in a 401(k), and so on. In the beginning you're going to have a little seedling of traffic, and you'll be looking up to those who have giant oak trees, thinking, *I must be doing something wrong.* You're not doing anything wrong. The traffic starts as a trickle before it becomes a flood.

But don't worry if you're a startup. Our goal is to get enough traffic that continuing to do this will be sustainable (meaning we won't die before we start to see the rewards), but at the same time we're building equity in the Internet. The type of traffic we want to build is the type that will compound and never go away. We want to create traffic today that will still give us a little trickle of traffic in five years. Combining hundreds (or thousands) of little trickles with a site that converts and a great product, we will create a giant river.

Other chapters will go into depth on the networks we need to drive traffic from, so in this chapter we're going to focus on traffic that's network-agnostic—traffic that we can't get by tapping any specific network. Just to give you some idea of scale, I've seen this process drive over five hundred thousand visits *per day,* though the buildup to that level took almost a full year. What could you do with five hundred thousand visits per day?

MONITORING ALERTS

To start we're going to use the keywords we found back in the "SEO in One Day" chapter and inject ourselves (and our company) into the conversation wherever it's taking place. We can do this by using software called BuzzBundle.

BuzzBundle

This software lets us do a few things:

1. Constantly monitor all mentions of a specific topic, competitor, or keyword across multiple locations on the Internet (Facebook groups, Quora questions, blog posts, etc.) where comments are available.

2. Allow us to leave a constructive comment that references our product or company.

Disclaimer: this is *not* the SEO comment spam you've seen before. This step takes thought, effort, and a real human who understands what they're typing. I don't often say this, but you cannot effectively automate this step without it becoming spammy. If you're trying to replicate the automated SEO spam you've seen on various blogs and sites, it will probably work but you'll get banned, and your clickthrough rate will be a fraction of what it could be.

Productive Commenting

We're not going to fire up some awful software to drop spun mentions of garbage onto various comment sections online, hoping that brings us SEO traffic. Our comments must do two things:

1. Be contextual. We are going to talk only about the topic presented in an article or tweet and mention our company only when it naturally fits in.

2. Contribute to the conversation. I should learn something or have value added to my life by reading your comment.

If you do these two things, a few changes will take place: First, you'll notice that people click on your links *because you're a thoughtful person who likes to contribute*. Second, people will respect your company *because you're a thoughtful person who likes to contribute.*

And with that disclaimer, we'll move on to the nitty-gritty of how this is done. Let's fire up BuzzBundle and get to work.

ACCOUNTS AND PERSONAS

The first thing you'll want to do in BuzzBundle is go to "Accounts" and then "Add New Accounts." This is the starting point for everything we'll do because we need accounts to comment.

One thing you'll notice about BuzzBundle is that it lets you use multiple accounts. I find it beneficial to think from multiple perspectives and therefore multiple points of view, but I don't want to go too far overboard and be spammy. I'd recommend doing something simple. Create two to three personas, each of whom you identify with (or are you), and enter them into your BuzzBundle accounts.

Personally, I don't even change my name. I just use a different one (*Austen J. Allred* versus *Austen Allred*) or use a few photos just so it isn't literally the same name and same photo blanketing the Internet.

Disqus

Disqus is a comment system used all over the place, and it carries some caveats. Disqus will ban you if you use the same link in every post, so there are two work-arounds:

1. Use a lot of different accounts, rotating IPs or using a proxy every two days or so.

2. Use your site URL as your display name.

Both of these work, but the second one is much easier, in my view.

UTM Parameters

Using links with our Urchin Tracking Monitor (UTM) parameters here will be very beneficial. We'll be able to track traffic back to each individual blog or site, and if necessary, double down on the ones that are driving traffic.

Link Shorteners

If you ever start to run into problems with getting your link posted, it may be useful to use a few link shorteners or some 301 redirects. To keep it simple you can use a link shortener that 301s, such as Bitly. Or if you want to spend a little more time, you can set up your own site and 301 the traffic from a certain page to your money site.

USING BUZZBUNDLE

Let's get started with BuzzBundle.

First, it's going to ask you for a keyword. We already have a keyword from the SEO section, but we may want to use something even more generic. For this one I'm going to go with *growth hacking*.

Simply hit "Go," and let BuzzBundle get started.

It will load different content types into different columns, but generally we are going to be scrolling through until we find something that looks compelling and that we can actually contribute to.

The first thing I clicked on was this:

← → ✕ ↻ 🌐 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdvP1P2z4V8

☰ You Tube   Search

An error occurred. Please try again later. (Playback ID: fYtOJUcPbIf6fajy)
Learn More

⏸ ▶❙ 🔊 0:00 / 10:56   CC ⚙HD ☐ ⌞⌟

Growth Hacker Marketing - Ryan Holiday - Review [Buch 1]

It's a review of another book about growth hacking. All I had to do was comment, tag the author, ask him if he would be willing to review our book, and offer to send him one for free.

Austen Allred 1 second ago   ⋮
Hey,

I would love for you to do a review of the growth hacking book I co-wrote, called Secret Sauce (https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/secret-sauce-a-step-by-step-growth-hacking-Read more

Reply • 👍 👎

My assumption is this person will find the conversation to be completely authentic, because it is. The fact that there's now a link on his video that people who are searching for something else will find is just an added bonus. (As an aside, I much prefer to open a link in my normal browser if I'm just going to be

commenting as myself.)

The next one I found was a roundup of great growth hacking blog posts from the week. I left the following comment:

Comment

Hey Patrice,

I just found this blog, and this is one of the best roundups I've ever seen.

I'm actually in the middle of writing a growth hacking book called Secret Sauce (https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/secret-sauce-a-step-by-step-growth-hacking-guide--2) and would love for you to review it. I'd be happy to send you a review copy for free - it's not done yet, but we've raised over $80,000. I just followed you on Twitter as well so feel free to hit me up there.

Name *

Austen Allred

Email *

austen.allred@gmail.com

Website

https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/secret-sau

POST COMMENT

Note how I followed him on Twitter so it's obviously personal and not an automated spam comment. I even went a little bit overboard and tweeted at him, just for kicks.

Austen Allred @AustenAllred · 15s
@PatriceTruong Hey, just left a comment on your blog. Would love for you to review the first half of indiegogo.com/projects/secre…. Thoughts?

That is how you get people on your team.

As you get further along and have an idea of how to get a good response, I'd recommend starting to sort by reach, ramping up the number of keywords you're searching for, and possibly even—*gasp*—upgrading to the paid version of BuzzBundle. Once you have that ball rolling, let's move on to Twitter and getting press.

[6]

GETTING PRESS

There's nothing a startup (or any company) needs quite as much as press. We can pretend like press doesn't matter after we have it, but until then, it brings in traffic, users, social validation, and legitimacy. Those are things that are hard to get enough of.

It's taken me years of trial and error, the help of a lot of really smart marketers, and tons of time tweaking language and strategy to figure out a repeatable process that works across the board. Using these methods, I've been successful getting my company and others published with some of the heavy-hitting content sites. These have included

- *Time* magazine
- BBC
- *The Guardian*
- TechCrunch
- *PandoDaily*
- *Slate*
- *Gizmodo*
- And hundreds of smaller blogs and websites

This process, if followed the way I spell it out below, should work well for you. With great content or a compelling story, you'll have the potential to get published in major publications.

OVERVIEW

On the surface, the process of getting press seems reasonably simple. All you need to do is find a reporter or blogger who might like to write about you, and e-mail them your pitch. But doing that well and making it scale can become very complex very quickly.

We'll take you through step by step, and by the end of this guide, it should take you less than a day to e-mail up to a thousand relevant press contacts with all the right information to make them want to write about you. Even marginally interesting companies and products should get a half dozen mentions in the press when doing so.

We'll cover the following:

1. Managing overall strategy and approach
2. Finding the publications that would likely write about you (and programmatically break them down into manageable lists)
3. Finding an angle to pitch

4. Creating a press kit

5. Writing the perfect, personalized e-mail (at scale)

6. Sending large amounts of e-mail, prepopulating fields, and allowing for personalization

Now, let's go get you some press!

STRATEGY AND APPROACH

Customer Profiling

Whenever I begin a marketing effort, I like to really try and get into the mind of the person I'm selling to, regardless of what it is I may be selling. In this case, we're selling to the reporter, and what we're selling is that we're legitimate and interesting enough that their audience will want to hear about us.

There's also a pecking order among reporters. The high-profile bloggers and reporters can spend most of their time covering their favorite companies and on analysis, while some of the lower-profile or younger reporters have a large quota they have to meet and can barely rephrase press releases before they throw them on their blog. It takes a unique strategy to reach the different levels on the totem pole. Though there may be some exceptions due to reporters' pet interests, it rarely makes sense to pitch to the highest tier first when we're looking for press coverage. They're big enough that if what you're doing isn't shaking up Silicon Valley, they probably don't care. Our strategy will actually be quite the reverse.

One of the first things reporters do when your pitch lands in their inbox is see what other reporters are saying about you (or if anyone has written about you at all). Naturally, reporters like to see some level of social proof before they make a move. If other people are writing about you, it signals that you're worth writing about. We're going to use that to our advantage. (This doesn't apply if you *know* people will write about you and you're giving an exclusive. If you're already that type of company, you probably won't be reading this anyway!)

The Press Pyramid

To solve the "What do people find if they google you?" problem, we will build a pyramid of press mentions starting with blogs and sites that are small and hungry for content, and then we'll work our way up to the eight-hundred-pound gorillas.
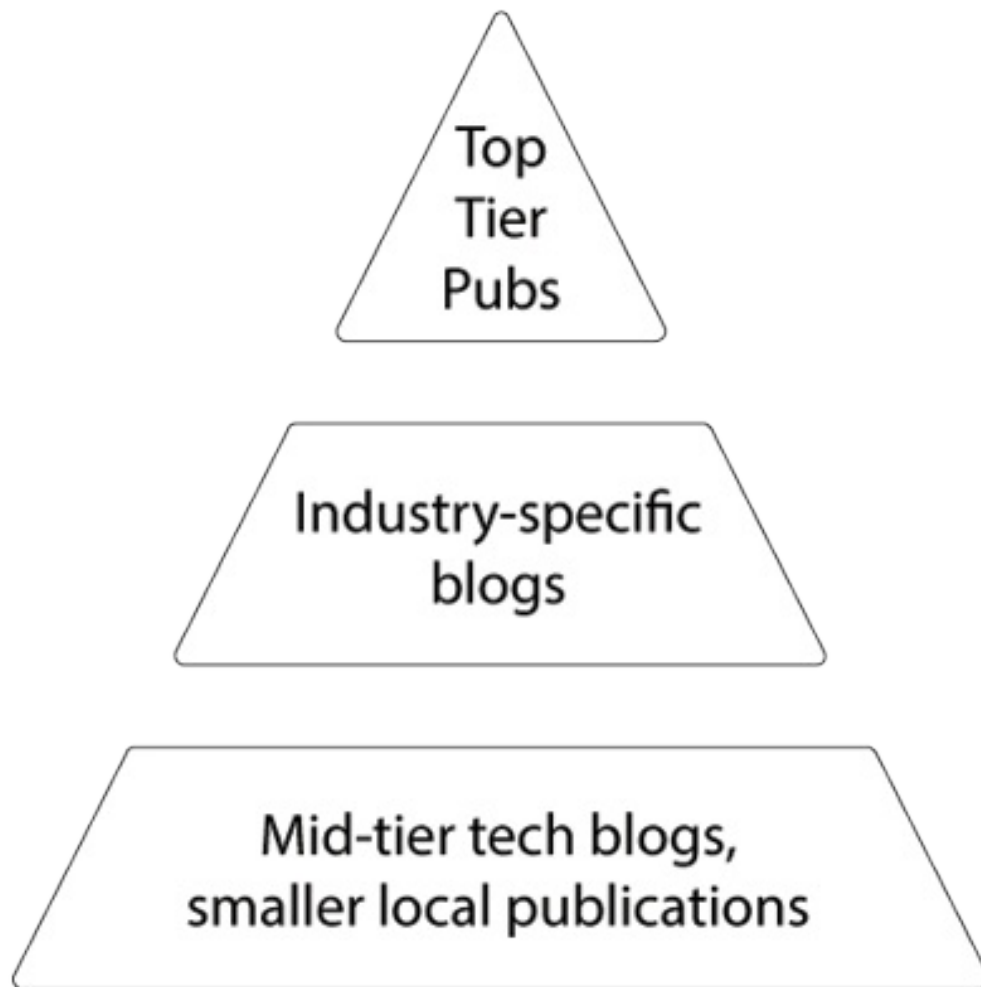
So we want to start at the bottom rung: the hobbyist with a decent following, the small tech blog just getting started, the small companies doing what they can to pay the bills with a little traffic and some well-placed Google AdSense ads, etc. But most of them are blogs you don't read often and may not have even heard of, so how do we find them? (This is where it gets fun.)

LIST BUILDING

The first thing we need to do before we can sort the websites into their separate tiers is to generate a mammoth list of blogs that we can easily import into tools we'll use later. All we'll need in the beginning are URLs of publications that write about companies like ours. We have tools to find contact information within those blogs, but the tools have to know where to start.

A word of caution: Blogs that are only *vaguely related* and reporters who write about things that are only *kind of like your company* will not write about you. For example, if we make iPad cases, a blog that writes about iPad apps isn't even worth approaching. So when we build the list, let's narrow our options as closely as we can.

List-Building Method 1: Blog Rankings

We're going to use a couple of sites that rank blogs within their categories and scrape for the URLs of blogs in the categories that apply to us.

First, download the [Scraper Chrome Extension](#) (or its equivalent in the browser of your choice). Now we

go to our blog-ranking website. Let's start with Alltop. Go to Alltop and find your category, remembering to be as narrow as possible when choosing.

We'll again use my former startup, Grasswire, as an example. Grasswire is a newsroom for the Internet. It lets everyday people come together to geek out about and write the news—usually by finding and verifying social media posts. So we're going to search for all the blogs related to social media and journalism.

The Alltop social media page looks like this:

Social Media

MOST TOPULAR STORIES

5 Ways Twitter Chats Can Help Your Business

How to Improve Your Facebook Engagement Using

5 Fundamentals That Determine How Fast Your Blog Grows

Grow Your Email List with this Simple Twitter Hack

How to Promote Your YouTube Videos for Free

SCOBLEIZER

Why I got Highlight wrong (and how Bluetooth Low Energy

Here comes the age of the "personal cloud"

Come meet the disrupters, like this guy (and enter our Google

Learning more about our advertising future in Google Glass

The kinds of innovation Google Glass will bring

SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMINER

20 Instagram Apps to Enhance Your Photos and Videos

5 Ways Twitter Chats Can Help Your Business

6 New Google Analytics Features for Marketers

How to Improve Your Facebook Engagement Using

LinkedIn Introduces Showcase Pages: This Week in Social

TECHCRUNCH

Money Dashboard Gets $4.4M To Tell UK Bank Users What

As Nadella And Mulally Lead In Microsoft's CEO Hunt, The

Let's Sit Out Black Friday, Shall We?

Mt.Gox Launches Bitcoins.com To Explain What The Heck A

Dutch Authorities Find Google Violates Its Private Data

READWRITE

Tablets: The Tech Guru Gift Guide

Smartphones: The Tech Guru Gift Guide

Game Consoles: The Tech Guru Gift Guide

Terremark Gets Surgically Removed From HealthCare.gov

Hey, Enterprise Developers! Get Agile Or Get Steamrollered

MASHABLE

What Tech CEOs Are Thankful for This Holiday

4 Types of Holiday Shoppers and How to Market to Them

A Very 21st Century Thanksgiving

9 Other Things to Do With Your Thanksgiving Turkey

Jennifer Lawrence Parodies Rob Ford's Crack Speech on

SMARTBRIEF ON SOCIAL MEDIA

How JPMorgan limited the damage from its Twitter misstep

SENSEI MARKETING

How to Expand your Marketing Mind

We see the classic suspects: TechCrunch and Mashable. But we also see some sites you might not be familiar with: *SmartBrief on Social Media* and *Social Media Examiner*. We need to add them to our list.

Right-click on one of the sites in red, and click on the Scraper tool.
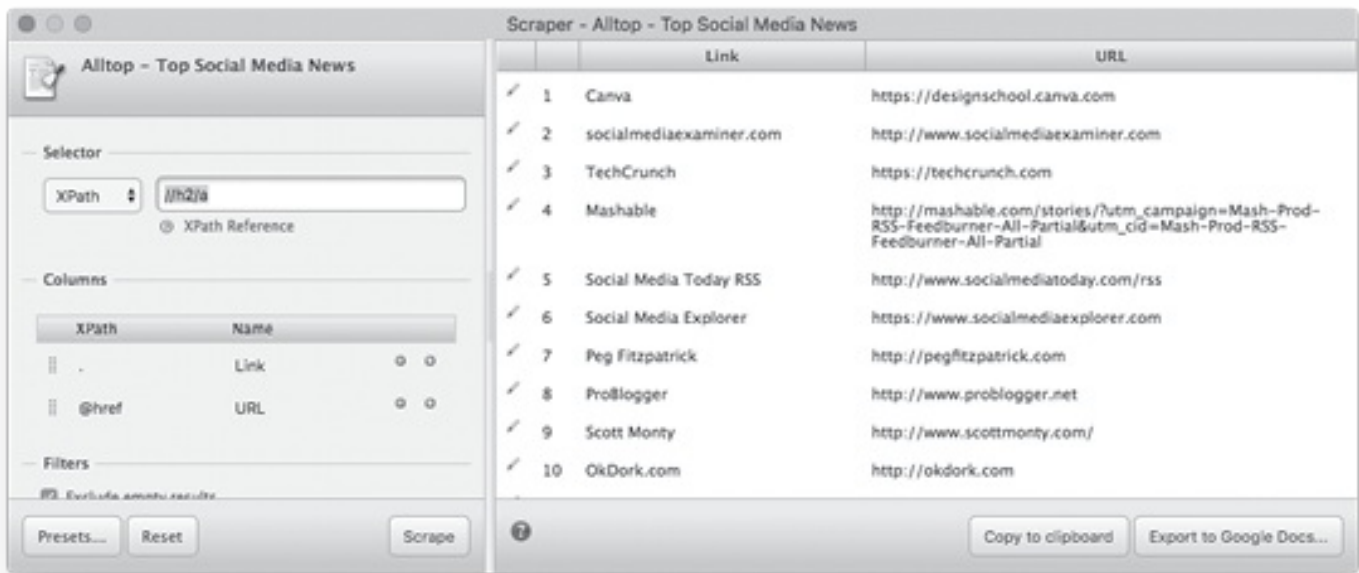
Then click "Export to Google Docs." Now we have a fairly decent list of sites with their URLs that might write about us. Repeat the process in as many categories as exactly match your company (check *journalism* as well), and then switch over to BlogRank.

BlogRank is a bit more complicated to scrape from. First, search for your category using the search bar. It will ask you to select a view, but it doesn't matter which view you choose, since we'll be scraping them all.

Again, we're going to right-click on the name of a blog, and click "Scrape." You'll see the Scraper tool pop up just as it did with Alltop, but this time it appears to pull in only one blog. It's not scraping all of the content we want it to, because BlogRank is set up in HTML tables. We need to modify what the Scraper is looking for.
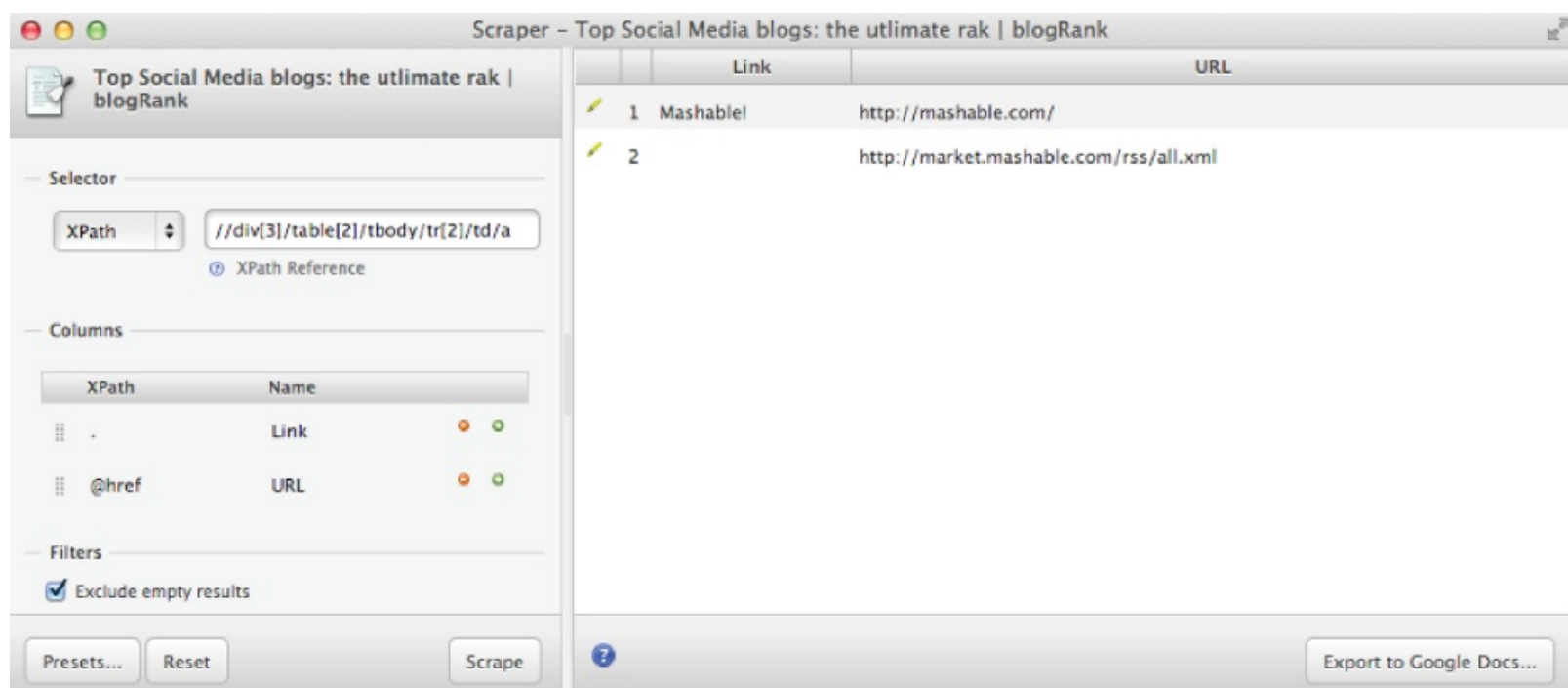
With the Scraper window still open, we'll edit the XPath reference, which is located at the top left of the tool. The XPath probably says something like //div[3]/table[2]/tbody/tr[2]/td/a. All we have to do to make

it scrape everything is change the final number in tr[2] (which stands for *table row 2*) to tr[*], which tells the Scraper to gather every row. With that change, the XPath reference should now read //div[3]/table[2]/tbody/tr[*]/td/a. Click "Scrape" at the bottom of the tool, and the results on the right side should look like they did for Alltop. Now we're ready to export to Google Docs.

Repeat the process for any other categories in BlogRank. We should now have a list of hundreds of blogs relevant to what we want to target. We'll expand the list with one more hack later, but we'll treat that separately, so just work with this for now. There are some duplicates, and scraping BlogRank brought in the URLs for the rich site summary (RSS) feeds as well (which we don't want), so we'll need to clean this list up before we can manipulate and import it.

Scrubbing the List

If we take the BlogRank Google Docs we just created, we can see that the odd rows from row three on only contain the RSS URLs we don't want. Let's get rid of those. This is a bit hack-y, and I'm sure there's a better way, but it works for me. In cell C1, enter the following =MOD(ROW(),2), and then copy that formula down (once your cursor turns into the cross when hovering over the bottom right corner of the cell) to the rest of the spreadsheet. The result should be every odd C cell (C1, C3, C5, etc.) containing a *1* and every even C cell (C2, C4, C6) containing a *0*. Now select the entire C column, click on "Data," and select "Sort sheet by column C A ->Z"

The numbers in column C won't change, but the rest of your sheet will be nicely separated out for easy deletion. Find anything that's empty in column A and delete its row. Once you've done this, you should have a column that is strictly blog URLs that we can import into the tools we'll use later. Do this for each Google Doc spreadsheet you created, and then combine them into one giant list. Hopefully it contains over seven hundred total sites at this point.

We will inevitably have some duplicates, so once we have everything combined, let's get rid of them. In the new cell C1, write =UNIQUE(A:B) and hit "Enter." This should create a list with only the unique entries in columns C and D. You can't yet delete columns A and B since they're linked to columns C and D using a formula, so copy the values from columns C and D and paste them in a fresh Google Doc.

What you just created is an enormous list of all of the top blog URLs in the categories and industries that

would be most likely to write about you. Give yourself a pat on the back; that's pretty awesome! But we're only getting started. Before we start building a press kit and sending out e-mails, there's yet another way to generate a list. This list takes a *lot* less time to create.

List-Building Method 2: Google News

Getting a list of blogs in our categories may not cover all the bases. The next method to build our list will be scraping the results from the Google News API.

This can be difficult because some scrapers start and stop working at different times. The best scraper currently requires Firefox and a Firefox plug-in, but it works quite well. Once you have the extension installed,

1. Go to digitalmethods.net/Dmi/ToolGoogleNewsScraper.

2. Ignore the top input that says "Enter Sources."

3. Put your keywords in the second input ("Keywords").

4. Click "Run." Once the scraper runs, you can download the URLs of sites that mention your keyword by clicking "Output." It will download as either a TXT or a simple CSV file.

This is, of course, much easier to use and manipulate than our other list. I haven't found anything of a particular region to be of any value, so I would delete those (unless you're from that region or your product is specifically relevant there). Other than that, I would leave the CSV file as is or copy and paste the information into your Google Doc.

The entire process can be a bit annoying, but if you combined the two methods, you may now have over a thousand URLs, and it should have taken you only a few minutes. It will be easy to go from URL to e-mail address later (I promise), so let's put together something to send the reporters.

CREATING YOUR ANGLE

News isn't worthy of publishing just because it exists. Part of the job of any journalist or reporter is curation—deciding what is worthy of being published in their publication, whether that publication is a blog or the *New York Times*. Your job as someone looking for press is to show them how you meet their standards and would be interesting to their audience.

We could go into all sorts of journalistic principles that determine why something makes it into a publication and what principles they use, but really it's just common sense. Is it timely? Is it relevant? Is it interesting? Why would someone like *you* be interested in reading this?

Again, we'll take my startup, Grasswire, for example. Grasswire is an Internet newsroom that lets everyone fact-check and sort social media content in real time. But what does that mean?

In the first *Pirates of the Caribbean* film, Jack Sparrow defined the difference between *need* and *is* this way: "That's what a ship is, you know. It's not just a keel and a hull and a deck and sails. That's what a ship needs. But what a ship is—what the Black Pearl really is—is freedom." What Grasswire *needs* is an Internet newsroom. But what Grasswire *is* is democratization of journalism and information. It's turning over the power of governments and corporations to everyday people. It's letting ordinary people control the information that determines how they see the world. Not many people want to read about yet another social media tool, but people love to read about freedom.

So in the initial pitch, we won't go into detail about how the technology works, what APIs we pull from,

why the user interface/user design (UI/UX) look like they do, and so on. We'll talk about the story of Grasswire: what we're doing, why we're doing it, and why it needs to be done. Reporters don't often like products, but they usually love missions.

Grasswire also has the benefit of a unique angle—I lived in my car for three months to get Grasswire off the ground. That's interesting to most reporters, if only to understand how I lived in a car, where I slept, where I showered, and so on. That also goes in the arsenal and should be mentioned when we're sending our press kit e-mail.

THE PRESS KIT

Now we have an *even bigger* list of sites that would potentially write about our startup. (I usually start working with a list of about a thousand URLs.) We'll create a semi-automated way of sending the e-mails soon. What we have to do next, though, is create something to send them.

The press kit is basically a ZIP file of all of the content the reporter may need access to, and this will vary from startup to startup. Grasswire's original press kit was, honestly, mediocre. But that press kit combined with a few e-mails got us our first press (BBC, *The Guardian*, *Slate*, Yahoo Finance, etc.) before we even had a product. Let's look over the basic structure of a press kit.

A press kit should include the following:

1. Company overview
2. Founder photos
3. Logos
4. Press mentions
5. Product screenshots, videos, or photographs

The Grasswire press kit included another document we called the "Grasswire Story," because the story of me living in my car for a few months to get the startup off the ground was quite compelling. If you can think of anything else specific to your company that would make for an interesting story, include it in a separate document.

Company Overview

The company overview is a simple document that explains who you are and what you do. Think of it as an elevator pitch for newspapers.

For Grasswire we included a tagline, a one-sentence description, three "how it works" paragraphs, and a call to action. An example might look something like this. (Note: This is a press kit for a real company we did work for, and it got them more than a little press, from *AllThingsD* to the *Wall Street Journal*).

Underwater Audio Overview

Tagline: Waterproof iPods and headphones for swimmers

Description: Underwater Audio has developed technology that allows us to waterproof iPods, headphones, and other electronic devices for swimmers.

How it works: Underwater Audio music players come waterproofed from the inside out. They look, feel, and smell like any other 2GB iPod Shuffle—but they work underwater.

Underwater Audio seals the iPod from the inside out using a proprietary process, and we have tested it at a depth of two

hundred feet (though we don't recommend Underwater Audio for diving). Dunk it in water, leave it there, and it still works.

The Underwater Audio player will work with any headphones—though under the water, you'll need waterproof headphones to create a watertight seal with your ear to have good audio. Our recommended picks are available along with your iPod on UnderwaterAudio.com

Underwater Audio iPods and bundles are available at UnderwaterAudio.com starting at $149.

Of course, Underwater Audio is fairly easy to describe—they sell waterproof iPods. Your company might be a little more nebulous, but you should be able to nail it down to both a one-sentence description and a short explanation, not more than a couple paragraphs. I like to start by pretending I'm explaining a company to a five-year-old and then make my explanation more technical and detailed from there, if necessary.

Founder Photos

Yes, this might seem weird, but some publications really like photographs. Send headshots if you have to, but really if there's an interesting angle to your story, you can tell the reporters through your founder photos as well. Most of the Grasswire team photos were published because my cofounder and I were standing in front of the car where I lived while we got Grasswire off the ground. Underwater Audio's founder photos might be something underwater with a waterproof iPod, demoing the product. These photos are rarely used, so you can go out on a limb.

Logos

I've had some reporters ask for AI or PSD folders that will scale better, while most prefer simple PNG logos. It's not difficult to throw them all in a folder, send them off, and let the reporters decide which ones to use.

Press Mentions

This is basically to show some social proof. It's just a document with links to other articles that have been written about you.

Product Screenshots, Videos, or Photographs

The most important of these three are screenshots. It's difficult to explain how a product works without a visual. Include any other product demo videos or photographs a reporter may want to use. Remember the strategy here is to give them every piece of content they could possibly want, and then let them decide what is relevant for their type of media.

THE E-MAIL

We're almost ready to start systematically gathering reporters' e-mails and sending them our press kit, but first we need some text to populate the e-mail.

Ask ten reporters what they would like to see in press pitches, and all ten of them will say, "Keep it short." And when they say *short*, they mean it. Looking through our press pitches, anything that was longer than two short paragraphs cut our response rates in half. So I like to boil my pitches down to three easy parts:

1. Introduction
2. One-sentence pitch
3. Offer or ask (sample or press kit)

Here's the general framework for an e-mail that works well:

Hey [name],

My name is Austen, from Underwater Audio. We developed a process that makes iPods completely waterproof. It's some pretty cool technology you and your readers might be interested in. We're at UnderwaterAudio.com, and I have a [press kit/sample/demo] I'd like to send your way to [review/check out] if you'd be interested. Let me know!

Thanks,

Austen Allred
[contact information]

The most important part of that e-mail, to wax Steve Jobs–like, is what *isn't there*. No long introductions, no links, no videos, no demos—just, "We're here. Are you interested?" I've also gone back and forth with varying levels of personalization, *a la* "I read your article about X, and I really liked Y" or "I'm a huge fan of your work" enough to make it clear that the e-mail is unique to them, but the difference in results seems to be negligible, especially if you don't put in the research to understand the writer or his publication. (I accidentally told a TechCrunch writer I liked his work in *PandoDaily* once. That is the only angry response I've ever received.)

It's really easy for a reporter to reply with, "Yeah, send me what you've got." And now you're introduced and talking! It can be tempting to send out a thousand press kits or tons of links on the initial e-mail, but trust me: the offer approach gets much better results. Also note that you'll want to avoid links, especially since you'll be sending e-mails in bulk. A thousand similar e-mails with the same link will look suspicious to e-mail providers, and you will probably start hitting spam folders.

SENDING THE E-MAILS

Now we have a press kit ready, some e-mail text to send, and a list of sites to send them to. It's time to start gathering e-mail addresses and sending e-mails. (This is, surprisingly enough, the same step.)

To save us hours of time, we're going to use BuzzStream. BuzzStream helps you navigate to sites, automatically pull contact information, send prepopulated but personalized e-mails, and follow-up on those e-mails. The starter pack, which will be enough to meet our needs, is twenty-nine dollars per month (with a fourteen-day free trial!), so it's well worth our time to not have to do all of this manually.

Open up your BuzzStream account, and you'll see this page:

Add Websites to this Project

Add Websites to your project and BuzzStream will **automatically research** them for you and **keep track of your outreach** to them.

NEW!

Find Influencers & Bloggers
Search our database of over 60 million influencers.

Add a List of Websites
Paste a list of URLs and we'll do the rest.

or import an existing list

Set Up the BuzzMarker
Research and add contacts directly from your browser.

Hit "Paste URLs" and paste the URLs from your Google Docs. (You still have them, right?) Click "Add websites," and wait a minute for BuzzStream to do its job. It usually takes between fifteen and thirty minutes for it to process a thousand websites.

Importing and Researching ✕

Right now BuzzStream is...

(We'll email you when the import has completed)

Searching for Contact Information

Collecting Metrics

Finding Recent Content for Each Site

Checking for Backlinks

OK

What you have now is a giant list of websites with e-mail addresses, Twitter handles, etc.

	Name	Domain	Discovered Contact Info	Relationship Stage	Domain Authority	Post Frequency
☐ ★	tsmri.blogspot.com	tsmri.blogspot.com	✉ 📞 📘 🐦 📌 📷 📅		91	Weekly
☐ ★	bloombergmarketin...	bloombergmarketing.bl...	✉ 📞 📘 🐦 in 📷 📌 📅 🌐		73	Inactive
☐ ★	buzzshift.com	buzzshift.com	✉ 📞 📘 🐦 in 📷 📌 🌐		35	Monthly
☐ ★	adweek.com	adweek.com	✉ 📘 🐦 📷 🌐		92	
☐ ★	nowsourcing.com	nowsourcing.com	✉ 📞 📘 🐦 in 📷 📷 🌐		52	Monthly
☐ ★	knowledgeenthusias...	knowledgeenthusiast.c...	✉ 📘 🐦 in 📷 🌐		20	Monthly
☐ ★	techcrunch.com	techcrunch.com	✉ 📘 🐦 📷 📌 📷 📅 🌐		94	Daily
☐ ★	convinceandconvert...	convinceandconvert.com	✉ 📞 📘 🐦 🌐		80	Daily
☐ ★	hotinsocialmedia.com	hotinsocialmedia.com	📘 🐦 📷 📌 📷 🌐		32	Weekly
☐ ★	thenextweb.com	thenextweb.com	✉ 📘 🐦 📷 📌 📷 📅 🌐		91	Daily
☐ ★	chrisheuer.com	chrisheuer.com	📘 🐦 in 🌐		45	Inactive
☐ ★	wearesocial.com	wearesocial.com	✉ 📞 📘 🐦 📷 📷 🌐		71	Weekly

I use domain authority as the best sort method to decide how legitimate a blog or website is. Generally, the biggest sites (TechCrunch, Wired, etc.) will have a BuzzStream rank of 90+; really, really good blogs will be 80+. Anything in the 40–70 range is usually an amateur blog.

If you're looking to go straight to the top, look at 80–100. If you want to start at the bottom and build your way up in legitimacy, go for the 40–70. I don't even bother with anything that has a domain authority lower than 30.

Now we have our list. Let's go to work!

Reaching Out

The temptation here is to send a mass e-mail blast. Fight that temptation! Even if it takes us a few days to pore through and send out five hundred really good e-mails, it will be worth it. I promise.

BuzzStream makes it easy for you to take an e-mail template and fill it in with variables. (For example: "[firstname]" or "[sitename].") Once it finds the right contact information, it will automatically plug it in, so you could be pretty close to simply hitting "Send" for every e-mail you create.

It's also possible to reach out on Twitter, but this doesn't scale very well. First, find out if there are one or two blogs that would be your ideal publications. Find the ideal person there, and reach out to them on Twitter. Try sending a message like this:

@username Hey I have something to send you about [your angle]. What's a good e-mail? This creates a more personal relationship, and if you're vague enough and your angle is interesting enough, few will refuse to give you their e-mail address. I like to send tweets to two people, but refrain from tweeting at fifty people. First because that's annoying, second because the other reporters will see you blindly reaching out, and third because you'll be suspended from Twitter for spamming.

Some reporters' contact information won't be brought up as well as some others. Make sure to find the right person to contact. If you're Grasswire, don't e-mail the person who writes about The Internet of Things. It's worth spending twice as much time to find the right person.

Now we're going to open up the BuzzBar, which will let us go through our list of websites, open them up, and pull and send information to contacts. It will track the e-mails we've sent, remind us to send follow-ups, and let us get rid of the sites we don't like.

I try to send five hundred e-mails per day if I'm working a full day. Yes, it's a full day's work to send five hundred e-mails. That's because you should try to understand who the person receiving the pitch is and speak specifically to them. If you're copying and pasting and just hitting "Send" on every e-mail, you're doing it wrong.

Follow Up

If you don't receive a response after a few days, you can use BuzzStream to follow up. But don't be annoying about it. Remember that running a company is a marathon, not a sprint. (A startup is more like a sprint and then a marathon.) You may want to get coverage from these reporters again. So be cordial, don't burn any bridges, and be grateful if anyone writes about you.

[7]
TWITTER

T witter is probably the coolest marketing tool of our generation. A few things to ponder about the great things you can do with Twitter—

- See what people are interested in and talking about right now.
- Search user profiles to find what tribes people align themselves with.
- Find lists of people who follow your competitors.
- Interact with all of those people.

When we actually put those facts together, it was one of those "holy smokes, we're sitting on a gold mine" moments that marketers live for. It took a couple of years to figure out the right strategy, but now if a product we're marketing doesn't get 50 sign-ups (not to mention 150 new, active Twitter followers) every day, I know I've done something wrong.

AUTO-FAVORITING AND RETWEETING (THE CRAPPY WAY)

Have you ever noticed those accounts that seem kind of spammy—always favoriting and retweeting your tweets? That's because it works. For example, there was a time when tweeting anything that contained *HackerNews* was favorited by @HackerNewsOnion.

My first tweet that contained *HackerNews* was something a bit condescending about how a HackerNews thread had descended into a flame war. When @HackerNewsOnion favorited my tweet, I thought, *Hey, these guys are laughing along. That's cool.* I checked out their profile, and their tweets were pretty funny, so I followed them. Then a couple minutes later, I tweeted something else that contained *HackerNews* to a friend. Again, it was favorited. But this time it didn't make sense; there was no reason @HackerNewsOnion should have favorited that one.

I opened up their profile and looked at the things they had favorited—it was just a list of every tweet that said *HackerNews* in any context. As I watched the account over the next few weeks, I realized I wasn't the only one being duped by a stupid little "favorite" bot. Dozens were following @HackerNewsOnion each day.

Auto-favorite Tweets Containing Pertinent Keywords

If you're ever up for a laugh, try tweeting "#SEO #social #socialmediamarketing #SEM #socialmedia SEO social media marketing." Your tweet will be inundated with Twitter favorites and retweets from bots.

It was a little cheap and a bit spammy, but for @HackerNewsOnion, it worked. It might for you too. Just make sure to not tick people off along the way. (I unfollowed them.) Despite the fact that it works, I don't recommend it. There are better ways.

SELECTIVE FOLLOWING (THE MEDIOCRE WAY)

If favoriting a tweet shows solidarity, following an account shows respect. Using a method similar to the one @HackerNewsOnion used to favorite hashtagged posts, we can *follow* people to gain those few seconds of attention needed to attract someone's interest.

Twitter allows accounts with fewer than two thousand followers follow up to five thousand people. Those with over two thousand can follow a thousand people per day (so long as the number of people you follow isn't more than 110 percent of the number of your followers). In other words, you can, by brute force, get a split second of attention from up to a thousand Twitter accounts daily. Set up your profile right, and that traffic drives through to your product or landing page, and interested parties can sign up from there.

Let's say you have a 10 percent follow-back rate (though in my experience, you will get a higher percentage of follow-back than that). That's one hundred new followers per day, three thousand new followers per month, and thirty-six thousand five hundred new followers per year. It's not pretty, but it works. What could your startup do with three thousand interested Twitter followers? How quickly could you turn those three thousand followers into users?

MANUAL FOLLOWING (THE BEST BUT SLOW WAY)

Manual following isn't ideal; it takes a long time, and it's tedious. Your fingers will "feel the burn" from the fatigue of hitting buttons. But as you begin the process of using Twitter as a marketing tool, it's best to really get your hands dirty.

The Manual Following Strategy

So let's say, just as an example, you make iPhone screen protectors. How would you find potential customers?

You could look at the users who follow Zagg. Zagg (the largest iPhone screen protector company) has the Twitter handle @zaggdaily, with almost forty-two thousand Twitter followers—all of whom are presumably at least somewhat interested in iPhone screen protectors. You could open up a list of their followers and follow them all in succession. This would work, but you'd end up with a ton of spammy and other business accounts. Just look at the next screenshot, and you'll see what I mean.

Dag Accessories @DagAccessories
Mobile Accessories Shop - Follow for exclusive twitter promo deals -
#teamfollowback

Follow
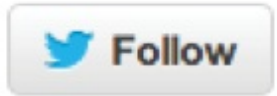
Adam Cohen @adamcohenPSE
Director of Football Operations at Perennial Sports and Entertainment, a full service sports agency representing NFL and NBA players.

Follow

SimpliSafe @simplisafe
The complete wireless home security system that you install yourself and can take with you when you move.

Follow

Lottery Destroyer @LotteryDestroy
#lottery #LotteryPredicter Get Lottery Destroyer tinyurl.com/GetLotteryDest...

Follow

Michael Sweeney @mcsweene

Follow

ZTE USA @ZTE_USA
Phones. Tablets. Internet Devices. Welcome to the official Twitter account of ZTE USA - The world's 4th largest mobile handset

Follow

What we need to do is create a search syntax that finds the right people. Let's go to Twitter and search *screen protector*. Make sure to click "All" to get the most recent results instead of the top results of people who have the most followers.

Results for screen protector

Top / **All** / People you follow

adovidz @a_dovidio · 2m
Wanna maintain my phone so I would be on my third **screen protector** dkm
Expand

Essence Ja'Nice @Chyna_Doll88_ · 2m
I need a **screen protector** ASAP
Expand

Taylor Leonard @letsparTAY15 · 3m
SOMEONE GAVE ME AN IPHONE 4 **SCREEN PROTECTOR** LIKE NO I HAVE THE 5 #itlooksweird
Expand

@ihystagram · 4m
"@chntxl: I WAS GETTING A NEW **SCREEN PROTECTOR** AND THIS APPEARED WHILE THE GUY WAS PUTTING IT ON pic.twitter.com/5RdrxkHLtw" IM WEAK
💬 🖼 View photo

That's much better. Everyone is talking about screen protectors. There aren't as many business or spammy accounts, and each person there is a potential customer.

But what if there were something even better? If I were a person who was not only talking about screen protectors but who was also looking to buy, what would I be tweeting about? Let's search *need screen protector* instead.

Results for **need screen protector**

Janua Flores □ @januacaluza · 14m

i **need** a new **screen protector**

Expand

Snezana R □ @sneekysneki · 15m

Scratched my phone screen so badly good thing I have a **screen protector**... Except that I **need** a new one □□

Expand

Mike McParland @I_Am_McP · 18m

@ChrisKeosky Yeah, I'm gonna **need** to invest in some sort of **screen protector**.

💬 View conversation

Young Meezus @sassykatbaco · 20m

I **need** a new **screen protector** bc mine is brown

Expand

---

alice. @gyuyoji · 26m

i **need** a new **screen protector** for my iphone but it's so difficult to find 4s accessories ;-;

Expand
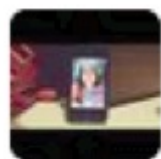
Qi △ @Firarex · 29m

I **need** to change my **screen protector** zzz

Expand

Bingo. There they are: our target market, ready and looking to buy, and perhaps most important—tweeting about it right now. We could follow them, and they would see our profile and hopefully head to our landing page or store. We might include a discount code and a link to our store. Sales would come in.

"But that's easy," you might say. "Screen protectors have a huge market of people ready to buy. No one

has even heard of my project yet!" If that's the case, we might go a bit more abstract. A good rule of thumb is to look at the last thing you tweeted. What was it about? Find people tweeting about the same stuff.

What if you're Heroku? Your target market is hackers. So enter the mind of a hacker: what would they be tweeting?

You could plug in the name of a competitor (DigitalOcean or AWS). You could plug in *hosting* or *scale/scaling*. Maybe you would plug in the top link from HackerNews or r/programming. You could even try your own name if you're that big or perhaps the URL of an article you've been mentioned in.

This worked for my former startup, Grasswire (a sort of Internet newsroom), many times in different forms. Grasswire lets everyday people create collaborative news reports from real-time social media aggregation, so we might find the people tweeting about breaking news—perhaps something to do with Egypt, Syria, or #navyyardshooting (depending on the news that day). When people can see our real-time news feed of retweeted firsthand content at the same time they're tweeting about it, our follow-back rates approach 40 percent. That's four hundred followers per day. Now Grasswire's Twitter account has more than one hundred eighty thousand followers.
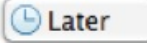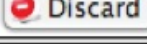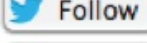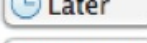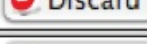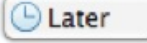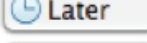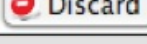
Perhaps more interesting than that, though, is watching the traffic flow to our landing page. In the course of five minutes, we can follow people, watch them flow through to our landing page (the link on our Twitter profile), and track sign-ups. Using this method, we can typically get fifty sign-ups a day from Twitter alone.

But the application doesn't stop there. Here's where FollowLiker comes into play.

SEMI-MANUALLY FOLLOWING

FollowLiker is basically a piece of software that makes it easy to scrape Twitter and follow people. You simply put in all the details of your account and the keywords and times you want it to follow, and it will follow the people you want it to. Doing so, you could expect to see at least a hundred new followers per day, and at least fifty clickthroughs to a landing page in a bio.

With FollowLiker I can not only search and follow in real time (sorting tweets by most recent first to ensure real-time relevance), but I can also search profile data.

carlosahumada @carlosahumad[a]	4/22/09 1:50 PM)5188,−71.509506 Friends: 51 Followers: 245 Tweets: 2350	Follow / Later / Discard
1 Geographer by profession, entrepreneur at heart. And married to the beautiful Francita.		
Clinton Mucha @Clintonzpvu9v	3/25/13 9:17 PM Minneapolis Friends: 0 Followers: 0 Tweets: 116	Follow / Later / Discard
2 Web nerd. Creator. Beer expert. Friendly social media geek. Music ninja. Prone to fits of apathy. Certified entrepreneur. Future teen idol		
The Real Armer @armenian999	4/1/09 10:34 PM 2315,100.531359 Friends: 1480 Followers: 269 Tweets: 540	Follow / Later / Discard
3 Bangkok Thailand based Wireless Entrepreneur.		
I'm in ♥with ﷲ @Rizqanindya	10/2/09 12:02 AM 1esia,South Borneo Friends: 616 Followers: 553 Tweets: 4587	Follow / Later / Discard
4 Y^{ou} O^{nly} L^{ive} O^{nce} I♥ ﷲ. . I'm Moslem. I♥ Muhammad SAW.Young entrepreneur,Programmer,Blogger,Gammer (19th yo)		
Neil Kennelly @Neillynkvhkk	3/26/13 1:33 AM La Paz Friends: 0 Followers: 0 Tweets: 146	Follow / Later / Discard
5 Troublemaker. Travel enthusiast. Total entrepreneur. Hardcore analyst. Bacon aficionado		

Export | Follow All Later | Filters

So if I'm looking for press, I can search *+technology +journalist,* or *+tech +journalist* and follow from my personal Twitter profile (which has a bio to emphasize the fact that I lived in a car to get a startup off the ground). This, as well as some other press-hacking, got us in a half dozen major publications. Warning: Using FollowLiker on a personal profile will pretty much destroy the enjoyment of using Twitter.

MANUAL INTERACTION

When all is said and done, this pales in comparison to true, authentic communication with people who are interested in what you have to offer. Following is great if you're looking for a quick bump in numbers, but if you actually reply to people using the same search syntaxes, people care about what you have to say. There are a couple of options for this. I prefer to use TweetDeck (a free download).

TweetDeck Interaction

We're going to download TweetDeck and create a new stream for the terms we want to interact with. For example, here is a list of everyone tweeting about me or my blog. As you can see, it pulls in every tweet that mentions my name or links to Austenallred.com (including shortlinks).

Steven McConnell @TogEntrepr.... 3d
Can We All Agree "The News" is
Sufficiently Broken? - bit.ly/1disfn0
Details

Bobby Saini @bobbysaini 3d
The Hacker's Guide to Twitter User
Acquisition by Austen Allred
bit.ly/1aGjA9t
Details

Twoodo @Twoodo 3d
Twitter #growth hacks to get you
those first 1000 followers via
@AustenAllred buff.ly/1h6CJGK
#growthhacks
Details ↩ ⇄ ★ ...

Nichole Elizabeth @NikkiElizDe.... 3d
The Hacker's Guide to Twitter User
Acquisition by Austen Allred
buff.ly/1hYqGgb
Details

David Arnoux @darnocks 3d
Twitter #growth hacks to get you
those first 1000 followers via
@AustenAllred buff.ly/1h6CKKX
#growthhacks
Details

Growth Hacker TV @growthhack.... 3d
The Hacker's Guide to Twitter User
Acquisition by Austen Allred
bit.ly/Ihh8fC
Details

Denis Duvauchelle @desduvauc.... 3d
Twitter #growth hacks to get you
those first 1000 followers via
@AustenAllred buff.ly/1h6CGdZ
#growthhacks
Details

Austen Allred @AustenAllred 4d
@jdickinson1988 austenallred.com
has a couple posts, as well as
quora.com/Would-becoming...
💬 Conversation

Bobby Saini @bobbysaini 3d
The Hacker's Guide to Twitter User
Acquisition by Austen Allred
bit.ly/1aGjA9t
Details

Hot Pepper Comm. @hotpepper.... 4d
"@cboyack: Um, BYU, you might
want to rethink this one.
facebook.com/austen.allred/...
#socialmedia #utah"
Details

Using TweetDeck I can click on any tweet and respond instantly, without opening a new interface.

Steven McConnell
@TogEntrepreneur

Can We All Agree "The News" is Sufficiently Broken? - bit.ly/1disfno

9:31am · 22 Nov 13 · Sprout Social

1 FAVORITE

Reply to @TogEntrepreneur

Austen Allred @AustenAllred   3m
@TogEntrepreneur Thanks for the mention! Let me know if there's anything I can do to help.

💬 Conversation

Don't let this become a rote copy-paste script—not only because Twitter will ban you, but also because this is an unparalleled opportunity to engage in an authentic, one-on-one conversation with a would-be user. And there are lists and lists of them. Think about it: lists and lists of people who are probably interested in what you have to offer. Doing this we have found not only the people who are interested but also the people who are advocates and a little bit obsessed about the little company we're building. (Have you ever had someone tell you they encouraged their mosque to pray for your Twitter stream?)

Conversion: Twitter Cards

So we now have lists of people interacting with us who are interested in what we're doing. We can take that data and turn them into users, subscribers, etc., by using Twitter Cards.

Twitter Cards are an easy way to allow a Twitter user to perform an action without actually leaving the Twitter interface. Users can even create accounts on your system with one click. Or they can join an e-mail list.

Earlier, I recommended tweeting *#SEO #social #socialmediamarketing #SEM #socialmedia SEO social media marketing*. I could hypothetically respond to everyone who tweets that particular tweet and give them a Twitter Card for a discount to the book. Or I could push them to Amazon to buy the full book. Or I could just follow them, favorite the tweet, and have a cool new way to know who is actually reading what I write. I'm not doing anything with it yet, but you should!

Twitter Profile Searches and Reachout

We can again use Audiense for Twitter the same way we used it for Instagram, even using it to create our own influencer network. We can download lists and sets of Twitter users based on their bio, gender, job title, what they've tweeted, whether they're a company or person, and so on. We can also enable reaching out en masse, so long as we avoid doing it in a spammy way.

When you are sending out a lot of tweets, it can be difficult to write unique content that your users will connect with and respond to. One method I like to use is to pull the data I've collected from Audiense and create a spreadsheet. That way I can massage the content of the tweets I'm sending and then edit and review them in bulk.

1. Pull the data you have gathered from Audiense.

2. Create an Excel document. Leave Column A blank (You'll be putting the @ character in this column later), and paste the handles into Column B.

3. In Column C, create the first phrase of a tweet: "Hey, we wrote about the perilous state of Bitcoin." Continue down this column to create other interesting phrases that might entice a reader to pay attention to your tweet, but make them all unique. For example, "Hey! See you've been tweeting about Bitcoin." Continue until you've developed at least fifty introductory phrases.

4. In Column D, create a list of closing phrases: "Would love your thoughts: http://bit.ly/yourlinkhere" or "Do you think blockchain is a major step forward?"

5. Now simply drag and drop the @ character the full length of Column A, and use the CONCATENATE function in Excel to combine the phrases from Columns A through D to create a complete tweet.

6. You can repeat the process by matching up different rows from your "first phrase" and "second phrase" columns to create dozens or even hundreds of tweets, each with unique, user-friendly content.

7. Send out your tweets using Hootsuite Bulk Uploader or Bulk Buffer. As you automate post times and how many posts you'd like to send per day, you'll increase your reach to many additional Twitter users.

Yet Another Word of Warning

When you are doing this, be *very, very* careful. If your rates are too frequent, you're not using your account in an authentic way, or you're targeting the wrong people, you *will* make people angry.

Furthermore, if you do this in a spammy way, people *will* report your accounts and those accounts *will* be banned.

This is one of those sections that is so powerful we hesitated to put it in. But if used well, it provides such a boost that we couldn't leave it out either. So we'll just leave it with the obvious disclaimer.

Tagging for Retweets

One of the things you'll notice in hacking social networks is that vanity matters. If you tell people they're awesome, they'll want to share that with their followers to make it clear to everyone else that they're awesome.

Here's an example of somebody using this to their advantage:

This guy wrote a roundup blog post for his growth hacking digest that included articles from (and links to) nine blogs from growth hackers that have big followings.

He then tweeted it with the previous photo and tagged all of us. That means not only do all of us get a notification that he tagged us (and certainly we'll check it out), but a lot of us also retweeted it because it

shows that we were legitimate enough to be included in such a list.

We've seen people do the same thing with affiliate reviews, rankings of influential people, "here's what I learned from Person X" articles, etc. Even moderately successful people love to have their egos rubbed and to be told how awesome they are. If there's an influencer in your industry you want to get at, this is among the best ways to do it.

PINTEREST

Pinterest is unlike the other networks we've seen. It's not necessarily a social network like Facebook or Twitter, yet it's also not purely a discovery platform like Reddit. It's kind of a combination of the two.

The average Pinterest user may use the platform to save a collage of things they like—planning what clothes to buy when shopping, deciding what meals to cook, daydreaming, planning weddings (real or imagined), setting goals—as well as a method of discovery not unlike a search engine. For example, if you want to find pictures of white sneakers that look good with jeans, there's no better "search engine" out there for this type of content.

That's a lot to wrap our minds around from a growth perspective, but allow us to make one suggestion that will help determine how Pinterest should be used: think of it as a discovery engine.

PINTEREST—THE ULTIMATE DISCOVERY ENGINE

This method of searching may not be true for 100 percent of users—certainly there are some that are going out, finding, and pinning original content—but controlling that process is much more difficult. There's only so much we can do about getting influencers to pin our stuff as opposed to pinning others' things. (That's not entirely true, but we'll get into the nuance of that later.) What we *can* control, to some degree, is what happens once pins and users are actually on the platform.

Note that as we go through this exercise, we hope to see the wheels turning in your heads instead of just passive reading. You should start to be able to look at situations and networks and dissect them for yourselves at this point.

TWO THINGS

As you'll remember from the "Instagram" chapter, after we have our target audience carefully selected, we want to determine two things:

1. Where our target audience goes

2. How to interact with them in a non-intrusive way

Because we're already looking at this network, we'll just assume that your audience is one that's active on Pinterest, and we'll focus mainly on point number two. As we do, let's list all possible interactions we can have on the Pinterest platform to come in contact with another user.

- We can repin what others have pinned. (Could be interesting, but we're not sure how yet.)
- We can follow other accounts or boards. (Think back to the "Twitter" chapter and you should instantly see how we can use this—following to make a touch point.)

- We can "like" pins.
- We can comment.

With those touch points we can put together a pretty straightforward strategy for getting people to find our pins, just like we did on Twitter and Instagram. Maybe we're going to follow a lot of people and like some of their pins to make them notice us. Maybe we're going to create boards full of beautiful pins and encourage others to follow our boards by pinning their content.

Those strategies definitely work, but we can also look at Pinterest just a little bit differently because it is a discovery engine in addition to its social properties.

PINTEREST DISCOVERY

In the interest of learning more about Pinterest, go to the search bar and enter the phrase *white sneakers*. You'll see something like this—though Pinterest gets redesigned so frequently the screenshot could be outdated by the time I finish this sentence.
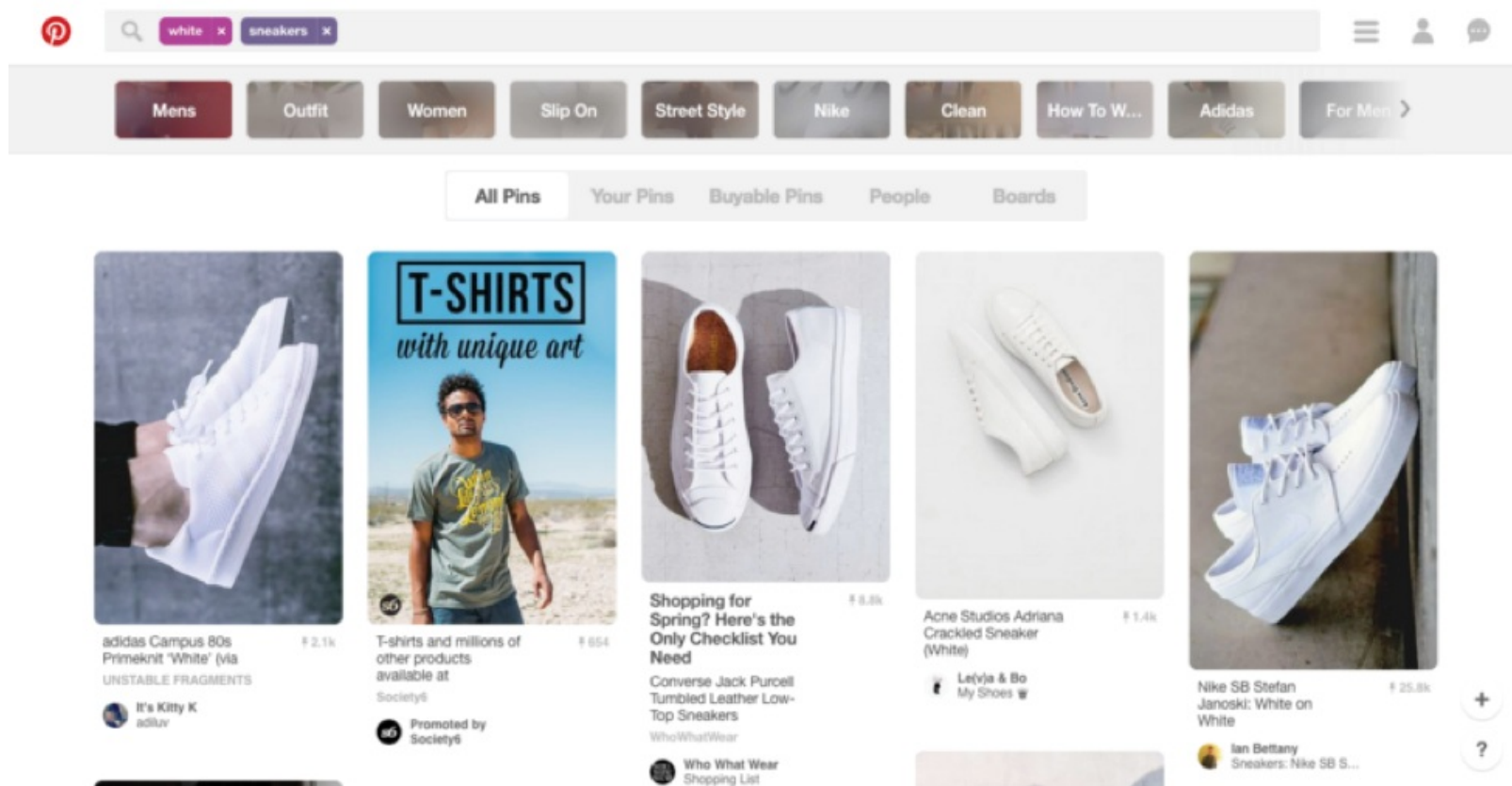
You'll notice a few things: The top results tend to be those with a lot of repins in a short amount of time. This makes sense, as Pinterest wants to bring its best results to the top. Also of note, however, is that Pinterest is already determining things like *men's* sneakers for me based on my profile history and past behavior.

Pinterest is smart, and it does a phenomenal job of guessing what you might like. If you want proof of that, try creating a fresh Pinterest account, pinning a few topics that you're interested in, and not following any other users or boards. You'll notice that after a couple of days, Pinterest starts to fill your feed with pins that you are really interested in and pins that you do like, even if they're from outside your network.

That is the game we want to win, and doing so is shockingly simple.

STEP ONE: MAKING OUR PINS REPINNABLE

The first step to making the pins of your product is almost stupid because of how simple it is, but it works, so we won't complain. When you pin something for the first time, you can attach a comment, and that comment generally remains with the pin.

For example, one of the first results I see when I search for chicken dinner is this:

Skillet Chicken with Creamy Cilantro Lime Sauce   ⚲ 377.7k

Seriously simple dinner! Crispy skillet chicken in the most...

Sallys Baking Addiction

Lindsay | Life, Love ...
Yummy Food Recipes

You can see the description pulled from the website ("Skillet Chicken with Creamy Cilantro Lime Sauce"), the number of pins (377.7k!), the pinner, the source, and some other information. But what we really want to focus on in this instance is "Seriously simple dinner! Crispy skillet chicken in the most . . ." That's a comment that the first or last person to pin this pin gave it. Now note the almost tacit endorsement that this pin carries: "Seriously simple!"

This dinner, indeed, looks delicious. But you'll notice that almost every top pin contains an endorsement like this pin does. If it's a recipe, the comment will say something like, "We make this all the time, and it's amazing!" If it's an outfit, it will say, "So cute!" This commentary serves as an endorsement of the content itself and remains attached to the content. So how do we manipulate that in our favor? It's simple:

1. Look through the top pins in your category or of your topic to see what comments seem to trigger more repins.

2. When you're pinning, include similar endorsements in the comment portion of the pin.

"Well that's just fine," you may say. "But how does that help me make my pins popular? I don't have a big following, and I can't force thousands of pins."

First, make sure you are interacting, following, and otherwise rubbing Pinterest shoulders with as many people as you possibly can.

Second, we're going to cheat.

STEP TWO: NAVIGATING PINTEREST GROUP BOARDS

Pinterest group boards were originally designed to let a few family members or friends pin a board together. When I got married, for example, my wife and I shared a board about wedding ideas, and when one of my wife's sisters became involved with planning, she was also invited to pin on the board. When you're invited to pin on a board, the pins from that board flow into your feed.

When group boards first rolled out, a few enterprising individuals realized that Pinterest had inadvertently created a loophole—you could invite *anyone* to pin on your board, even if you weren't friends and didn't follow each other. And here's the kicker—when you booted the people that had accepted the invitation to pin, those people *still followed the group board*. In other words, I could invite you to pin on my board, kick you off, and virtually force my pins directly into your feed.

After a while, Pinterest closed this loophole, making it so that you could invite only people who follow you to pin. But in the meantime the group boards exploded in popularity. They are still around today and can be used with incredible efficiency for the few people who know about them.

Group Board Etiquette
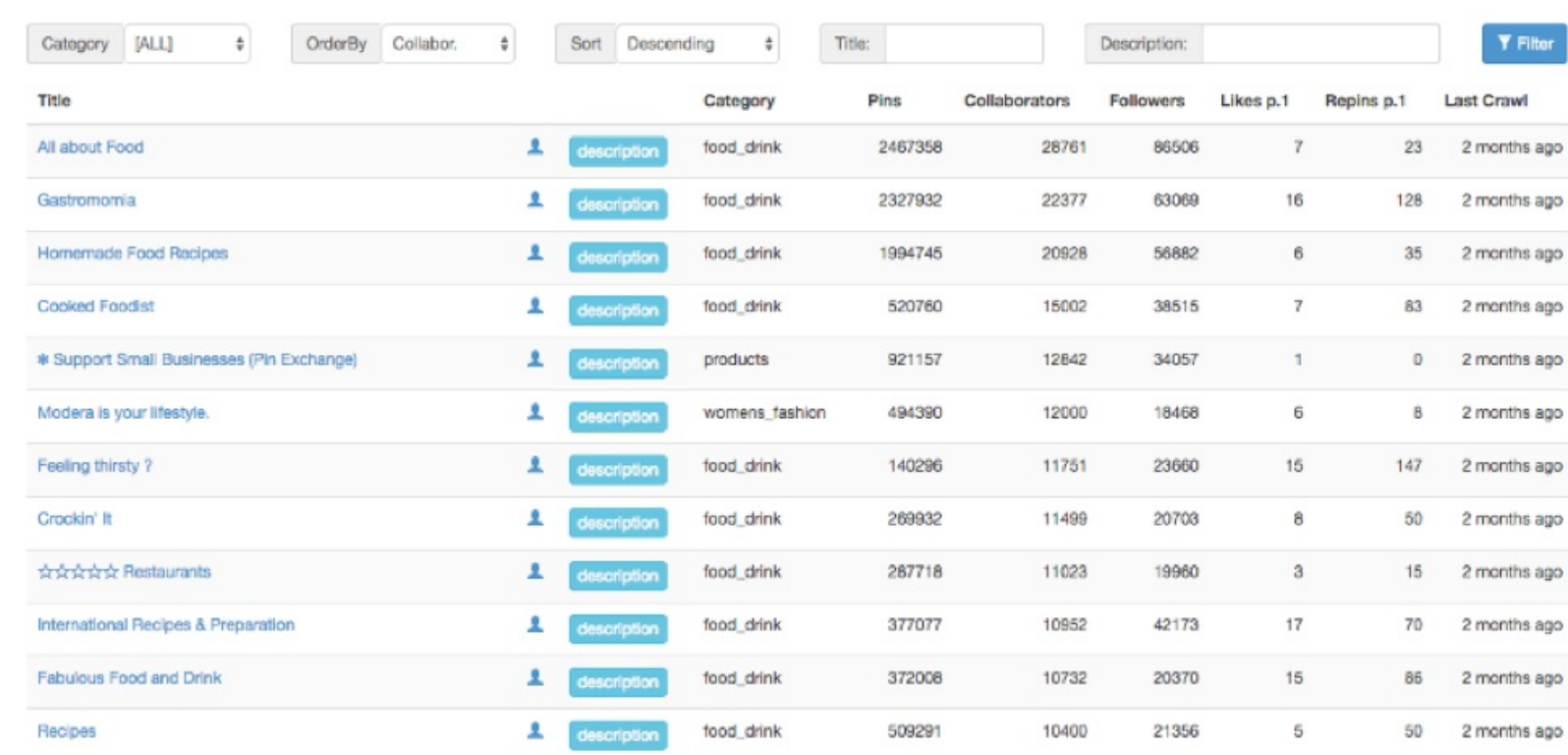
Each group board is a little different, but in general there are a lot of people who have been given permission to pin, a much larger number who are following, and various rules about how to add or remove pinners to the board.

In order to be added to a board, we have to make our account look legitimate—the more tasteful, the better. Then follow the instructions on the board itself. Usually if you have a good-looking account and ask the board owner to invite you, you will receive an invitation. Additionally, on some boards, anyone who has been invited to pin can invite anyone else. For those boards you can usually find someone who has access and negotiate a trade of some sort, especially if you have access to pin on a group board that they want.

Once you are invited to pin on those boards, as long as you don't become overly spammy (be careful there—many will ensure that you're not just pinning products from one company), you can pin on that board indefinitely—at times showing your pins to as many as hundreds of thousands of people. Some of the bigger boards will move quickly, so you'll have to be more active, but there's no doubt that those pins are seen. And when they're seen and pinned, they can drive traffic and sales for a long, long time. Pinterest content has a long shelf life.

Finding Group Boards

Finding group boards used to be a huge pain. There was no way other than to stumble upon them by jumping around from popular pin to popular pin. That's still not a bad way to find them (it's pretty likely that popular pins have been on a group board at one time or another), but recently someone started collecting all of them and turning them into a searchable, indexed directory called PinGroupie. There you can sort the groups of pins any way you want.

Category [ALL]	OrderBy Collabor.	Sort Descending	Title:	Description:	▼ Filter

Title			Category	Pins	Collaborators	Followers	Likes p.1	Repins p.1	Last Crawl
All about Food	👤	description	food_drink	2467358	28761	86506	7	23	2 months ago
Gastromomia	👤	description	food_drink	2327932	22377	63069	16	128	2 months ago
Homemade Food Recipes	👤	description	food_drink	1994745	20928	56882	6	35	2 months ago
Cooked Foodist	👤	description	food_drink	520760	15002	38515	7	83	2 months ago
✻ Support Small Businesses (Pin Exchange)	👤	description	products	921157	12842	34057	1	0	2 months ago
Modera is your lifestyle.	👤	description	womens_fashion	494390	12000	18468	6	8	2 months ago
Feeling thirsty ?	👤	description	food_drink	140296	11751	23660	15	147	2 months ago
Crockin' It	👤	description	food_drink	269932	11499	20703	8	50	2 months ago
☆☆☆☆☆ Restaurants	👤	description	food_drink	287718	11023	19960	3	15	2 months ago
International Recipes & Preparation	👤	description	food_drink	377077	10952	42173	17	70	2 months ago
Fabulous Food and Drink	👤	description	food_drink	372008	10732	20370	15	86	2 months ago
Recipes	👤	description	food_drink	509291	10400	21356	5	50	2 months ago

If it were my first time looking for a group board, I would first navigate to my category of choice and then sort by "Repins p.1," which means repins on the first page. Generally speaking, the more repins there are on the first page, the more active the audience of a board is.

And there you have it, the dead simple, incredibly effective way to make your product explode on Pinterest.

- Create a legitimate and active account, constantly interacting with others in your space.
- Create great pins with a tacit endorsement comment.
- Join group boards (by invitation or board swap), and leverage those audiences as best as you can.

[9]

YOUTUBE

YouTube is also a bit unique; it's actually the second largest search engine in the world. That's right—YouTube handles more searches monthly than Bing or Yahoo! But it's also a discovery engine. The average amount of time spent on YouTube per visit is fifteen minutes. That's an incredible amount of time, and that doesn't happen when you come, find one video, and leave. YouTube is designed to keep you finding, clicking, and watching for as long as is possible. We'll use all of these things to our advantage, despite the fact that YouTube SEO is a bit more difficult to understand than traditional SEO.

PICK KEYWORDS

The first thing we're going to do is pick keywords. Using our traditional keyword-finding method, as we did with organic search, will get us a long way. (Check out the "SEO in One Day" chapter if you've forgotten.) But to that process we're going to add a few caveats.

Google Display Planner

Instead of relying solely on Google Search Console, we're going to use a little tool called Google Display Planner. This is largely the same tool. It will even feel familiar to those of you used to using Google's organic keyword planner, but it is specific to AdSense—Google's display arm. We can use this to get approximate-view data for specific keywords.

First, set the bidding to "vCP," set the filter to "Video," select "Placements," and make sure "Video" is selected. Google and YouTube will suggest a few additional keywords that are video-specific, and we can see where our other keywords stack up in a YouTube world.

YouTube Autosuggest

The last method we're going to use to find some good keywords is YouTube autosuggest. Simply start typing in your keyword (or keywords), and see what YouTube recommends you search for. These are likely going to be the most popular keywords, and (assuming it's not a popular branded term) we're going to utilize that in later YouTube SEO.

MAKING YOUR VIDEOS

It's important to note that in this chapter, we're leaving out what is arguably the most important step: the actual creation of videos. There's only so much we can say that will apply to all audiences. Simply know that the quality of your videos is much more important than anything else. Your goal is to get people to watch as far into your video as we can get them. We'll optimize for that, but no marketing can save poorly made or unwatchable videos.

And with that disclaimer, we'll get back to optimizing this channel.

USING OUR KEYWORDS

Video Description

YouTube doesn't have much room for written content, which is what Google is the king of optimizing. We're going to help YouTube out as best as we can. You'll notice that there's an area for a video description. Inside of that we're going to want to lay in three hundred to five hundred words of text with a two-to-five percent keyword density. You can test for keyword density at http://smallseotools.com/keyword-density-checker/, but it's only the approximation that we're looking for.

Closed Captions

In addition, we're going to make sure to include closed captions. Not only does YouTube give us a little boost for caring about the hearing and vision impaired, but studies have shown it uses those words to determine which videos are most likely to rank.

The Video File

Before you upload a video, make sure to name the actual file with your keywords. So if your keyword is *how to get abs*, you would name the file "how-to-get-abs.wmv" (or something like that) before you upload it.

THUMBNAIL

The next most important element of your video is a thumbnail. Spend a lot of time making this really good, as most of a person's mindless YouTube–surfing time can be described as looking for interesting titles and thumbnails to click on. You've probably experienced a time when you clicked on a video, looking for the moment in a thumbnail, and it either barely comes or it comes in a remarkably unexciting time. You can't help but think to yourself, *Wow, they got me!* Find a moment in the video that's so outrageous or interesting people will feel like they have to click on it. A good thumbnail goes a long way.

DRIVING CLICKTHROUGH RATE

The next thing YouTube looks for, after how long someone watches a video initially, is *where they go afterward.* In other words, YouTube will give a boost to videos if the viewer of the video clicks through to another video.

We're again going to optimize for that by making sure there's plenty of clickable content within our video, leading YouTube users further down the inescapable path of eternal YouTube watching.

ANNOTATIONS TO OTHER VIDEOS

If you've ever noticed a video where annotations (those little on-video notes) pop up part of the way through, directing you to other videos, that's not just because they're trying to drive traffic to something else; that's because they want the credibility of sending people further down the YouTube rabbit hole.

If the analytics show that there's a time in your video where people start to leave, instead of letting them exit and go on to other publishers' videos, entice them in some way to stay on yours. This could be with an annotation that prompts them to check out another one of your videos, or something that makes them want to wait just a few seconds longer. As you do this, you'll notice the total views of your videos rising, and the number of views YouTube sends you will also increase. This is because clickthrough rate is one of

YouTube's most powerful ranking metrics.

AFTERROLL

Another step you've almost definitely noticed is the video after a video, encouraging you to subscribe, like, see another video, etc. What you want to do for this is record what we'll call "AfterRoll." This includes basically the same people who were in the video (or the same theme) with some after-the-video begging to check out other stuff. The best ones we've seen have people pointing to different buttons that lead to behind-the-scenes content or other videos.

As far as YouTube is concerned, this is (again) people navigating to other videos after having watched yours, even if the video is over.

ENCOURAGING THE THUMBS-UP

My favorite example of someone encouraging the thumbs-up is devinsupertramp. He makes videos that make your life feel lame. They're all about people doing awesome stuff like jumping bikes into lakes or rope swinging off natural arches. But he sneaks in little invitations to like the videos at the most opportune times.

You'll be watching a cute girl jump off a tall building, and you'll see an annotation pop up that says, "Thumbs up for cute girls jumping off things ;)!" I know exactly what he's doing, and I'm happily married, but I can't help but click the thumbs-up when I see that.

Thumbs UP for flying 120 feet!!! :)

Human Slingshot Slip and Slide - Vooray

devinsupertramp

▶ Subscribe 4,340,224

16,332,879 views

+ Add to   ➤ Share   ••• More

👍 115,278   👎 1,368

YOUTUBE PLAYLIST HACK

You've probably noticed that when you search on YouTube, you often see already-created playlists on the topic you're searching for. If YouTube loves videos, it *adores* playlists. It knows that if you watch one of those, you'll end up watching many more videos.

So what are we going to do? Simple: create our own keyword-based playlists. We can create the thing that YouTube loves, inject our videos in it, and drive traffic to that playlist—which just so happens to contain our video, which just happens to include and link to all of our content.

And that's pretty much all there is to gaining popularity on YouTube. The hard part is creating the content!

APP STORE OPTIMIZATION

T his is going to be one of the shortest chapters, but luckily, that's because app store optimization is one of the easiest growth hacking methods. We're going to talk specifically about the Apple App Store, but almost all of the methods carry over to Google, despite the fact that Google's ranking algorithms are just a little bit smarter than Apple's.

UNDERSTANDING APPLE'S ALGORITHM

Apple's ranking algorithm is among the simplest there is. It looks for keywords in the title, keywords in the description, and ratings. That's really all there is to it. To manipulate this algorithm, all we have to do is put our keywords in the title and description. And there are a few interesting things that will open up for us.

RATING MANIPULATION

The only other variable we have to play with is the rank. We don't fully understand why Apple makes it so easy to manipulate an App Store Ranking. All you have to do is ask people if they enjoy the app. If they do, ask them to rate it. If they do not, ask them for feedback.

Any statistician would cringe at seeing this method, but our goal isn't to be statistically accurate; our goal is to boost our rankings. You can get more sophisticated and ask for feedback at the right times and in the right places (in-line tends to work better than pop-up), but we'll keep it simple for now.

KEYWORD RESEARCH

Yet again, we're going to start with keyword research. We'll try to grab some data out of Apple's new paid downloads feature, and then we'll use our SEO keyword research to fill in the gaps.

Paid App Downloads

The best part of Apple's new app store ads functionality is that we can (finally) see keyword-level data for what's happening in the app store. It's not exact, but it gives us some indication of which words are most popular. They're going back and forth on how exact to make it, but you will get a long way by just doing the following:

1. Looking for a keyword
2. Seeing what other keywords Apple suggests
3. Finding how many people are searching for that keyword
4. Seeing what other apps come up when you search for that keyword

All we're really looking for are keywords we can own. Specifically, you're looking for apps likely to have

fewer downloads, fewer reviews, and to be less optimized than yours when you search for a key term.

COMPETITORS HACK

In addition to all of our top search keywords, there's something very simple we can do to drive more downloads (for most apps) than even keyword optimization.

1. Create a list of competitors.

2. Find the names of those that don't have an app.

3. List them subtly in our app's description.

Let's say you have an app for a clothing company. Make a list of the top clothing companies in the world, and then go through them one by one until you find a few that don't have an app on the app store. When you find one, slip a subtle mention of that company into the description—maybe something like "Comparable to Company A" or "The best app alternative to Company B." People will search for Company A or B, find your app, and download it, thinking it is the closest thing available to your competitor on the app store.

PUMPING LAUNCH

Another tactic that works quite well is buying a lot of downloads on the day you launch your app. You can use something like Tapjoy, pay for the download, and order, say, a thousand app downloads from ads on the day you launch. The jury is still out, but it appears that Apple doesn't really count paid downloads toward its rankings when they're paid from within the app store, which makes sense. Remarkably, the app stores don't do a great job of determining where an app download came from, and those are viewed as organic. That will boost your rankings, potentially getting you to the top of your category. We've even seen it help apps bubble up to the editors, causing the apps to be featured as the top apps of the day or week.

You can do this with each subsequent launch of a new version, though it doesn't work *quite* as well. How many you have to buy and how many additional downloads those net you will depend on how much a download is worth and what category you're in.

And there you have it, everything you need to know about app store optimization in a few minutes! Maybe this will get more interesting as app stores become more complex, but for now it's so easy to manipulate, there's not much to say.

HOW TO WIN AT PAID SEARCH MARKETING

Paid search is among the most interesting acquisition methods because you don't really even have to beat the system. The system is designed to reward the people who are willing to put in extra effort. That's going to be us, and we're going to see how cheap we can get our clicks. The principles change from network to network, but they will be similar.

GOOGLE

Google is definitely the market leader when it comes to pay-per-click (PPC) networks, because the traffic is intent-based. With other networks, you can target behaviors or demographics. But with Google, you know that someone is looking for what you're selling. That's valuable.

For this, we're going to be focusing on ads on Google.com that are available through a product called AdWords, and we're going to ignore Google's other ad networks. We'll show you how to turn those off later, but media buying is a different game than search advertising, so we're not going to play two games at once.

In order to get the best pricing on Google, we'll do some research on how Google determines pricing, reverse engineer it, and get cheap but quality clicks.

How AdWords Works

First, Google offers a few bidding methods: pay per click, pay per impression, and pay per lead (which is being removed soon). Paying on a per-impression basis is something you can try out once you know exactly how much you make per impression, but in starting out we're going to focus solely on PPC.

The price you pay is based on two things: the keyword you're bidding on and the quality score.

GOOGLE'S QUALITY SCORE

Let's say we're bidding on the keyword *best widgets.* There are quite a few searches for this monthly, and as such, there are a lot of people who want to bid on it. Google could base placement solely on price, but then its users might end up with a bad experience. It might be an ad for an irrelevant or bad site, and then frustrated users may say to themselves, "I don't like Google. I'm going to try out that Bing thing."

To ensure that users don't flee to competitive search engines, Google factors the user experience into the advertising formula. Google sets up a mini-auction to determine who gets to be placed where on the page, and it calls the system it uses to rank those ads "AdRank." The basic formula for AdRank is as follows: Quality Score × Maximum Bid = Ad Rank. Your ad rank ends up as a raw number, and those advertisers with the highest Ad Rank are displayed at the top of the page.

If we want to start winning bidding contests cheaply, we need to focus on quality score first. We'll get back to keyword selection later.

How is Quality Score Calculated?

Recently Google rereleased an application programming interface (API), and within the API it unwittingly showed exactly how quality score was calculated at the time. Someone named Brad Geddes went in, reverse engineered the API, and was able to produce some pretty solid numbers as to Google's formula. He found it comes down to these things:

- 22 percent ad relevance (how relevant your ad is to the keyword)
- 39 percent landing page (how relevant your landing page is to the keyword, as well as how long visitors stay on your site)
- 39 percent expected clickthrough rate (CTR) (when your ad appears on Google, how many people click on it compared to the other results)

Let's go through each of these one by one and cheat as much as we can to create the perfect ad.

Expected CTR

Your expected CTR is Google's estimate of how many people will click on your ad when users see it next to competitors. Generally speaking—and this totally depends on the industry—around an 8 percent CTR is good, a 3 percent is bad, and a 15 percent is great. Those are the guidelines we're working within. We provide these as rough parameters only because there are so many people who don't know whether to shoot for 0.8 or 80 percent, but please take this with an enormous grain of salt. For example, on brand terms, your CTR could get as high as 50 percent.

So how do we get a higher clickthrough rate? It's pretty simple: we create clickable ads.

Clickbait

A term that started out (so far as we can find) referring to paid search campaigns but was later co-opted by the news and media space is *clickbait*.

Think about the headline, "Hilary Duff's Bikini Falls Off—You'll Never Believe What Happened Next." That headline had one of the highest clickthrough rates of any news story ever, and it's pretty obvious why that's the case. There's suspense, curiosity, a celebrity, and—in this case—the allure of sex. Now that's not to say that we should try to use the false allure of nude celebrities to sell paper shredders, but you get the idea.

Some of you will be bothered by this. Shouldn't people be looking for facts, logic, good buying material, and so on? They probably should be, but those things don't get good clickthrough rates. Don't blame me; blame the folly of the human condition. We didn't make people this way. We're just advertising to people who are this way.

But how do you make paper shredders more appealing and clickbait-y? That's something you'll have to figure out on your own, but we will say this: Most search engine marketers are barely scratching the surface of what is possible. Blendtec's "Will it blend?" campaigns are among my favorite ever on YouTube, but rumor has it they also performed shockingly well on Google. Turns out if you're googling *blender*, people will click on an ad that says, "This blender is so powerful, it grinds an iPhone into powder." Be creative, and you can get higher CTRs.

Testing

Once we have a few hypotheses of what will work, we're going to do what we call, "The fifty-dollar test." For the fifty-dollar test we're going to create twelve ads with different titles, different headlines, and largely similar keywords and landing pages. (Unfortunately, it's hard to make this experiment truly scientific, so we

can't have a true target and control population.) Try limiting your use of specific keywords, as this could sway the results. We're trying to isolate the text of our ad to the greatest extent possible.

Give each ad group a budget of three dollars per day and let it run for a couple of days. Generally speaking, three dollars is enough of a budget to parse out some semblance of what the CTR is. Looking at the data, you'll start to notice similarities between the ads that are performing well and those that aren't. Remember, for this we're looking just at CTR. Double down on and try variations of the ads that are working as many times as you'd like. Doing this will save you thousands in future advertising expenses.

If you have a budget of $110 for testing, you should be able to test about thirty-six ad variations. Day one will have twelve, day two will have twelve that are more optimized than the ones on day one, and day three will have twelve that really let us drill down on exactly what copy we should be using in our ads. At this point our CTR should be very high.

There are enough factors affecting the CTR that we shouldn't go purely on the numbers, but some combination of the numbers and a little bit of intuition should tell us everything we need to know.

AD RELEVANCE

Ad relevance is simply a measure by Google about how closely the ads you're running match the keyword you're running on. In this instance it's only talking about the text of the ad itself and not about your landing page.

This, luckily, is very easy for us to control. We're deciding what keywords to target, and we're deciding what ads to target them with. An enormous amount of time, money, and research has gone into deducing how Google derives its ad relevance score, and the general consensus comes down to this: are you using the keyword (or related words) that you're advertising in your ad?

The only potentially complicating aspect of ad relevance is that your best ads with regard to clickthrough rate may not have the highest ad relevance. This may require you to do more testing depending on your keyword, but generally a combination of your high-CTR ads with a keyword interjected here and there will allow you to bid on ads for much cheaper prices than competitors can.

LANDING PAGE PERFORMANCE

The last element of Google's quality score is the performance of our landing page. Specifically, Google likes to see how long people stay on your page and how quickly they're hitting the "Back" button.

Luckily, we already have all the tools in our bag that we need for this element. To design the perfect landing page, take a glance at "The Perfect Landing Page: Starting a List" chapter. We'll need to create new landing pages that are optimized for each keyword we're bidding on. To optimize by keyword, follow the directions listed in the "SEO in One Day" chapter.

Some people like to use something called *dynamic keyword insertion*, but I find that to be more work than reward. Instead, unless you're using some crazy platform, it's probably easier to just create several pages that match keywords exactly.

KEYWORD SELECTION

Even after all this, the single most important aspect of advertising on AdWords is keyword selection. If you can find keywords no one else is bidding on, it doesn't matter what the competition is doing or paying; you'll be playing the game in a different arena. If we do our job, it's entirely likely that no one else will be

playing there. And like someone playing basketball alone in an empty gym, it's easy to score.

In short, we're looking for two things: keywords that no one else is targeting and keywords that people who buy are searching.

Buyer Intent

Given that we're looking for these two things (untargeted keywords and buying intent), we have an incredible opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. For example, if I go back into the Google Keyword Tool (like we previously learned how to do in the "SEO in One Day" chapter) and search for *iPhone*, I can see that the suggested bid is currently about four dollars.

If, however, I look at the keyword *buy iPhone*, the bid drops to $1.96. Presumably, the people searching for *buy iPhone* are more active buyers than those who are just searching for *iPhone*, but the price of a keyword here is determined by supply and demand. A lot of people want to bid on *iPhone*. So we'll let them and go after the better keywords.

Ideally, we can find a list of keywords that apply to our product or niche yet are so specific no one else has touched them. I've seen companies make a living off of this alone, even when people are in brutally competitive markets.

To help you out, I have a list of keywords that signal commercial intent here: https://github.com/growth-austen/intent-keywords. And these are great, but you should go one step further.

Mix and Match

We've already seen several tools that can take a keyword and spit out more based on that keyword. For example, Keyword Shitter and ÜberSuggest. Using these same tools for something like the keyword *growth hacking*, we can find even more interesting results. For reference, if we plug *growth hacking* into Google's Keyword Planner today, we get a suggested bid of $4.68. Pretty pricey.

Now let's plug an intent-based keyword into Keyword Shitter. Let's go with *how can I growth hack*.

I get the following:

```
how do i growth hack
how to do growth hacking
how to growth hack
how to growth hack instagram
how to growth hack a book
how to growth hack twitter
how to growth hack facebook
how does growth hacking work
how to growth hack linkedin
how to growth hack anything
how to growth hack youtube
how to growth hack an app
how to growth hack pinterest
how to learn growth hacking
how to become growth hacker
how to be growth hacker
how to hire a growth hacker
how to interview a growth hacker
how to hack increase broadband speed
how to increase bandwidth hack
how to increase garena energy hack
how to increase hack level deus ex
how to increase reputation in hack ex
how to gain money in hack ex
how to gain followers hack
how to increase instagram followers hack
how to increase twitter followers hack
how to gain instagram followers hack
how to increase facebook followers hack
how to gain twitter followers hack
how to increase facebook friends hack
```

Some of these aren't very compelling. I don't want *how to interview a growth hacker*. But others? If I'm selling a book that teaches you to be a growth hacker, what about *how to learn growth hacking*? *Learn growth hacking* has a suggested bid of $3.95. We just saved $0.70 per click!

Now let's try a few more, keep testing, and keep drilling. Try the process a dozen more times.

Learn to growth hack has a suggested bid of $0.05 per click. Probably not much traffic, but that's an amazing price. *Growth hack Twitter* has quite a few searches but no competition. Google doesn't even

know how to price it. If we can be the only advertiser on that keyword, we can get highly targeted traffic for dirt cheap.

I get the sense that *growth hack* is going to end up cheaper than *growth hacking*, so let's plug that into Keyword Shitter and put all of the results in the Keyword Planner. Sorting by price, we see a lot of cheap keywords. *Growth hack book* has a decent number of searches and is $0.72 per click. Not bad. But let's go to the stuff with zero clicks. We can go through the pages until we find some that are interesting. If you do this for a few hours (a tedious process), you will likely find keywords that have hundreds of exact-match monthly searches and no bids.

Those are dirt-cheap keywords. *Our* dirt-cheap keywords. Enjoy the dirt-cheap, high-converting traffic.

Negative Keywords

Within any list of great, cheap keywords, however, you're likely to find a few that aren't just duds but are so bad that we don't want people searching for them to find our ads. It's not because we don't like those people but rather because we don't want to pay for the clicks of someone who isn't going to convert. For example, if I'm selling an iPhone I probably don't want to pay for clicks from *iPhone returns*.

You can find a list of negative keywords to start with here: https://github.com/growth-austen/negative-keywords/blob/master/README.txt.

UTM PARAMETERS

As always, we need to make sure we have excellent tracking when it comes to PPC ads. Before you set your campaign live, make sure you are using URLs with the proper UTM parameters. If you can't track where the clicks and conversions are coming from, your efforts will be in vain. Make sure to jump to that chapter and learn how to set up your tracking before pushing anything live.

HOW TO TRACK ALMOST ANYTHING

The best marketers I've ever met are as much "Math Men" as "Mad Men." This isn't because they aren't creative—some are truly brilliant—but rather it's because every marketer carries assumptions that are incorrect into his or her marketing efforts. If there is one ability that makes some marketers more powerful, it's that they test every assumption.

Often, your gut and intuition will be right. You can think logically about how people will react to something, and you'll probably be correct about that. A lot of the time.

The most important times in your life as a marketer are when you are wrong. When you thought people wanted X, but they actually wanted Y. If you don't course-correct, you'll spend your days trying to make arguments that don't resonate and to entice with something that is un-enticing. There's a framework we're going to use in this guide that I refer to as "marketer as scientist." I didn't coin the phrase, but it makes sense on multiple levels. This concept will help us make the most of those times when you are wrong.

MARKETER AS SCIENTIST

When we say "marketer as scientist," what we really mean is that we follow something akin to the scientific formula in our marketing.

Hypothesis

Good marketers recognize that every idea they have—every thing they want to try out—is nothing but an assumption. We'll call it a hypothesis. In order to find the perfect mix, you're going to be wrong. A lot. Recognize that your first idea of what to do is just that: A hypothesis. An educated guess. That doesn't mean it's wrong, but it does mean that we should test it as much as we can.

Analysis

Analyzing whether we are right or wrong is the difficult part. Oftentimes, small startups don't have enough data to determine if a blip in the data is statistically significant. According to most rigorous data scientists, the amount of traffic you would need to scientifically analyze whether a button should be red or blue, or whether it should say "Buy Now" or "Get It Now" would likely require months.

For that reason, we're not going to go into the gory details of how to make our tests run in a 100-percent scientific manner. If you're Amazon or Google, you can throw things out to the wild for a day and come back with completely statistically significant results. My guess is that you don't work as a data analyst for Google or Amazon. (If I'm wrong, feel free to tweet at me and correct my faulty assumption.) So instead we're going to do the best we can with what we've got, and it will just have to be good enough. You may have to make critical decisions based on a thousand or (heaven forbid) a hundred visits to a page. We're just going to do the best we can with the data we have and hope that the data is right more often than it's wrong. That's the beautiful and terrible thing about being a smaller company: you can't (or don't have to) make decisions in the same framework as a corporate competitor.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA

In order to analyze, there's one thing we need and one thing we can never get enough of: data. Data rules everything we do. It will expose our weakest flaws, find our greatest strengths, and show us exactly what is and isn't working.

DARK UI PATTERNS AND DATA-DRIVEN FLAWS

Before we jump in, bear in mind that the statistical data may not hold all of the information we need. I have seen several instances where things work statistically but drive people away, killing a user experience or brand. I have yet to find a truly scientific way to measure UX, but if your methods exasperate your audience rather than engage them, it will come back to bite you. (Even if it seems to work in the short-run.)

LinkedIn, for example, has stats that are unlike any other startup I've ever seen. Once they get you in the door, they have a masterful way of sucking data out of you, tricking you into inviting your friends, making it borderline impossible to unsubscribe, and overall doing terribly successful things that make people angry. In the short-term it works. Their growth numbers are absurd. Yet now some of the smartest people I know are deleting their accounts as a result.

LinkedIn probably looked at this and decided that the harm to the UX was worth it. Is that a wise decision in the long run? It remains to be seen. I'm sure they are worth a lot; their stock, despite its dips, seems to be doing fine, and they seem like they're an enormous acquisition target. But the resentment that some users feel toward the platform is palpable. (Edit: Since writing this, LinkedIn was acquired by Microsoft, so your mileage may vary.)

With that in mind, let's move forward and start getting as much of that precious data as we can.

GOOGLE ANALYTICS

As our foundation, we're going to use Google Analytics. There are a lot of great analytics platforms out there, and I think I've tried them all. Google Analytics remains my gold standard, despite its flaws, for a few reasons:

1. It's free.

2. It's used widely enough that other people have created simple ways to build it in.

3. It allows us to A/B test natively. (Don't worry, we'll teach you how to do all these things.)

4. It monitors UTM parameters very well.

5. It tracks conversions well.

6. It eliminates basic bot traffic.

7. It has event monitoring built in.

Any analytics platform that meets most of these standards should be fine, but we'll be using Google Analytics because it's simple, familiar, and—best of all—free.

Note: No Two Analytics Platforms Are the Same

When creating an analytics platform, there are hundreds of ways to measure things. For that reason, not

all analytics platforms will show *exactly* the same data. Your Facebook ads may show more clicks to your ad than Google Analytics does. That's OK. There's nothing broken with the way you're measuring or within the analytics platforms themselves.

None of these platforms provide perfect measures, but they are directionally correct, and that's more than enough to test our basic assumptions.

So let's get into it.

Setting Up Google Analytics

Google Analytics allows you to monitor user behavior on your site. You can track things like the keywords users typed into their browser to find you, how long they stayed on your site, whether they made a purchase, and if they "bounced" from the site immediately. Essentially, this tool allows you to see how users interact with your site, and that's powerful. As you begin to understand user behavior, you can also start to consider how you want to change or direct that behavior. Adding Google Analytics to your site is relatively simple, and depending on the platform you use, there may be an easy way to add it already built in. (For example, WordPress has dozens of Google Analytics plug-ins that will work just fine.)

You can follow the Google Analytics setup guide here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1008015?hl=en.

The only thing worth mentioning is that the JavaScript snippet needs to be on *every* page, one way or another. If your product is split into different apps or if you are using an external app or product for some element of your product, make sure you add the same snippet to those external pages as well or the data will get messed up.

E-COMMERCE, CONVERSION, AND CROSS-DOMAIN TRACKING

The reason most people don't get as much value out of their analytics platform as they should is that they don't have it set up correctly. Probably 95 percent of the Google Analytics setups I see are missing the most valuable aspects. Google Analytics won't help your e-commerce store much if you're not seeing how much revenue you're bringing in.

E-commerce Tracking

Google provides us with the following instructions to turn on e-commerce tracking:

1. In the Admin section, navigate to the desired account, property, and view.

2. In the View column, select "Ecommerce Settings."

3. Click the "Enable Ecommerce" toggle on.

4. Click "Next Step."

5. Click "Submit."

Good e-commerce providers (whether it's Shopify, BigCommerce, or Kickstarter) have Google Analytics e-commerce built in. If you have built something out yourself, you'll want to follow Google's instructions to pass the information back to Google using the e-commerce API. (Very few people should have to worry about this.) The instructions can be found here: https://support.google.com/tagmanager/answer/6107169.

Please set up good e-commerce tracking—it takes only a few minutes and will be incredibly valuable later on.

Cross-Domain Tracking

If you use multiple domains, Google will want you to add cross-domain tracking. This enables Google to read the data from domain1.com and lump it together with domain2.com. It's not difficult to set up, and it's nice to have all that data in one place. Instructions to do this can be found here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1034342.

GOOGLE ANALYTICS OUT OF THE BOX

Just by adding that snippet, we have some pretty powerful data flowing in. Almost too much.

The beauty of Google Analytics is that you can see all sorts of things. The difficulty is you may not be sure what to look at. So let's walk through the basics that we should be monitoring frequently, and then we'll create a dashboard so all the basics are in one place.

Follow along, create this dashboard, and you'll have a really good overview every time you want to monitor what's going on.

GOOGLE ANALYTICS DASHBOARDS

It took me an embarrassingly long time to realize that this functionality of Google Analytics even existed. Most marketers I talk to, even the great ones, recognize only a fraction of how powerful it actually is. There is so much data available to you via Google Analytics that the most valuable information tends to get buried deep in the app. We're going to create some simple dashboards to bring it front and center.

Google Analytics does have the unique ability to share and import dashboards, so we'll link to a couple of dashboards at the end of this chapter, but it is really helpful to go through the process of making one yourself. You'll likely want to make changes from the default, and we want you to know how to do that. We're going to create one with the specific goal in mind of getting an at-a-glance view of all of the high-level, actionable data that we need instantaneously.

To see your dashboards, log in to Google Analytics, click on "Dashboards" on the left, and under "Private" you'll find "My Dashboard." That's going to be our playground.
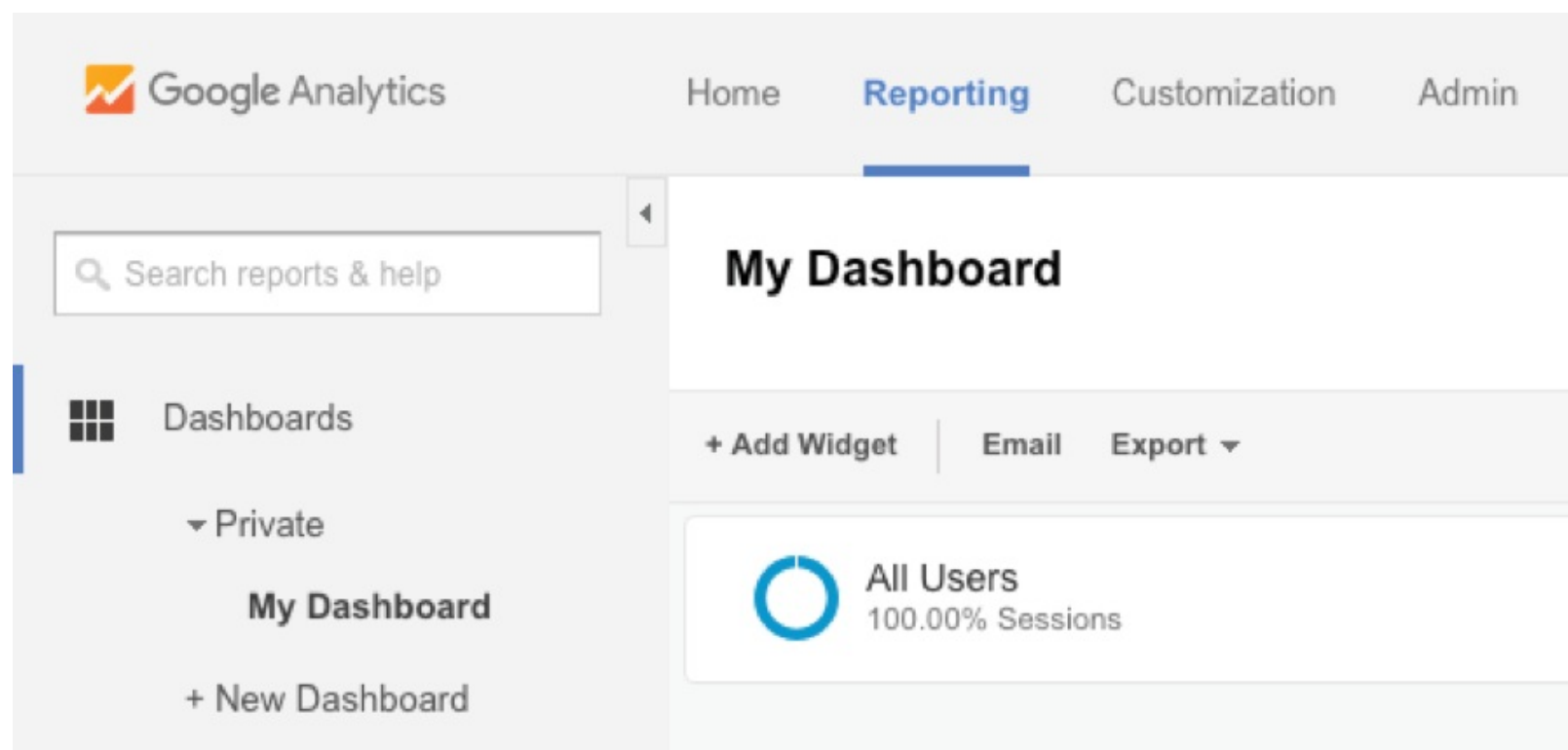
You'll probably want to customize your dashboard to your particular circumstances. We'll create one for a revenue-generating site, give you a couple tweaks to make it work for a non-revenue-optimizing site, and you can further customize from there.
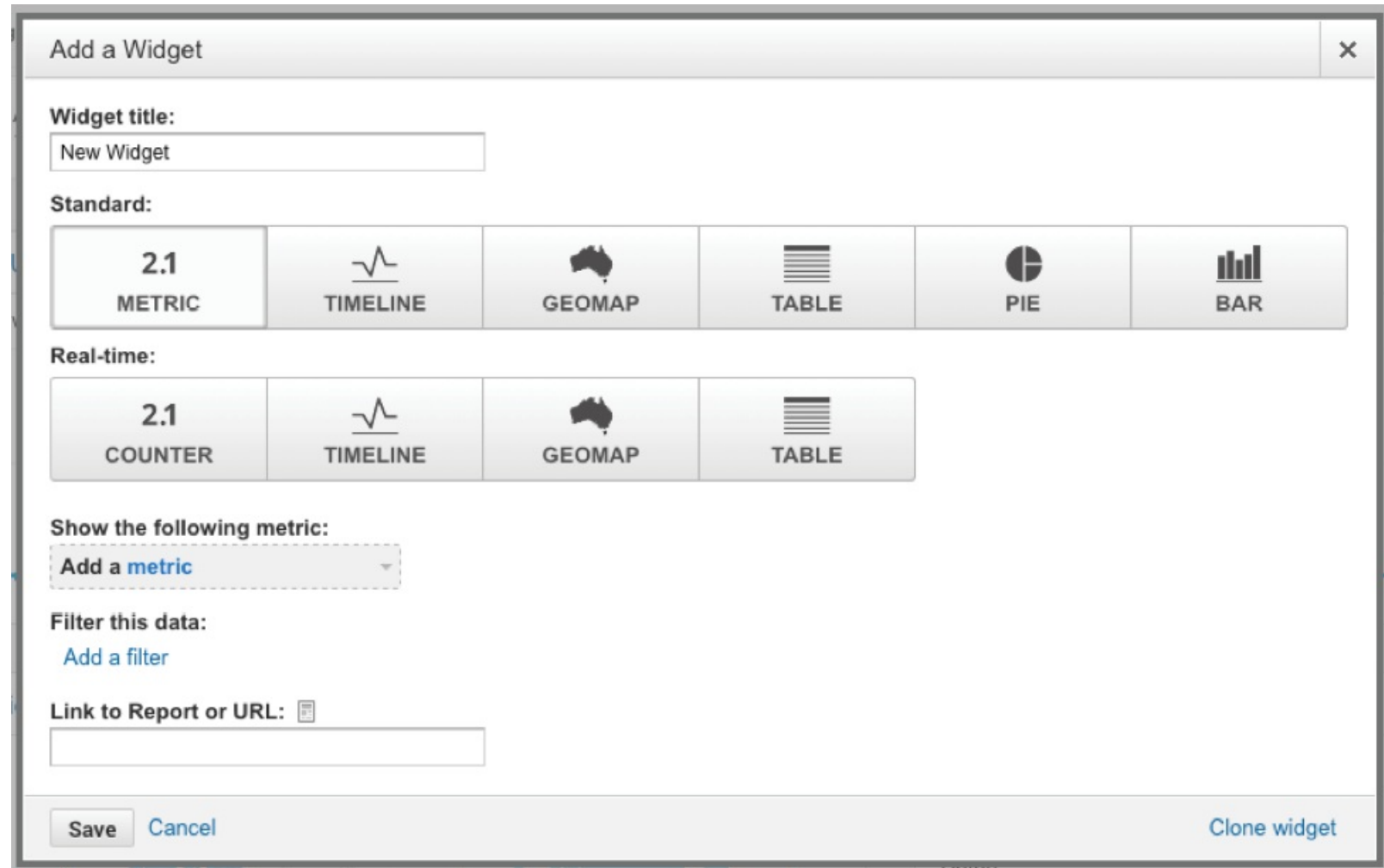
Bottom-Line Up

The important thing we want to remember is that this data will inform our decisions. If you're like me, you'll probably check this dashboard multiple times a day, and humans have the tendency to optimize for what they're measuring. So the order and information we provide ourselves here will be vitally important. Because of that, make sure you are working from the most important metric you have and then backward to what drives that.

CREATING OUR DASHBOARD

Google Analytics dashboards are composed of what we call *widgets*—little sections that help bring the data we want to our main screen.

Clicking the "Add Widget" button brings up a menu like this:

Let's start with the big one for a revenue-generating site: the dollars coming in. The first widget we need to add will be the "Revenue" widget.

Most of the time we'll just use the standard metric-style widget, but widgets can be added to display data in several different formats, including metric, timeline, table, pie, and bar. Unless otherwise noted, select "Metric" from the list of Standard options. (Real-time-options are also available.) Type the name of your widget ("Revenue") into the widget title box, select "2.1 Metric," and then choose "Revenue" from the drop-down list labeled "Show the Following Metric." You can also search for the widget by typing *revenue* into the search box. It will autocomplete, and there may be several options that include the word *revenue*. We'll want just plain *revenue*.
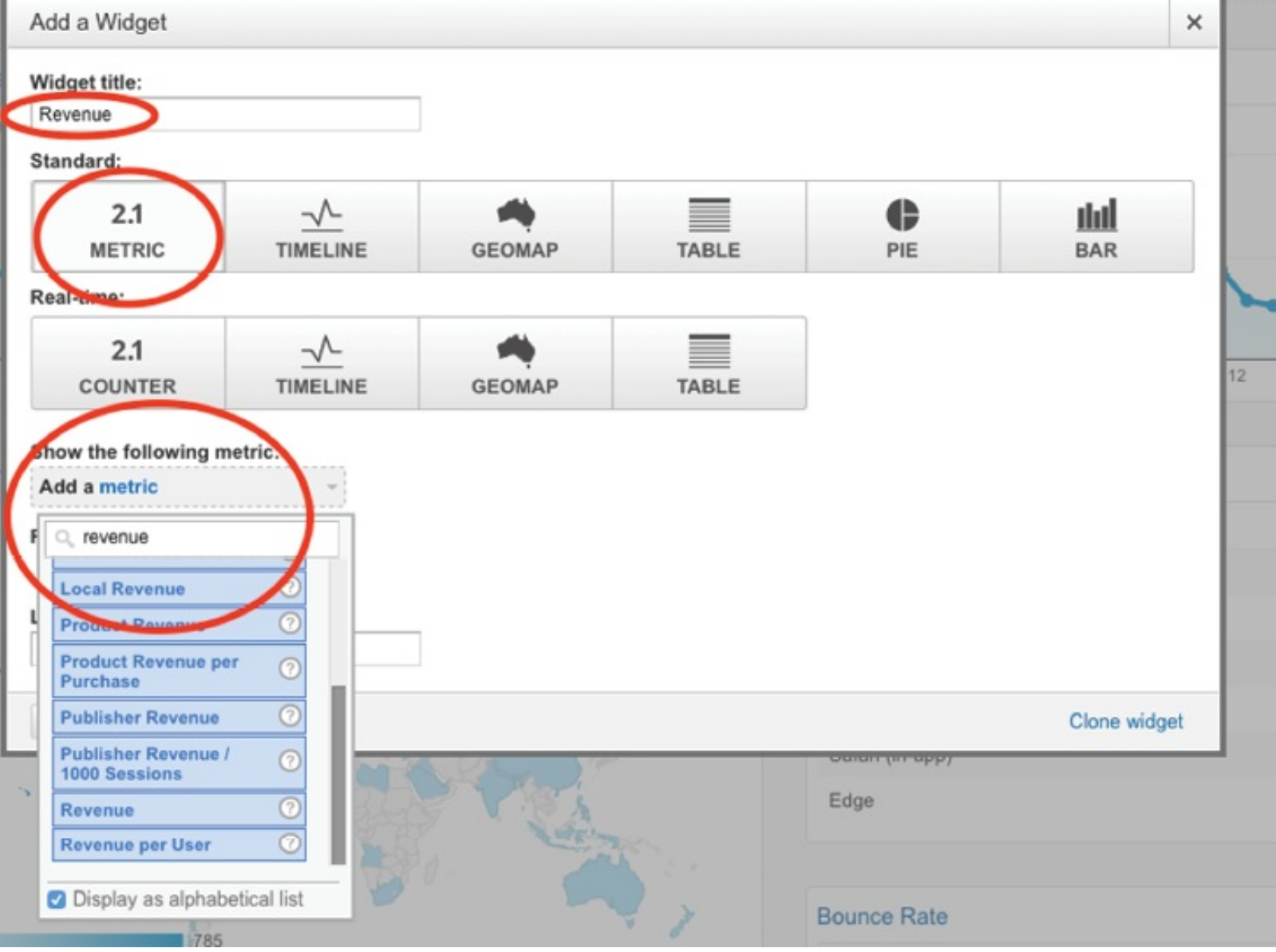
We'll be adding several widgets. You'll see the name of each widget we will be adding listed in italics below.

- *Revenue*

We're actually going to provide ourselves with two different revenue graphs. One will show us the amount of revenue that has come in today, and the next will show us a brief timeline of the revenue coming in.

We'll start working backward from our revenue. What are the things that create buyers? People checking us out. Let's add the following widgets:

- *Sessions (Select "Standard Timeline" instead of "2.1 Metric")*
- *New Users ("Standard Timeline")*
- *Sales*

Now we want to figure out where those visits are coming from. If something is working well, we can double down. We'll add widgets that let us see where people are coming from, be it referral traffic or SEO.

- *Visits by Channel*
- *Referral Traffic*
- *Top Non-brand Keywords*
- *Top Brand Keywords*

The SEO traffic may not be very accurate. Google likes to hold that back from us a little bit, but we'll go over how to get at that later.

Now let's add a widget or two to see which content people like:

- *Top Landing Pages*

Now that you've gone through some of the legwork, you can take a look at these dashboards we created for you. Go ahead and copy over the dashboard if you want by visiting this site: https://analytics.google.com/analytics/web/template?uid=nblAnxQXTqCqtWbdZMtjJg. (Sorry we didn't give it to you in the beginning, but it really is beneficial to go through it yourself.)

If you want to use the same dashboard for a non-revenue site (a goal-oriented site instead of sales-oriented site, and we'll show you how to create one of these goals later in the chapter), you can get that dashboard here: https://analytics.google.com/analytics/web/template?uid=jfJLs1wqQTOS8L2O-YGgiQ.

Both of these should be exactly what you want for a high-level analysis: the basic information you need and the ability to drill down into anything that seems interesting.

UTM PARAMETERS—MEASURING EVERY CLICK

Google Analytics is now ready to accept all the data we can send it, but we need to make sure that we're sending it the correct data.

Among the most important sources of information is referrals. That tells us not only which sites people are coming from, but, more important, what sources our revenue is coming from. This is helpful for prioritization and for when we try something that works and we want to double down on it. If our marketing efforts on Instagram are bringing us lots of visitors but no revenue, and our marketing efforts on Facebook bring in few visits but 15 percent of those visitors make a purchase, that's critical information that informs where we spend our marketing dollars and our time.

Unfortunately, a lot of referral information is *very* basic and doesn't give you the information you actually need. Let's say, for example, most of your sales today came from Twitter. Did they come from that message you tweeted, or did they come from people you followed who read your bio and decided to check you out? If you see that a lot of revenue is coming in from e-mail, which e-mail is it coming from?

Urchin Tracking Module (UTM) parameters unlock the ability to access that information. Most of the time they will give us the exact information we need to make decisions. But first you have to know how and why to use them.

The Anatomy of a UTM Parameter

You've probably seen links like this before: https://www.austenallred.com?refid=e-mail. What is this link actually doing? The first part is fairly obvious—the actual link is https://www.austenallred.com. But what's the rest?

Query Strings

Most browsers and apps are trained to ignore anything after a question mark as far as navigation is concerned, so we use those fields to pass information without affecting navigation. The part after the question mark is called a *query* or *query string*. Query strings can be used in multiple ways.

So far as I can find, the original use was for prepopulating the content of a web form. If I want to autofill the e-mail form in a field with austen.allred@gmail.com and the name field with Austen Allred, I could use a URL that looks like http://someurl.com?e-mail=austen.allred@gmail.com&name=Austen%20Allred, and it will prefill those fields for me. (This is useful at other times, but we won't dwell on this application now.)

As a side note, after the query string you may see something like *#something*. That's called a fragment, and it can send you to a particular portion of the page. All you need to know is that it's not a part of the query string. Nowadays, most URL strings are used for passing tracking information.

Tracking with Query Strings

If you open the URL to Slack on Product Hunt, it sends us to https://www.slack.com/?ref=producthunt. Product Hunt encodes all of its URLs with *?ref=producthunt*, so when Slack's webmasters review their analytics, they can see that that traffic definitely came from Product Hunt, even if Google Analytics wouldn't normally pick it up as such.

For example, let's look at the traffic to my blog on March 30, 2015. If we look at the source info, we'll see 1,513 visits coming from Product Hunt. That's the level of information that Google Analytics provides without me doing anything. We'll also see 627 visits from "direct." If I dig into those views, I can see that 627 of them come from something called "viewlist." I don't know what that is, but for some reason Google Analytics buckets that as "direct" instead of coming from "viewlist." If Product Hunt hadn't tagged its URL with the right query string, I may have missed that traffic somehow. Since Product Hunt wants you to feel like it's driving a lot of traffic, it automatically appends the ?ref=producthunt for you.

So let's say I'm sending out two e-mails, and I want to know how many sales came from each. How could I measure the ROI? We're going to generate a query string to our URL so that information is passed back to Google Analytics.

Creating Query Strings

How can we properly tag our strings to pass the information we need to Google Analytics and track where our traffic is coming from more precisely? Luckily there's a tool for that so we don't have to memorize all of the intricacies, and it works very, very well. Google Analytics has a URL builder we can use at https://ga-dev-tools.appspot.com/campaign-url-builder/.

Before we move on, let's analyze that URL to see what Google wants to know about us.

We have *https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1033867*—that's the actual page we want to go to. If I remove the rest of the URL, that still works just fine. Google then appends the query string *hl=en. Home language = english*, I'd assume? I'm not sure what Google is using that for, but you'll start seeing the query strings everywhere. (This isn't what we're focusing on now, but you can see that they're using the *#url_builder_form* fragment to direct us to that part of the page.) Now back to what is actually located at that URL.

Google URL Builder

Using the URL builder is really simple. Let's keep using our example of sending one e-mail to 50 percent of our list and another e-mail to the other 50 percent to measure conversions. In one e-mail we'll send a button that says, "Check It Out," and in another we'll have a button that says, "Buy It Now." We are going

to create an A/B test that will help us determine whether our potential customers are more likely to click a button that says, "Check It Out" or a button that says, "Buy It Now." Good marketers test details as minute as the color of the button to determine how consumers act and what methods are the most likely to generate a sale or a conversion.

Some of these fields on Google's URL builder form make more sense in advanced circumstances rather than our basic requirements, but if you're not sure what a field should be, just enter your best guess. It's better to have your best guess in your URL than no data at all.

Enter the website URL and campaign information

Fill out the required fields (marked with *) in the form below, and once complete the full campaign URL will be generated for you. *Note: the generated URL is automatically updated as you make changes.*

* Website URL

`http://austenallred.com`

The full website URL (e.g. `https://www.example.com`)

* Campaign Source

`email`

The referrer: (e.g. `google` , `newsletter`)

Campaign Medium

`email`

Marketing medium: (e.g. `cpc` , `banner` , `email`)

Campaign Name

`december_campaign`

Product, promo code, or slogan (e.g. `spring_sale`)

Campaign Term

Identify the paid keywords

Campaign Content

`check-it-out`

Use to differentiate ads

1. **Website URL:** That's pretty simple. It's the URL we want people to go to. For this example, we'll say http://austenallred.com.
2. **Campaign Source:** Let's just call this "E-mail Test." It's not important for our needs.
3. **Campaign Medium:** This one is easy. E-mail.
4. **Campaign Term:** This is generally used for pay-per-click campaigns, so we can leave it blank.
5. **Campaign Content:** This is also for pay-per-click, but let's just use the text from the button we

want to test. For the first one we'll use *check it out* in the field for Campaign Content.

6. **Campaign Name:** Let's use *check it out* again.

We hit "Generate URL," and we end up with this: http://austenallred.com/?utm_source=e-mail%20test&utm_medium=e-mail&utm_content=check-it-out&utm_campaign=check-it-out.

All we have to do is draft an e-mail to our customers to let them know they can buy or download something cool from our website and include a button that says, "Check It Out." When they click the button, it will link to our page, and we'll be able to track the number of clicks.

In order to test whether customers are more likely to click a button if it includes the phrase *Buy It Now*, we'll send out the same e-mail to the other 50 percent of our customers. The only difference between the two e-mails is the text on the button, and the page on the website they link to. For the second URL ("Buy It Now") we'd use http://austenallred.com/?utm_source=e-mail%20test&utm_medium=e-mail&utm_content=buy-it-now&utm_campaign=buy-it-now.

Google Analytics will now allow us to measure which e-mail campaign was more effective. With this method, we can track exactly how many people visited each page on our website.

The only other parameter I would consider using on top of the one Google has provided here is the *ref=* parameter that Product Hunt uses ("Tracking with Query Strings").

Tracking Our UTM Parameters

Seeing where our UTM parameters are isn't always obvious in Google Analytics, but generally you can make them appear on (almost) every page. The first place to look is in "Acquisition" → "All Traffic" → "Source/Medium or Acquisition" → "All Traffic" → "Referral." There you'll see something like this:

Source / Medium ?	Acquisition	
	Sessions ? ↓	
	1,513,259 % of Total: 100.00% (1,513,259)	
1. (direct) / (none)	533,967	(35.29%)
2. google / organic	386,697	(25.55%)
3. [____] / partnership	256,171	(16.93%)
4. google / cpc	80,721	(5.33%)
5. com.google.android.googlequicksearchbox / referral	42,126	(2.78%)
6. [____] / affiliate	31,078	(2.05%)
7. [____] / affiliate	21,642	(1.43%)
8. yahoo / organic	19,855	(1.31%)
9. [____] / partnership	19,486	(1.29%)
10. bing / organic	15,632	(1.03%)

We can see each source and each medium listed out. If we navigate to the e-commerce section of Google Analytics, we can see the same thing for our revenue; we can see where each purchase actually came from.

Direct usually refers to when people navigate to your site from a bookmark or by typing in the URL, but in practice it ends up being much more than that. If Google can't tell where a source came from, it just buckets it as "direct." This either means some site or app is stripping the referrer before it gets to you (as some link shorteners and mobile apps do) or that you're not using your UTM parameters correctly. We'll have the best information when the number of "direct" visits are as low as possible, and the best way to do that is to use UTM parameters.

FOR MORE ADVANCED USERS: EVENT TRACKING—MEASURING IN-PAGE NAVIGATION

Sometimes, page-based navigation captures only part of the story. There are times when a user can take an action on a page (without ever leaving the page) that we want to record (downloads, mobile ad clicks, video views, etc.). For these times we can use Event Tracking.

Event Tracking is simple to add if you know some JavaScript. (Make sure to use the new analytics.js library and not the deprecated ga.js.) The Google Analytics tracking snippet already contains everything you need to pass the data back to Google, and we just have to send a message using the Analytics script. For example, *onClick="ga('send', 'event', { eventCategory: 'category', eventAction: 'action', eventLabel: 'label', eventValue: value});"* would be the generic format.

If we wanted to track downloads of a PDF, we could use something like *Download PDF*.

You can use the script builder here: https://raventools.com/gaconfig/google-analytics-event-tracking/file-download/ and follow more in-depth instructions here: https://developers.google.com/analytics/devguides/collection/analyticsjs/events.

If you're not a developer and this doesn't make any sense to you, don't worry about it. Chances are you don't really need it.

GOAL SETUP AND NON-E-COMMERCE CONVERSION TRACKING

There are a lot of things we want a user to do that aren't generating revenue. For example, if my app allows people to apply for a mortgage, there may be several dropping off points along our conversion funnel. We may want to make getting to each of those pages a goal.

Let's say that our home page (somesite.com) is a sales page culminating in an "Apply Now" button that takes you to the first step of a three-step application process (somesite.com/apply1). The user navigates through the pages apply2 and apply3, and the application is submitted when the user lands on apply4. We're going to create a goal for each of those pages.

Creating Goals

To create a goal, we again start in the "Admin" section of Google Analytics, navigating to the correct view and clicking on "Goals."

There we'll be greeted with this page:

To create a new goal, click "New Goal," and we'll fill out our first goal—starting a new application.

Goal setup   Edit

Custom

2   **Goal description**

Name

Submit Application

Goal slot ID

Goal Id 4 / Goal Set 1 ▾

Type

◉ **Destination**   ex: thanks.html

○ **Duration**   ex: 5 minutes or more

○ **Pages/Screens per session**   ex: 3 pages

○ **Event**   ex: played a video

○ Smart Goal   Smart Goal not available.

Measure the most engaged visits to your website and automatically turn those visits into Goals. Then use those Goals to improve your AdWords bidding. Learn more

[Continue]   [Cancel]

3   **Goal details**

We select "Destination" because the way Google Analytics can tell whether a user started the application is that they clicked "Apply Now," which leads them to somesite.com/apply.

We'll fill that out on the next page and see that Google has given us a convenient way to complete the funnel without leaving the page.

The names can be whatever we like, and we mark them as "Required" because we don't want a user to be able to move from one step to the next without finishing that step.

We hit "Save," and that goal goes live.

Monitoring Goal Conversions

Now that our goals are created, we have an entire section of Google Analytics dedicated to measuring them. On the left-hand side of Google Analytics, at the bottom, you will see "Conversions." Click that and then "Goals" and "Overview," and you'll be directed to a page with all of your goals. We can then select which goal we want to measure.

This section will let us do all sorts of highly valuable things now—measure which goals caused subgoals, start at the point of conversion and work backward (a backward funnel), visualize our funnel from beginning to end, and so on.

GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE: MEASURING SEARCH TRAFFIC

One of the most frustrating elements of Google Analytics is that Google doesn't provide exact search traffic for most keywords anymore. You used to be able to tell exactly how many users came from which

keyword, but for some reason Google turned that ability off. A lot of marketers just assume that this data is lost and gone forever, but for the most part that's not true. Google just moved that information into another app, which not as many people use. To get our search traffic we have to use Google Search Console (formerly known as Google Webmaster Tools).

You shouldn't have to add your site again if you already have Google Analytics installed, but from that point you can see your search traffic in "Search Traffic" -> "Search Analytics."

A/B TESTING

A little-known fact about Google Analytics is that it actually has the functionality to A/B test pages built right in. This is pretty remarkable and is something many marketers pay a lot of money for. The "Experiments" portion of Google Analytics lets us create a new link that will split traffic between two pages and measure the goal-conversion rates of those pages.

Building an A/B Test

In order to A/B test, we're going to start with a conversion. That may be sales, but if we're narrowing down on a particular aspect of a site (maybe whether a red "Apply" button works better than a blue one), the point of conversion may be getting to somesite.com/apply2. No matter what it is, make sure to have that defined exactly before you begin the experiment.

Once that's been decided, we just have to create three pages: one that a user will land on and then two pages that Google Analytics can swap in and out for us. We'll say they're somesite.com/landing, and we'll direct Google Analytics to use somesite.com/alternativeA and somesite.com/alternativeB as the pages we'll test.

To start, we're going to go to "Behavior," then "Experiments," and select "Create Experiment."

▸ Geo

▸ Behavior

▸ Technology

▸ Mobile

▸ Custom

▸ Benchmarking

Users Flow

Acquisition

Behavior

Overview

Behavior Flow

▸ Site Content

▸ Site Speed

▸ Site Search

▸ Events

▸ Publisher

Experiments

All Experiments

Create experiment

Experiment Name

When we do that, we'll be greeted with the new experiment page. Let's select our goal and fill in some basic information.

Content Experiments - Create a new experiment

1 Choose an experiment objective

Name for this experiment

Apply Button Color

Objective for this experiment (?)

Registration (Goal 1 Completions) ▼ ⊗ - or - Create a new objective

Percentage of traffic to experiment (?)

100% ▼

Email notification for important changes

OFF

Advanced Options (?)

[Next Step]   [Save for Later]   [Discard]

2 Configure your experiment

3 Setting up your experiment code

4 Review and start

We'll also fill in the respective URLs for our variants.

Original Page URLs with dynamic parameters are supported. ⑦

Web page to experiment ⑦

[http:// ▼] [somesite.com/landing] ⬆

Name for the page

[Original]

☐ Consolidate experiment for other content reports ⑦

Variant 1 ⊗

Web page to experiment ⑦

[http:// ▼] [somesite.com/alternateA]

Name for the page

[Red Button]

Variant 2 ⊗

Web page to experiment ⑦

[http:// ▼] [somesite.com/alternateB]

Name for the page

[Blue Button]

+ Add Variant

[Next Step] [Save for Later] [Discard]

Google is going to give us another JavaScript snippet that we need to include on each page. This script will send traffic to each page and measure the results for us. We just have to drop that in our original page, and we're all set!

How do you want to set up your experiment code?

Manually insert the code	Send the code to webmaster

Adding script code to your page ⓘ

1. Make sure your original and variant pages have Google Analytics tracking code installed.
2. Then, paste this experiment code immediately after the opening head tag at **the top** of your original page.

```
<!-- Google Analytics Content Experiment code -->
<script>function utmx_section(){}function utmx(){}(function(){var
k='60151008-0',d=document,l=d.location,c=d.cookie;
if(l.search.indexOf('utm_expid='+k)>0)return;
function f(n){if(c){var i=c.indexOf(n+'=');if(i>-1){var j=c.
indexOf(';',i);return escape(c.substring(i+n.length+1,j<0?c.
length:j))}}}var x=f('__utmx'),xx=f('__utmxx'),h=l.hash;d.write(
'<sc'+'ript src="'+'http'+(l.protocol=='https:'?'s://ssl':
'://www')+'.google-analytics.com/ga_exp.js?'+'utmxkey='+k+
'&utmx='+(x?x:'')+'&utmxx='+(xx?xx:'')+'&utmxtime='+new Date().
valueOf()+(h?'&utmxhash='+escape(h.substr(1)):'')+
'" type="text/javascript" charset="utf-8"><\/sc'+'ript>')})();
</script><script>utmx('url','A/B');</script>
<!-- End of Google Analytics Content Experiment code -->
```

Additional information for your experiment code:

  Experiment ID: hIQw6qi_Sja3n4Aq4INM2g
  Experiment Key: 60151008-0

Publish experiment pages

  Publish your original and variant pages to the web.
  When you're done - Click **Next Step** to continue.

After you have updated your pages with the experiment code, click Next to validate the code, review your configuration, and run the experiment.

You can also continue this setup at a later time.

Next Step	Save for Later	Discard

It will verify that you've set it up right. Pat yourself on the back! You just set up your (potentially) first and (definitely) cheapest A/B test!

FULLSTORY

There are times, however, when this quantitative data doesn't tell the whole story. Maybe there are bugs, maybe things are acting differently on different browsers, or maybe you're missing something altogether in the way your users are behaving. For times like these, we can use FullStory (or something similar). FullStory lets us record and play back as a video every session of users visiting our site.

In the 1980s, my grandmother worked as a technical writer, creating and editing computer manuals (documentation) that would teach people how to use software. This was long before the Internet, so throwing a video tutorial up on YouTube wasn't an option. The only way to help people learn how to use a complicated database was to make a manual for them to read. In order to test whether people could

understand what she and her coworkers had written, she would set up a video camera and then pull people off the street to try the software. The result was that she could watch where and why people were getting stuck or frustrated trying to use the information in the manual.

Until then, the writers had always *assumed* their writing was clear enough. The video data showed when they were right and when they were way off. Eventually, her experiment developed into a usability testing department whose goal was to expose weaknesses in the instruction manuals and fix them so the manuals were easier to understand and use.

FullStory will allow you to "usability test" your own website. There have been plenty of times I used FullStory to discover users skipping over things I assumed they had read or ignoring buttons I thought they would click. Users have helped me uncover bugs that I didn't know existed. I've even seen users try to click on links that weren't clickable, because I hadn't thought to put the link in place. Being able to watch the actions I didn't know people wanted to take has helped me make my site more intuitive and a better user experience. If you've ever wanted to sit behind your users and watch them use your product, FullStory gives you that chance.

READY TO TRACK

Now that you've gone through all of that, you've done the hard part and you're set up for success.

If you skipped this chapter, please, I beg you, get this all set **up.** You will find assumptions that are wrong, opportunities you would have missed, and—generally speaking—things you need to know that you wouldn't have known otherwise. I have found a strong correlation between the people who finish this chapter and the people who end up as capable growth hackers. Sharpen the axe before you start to swing it. If you are a little overwhelmed, don't give up. Start with the easier Google Analytics tasks, and add the more difficult ones as you become more experienced.

LIVE PRESENTATIONS & SALES

Most businesses need networking sales, and one great way to create networking opportunities is to locate early adopters and mavens who will push your product via word-of-mouth. One way to get in front of these influencers is with a live presentation. It's a terrific networking tool that will allow you to form partnerships, get past company gatekeepers, meet influencers, make sales, and do anything in between. We'll follow the traditional sales funnel of leads → prospects → sales/conversions.

Some broad-strokes advice: If you're running an agency or you're a contractor, a freelancer, or an early-stage founder looking for a lot of feedback from a few users, public speaking is one of the single best uses of your time ever. It's a win-win-win.

- A win for you: You get an entire room of prospects who, depending on your ability to present well, will be silent and paying full attention to you. And if you're good, you might be invited back.
- A win for the audience: They get value from the content and learn some new tricks and ideas.
- A win for the event organizers: They get access to great content, while filling up one of their speaker slots.

So how do you make this happen? There are two things you need to perfect:

1. A good live presentation
2. An ability to book presentations

Creating a superb presentation is such a robust subject, it's impossible to cover all of the particulars. That's beyond the scope of this book. Instead, we'll assume you are already a great presenter, and we'll show you some of the basics of pitching opportunities.

MASTER THE DETAILS

Take a look at these presentation titles from an actual blogger conference:

- "Master the Art of Professional Periscope"
- "The Secrets of Building Brand Relationships"
- "Want to Double or Triple Your Pageviews? Get Organized!"
- "How to Sell Books by the Truckload on Amazon"
- "Generate and Pitch Ideas like a Boss"

Which of the five are you going to attend if you are an up-and-coming blogger? Which of the five do you

want to attend? If you said, "all of them," you've just fallen victim to the art of a great title. You know nothing about the presenter or the presenter's credentials. All you know is that these presenters are credible enough to be speaking at a conference, and they've used your ego against you by suggesting to you that they can, in sixty minutes or less, teach you something you really need to know to succeed. Look closely at the messaging in these titles. Words like *master*, *secrets*, *double or triple*, *truckload*, and *like a boss* are used precisely because the five-to-seven-word title *must* pique interest. These titles are great examples of taking content and making it sound compelling. It's the difference between selling "Bagels" and selling "Asiago Cheese Bagels." It won't matter how good your content is if you can't pitch it well enough to draw attendance. So work, work, work on those initial details, and be willing to be so well-prepared and so engaging, the organizers will beg you to come back next year to offer the keynote!

Let's say your product is some form of e-mail automation software service, or you help people use e-mail more efficiently and become more productive as consultants. Title your presentation something like this (and switch out the word *e-mail* with whatever your industry is):

- "10 Ways You Can Use (E-mail) More Effectively"

- "The Secrets of (E-mail) Masters"

- "How to be Fantastic at (E-mail) in 10 Easy Steps"

- "5 Trends in the (E-mail) Space That Will Change the Industry"

- "Hacking (E-mail) 101: Everything You Need to Know"

Start by compiling a presenter's tool kit of information to use as you are submitting proposals to conferences. Keep a document with answers to the questions below as a place to start, and add answers to questions you encounter on other sites where you submit an application to present. This will help speed up the process when you start submitting proposals, since you won't have to craft each answer from scratch.

You don't necessarily need to write your presentation and *then* go looking for a place to give it. This is like a job search, and you're qualified to fill several different jobs. Many conferences will allow you to submit several ideas for presentations, and once you are accepted, you'll generally have several weeks to prepare and polish. Prolific book authors often don't submit a complete manuscript for consideration. Instead, they might send a query to a publisher, indicating something they are qualified to write about, and the book is written after the contract is signed.

PRESENTER'S TOOL-KIT QUESTIONS

Title: Provide a descriptive title that tells attendees what you will be teaching about (50 characters or less).

Class Tweet: In 140 characters or less, tell attendees what your class is about. This needs to be just as compelling as your title. If you're not great at product or presentation messaging, search through the presentations given at other conferences for messaging you can imitate or tweak. You might also list three questions attendees will know the answers to by the time they leave your class.

Skill Level: Indicate the preferred skill level for your attendee. Is the content something you can adjust depending on the skill level of your potential audience?

Technology Skill Level: Will your attendees need to have any prior experience with a certain type of technology in order to understand what you will be teaching?

Technology List: List every tool, software, app, platform, gadget, or device you will be addressing or demonstrating in your class. Do you have a plan B in the event that any of these fail while you are

presenting?

List of Conferences: Keep a list of all the conferences you have presented at. Build it like you would a résumé.

Presenter URL: How will attendees contact you easily? Is your Twitter handle available so that they can tweet while you are speaking?

To find content for your presentation kit, spend a weekend on industry blogs and forums. Reddit Subreddits related to your niche are good too. Now you have the content.

Make a PowerPoint presentation. Google Slides is great for this, and it's easy to use. You could select the black background with the white writing theme. (It's easy to read and looks way cooler than the standard white with black words.) On Google Sheets, you can also drag and drop GIFs. Use Reactiongifs.com and type in "I am happy," "I am angry," and so on to find good ones. Also, you can turn any YouTube video into a GIF by putting the word *GIF* before *YouTube* (www.gifyoutube.com). You can also embed YouTube videos easily enough.

So now you have a presentation of good content that looks nice. If you haven't given a talk before and you're nervous, the easiest thing to do is to put every word you want to say on the slides, and then just read them out from a laptop in front of you. Once you're confident with what you're saying, remove the words —trying to keep no more than six words per slide. You want the audience to read the words, absorb their meaning (ideally with a picture), and then focus back on you. Try to replace the *um's* with pauses. It instantly makes you look more professional and confident. Put your Twitter handle on every slide to ensure a steady stream of tweets, which look great on Storify pieces on your talks or embedded in articles. Also, if you have content-rich slides, you can put your e-mail address on the last slide with the text *e-mail me for slides*. Bingo! Instant e-mail lead magnet!

BOOKING PRESENTATIONS

One of the easiest ways to book presentations is through Meetup and Eventbrite. Follow these steps:

1. Type your niche into the search boxes on Meetup and Eventbrite. You could also make a list of local coworking spaces and accelerators—particularly if you're in the small business or startup space. Check for a networking group in your area, a small-business development center, or a professional organization. Any place where groups of people congregate for conferences is a good place to start.

2. Find all of the active relevant groups on Meetup and Eventbrite.

3. Copy and paste the following message as a private message to the organizers: "Hi, I'm a big fan of your Meetup. I give a talk on '10 Ways to Improve X' (insert your title here, obviously) that I think your audience would love. Do you have any upcoming events where I could share this presentation? I have a large network that I would be happy to invite to the event as well. Let me know—I'd love to be involved!"

4. E-mail and tweet at them at the same time: "Hey, just messaged you about getting involved with your group. Let me know what you think. Thanks!"

Typically, about 25 percent should get back to you, and you can take it from there. In terms of scaling this up, on your first slide put the words *Tweet me throughout my talk,* and on the last slide *Let me know what you thought of my talk! Here's my e-mail for slides.* You'll get two things you can use in the future:

1. Tweets you can embed on your personal website. For example, "Watching @speaker giving an interesting talk on e-mail. So many tools!"

2. Nice words from people when they request slides: "Great talk. Didn't realize half these tools existed."

Now you can use these in a blog post or on your personal website as collateral to help you book more talks. (Make sure your site has a schedule of your appearances.)

A surprising number of big conferences have open calls for speakers. On average, applications are due for these about nine months in advance, and they tend to get booked quickly. Ideally, you want accelerators, meet-ups, and coworking spaces who will put in most of the legwork of filling the room for you. Always check expected attendance and how much promotion they'll do before you confirm. This technique is so powerful; the sales process begins with a face-to-face interaction (even if it's with ten people who speak to you after the talk) and can often be continued over Skype. Be careful about turning down any speaking opportunity because the audience is "too small." The opportunities for great networking are immense, and you may meet exactly the right person in a class only six people attend.

Now, outside of that, let's dig into some tools that you can use to hack your lead generation and sales flow. We'll presume you've identified who your target audience is. Here are some tools and strategies you can use to get in front of them.

SALES PHASE 1: GETTING PEOPLE TO YOUR SITE AND FINDING LEADS

- **Import.io:** The king daddy of scraping tools. Scrape any website—no code required. Slight learning curve, but worth it. Incredible for grabbing data from websites. Thousands of companies have been powering their user acquisition through scraping techniques.

- **Hunter:** Type in any company's website and find all the public e-mail addresses of people who work there.

- **Voila Norbert:** Find anyone's e-mail address in the world. You just need their first and last name and their company name. It costs ten dollars for one day, so do all your lead prospecting for each month at once.

- **Spaceship.rocks:** Download lists of your competitors' Twitter followers and convert them into e-mails. From here you can import the e-mail addresses into Facebook and Twitter via the "Custom Audiences" feature so you show only ads to these people. You *could* also e-mail them directly, but we would exercise caution pending what the laws are in your country about this.

- **SellHack:** Constantly scan social networks like LinkedIn to create lists of e-mails and contacts you can reach out to. Great resource. It's a bit pricey for a startup, but it's a great tool— particularly if you're doing high-value sales and need lots of leads.

- **Mattermark:** This tool tracks and helps you connect with eight hundred thousand high-growth Internet companies. It provides a mine of leads that will never run out, but it is pretty expensive ($6,000 per year). If you're looking to scale fast or have investment, it could be worth it.

- **Mention:** This tool enables you to track mentions of your brand, your competitors' brands, or key phrases across multiple platforms (Instagram, Twitter, blogs, etc.) so you can jump in real time and convert potential customers. It's a pretty essential and useful tool for most companies. It

can be a little expensive if you want multiple alerts though.

- **Fresh Web Explorer:** This one by Moz does something similar to Mention.
- **Gainful:** Capture leads from AngelList, Crunchbase, and LinkedIn. It validates all e-mails to prevent bounces. Moderately priced.
- **LeadFuze:** It glues together a few of the functions listed above. On anyone's LinkedIn, it can usually find their e-mail and sometimes their phone number too. At the click of a button, you can then send a prepared e-mail, so it will save you time rather than using scrapers and e-mail software. It can get expensive if you need a lot of leads in your funnel. LeadFuze starts at $125 for 350 e-mails per month. Definitely worth it if you have money to invest. It saves some serious time!

SALES PHASE 2: MAXIMIZING VISITORS' VALUE ONCE THEY'RE ON THE SITE OR HAVE GIVEN YOU THEIR DETAILS

- **Hello Bar:** This eye-catching bar sits at the top of your site and captures e-mails. It's used by thousands of high-converting sites.
- **SalesIQ:** See who's on your website and interact with them live through live sales chat, sending targeted messages if they take certain actions, and so on.
- **Inboundgeo:** Find the physical address of people browsing your website for direct mail opportunities.
- **Leadfeeder:** Get analytics on the companies that visit your site so you can convert them to sales leads.
- **Intercom:** Plug and play live chat (text or voice), enabling people to speak to your team in real time if they have any questions. It's incredibly useful as a customer service and sales tool.

E-MAIL SALES TOOLS

- **Reply:** Send cold e-mails that feel warm, A/B test different titles, increase response rates, etc.
- **Streak:** This is a brilliant customer relationship management (CRM) tool. Every time a potential customer e-mails you, click to add them to a sales flow that sits neatly in your Gmail. Have they been pitched? Are you negotiating? Move them through the funnel!
- **Sidekick:** See who opens your e-mails. I've known sales teams to wait for people to open their e-mails and then call them one minute later.
- **MailMatch:** Broaden your relationship with your connections. Once you have their e-mail addresses, import them into MailMatch, and they'll scan multiple sources to find your connections' other social channels (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) and personal information, including name, website, and any other sites they exist on.
- **Discover.ly:** This is a fantastic tool. Go on anyone's LinkedIn and it will show you all the Facebook friends you have in common so you can ask via your friend for a warm introduction. It

runs across Twitter, AngelList, and more. It also has a Gmail plug-in to do the same when someone e-mails you.

- **Boomerang**: Send e-mails later, "snooze" e-mails you don't want to read now, and boomerang e-mails that don't get replied to back to you so you can follow up.

- **Nova**: Send personalized e-mails at scale.

- **Crystal**: Bit of a wildcard this one. Crystal researches people you're e-mailing and advises you on how to e-mail them—which emotional responses they may respond well to, etc. Best-use case for this one might be if you're targeting a few, high-dollar-value clients. It may be a bit time consuming otherwise.

- **Conspire**: It looks at the people in your e-mail network and who they're connected to, enabling you to get introductions to powerful contacts.

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CONTENT MARKETING

Y ou've probably heard someone talk about content marketing or inbound marketing recently. Really these are just new words that describe the same thing that has been done by good marketers for hundreds of years: provide somebody with something of enough value that they'll listen to what you have to say.

There are a few ways to do this. These range from building tools or recommendations that people use (which is the basis for most affiliate websites) to creating content that people want or need (more traditionally called "content marketing"). But for our purposes, in this chapter we'll refer to anything that consists of writing an article or blog post and getting it published somewhere as content marketing.

Content marketing, in actuality, is very simple. There are two sides to content marketing:

1. Writing great content

2. Getting it seen

It seems silly to dwell on the first option for too long, but in reality that is where most people mess up. Heaven knows how many blogs there are with some set quota—trying to publish fifteen articles per week about useless drivel—without ever providing any *real* value to their target audience.

Because of that, we have developed a simple rubric that will help you write better content.

WRITE FOR REDDIT

We call it "Write for Reddit," but it doesn't mean writing specifically for the website Reddit. More generally this paradigm means that you write something good enough that if it were placed on a Reddit-like site, where people heavily scrutinize your work and have the option to upvote or downvote it, it would go to the top.

We like to take this advice literally at times. Some of our most popular blog posts ever were posted to Reddit or HackerNews or GrowthHackers several times, incorporating the feedback before they were assembled in their final blog form (and viewed millions of times).

It sounds simple, but it really cannot be stressed enough. If you write something that's *so good* people will have to share it, it will bring in sales, traffic, and revenue for a long time.

We shared the "SEO in One Day" chapter from this book on Reddit, tweaked it until it was good enough, and then posted it to Medium, where it was viewed nearly thirty thousand times over the course of one week. Make that type of traffic the goal of your content marketing, and even when you miss the target, it will be a huge win.

GETTING YOUR CONTENT SEEN

The problem with most content-marketing literature, blogs, and software, however, doesn't lie in the "write good content" bit. There are absurd amounts of literature that will tell you exactly how to create

good content—with people even calling it *10x content.* We're going to assume you have written this type of 10x content.

Now we need to get it seen. The truth is, building a media company (yes, we are all media companies now) is maybe 20 percent content and 80 percent distribution.

Why did a tweet containing only the word *burger* get over one hundred and fifty thousand retweets? Because it was tweeted by One Direction's Harry Styles. It's plain to see that someone with a large number of Twitter followers can tweet content that's not as good as what others are tweeting, and it goes much further. The same is true when it comes to content marketing: A mediocre article with great distribution is far better than a great article with no or mediocre distribution.

A lot of content marketing is tricky and unpredictable because it deals with other people. An easy place to start is to build out the channels that you *do* have control over. So we're going to focus now on what exactly you need to do to get huge distribution and more eyeballs on what you're writing.

THE MONEY'S IN THE LIST

The simplest way to increase distribution is to use the e-mail list that we started to build in earlier chapters. Heaven knows how many times we've written a great article that just didn't seem to get much traction until we remembered to e-mail our list.

Even if the results don't seem huge, every opened e-mail brings recognition and brings your user base some percentage closer to actually buying from you.

The James Altucher Method

James Altucher, one of the bigger bloggers out there, has pioneered a method he calls, "A Few Simple Asks." In it, he recommends providing quality content all year long, and specifically and explicitly asking his customer base to do something three to four times per year.

That's a lot of work to optimize for a few events, but doing so makes the events very powerful. Whatever James decides to sic his user base on inevitably blows up.

BUILDING SOCIAL

The next most obvious way to distribute content is to always be building a social following. Remember that our goal isn't only to get our followers to see what we're saying, but we are also trying to get them to share what we're saying so other people see. We've watched companies drive hundreds of thousands of dollars from one tweet in one day, despite the account having only a few thousand followers. If you can hit the right audience with the right sharable message at the right time, you can see explosive results.

ALWAYS CROSS-POST

Another thing we've constantly been surprised at is how often some of our biggest fans completely miss something we've written. The most basic example is cross-posting to Medium and LinkedIn. Just copy and paste the whole thing and put it on every channel you easily can.

This link will let you share an article with up to fifty LinkedIn groups at once: https://www.LinkedIn.com/shareArticle?mini=true&url=http%3A%2F%2Fyourwebsitehere%2Ecom. If you are in a large number of applicable LinkedIn groups, go ahead and drop the article in there. (If not, start joining a large number of applicable LinkedIn groups.)

Additionally, look for social news sites you can cross-post to. There are almost always industry-specific niche sites that are hungry for content. Try googling *[industry] social news* and see what happens. You may be surprised at how many there are out there.

Once you've exhausted the basic options you have control over, move on to the channels where there's a little more up in the air.

EXTERNAL CHANNELS

Let's go over a few more methods that may work for you. There's some finesse and a lot of luck involved when it comes to using these, but we've never seen anyone try all of them and have none of them deliver.

The Skyscraper Technique

The skyscraper technique, popular among SEOs, consists of building an article that includes the best bits of other people's articles. For example, "20 Design Tips from the World's Best Designers." (Don't you want to click that link already, even if you're not a designer?) The end strategy is to get the article in front of these influential people and let them share it out of a sense of ego. You would be surprised how often this works with everyone except the most famous.

If you want to see an example, you can easily find these types of articles by searching for your niche or industry in BuzzSumo. BuzzSumo is essentially scraping the web, trying to find the content that is doing the best. (The free BuzzSumo plan should work fine for this, but you may want to try the paid plan just to check it out.)

With that information in mind, we'll write an article that includes quotes or sections from famous people in our niche, and we'll use a few techniques to automate reaching out to these people to let them know it exists.

Once you have the article written, with the name of the author in it, use ContentMarketer.io to automatically scan your article for the names of people you've mentioned, and e-mail and tweet them from within the ContentMarketer.io platform. Since we're targeting influential people, ContentMarketer.io will generally be able to find them, and there's a relatively good chance they'll retweet, share, or drop your post in their weekly e-mail because you're complimenting them. This method can give your traffic the initial traction it needs to take off. From here, it should get shared and begin the viral spiral if the content's good enough.

ADD A TRAFFIC-SHARING WIDGET

Native ad widgets, which sit at the bottom of an article on your site, normally send you two or three visitors for every one you send away from your site.

Taboola and Outbrain bring media companies tons of cheap traffic, but their widgets are usually untargeted and can make a page look cheap. Instead we're going to use SumoMe. SumoMe is like Taboola or Outbrain, but it is generally used by startups and small businesses. They have developed their own widget, and it works remarkably well (https://sumome.com/app/discover).

Add it to your site and start receiving free traffic from other sites. You are, of course, going to have to send people and traffic off to sites other than yours in order to utilize this, so make sure yours is a site that doesn't rely on people staying on it for long.

As you can probably imagine, there's also an underground gray market of sites that do nothing but send traffic to and from these widgets all day. Some of them stack some serious cash doing so, but in order to do

that, you're going to have to spend a large amount of time optimizing your content to make it clickbait-y.

GUEST BLOGGING

Sigh. This one isn't a favorite, because everyone's doing it, it's pretty manual, so only small parts of it can be automated, and it has unpredictable results.

Don't go purely off of a site's popularity here. On many of the most popular sites, you'll never get much face time with the users. For that reason, a major blog with a lot of traffic might deliver only a handful of visitors to your site, while a blog no one has heard of can deliver tens of thousands. It depends as much on how your content on the blog is doing as it does on what the blog is.

Nevertheless, guest blogging is a somewhat necessary evil for a growth hacker. Its main benefits are SEO bonuses (links from legit sites are one of the strongest SEO signals), extra traffic, and brand awareness—impressive to stakeholders in your company (investors, online communities, competitors, potential customers and employees, etc.).

Also, on day one, nobody is going to be reading your blog, so you have to go where the traffic is. Start by writing on other people's blogs. Use the tools in our PR section to find relevant small blogs for your industry to start with while you build up both your writing skills and your reputation. You'll use these as a bit of a résumé to get into the bigger sites. Once you're ready, you might consider some of these bigger, influential sites that regularly accept guest posts. We'll go over how to guest post for them shortly.

- *The Huffington Post*
- TechCrunch
- LifeHack
- Tech.co
- *TechnoFAQ*
- KnowTechie
- Tech News Beat
- AptGadget
- TheFutureTech
- Business.com
- *SportsBlog*
- BlogHer
- HubSpot
- *Social Media Examiner*
- *MarketingProfs*
- AllBusiness.com
- *SEMrush Blog*
- *Social Media Today*

- [Tech City News](#) (UK-focused)

If you want to find something more specific to your niche, you can search for some of the footprints using Google that indicate they might be accepting guest posts. You can see a huge list of those footprints here: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/growth-austen/footprints/master/Footprints/community.md.

The Huffington Post and basically every other major blog runs to the same content-hungry system. All you need to do is e-mail, saying, "I like your [blog/site], and I'd like to write for it. I've attached a post about X." As long as the post is fairly well written, they'll usually publish it. A lot of people put "Write for *The Huffington Post*" in their bio, but it really means nothing. *The Huffington Post* currently publishes around a thousand articles each day, and most of them are garbage.

Most of these blogs and sites make their money from banner ads and AdWords, so the more traffic they get, the more money they make. By delivering them free content and sharing it on your networks, you're essentially working for them for free. Just as an experiment, we worked with someone to send an e-mail to *The Huffington Post* that said nothing other than, "I wrote this. Publish it." They did.

And if it's that easy to get something published on *The Huffington Post*, imagine how easy it is to get published on a smaller blog within your niche, where your customers will be reading the content. As ever, the best strategy is to e-mail the correct contact and tweet them at the same time to let them know you've just e-mailed them, increasing the chance they will read your e-mail. Make sure you put a great title on it, of course.

Influencer Outreach

Reaching out to influencers to share your content is simple: Use Ninjaoutreach.com to find influencers in your niche, reach out to them, and share your article. Some will post or share them or at least be intrigued by them.

You can also use Onalytica. On Onalytica, you copy and paste your article in, and they'll scan it for keywords and then find influencers who have used those keywords recently. So you can reach out and say, "I saw you've been writing about Bitcoin recently. I just wrote an article on how I think it will develop this year. Would love your thoughts! Please share it with your community if you like it. Thanks!"

As ever, remember: target the right people, try to reach out to a lot of them at once, and expect a small percentage to convert.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

This book is only as good as what you put in to make things happen. Some of you may be thinking—*It works for other people. I don't think it'll work for our company. Why would it?* The only way to know is to try. Ask anyone whose company has been successful: there is always an innovative marketing technique early on as part of their story. Using the tools and techniques from this book, you can get a serious competitive advantage.

We're living in a time when the Internet has allowed a handful of people to dramatically change their lives in a fraction of the time it used to take companies to scale. Our intention with writing this book is to empower as many people as possible to grow their companies, and then to have those people get in touch with us and let us know how they used what's in this box to boost their company. Getting those e-mails will be the ultimate reward for the hours spent writing this for you. Thank you for reading! Let's keep in touch.

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VIN CLANCY (formerly known as Vincent Dignan) is a growth hacker, public speaker, consultant, and entertainer. He bootstrapped his way out of being on welfare in the UK by teaching himself to growth hack by reading everything he could find on the Internet—eventually starting his own Techstars-backed growth hacking agency: Magnific. He currently coaches entrepreneurs on how to improve their growth hacking strategies. You can find him traveling the world giving talks, wearing giant golden shoes and tie-dye fur coats, and giving award-winning presentations on everything from growth hacking to sales and personal branding.