

Power Teaching Master Class

Transcript of interview with Chris Guillebeau of *The Art of Non-Conformity* and *The Hundred Dollar Startup*

By Pamela Slim of *Escape from Cubicle Nation*

Topic: How to Launch and Promote

PAMELA: Hello, this is Pamela Slim and I am so delighted to introduce a master class on how to launch and promote with a dear friend and amazing author and businessperson, Chris Guillebeau. Let me give you a little bit of background about Chris, if any of you have not heard of him before.

One of the many things that he does in life is to attempt to visit every country in the world by the time he's thirty-five. He's very close, we'll find out exactly what number he's on right now. But also on his travels he shares, on his blog, a lot of stories about living a life of meaning and creating a business that can be location independent, and traveling, and social justice, and all kinds of topics that relate very strongly with his market. He's written two books: [The Art of Non-Conformity](#) and the most recent one, [The Hundred Dollar Startup](#).

And, what's really been amazing to me, having been a friend of Chris for many years, is seeing a pretty dramatic increase in terms of the number of people who are aware of his work and, in particular, who are purchasing products and programs. He just ran, with a wonderful group of volunteers, the World Domination Summit in Portland, and if my numbers are correct, the thousand seats sold out in about twenty minutes. And it's not magic, it's not voodoo, it's not mind control. I think there are some very specific things that Chris has done over the course of a number of years that we can really learn about in terms of promoting our own programs and products. So, Chris, with great pleasure, I welcome you to the call.

CHRIS: Thank you so much, Pam.

PAMELA: So, what number country are we on now? How many are left to go?

CHRIS: I have six countries left, so I think I'm on 187 or 188. [I was] just in Yemen recently and the Congo and now I'm holding Portland, Oregon for a couple weeks, so about six countries left.

PAMELA: Wow, that is amazing. It's getting so close. I'm so excited for you!

CHRIS: So far, so good. You've been a part of everything for so many years now, and I appreciate your kind introduction now and I've learned so much from you, so I'm happy to share whatever it is I know with your great group here.

PAMELA: Wonderful. Well, let's start with a big picture frame. I really like to start these kinds of sessions this way because, before getting to very specific tactics that you might do about creating a really effective launch of a program or a product, there are some fundamentals that you want to think about when building a very engaged audience. And, knowing that you have

such a connected and engaged audience, what's been important to you to set in place before you even begin to sell your first e-book?

CHRIS: Well I really liked what you said in the introduction about working for a number of years and being somewhat dedicated. I certainly haven't been consistent in everything, but I think that it really is important right from the beginning when you're thinking about selling something. I think it's very important to understand first of all what is your overall message and what are you trying to do. What do you hope to accomplish.

You know, you and I have a mutual friend, Jonathan Fields, and I remember sitting with him in a conference room once. We were listening to someone else speak and someone asked a question about writing a book and they [asked], "What are the first steps to marketing a book or getting it out there?" And the response went through maybe four or five things, all related to tactics. He was talking about Facebook and all this kind of stuff, which was fine, but then he said, "Oh, and make sure you have something to say." And Jon and I looked at each other and said, "That's probably the first thing, right?" When you think about the fundamentals of building an audience and then creating a product that you sell, the first thing [to identify is] what is it that you have to say, and then putting forth that message.

And over time, I tried to be somewhat focused and somewhat consistent with the blog. I also think [about] this whole idea of delivering value. When you say "delivering value", I know a lot of peoples' eyes kind of glaze over because they hear that phrase all the time. But when I hear "delivering value" I think value is fundamentally about helping people. So when I think about the fundamentals of building an audience which then relates to the fundamentals of creating and launching products, it really relates to helping people and consistently doing whatever you can do to understand people's needs, understand why people would care about what you have to say or what you have to offer and then focusing on that.

And then over time as you understand the audiences, as you understand [their] ideas and what their moods are, then that usually translates very easily into creating a service or creating a product in response to that. So for me, whatever success I had has been in responding to that and whenever I've had things that haven't been so successful I can usually translate it back and say "You know, I thought I understood a need of my community, but I've probably done it wrong." So, the times I've had success are when I've really understood what my community's about, what they want, what is it I'm in a position to provide and then focusing on that. That's how I start thinking about a lot of these things.

PAMELA: Yes. Did you know, when you first started your blog, what you wanted to be saying? Did you have clarity from the beginning or did it also develop the more that you wrote? I'm just curious as to what those actual pieces were for you personally.

CHRIS: It was definitely an evolution. I started with an idea that I wanted to write about some broad things related to travel and alternative kinds of work and lifestyle and some of the things you mentioned in the beginning. But the specific variations of that definitely came about through the process.

I would say [that a] couple of the turning points are not so much the online work, but the turning points are when I actually began to meet readers and different people that I've connected with

offline. When I began to have meet ups and began to see the different kinds of people that came and understand what it is they were trying to do and the projects they were involved in.

First of all, I went away feeling kind of inspired because I thought, “Wow, there’s great people paying attention to my blog - I should do a good job.” But then I also understood what they’re trying to do, and maybe here’s what they need help with and then [I could] craft the products and services in response to that. So, it was definitely an evolution.

PAMELA: Yes, I know, it’s interesting. I’m always curious because I was actually just talking with a client before this call [about] the paradox of, in order to get clarity about what your message is, you need to just begin to write. And connect with people. So, it’s different for every person. Sometimes you know what you have to say after having said a whole bunch of stuff. And pulling out the gem.

CHRIS: Right, right, true, true. You don’t have to wait to begin though, because it’s like a chicken and egg kind of thing in some ways. I think you refine your message [as] you go along. If you’re going to start a business, hopefully you have some idea of what it’s about, and you know about the difference that you’re going to make in the world for your clients or customers. I think you improve and get better, but hopefully you know you’re starting with something.

PAMELA: Exactly. So with that,[let’s move from] really thinking about, what is the core message that you want to be communicating and how can you be really listening in to the need [of] your market and making sure that you’re helping, to begin to develop products or services. One of the things I will [never] forget I learned from you after you did your book tour for *The Art of Non-Conformity* in Phoenix at Changing Hands bookstore; a great local independent bookstore. We had dinner afterwards and I was running through a whole bunch of ideas that I had for products and services. And in my typical trainer fashion I was all excited by the specific things that people were going to learn. You know, “Oh, they’ll learn this and they’ll learn that and it’ll be so great!” And you said, “You know, Pam, what’s the promise? What’s something that’s actually going to get people really excited about this?” Because from a sales perspective, even though you may know,...

CHRIS: Right.

PAMELA: ...as the master of your domain, that what you have to offer is great, it definitely does not translate into sales if you’re not telling the story about what it is in a very compelling way. So, say more about what you mean about a promise and why it’s so important.

CHRIS: Yes, I was trying to think back on that conversation because I remember the gig and I remember our dinner quite well, but I don’t remember the specific parts that we talked about. I would say overall, [that] if you’re going to make this thing, then you have to focus on how people’s lives will be fundamentally changed [as a] result of the project. If you want to make something that matters and you want it to be successful and you want it to sell a million copies, then people’s lives have to be changed. Because that’s [the] kind of promise or benefit [they need].

When you were listing those things like, “Oh they’re going to learn this, they’re going to do this”, what you were doing was the classic thing that a lot of us do,[which] is to focus on the nuts and bolts of it, or focus on the features. And that’s fine, but ultimately what matters the most is how people’s lives will be changed. So, that’s what I think about when I think of the enticing promise.

All of us are bombarded with all these different messages, all the time. We have limited money and we have limited time to invest in certain things. Why should I invest in this product or this course, or why should I hire this coach? Ultimately it’s going to come down to the promise or the benefits.

I was trying to think of some good examples of people that really know that well. I was thinking of another mutual friend of ours Ramit Sethi]. He had a project a couple of years ago called “Earn 1k”, like earn a thousand dollars. That project [described] the ultimate benefit. [It was] communicated very, very clearly. That’s a promise - in two words, two very strong words. You know exactly what that course is about. You know exactly [that] “Oh, I’m going to do this and I’m going to earn 1k. And, you can have a whole sales order written up that explains all kinds of things about it, but ultimately it relates to fundamental concepts of earning money, earning a relatively small, but, [definite] amount of money that we can relate to. So we can do some more examples, but I think that ultimately it comes down to that focus on how peoples’ lives will be changed or improved.

PAMELA: Definitely and we had Ramit that did another master class for us on pricing, so it’s neat that you mentioned that.

CHRIS: Oh great.

PAMELA: It is, it’s such a brilliant title and it is very, very clear, so people know what they’re getting. Now, a part of what is very interesting in talking about benefits or talking about promises is, how do you know that you can deliver? We’ve all been victims of marketing that promises you’ll make six figures in your sleep and, sometimes...

CHRIS: Right, right.

PAMELA: ...you’re in the very beginning of creating something [which], to be brutally honest, you don’t even really know what the results will be. You’re hoping for the best and you’re always offering a hundred percent guarantee, right? In the case that you can’t deliver ...

CHRIS: Right, right.

PAMELA: When do you know that something is really an enticing promise versus something that might be manipulative, just preying on people’s needs to get their credit card out of their pocket?

CHRIS: Well, yes, there’s probably a lot we could say about that. It has be rooted in factual experience. It has to be rooted in something that you’ve done before. [For example,] I’ve had some success with my travel products, helping people travel the world and earn lots of frequent

flier miles, and save on airfare. And I've had success in that area because that's what I do myself. I regularly fly around the world and I always earn all these miles, so I think that the experience component is important.

And then the component of "have you helped other people" - do that as well. So, in Ramit's case, he has a whole track record and a history of helping people learn to do consulting or helping people learn how to buy and sell or learning how to get to that point of making a thousand dollars and then a lot more. So, I think it's through the track record and through testimonials.

Even if it's not like a formal testimonial, but it's a general social proof. [For example,] if Ramit comes out with something, his audience and those of us who know him find him somewhat believable, because he's done that before. And, so I think that matters.

Ultimately, if you are on the fence and you're trying to decide, should I go for this or not? Then there's the question of does it feel right? Do you feel relatively confident that you can do this and you can go over this value for clients? And, the second thing is what you mentioned about the guarantee. The guarantee is important if you feel [unsure]. You probably don't want to say, "I'm going to help you make a hundred thousand dollars or your money back," because you don't know that you're going to be able to do that. But, if it were something smaller, then I do think that's when you put the guarantee forward and say, "This is what we're going to do. And we're going to publicly report back, but if it doesn't work out for you then here's the guarantee."

PAMELA: Yes, that makes so much sense. So it's having something that is significant enough - like a thousand dollars - which peaks people's interest, because it's not a small amount of money. And it's probably less than he first charged when he did the class. But it is something that really solves a very specific problem.

We were talking about a side hustle product that I was thinking of. Of what would be a way to get specific training for people that might be in a corporate job that want to start a business? You can tell I haven't even done that product yet. So, I'm still thinking about the promise, but with that as an example, I was going to [offer] things like how do you choose your own health benefits and how do you make sure you're not violating employment contracts? When really I think what people want is to insure that they have safety in their plan and also that they won't be burned out. So many people are so tired that are doing a side hustle and feel like they're never going to get anywhere. So, maybe a promise [for] something like that could really be the relief that people would feel. Which of course could be quantified and get a lot more concrete.

Maybe it's a time frame, you know? In which they would really see the beginning and the end of their side hustles. It was a very significant way for me to think about it. Because that often is what people are looking for - to really understand what they invested in. As you said, we're bombarded by so many different offers that sometimes it's hard to sort through.

I'm curious for the World Domination Summit, for the particular branding about that, it really is spectacular and I say this with that, like, older sister pride because I've known you for so long I just was beaming at seeing how well things were going and how quickly people signed up. I just find it amazing and wonderful. But, there was something that was very powerful where it did

resonate so strongly with your audience. By the time you did the first World Domination Summit, how long had you been in business, or how long had you had your blog?

CHRIS: I keep thinking of lots of things that I want to say in response to this because I was thinking about this side hustle project and, just as a side note, I do think that's going to be a very powerful thing. When you release it, I do feel like the concerns that people have do relate to security and safety as you mentioned. So I think there's so much you can do with that, I'm excited about that.

Now as for WDS, [there's] a lot we could say about that too. I think I had been doing my thing for between two and three years when we announced the first WDS. So it's a learning process all along the way.

One thing to say about benefits and communicating the essence of something [is that] there [are] two different approaches. One approach is what we've been talking about thus far which is the benefit-driven. {For example}, the "Earn 1k" thing. That is the side hustle thing, the hundred-dollar start [up]. Those things communicate the benefits really clearly.

With World Domination Summit, if you hear the name "World Domination Summit" it doesn't necessarily communicate the benefit right away. People [wonder], "What's that all about?" So for that kind of project, the strategy was more of a Seth Godin approach. And Seth Godin, as you know, wrote the book Purple Cow and he's written some other books [like] Lynchpin, Meatball Sundae. [When] you hear these kinds of projects, you don't really know anything about them at all. All you know is you hear that name and you wonder, "But what is that? That's interesting."

His whole philosophy [in] creating something like this is not necessarily to communicate the benefit right away, but just to get you interested. Just for you to hear it and say, "I want to know more about that; what is that?" So "World Domination Summit" kind of falls [there], at least in terms of the branding aspect of it. The initial branding aspect of it falls more to that second category instead of the immediate, benefit-driven category. But I think I interrupted you because you were going to ask me something else.

PAMELA: No, that's very useful. And [you're] right, his latest book, which is coming out in January, is the Icarus Project.

CHRIS: The Icarus Deception.

PAMELA: The Icarus Deception

CHRIS: What is that?

PAMELA: Yeah, like "What is that, who is Icarus and what's the deception?"

CHRIS: Yes, exactly. So, here's some advice to people who are listening. So [many] people emulate that and they say, "Oh well, you know Seth Godin creates all these books with these titles that nobody knows anything about. That's what I should do too because it works for him."

But I went and talked to some people and I say well, most of us are not Seth Godin. He has this huge platform, this huge influence. So if you're just getting started and you haven't created a product before, I would choose the benefit-driven approach. And I would focus that product as much as possible on the benefit, on how it's going to change people's lives and improve people's lives, because that's easier than doing the alternate approach.

PAMELA: Yes, that's a really good point. Step one is be Seth Godin and then step two is to use that strategy. But, what's neat, and actually in the context of talking about your own story is [that] for the first kinds of products that you released, they were very benefit-focused and very clear for your market, answering specific questions. But then, as they get that connection with you, as they receive value through the products and then through your ongoing blog posts and develop more of a community that happens by people commenting in the posts and then knowing that you do meet with a lot of people in person. It's neat to think about that other strategy of maybe something that has a little bit more intrigue. That can be something that builds. And sometimes, somebody's personality is such that they can go right out of the gate like that, but I'm with you. Starting with the benefit is usually the safest bet so people are crystal clear as to what they're getting and you know exactly what you're accountable for delivering.

CHRIS: Right, right.

PAMELA: [That's] really helpful and I think that's a very important thing for folks to think about. And really it's similar to what we were talking about in the master class with Ramit about pricing. Before you're even going and creating your entire class and then a lot of people might create the class and then say, "Oh how much should I charge?", you're doing a lot of the thinking beforehand [about] "What am I creating and who is it for and what's it worth?" And in this context of what we're talking about here, you're thinking about the promise far before you go down the line of actually creating the class. So it's not just that you create the promise for the sales letter, which is often the last thing that people will do, but that you start with that and then say what really needs to be in the program in order to deliver this great thing to people I care about.

CHRIS: Yes I completely agree. That's exactly how I plan my projects as well. I try to plan with the outcome in mind, of what I hope to achieve with it in terms of people who are involved, what I hope to achieve for myself in terms of number of sign ups or profit. I do a lot of non-profit projects as well. Even if it's a non-profit then you can still use your influence somehow. So, I always think, what do I hope to achieve from it and then backing it up from there, then what is the offer, what is the pitch, what is the media, and how am I communicating that? And then you actually create the cores for the product or the project or whatever it is.

PAMELA: Okay, that's great, that's really useful to frame that. So, we've been talking about the fundamentals of building an audience, and having a strong message and making sure you're leaning in and listening to their needs. Then, for a particular program or product, you're thinking about an enticing promise that you can deliver. Let's shift to some more tactical things about putting together a really strong offer and planning an organized launch.

CHRIS: Hmm, hmmm.

PAMELA: Where do you start?

CHRIS: Okay, where do I start? I think the first thing about a launch is, you want to actually have a plan for it. You want to think through whether it's a three month thing or a one month thing or a couple of weeks. I don't want to just come out with something and say, "Here it is, try it." I want to lead people up to it.

One of the things that's very important is telling a good story and involving people and letting people understand why you're doing this. And probably just as important [is] why are you doing this now? I honestly think that out of all the different characteristics of an offer and of a launch and of marketing and so on ... we haven't talked about authority very much, which is an important thing, especially in terms of the World Domination Summit. But overall I think the most important concern is urgency. It's [explaining] why does this matter now and why should I take action on this now. So I'm always trying to think about that.

And then [there's] creating an offer. If you have the product or the service, that's not an offering. An offer is the description of what it is, the focus on benefits that we've talked about, the inclusion of the features, the guarantee. You also have to consider what the objections are going to be. Why would people not buy this? If your product or your service isn't for [everyone] but [just] for [some] people, what are their objections going to be? So when I think about constructing the offer, and then putting together a sales page or however I'm going to communicate that invitation, I want to respond to those objections and preemptively deal with them as much as possible. Maybe preemptively provide some reassurance to those objections. And I think about that in context of creating the whole offer and then everything that leads up until the launch as well.

PAMELA: So, let me take those one by one. Let's say that folks in Power Teaching want to be doing something like a four week teleclass on a topic where they're [going] to teach people a very specific thing that's going to be useful. What might be a good time frame [in which] to start laying the groundwork? [Like] writing blog posts about it or talking about this topic. Is it three months or six months?

CHRIS: I would lean closer to two or three months. A four week teleclass - obviously that's an important project and you want to invest well in it - but I don't think it requires six months of your time. I also think it's hard to keep people's attention focused for six months, for [something] that's coming out so far in the future. So I would say maybe two months out or so.

One practical sampling thing that I would almost always do is I would have the blog post thing. I would also have an early invitation and an early initiation is not to purchase anything but the early invitation is to participate in some form. We began this conversation by talking about the fundamentals of building an audience. Something that's really helped me in building the audience is in involving them as much as possible. And I've done that through things like the book tours or the in-person events, but even if you wanted to have the tele class you could involve them by saying, "Hey, I'm creating this series of calls in response to some of the questions that you've asked on the blog, or some of the things that I know that you're interested in. And I'd love your help in making it better," and then invite them to participate in the survey or invite them to join a special list. And make it clear to that list [that] you're not really pitching

them on anything there, but you're asking them for help. And I do a series of short surveys and the surveys are great because they get people involved, they give you information that you might not otherwise have had, they help you make the product better. And those people are also then raising their hands and identifying themselves and saying, "I'm, not only willing to participate in this, but I'm probably a good fit for this. I'm probably going to be interested in purchasing this because I'm taking action and identifying myself as one of your fans."

PAMELA: So when people volunteer to do that, you're not going to be pitching them, but if they are in some ways raising their hand, then how do you graciously invite them once you do open the class to participate?

CHRIS: Yes, I'm glad you asked that. When I said you're not pitching them, I mean you're not pitching them right away. I do think [that] if they raise their hand [to] be part of this survey group, then of course they want an invitation to purchase when the time comes. I just mean you're not taking advantage of them in any way. You actually do want their input and you are going to be going through the data that they provide. You're not immediately pitching them something right away. But you will definitely be inviting them to purchase or to register when the time comes.

PAMELA: Okay, wonderful. And so you're getting input, you're making it a stronger product, you're letting people know what you're working on, and they begin to get an inkling that something is happening. Then tactically, when should you - and I know there's no perfect answer to this, that's the caveat - but what is really an ideal window to have open for registration for a program like that?

CHRIS: Hmm, you mean in terms of a time frame?

PAMELA: Yes, from the time that the sales page goes live to when it closes for registration. Is there an ideal time frame for that?

CHRIS: It's going to depend on the kind of project and what it is that you're offering. I think that, especially if you have coaches or people who are providing service-based businesses, then in some ways it is easier for you, because again there's this question of urgency. If you have an in-person event or if you have a call that has a limited number of lines, or if it's a consulting thing where you can only help a certain number of people. People understand that reason and you really have a legitimate, urgent need to register. If it's a digital card or something like that, it's a little bit more difficult, because you can't say, "Oh we're only keeping this open for a short amount of time because we're going to run out of e-books". You're not going to run out of e-books. But, if you have this tele-summit and you have room for a hundred people and you're going to answer follow-up questions or something like that, then I don't know if you keep it open for a specific time or if you keep it open until it sells out.

I would think about how many people I think I can serve with this. Based on what I've done before, based on the size of the list, based on the interest level that I see so far, based on the price that I'm offering this for, maybe compared to what other people are offering or what I've done before. I would base it around that, because you want there to be a certain amount of excitement. You're not trying to create an insider's club necessarily, but you do want people to

feel like they're getting something special if they're participating with you. So, I'd consider all those things together. But I don't know how long it should be open.

PAMELA: Well, [that's] helpful. I think sometimes, because of different e-mail marketing strategies that people use, people can get tired of it. People who have received seven emails in one week for a program can get fatigued. And a lot of that can just be choices that you make about how you want to market. I'm always really curious about that, because I've experimented with a number of different time frames. and personally what feels comfortable is to be a little bit more aggressively letting people know about something, usually a two week window feels comfortable. I've tried three, which sometimes drags on. And one week often, I get a bunch of people saying, "I didn't even know you were doing this!" So that's just very helpful to know.

CHRIS: Yes. Well, one point on this is that turning people's money away, in the long term, can be a very powerful sell strategy. Because if people have the belief that we're not actually going to miss out on something - if I see [that] Pam has a course and I might look at it and say, "Oh that looks great, I'll register for it later." If I go back later and I'm not able to register, a couple of things are going to happen.

One, I'm going to feel a little bit bad. I'm mostly going to feel bad about myself. I'm going to say, "Oh, I should have registered for that earlier. When I first saw that I should have done something about that." But then it's going to actually cause me to be much more attuned to what you're doing in the future. First of all, I'm going to believe that you keep your promises. Because sometimes things will close and then I email them to get an exception and they say, "Oh sure," but if you really do have an open and a close, [then] after the close you don't want to make an exception.

Over the long term this is actually going to increase people's faith and trust in you. I remember when you and I did the hundred dollar start up forum, which was the precursor to the whole hundred dollar set up book, I think we took 150 people or something in each course.

PAMELA: Yes.

CHRIS: And when we closed [each session], there were a lot of other people who would have registered afterwards. You know a lot of them are posting comments and emailing you and emailing me, but if you say you're going to take X number of people or you say it's going to be open for X amount of time and then you close it, those people [are] disappointed they couldn't get in that first class, but then they're going to be just as eager to get into the next one. Or they're going to be just as eager to pay attention to what you're doing later. So all that [is] to say [that] not taking people's money is a very powerful sales strategy.

PAMELA: That's definitely something I've really learned from you and just to be crystal clear about it, because as a bleeding heart, sometimes I do feel for folks and I want to be reasonable. Sheila (my assistant) and I often talk about clear guidelines. What do they actually mean? As long as you're following clear guidelines and applying them to everybody, that's really important. It was hysterical -people were practically bringing cupcakes to us, begging to be in the class, and the reality was it was a little bit more that [bleeding heart] feeling.

I saw that so clearly as to how it played out in later years for World Domination Summit, because you have had such very clear parameters and people know that if they don't get in they won't get in. That's part of what creates a real rush. You know [that] as soon as people see the links for World Domination Summit, they know they're going to immediately jump on it. And it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, but it doesn't happen by accident. That's based on years of being very clear and respectful of people by really closing down when you say you're going to close down.

CHRIS: Right, exactly, and it helps to have a real reason for it. So for something like an in-person event, you have a real reason. {There's] a certain amount capacity. Every year we go to 100% capacity, actually we go 110% capacity which we really can't go above because then the fire marshal is going to shut us down. But even if you're a coach or a consultant out there and you're not hosting an in-person event, you still have a good reason. Because you're one person, you want to devote your time and energy to your clients, and you can only service that number of people. So you can apply the same principle over time.

PAMELA: Wonderful. So, okay, it's a really important principle that I suggest everybody really thinks about. Think about what it actually means if you say you can only register by a certain date. As long as you know the definition and hold to it, that's what's important.

Another piece in thinking about the launch is how you get the word out. So that could be anything from affiliates, if you have an affiliate model, or from doing guest posts. Or from pinging your own network and asking people to spread the word. What do you suggest in terms of planning for that? How do you plan who do you choose to help spread the message about your class, and how much time do you need to give them to be prepared?

CHRIS: Yes, all good questions. In terms of what do I choose when I'm looking at all these different tactics and options, my first answer is to say I [use] all of the above. If it's a major launch, if it's something I'm really trying to to prepare for, then I will spend quite a significant amount of time in thinking about who am I going to connect with, and how do I hope the word to get out about this and what kind of project is it?

Is it purely a commercial project? Then maybe an affiliate pitch would be best. Then maybe I work with some affiliates and try to get them involved. For affiliates who can really have a substantial impact, the more lead-time you can give them the better. That's more of a four to eight week lead-time if possible.

If it's for a book or something like that, [where] you're hoping people, out of the kindness of their hearts or because they have a relationship with you, will endorse it, I tend to go a bit broader about it and reach out to a lot of people. When I think about different people who have helped me over the past four years, [it] has often been when I do book events. I don't know if you understand, but when I do book events, I noticed on my last tour probably five people at different events asked this question. They look at the names of people who wrote endorsements for my book and they would say "How did you get Pam's Slim or Seth Godin or these, people that say good things about you?"

And I'd always talk about building relationships and getting to know people over time and how much I appreciated them, but I would also say that in the long term, spreading the word about

your project [is] going to come more from your followers and your network of people who are readers or customers or clients. So in the long term, you're going to be more helped by those people than by so-called famous people who give an endorsement. So the most amount of time that I'm going to spend is not on writing to other famous people, asking them for their help, although I'm certainly grateful for that. But I'm going to spend more time making sure that I've really prepared my actual community for it and make sure that I'm going to make something that's helpful for them. And if it's going to help them, then they'll spread the word. So I always focus on that.

PAMELA: Yes. I really like that and I think that is a big misconception sometimes. It can speak a little bit more to credibility or authority just to have those kinds of endorsements, which help people to [take] that final step of deciding to do it. But it's not so much [help] in actually getting the word out. I was teasing JD Roth that of all the press that I got - I was in the NY Times, Business Week, all kinds of things for my book - I sold the most copies of my book and got the most traffic from the posts that he wrote on [Get Rich Slowly](#).

CHRIS: I completely believe it. I totally get it, yes. So it's great to have the NY Times, because then you have opportunity to do an op-ed for them if it's fantastic - that is huge authority. But not everybody buys the book, not everybody responds to things like that. I did a launch once [where] we really lined up lots of affiliates and there were some affiliates who had 150,000 subscribers. Everyone reads their blog and they're much more popular and more influential than me. Yet when they endorse it, we also had other affiliates who had maybe a couple of thousand readers, but those readers were very passionate and committed. In more than one case I saw people were saying that two to three thousand readers have the same results as people that had 180,000 readers. So again it is all about making the right connections and quality over quantity and finding the right fit. That's probably more important than anything else.

PAMELA: Yes, I really just do love it [that] you really put your energy first in building that community - where from the very beginning, you're listening to them and involving them and then that community slowly over time grows. They really can be your strongest advocates and then things can just be the cherry on top of that.

Now, you were saying before that you wanted to say a little bit more about authority. So, say more about authority. How is that important when you're promoting a class?

CHRIS: I was just thinking when you said "community" [that] community is the source, that's where it all comes from. You could take away a lot of other things but if you have the community then that's it. So, to relate that to authority, I heard this analogy once which I thought was really good. Maybe you've heard this expression about how the most powerful asset is a list of names and email addresses or a list of names and phone numbers or something like that. And I heard this analogy once where someone said, "What if I could show you a list of ten thousand business owners from Phoenix, Arizona or Portland, Oregon, or whatever your market is - would you agree that that's valuable?" And then he went on with it for a while and the summation of it is, eventually, he pulls out a phonebook and says, "Here's your list of ten thousand people."

So the point of it is that the value, the authority doesn't come from the names or the list or anything like that. It comes from your relationship with those people. And so if you don't have the relationship, you [might as well] buy a phonebook. Or you can get a phonebook for free or you could get all these different people, but if you don't have the relationship you don't have the authority.

So, I was thinking about the authority earlier when you were talking about World Domination Summit and you had sent me a note earlier about why do a thousand people all sign up at once for this thing, and I really feel like it comes from not any authority that I provide, but maybe the authority of the event itself and the endorsements of other people and people that have come and they've attended and they've they wanted to be there and so I feel like that's where it comes from. I feel like there's a sense of you had to be there.

So, you can create the same kind of thing in an online experience. You can create the same kind of thing where people are talking about it and it has authority and everybody else wants to be there and that's why they sign up and that's why they register.

PAMELA: Yes, that makes so much sense and I did see that. That more and more it wasn't just about you, but it really was about everybody who would come, people that really got excited for it. No, that's very, very useful.

There's one thing I wanted to jump back to, we were talking about something like a class that might involve a coach or a consultant where there would be a finite number of people that they could help. But what if you do have a product that is an evergreen stand-alone e-product? What are some ways to work in, when you're launching this, a little bit of urgency and relevance and timeliness, so people feel like "I need to buy this now even if it's going to be on the shelf all year long."

CHRIS: Yes, good question. I think somebody who's done very well with this is Brian Clarke and his Copyblogger empire because he has number of things that are just like this. He has a product called "Teaching Sells" which is an evergreen course, but he takes it on the market and takes it off periodically a few times a year. And, so the same thing has happened there where people have gotten used to that and they understand it's only available at certain times and so when it is available it becomes like a special kind of thing.

So it's interesting because it could be open all the time. There's no reason that it couldn't, but I think he's been more successful in going to that seasonal or cyclical model of that. So, maybe the other thing, the other suggestion just tactically would be if it is an evergreen thing and it's always going to be there, then when you're thinking about pricing - and maybe you covered this with Ramit - but thinking about pricing I would encourage someone to think more of a continuity or a subscription model. For something that is evergreen and always there I would encourage people to think about maybe not just a one-time sale, but getting people into a monthly cycle. Depending on the product, depending on what it is that you're offering.

PAMELA: So for that, give an example. Do you have any subscription products within your own suite of products? I forget, do you still have the Empire Building Kit that's available or e-books and stuff?

CHRIS: Yes. I have this travel service called the “Travel Hacking Cartel.”

PAMELA: Right.

CHRIS: And that’s a monthly subscription service. I don’t really promote it that much, it’s just one of those things that kind of lives there, but I like it because it’s a subscription service and people come in and they’re paying monthly until they choose not to. And I’m actually trying to shift more of my business to that model. Because [I’m] more and more persuaded that that’s a good model to go to. The next thing that I’m developing will also be on the same kind of pricing.

PAMELA: And does that mean that you are dripping the content? So if you have content that, for example, somebody could be utilizing all year, is it just that you introduce one piece of [it at] a time so they’re paying for it monthly? Or are you also creating new content? That’s been one detraction I’ve heard sometimes from that model, is continually feeding the beast of having to always come up with new content. How do you solve that problem?

CHRIS: Yes, well you could do it either way and I think it is probably more common to do the “feeding the beast” model that you mentioned, but I think it is possible to basically choose to do this sort of content thing. I could have done that with Empire Building Kit a couple years ago if I had been inclined to go in that direction. I think you can create everything and then give people a series of modules or content or whatever it is over time.

So it just depends on finding out your own priorities in your own time and how successful it is and if it’s a very successful product then maybe it’s not a problem to create content on an ongoing basis. Or maybe to hire someone to do that or introduce a partner in some way. If it’s not a profitable endeavor then maybe at a certain time you get tired of it. I know Ramit has had continuity products in the past that he’s had open for a while and then he closed them down, just because he got tired of doing it. So there’s more than one way to do it.

PAMELA: Yes, that’s really helpful. Well, anything else you can think of in creating your overall plan? So, you get the timing down, you think about what you’re doing, you get your offer in order, you identify the kind of people to get the message out. Are there any missing key nuggets that are going to be helpful?

CHRIS: I think I said something briefly earlier [but] I didn’t follow up on it well. I said something about responding to objections. So, a very practical, simple tool that anyone can use when you’re writing your material - whether it’s a sales page or it’s a general website or a blog or whatever - I think a Frequently Asked Questions section is a great place to respond to your objections.

Frequently Asked Questions sections can often just be very basic and descriptive. But I think one, they can be very persuasive and they’re very powerful because almost everyone will read the FAQ. They might skim a lot of other stuff, but they will go to the Frequently Asked Questions. And two, you can also make it fun.

So, [here's] an example [from] a long time ago, like more than ten years ago. I had a little business where I sold guitar strings and bass strings, like bass guitar strings. So I had this website called cheapbassstrings.com. But I was buying these strings from a wholesaler and then reselling them and so I knew that the number one objection or the number one concern would be quality. People would think, "Oh these strings are cheap, are they going to be good quality?" And so first, [the] first Frequently Asked Question [is] "Do these strings suck?" And then the answer is, "No, these strings don't suck at all, they're actually good," and then I explain how I get them from the wholesaler, why I'm able to provide them with a low price or whatever.

So, whatever it is you're selling, the purpose of the Frequently Asked Questions section is to persuade. And to understand what the objections are. It's like your questions are almost "how awesome is this course." Answer: "it's really awesome, it's incredibly awesome." "Do I really need this course?" "Absolutely." Maybe you're not quite as explicit as that, but I do think you're understanding what the objections are and you're presenting them in the form of a question and providing an answer which is your chance to preempt that objection. That's a very simple, powerful thing that I think a lot of people miss.

PAMELA: That's great, that's really helpful. I've found that as well in classes it really helps. You do just want to make sure that you're addressing the questions and I sometimes build it where as I might launch something and I get a bunch of questions and you can update it as more people are bringing in questions. So that's really helpful.

CHRIS: Yes, so when we talk about teleseminars, what are the objections to that? The objection is, "I won't be able to call in." So that's a question. Or, "what if I'm not able to make the call?" Answer: "You'll be able to listen later to a recording." "What if I'm not able to do all the homework right away?" "You can do it later." So I always think about that. I think that's kind of a key component of reinforcing someone's initial desire to purchase. If they're thinking this is good, [but]they're kind of on the fence, that section is going to help them get over it and go ahead and make that commitment.

PAMELA: That's wonderful. Excellent. Well, I want to turn now to a couple of specific questions. One of the things I did before this call was to ask some people if they had particular questions for you. One of them comes from Carol who says, "If you were a person with substance, but no clue about style, what techniques would you use to develop style without feeling like a phony?"

CHRIS: Wow, that's a great question. Well first of all, it's much better to be a person of substance without style than it is to be a person of style without substance. So, first things first - you're on the right track. I guess it depends on what you mean by style. I tend to believe that good substance, good content or quality or whatever it is, that will always be in vogue. If you actually have something that's substantial and helpful and valuable and meaningful, then that's great. I mean, that's the goal. So, not sure what she means in terms of style, in terms of presentation or something like that.

PAMELA: Personality. Yes, well, one of the things I was thinking that was also where my mind went as a coach is that probably the best thing you can do is really to reinforce the fact that you are a person of substance and you care about quality.

But, one thing I've thought about and I've talked about with you is you have an amazing graphic designer that you've worked with a lot, Resse, who's done beautiful, beautiful work. Everything from your websites to your e-books. And that can be an example of maybe you don't have a lot of style, like design-style talent, so that can be a case where you might have somebody who could really pretty up that wonderful substance that you have, so that it's very pleasing to your audience. Or, for some people, they just are really not good at writing sales letters. So, instead of totally struggling over that, maybe you can work with somebody that's good at that. That really communicates the heart of the message, but in a more compelling way.

CHRIS: Mm, hmm. That's great, I love that answer.

PAMELA: Let's see, another question came from Carrie and said, "Since you bootstrap most of your businesses, do you think doing a break-even analysis is worthwhile?"

CHRIS: Do I think doing an analysis is worthwhile? Well, I do bootstrap my businesses. So it's only just now, after four years of really working under the current business and writing models that I'm actually investing in the business and trying to do some things that will make sure it's going to be sustainable for the long term. But, for me, the whole model and the whole hundred-dollar setup model is bootstrapping, one, in terms of financial costs, but then also in terms of time costs as well. So if I'm starting a new venture, for the most part, number one, I don't want to spend a lot of money and then number two, I don't want to spend a year writing a plan for it and having all that time sucked into it.

So, for me, I do more of an outcome-based analysis. If I'm going to create a new product and I have a goal of net income for it, a goal of sign ups or subscribers or customers for it, that's the analysis that I tend to do. So, I'm pretty much telling [myself] that it's going to break even because I'm not investing a lot of money. So, for me it's more of a goal [like] "Is this project going to achieve the standard that I hope for?" and I usually have a stretch goal as well. I have a basic goal [of] "This is what I really want to have, this is what I'm going to be happy about," but then I also have a stretch goal of "This would be amazing, this would be great."

PAMELA: Wonderful, thank you. Jamie asked a question, "Do you or did you use psychographics in your reach out to people? If you did can you explain how you did so, if not, what would you do differently?"

CHRIS: Did I use psychographics? I'm a big fan of identifying people based on shared beliefs and shared world view and shared values and that's certainly been how the community or the movement that I'm involved in has built up. Because it is so diverse and people from all different backgrounds and ages and all different countries.

But as to whether I specifically targeted that, I'm not sure. I think I had a pretty open message. An open invitation [that said] "The overall thing that I'm putting forward here is different expressions of unconditional living." This is deliberately broad and people will identify with it in different ways. But the essential message is, you don't have to live your life the way other people expect you to, and you can do good things for yourself and others at the same time, and

here [are] different ways and stories [of] people doing that through travel. Through self-employment. Through education. And so on.

So, I don't know if I really did much analysis or any deliberate type of targeting, but I certainly didn't do anything based on demographics. Or at least not traditional demographics.

PAMELA: Okay, wonderful. Probably we have time for one more and that is, "I have different areas to work in: I'm a psychotherapist with a booming practice, a writer of not-yet-published thrillers, and a coach and a teacher for future psychotherapists and a creator of e-classes. My question is how [do I] juggle different passions in the long run?" It said, "Many greetings from Sebastopol where I just spent a few days before traveling to Odessa."

CHRIS: That's great. Well it's a good position to be in, I think. Because it means you're doing lots of things that you're excited about and to me the wrong answer would be to say you should pick one of those things and do only that. I tend to think that maybe it's a question of seasonality, like different seasons of our lives and what are you most excited about now and what needs to happen now and do you need to focus more on the money-making side of things and do something that's more profitable for a bit, or maybe you want to focus on something that doesn't make as much money, but you find to be more rewarding. Neither answer is exclusive and you can do one for a while and do the other for a while. Or you can find a way to do more than one thing at once. That's what I've done, for better or worse. So I think it's a good place to be in.

PAMELA: Wonderful. Well Chris, I so appreciate your time and all of the valuable lessons that you shared. You can find Chris at Chrisguillebeau.com. Everybody mispronounces his name, it has very interesting adaptations depending on who says it, but it's c-h-r-i-s-g-u-i-l-l-e-b-e-a-u and one thing I recommend that I've really been doing personally is, if you get excited by the kinds of things that Chris is talking about, then connect with him. Connect with him on twitter, he's very active on twitter. He's often visiting every single place in the world and so if he comes into town and is doing a book tour stop or something like that, it's really a chance to continue the conversation. One of the things I recommend for everybody, I know for myself, is just [to be] a continual student of business and certainly of online business. It's just tune in and pay attention to what people are doing that you admire. I know I really learn a lot from you, Chris, that I try to apply in my own way to things that I'm doing.

There's never a checklist where you can get every single question answered and you get the formula and it works. But if you do have a select amount of people around you that you resonate with, that you feel like you share values with, that run their business in a way that feels in harmony with you, then those are the kinds of folks that you really just want to pay attention to in the long run. And it's not just the big things like big launches, but what is somebody doing each day, what are the different kinds of blog posts that are coming and I think that's really where you can begin to see where some of the magic is created. So, I really appreciate your friendship and I'm so excited by all your success and can't wait to see you next time.

CHRIS: Thank you so much, Pam. It's always an honor and I love what you're doing too. So, thanks everybody who listened.

PAMELA: Thanks, bye bye everybody.