

Trudy Rankin ([00:00](#)):

Well, hello everyone. And welcome to the Online Business Launchpad Podcast. I'm really delighted to have Sam Hurley with me today. Now, Sam is one of the founders of Marketing Entourage whose focus is helping entrepreneurs grow their marketing skills for their business. So I first came across Marketing Entourage, uh, when I was at the Hub, which is a shared office space in Melbourne. And I got to know Sam's business partner, Phil, mm, right there when I was there at the Hub. And then years later when I needed some help with my marketing, I reached out to them.

Trudy Rankin ([00:32](#)):

And the thing that I really liked about working with Sam is that she's not all about sell, sell, sell, and that's in terms of marketing, you know, she's all about helping people learn the things that they need to learn so that they can market their businesses as well. So it's really all about skill mastery, which I think is great. And it's a really important, critical thing is, is getting mastery of the skills that you need to make your business grow. So I'm really excited to have you here, Sam.

Sam Hurley ([00:57](#)):

All right, Trudy. Thanks for having me.

Trudy Rankin ([01:00](#)):

Uh, it's really great to have you here. Uh, but before we dive into all my questions, uh, I want to start by asking you a question. And, and that is, um, you know, what's been the most surprising thing that's happened to you because of the lockdown we've been going through?

Sam Hurley ([01:13](#)):

Um, well personally I think the love of working from home and how being a remote team has actually brought us closer as a team together. So that, that's been, um, a big surprise. The other thing for me is, um, re- resilience, the resilience of the Australian people, A- Australian businesses, and the innovation and the creativity people have. Um, you know, they, they've looked at challenges, they've looked at changes and they've come up with better ways of doing things. And I think it's really apparent, um, for, you know, around you in, in local communities. And, um, that support for local businesses and support for Australian is, is really strong now as well, which I think is really important as we move forward as a nation.

Trudy Rankin ([01:59](#)):

Yeah, I think it's really critical. And I love seeing the innovation that's happening all around us, all the time, just out of sheer necessity. You know, so, necessity is the mother of invention they say, and it's-

Sam Hurley ([02:06](#)):

That's it.

Trudy Rankin ([02:07](#)):

... that's so true. And never waste a good crisis, if we want to use another great-

Sam Hurley ([02:10](#)):

(laughs).

Trudy Rankin ([02:10](#)):

... another great saying, yeah. So Sam, tell us, tell our listeners a little bit about, about who you serve and, and why you do what you do.

Sam Hurley ([02:19](#)):

We, we, we serve the entrepreneurial community. So that, whether that's small business owner or a startup founder, uh, or even a, a small to medium sized enterprise the, in a traditional business. One of the reasons we started was because myself and my business partner, Phil, had been in agency environments and always felt, um, like the clients was, what, wasn't really considered in the process. And also there wasn't really sort of a clear, valuable outcome for their customers at the end. And we wanted to change that. We wanted to, to really change the way people thought about their customers to create customer centered thinking so that, that whatever you were doing, whether that was building a website or, what, you know, developing a product, was all about bringing value to your, the energies to the, the customer.

Sam Hurley ([03:16](#)):

And, and the other thing that we really wanted to do was just demystify marketing. And over, you know, I've worked in sales and marketing for over 20 years, which shows my age. (laughs). But, um, the changes that we've seen in this, um, you know, in this sort of industry or, or this role ha- has been immense because of the increase in digital and digital platforms and the way, um, we collect data and, and understand people. And, and so it can be quite overwhelming for those that have never, um, encountered, um, some of these aspects before, like SEO, what does SEO stand for?

Sam Hurley ([03:54](#)):

And, and, and so there's a lot of people out there, um, that are using that this sort of veil of, uh, mystery, uh, to try, and, um, you know, to, I, I think to take advantage of, of people that are trying to do, do well and trying to do good. Um, but, are, you know, necessarily spending money with an agency 'cause they don't understand it and then not getting the return. And so that gives marketing a bad name, um, as well. But it also means that, um, you know, that these business owners, startup founders, you know, that, who have these limited resources are really, you know, sort of not spending the return and, you know, not spending well to get the return for what they've invested in.

Sam Hurley ([04:39](#)):

And so Marketing Entourage was born. We wanted to, to at first of all, educate people about marketing, what it is, demystify it, but also then teach people to think more strategically about it so that they understood why someone would do something. Or if they did engage in agency, they understood what that agent, agency was going to do, and they could question it so that, um, they got better results for their business.

Trudy Rankin ([05:03](#)):

Yeah, for sure. Yeah. I know that one of the sessions that you and I had, um, was super valuable to me because, because the process that you walked me through and my team, I had some of my team there with me, helped me realize, uh, that we had a huge big gaping hole in, in the, in our marketing outreach. And as soon as we realized that, then we could do something about it. And it's taking that strategic approach. And looking at it in a holistic way and going, "What are you doing? You know, how are you

doing it? And how, you know, how are people finding out about you?" Uh, that, that's actually really, really important.

Trudy Rankin ([05:41](#)):

So, no, I think that's, that's really good. And I think, you know, it's, it's, as you said, it's, it's we're in really interesting times. And so, so you've talked about, you know, why you've set up the business that you've set up and, and who you would like to help and work with. So what are you doing, uh, specifically right now to sort of help those other businesses survive?

Sam Hurley ([06:02](#)):

Yeah, so what we, we do a number of things. And I suppose we, in, in our services, we, we have three things that we do. We, we have a do it yourself, so we have a lot of free content, free education. Uh, and really that's for, for people that just want to explore, um, you, or understand marketing to a certain degree. And, and I think, as you say, in the session, uh, Trudy, is all about helping you realize. Uh, and so often when you went to an agency, the agency was the, the, you know, they were the most informed, they knew- they knew what they were doing. But actually we want to work with, um, our customers, our clients, so that they understand that part of this process and they take this process, uh, on board and they can replicate it again and again, you know, we're teaching them the frameworks, so the process, so they can continue to implement this.

Sam Hurley ([06:53](#)):

So we do it yourself. We give you the tools. But then if you need additional guidance, we do, we do it with others. So we might have a cohort of people that we take through a program, and we have check-in sessions or classroom sessions where we help and guide you through our educational content, or we do it together in, in a way where we might help implement it, but in the process, we're teaching you what we're doing and teaching you why we're doing it. And then really at the end, we're giving you a handbook or we're handing over something that you can continue, um, to implement within your business, or we're training your staff to be able to do that for you as well.

Sam Hurley ([07:32](#)):

So, so that's really, you know, what, what we offer, or, or we might do it with other organizations on their behalf. So we might work with the local government to create a program specific to their community, their business community, or, um, specific to a particular challenge, like the open innovation competition for the city of Melbourne. We'll, we'll help people, um, create a great pitch, for instance. So, so, so we either, you know, give you the tools so that you can learn, and then when you're ready, you might want to do it with others and get us to check in, or, or we can do it together while we're teaching you and, and doing some of those tasks for you to get you set up for success in the future.

Trudy Rankin ([08:13](#)):

Yeah, no, I think, you know, it's, it's really good because people start at different, uh, with different skill levels based on where, with their past experiences. Um, and so some people are here and some people are here and you have to be able to match where they are. So good, based on all of the, all of the businesses that you've worked with, all the entrepreneurs that you've worked with, what would you say is the, the most common missing skill that, that people have-

Sam Hurley ([08:39](#)):

Um, I actually-

Trudy Rankin ([08:41](#)):

... when it comes to marketing?

Sam Hurley ([08:42](#)):

Yeah, no, I actually don't think it's a skill. I think it's confidence.

Trudy Rankin ([08:46](#)):

All right.

Sam Hurley ([08:46](#)):

So, uh, um, so in, in the most part, um, I, I have this belief that you can teach anyone everything. I was just talking to Judy before about, um, you know, organically growing your team and getting the right people and the right culture, and then teaching them skill. I actually believe you can teach anyone anything. I think that, you know, even creativity can be taught. There's a process, there's a formula, you can teach people things.

Sam Hurley ([09:12](#)):

So, um, so I think that, um, it, it's never a lack of skills necessarily. It's always a lack of confidence. And because, you know, if you're, if you're confident, you will have a go at something, you'll say, "Oh, I'll just, I'll put something on Facebook and see how it goes." Um, so, so I think it's a lack of confidence. And one of the things that we really focus on, you know, is self efficacy is, is the, is the confidence to action what you've learned.

Sam Hurley ([09:38](#)):

And so really our education is around self-efficacy is about installing in, in the entrepreneur the confidence to action what they've learned. Um, and I think that's probably the most important thing, um, for, for any en- for any business person, any entrepreneur is having that confidence to actionate. Um, if I ha- if you had to, you put a gun to my head and said there was one skill that you had to have, I, I'd say it was, um, your ability to be data-driven, to use data to inform the process.

Trudy Rankin ([10:11](#)):

Just talk about that just a little bit more.

Sam Hurley ([10:13](#)):

Yeah, sure. So, um, we live in a world, back in the day, um, if you were in the marketing department, it's like the arts and craft departments, you know, you could barely justify your existence. You know, how many people look to the billboard, or I dunno. But, um, now we live in a world where we have access to a richness of data. We understand, um, how many people are looking at something online. We understand who's looking at it, what their interests are. We understand what, you know, what actions are, how many people open my email, what they looked at my email, how many people clicked through.

Sam Hurley ([10:52](#)):

And so, um, once again, data can be quite overwhelming 'cause there's so much of it. Really, um, we, we focus on being obje- you know, having an objective, what is the, what is the one thing that you want to achieve? Or what, what are your goals? Or how can we measure any activity that we do? Um, so for instance, if we, if you were a retail business and you wanted to sell 100 dresses, you'd say, "Okay, I want to sell 100 dresses in a year." All of the data that you look at relates back to that goal.

Sam Hurley ([11:23](#)):

So it could be that, you know, that, um, 100 people look at your website and of those 100 people, 10 people, um, you know, purchase a dress. Okay. If I need to increase the number of people that purchase dresses, I need to increase the number of visitors to my, to my website. How do I do that? Then, I'll, I'll create a hypothesis, like I, I did at science in school, and then I'll test it. I go, okay, well, I'll write a blog or I'd, um, I'll do some social posts.

Sam Hurley ([11:50](#)):

And then I'm looking at the data to see whether that social post drove that amount of people to the website and, and converted that people. And so I'm looking at that data journey to understand whether I'm reaching my goal. Um, I hope, with data, it can get quite complex, but really simply it's just about measuring the impact of your activities to ensure that what you're doing is helping you reach your goal or vision for your business.

Trudy Rankin ([12:17](#)):

Yeah, no, that's, that's so true because we, we are data-driven as well as you, you very well know.

Sam Hurley ([12:21](#)):

Hmm.

Trudy Rankin ([12:22](#)):

Um, and we, we pay a lot of attention to the data. And we, we do design air tools and things to make sure that we have the data that we need. But you can still, you know, as human beings, we can still make assumptions and for us having that data helps us, you know, not follow those assumptions. I'm going to give you a quick example because it just happened to me just this week. And that I was having a conversation with, uh, my team basically saying 'cause we, we, 'cause we're running an online business lift-off program. We teach people how to start an online business, find an idea, get started, get your website in place and get ready to grow. Uh, and, and so that's the, the main program that we have.

Trudy Rankin ([12:59](#)):

And we've put a lot of people through the program now. And we're in the process of going through the final recruiting for the very last group. Pardon me. That's, that's going to be, uh, starting up soon. And, and I was going, "Um, I don't think we should be paying attention to these people coming through as leads because, because they, they're not completing, you know, they're, they're, they, they tend to have a higher dropout rate," because we do have a dropout, right. You know, life happens. People have to-

Sam Hurley ([13:22](#)):

Yeah.

Trudy Rankin ([13:23](#)):

... stop and attend to other things. And, and then I thought, "Well, hang on, wait a minute. I better check the data." So I went back to my team and said, "Could you answer these couple of questions?" And they came back to me with the answers. And the group of people that I thought had the highest dropout rate actually had the highest completion rate. And I had it completely backwards because I had assumed without going back and checking the data. And so we were able to obviously turn that around very quickly. So it's, it's such, uh, a valuable thing having that data. 'Cause it stops you making silly, silly mistakes.

Sam Hurley ([13:55](#)):

Hmm. Yeah, it does. And it's so easy to assume. And, and as I say, you, back in the day, you had to make assumptions because you, you, you know, unless you spoke to a customer on the telephone, which you used to regulate, but you know, you, you, there was no way to actually see this and see it instantly. And I think, you know, having that enabled you to really make those strategic decisions. Yeah. It's really, really useful.

Trudy Rankin ([14:19](#)):

So do you find that, that a lot of the people that you work with are actually afraid of numbers?

Sam Hurley ([14:25](#)):

Oh, I think it depends. So, um, here's an interesting point for you, Trudy. Um, women business owners are less likely to hand something over to someone else and more likely to want to understand it themselves. The male, the male counterpart are more likely to, um, hire a bookkeeper or an accountant or, uh, an agency and get them to do it for them. Whereas women are, are more likely to want to, to know, um, more about it and do it themselves. I think you and I both know, (laughs)-

Trudy Rankin ([14:56](#)):

(laughs). Absolutely.

Sam Hurley ([14:58](#)):

... how it works in our own business as well. Um, but then I don't think it's necessarily the numbers themselves. I think, again, it's this, you know, demystifying, what does the bounce rate mean? Or what does this mean? Once they start, once they start understanding the, that are scary, like code, you know, code can look scary, but once you understand, you know, what it actually is, then it's not as scary what as you first sent.

Sam Hurley ([15:21](#)):

So it really comes down to building that understanding to help build that confidence, um, and, and, and then also where to find it. And because there's so much data and, and so today they're everywhere, it can be hard to then really focus on, uh, on, you know, what's important to you. But by setting those goals about what's important to you and your business, you can say, "Okay, these are the metrics, these are the numbers that I need to look for and I'll ignore the rest for the time being, and I'll just look for these." And that, that makes it a lot more manageable for people.

Trudy Rankin ([15:54](#)):

Yeah, for sure. So, so just out of sheer curiosity, um, you know, if you were, if you were talking to somebody who had, had come to you to say, "Where do we start? You know, we need some help. Where do we start?" What, and, and you found out that they, they didn't really know the numbers picture for their business very well. Where would you tell them to start? Where, where might they start?

Sam Hurley ([16:18](#)):

Well, um, I suppose it depends on their business. You know, is it, is it digitally focused for instance? I, I know a lot of your, um, audience might be, um, you know, online businesses. So if they haven't got Google analytics, um, you know, on their website, then that's the first thing that you should do. However, uh, you know, once that set up again, you go into Google analytics, like, "Oh, there's all these things. What do they all mean?" Um, but you know, it's the same with Facebook or social channels, there's a lot of data insights there. I would start by reassessing what it is that I want to do as a business, you know. So rather than looking at the data and, and, and the data sources, make sure your data is set up so you can collect it then, okay, what is it that I want to achieve?

Sam Hurley ([17:08](#)):

And really just pinpoint those metrics that are going to give you that indication of whether you're moving closer towards your goal, and then seek those numbers out and only seek those numbers. 'Cause it can be really easy to get overwhelmed by all of them. And on- once you get to a position where, you know, what they all mean, you do get kind of get a bit obsessed with data and you have your analytics app on your phone and you look at it every day. (laughs).

Trudy Rankin ([17:32](#)):

(laughs).

Sam Hurley ([17:32](#)):

But, um, but at the start, when you're just starting out, just figure out what numbers are gonna mean the most to you and just look for those, yeah.

Trudy Rankin ([17:41](#)):

Yeah. You know, for sure. 'Cause I'm just thinking about for us, we have, we have several numbers that we track. And, and, and I've been, I'm always doing, I'm always doing research and, and finding out how we can do things better and things like that. And basically I've been going through this book called Traction by Gino-

Sam Hurley ([17:56](#)):

Oh, yeah.

Trudy Rankin ([17:57](#)):

... Gino Wickman. It's a really great. You've got it. Oh, it's great. It's-

Sam Hurley ([18:00](#)):

Fantastic.

Trudy Rankin ([18:00](#)):

... fantastic. It really is a great book. And basically he says, "You need to make sure that everybody in your business has one number that they're responsible for." And so we have numbers for the organization, but everybody in the team has a number that they're responsible for. And that's kind of interesting. And so for me, my most important overall number is how many people complete the core components of our course-

Sam Hurley ([18:22](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Trudy Rankin ([18:22](#)):

... so that they can then go and grow their business. And to me that's important. What about for you? What about for Marketing Entourage?

Sam Hurley ([18:28](#)):

Confidence. So you, we always survey, um, at the start, you know, how confident are you in playing, [inaudible 00:18:36] saying always at the end. So we look, you know, have we been able to increase the confidence? Because we believe if the confidence is increased, then, then the impact that we've had will be longterm. So, yes.

Trudy Rankin ([18:51](#)):

Uh, that's an interesting one. 'Cause we, we care about confidence as well, but we find it's really quite subjective to measure. How do you, how do you go about measuring confidence?

Sam Hurley ([18:59](#)):

Yeah. It's really, isn't it? 'Cause, um, again, it's interesting to skew and you can tell that we you look at the data. But the male, um, participants generally tend to be more confident than the female participants. So, um, so it's subje- subjective, but it, what, what we're looking for is a shift basically, has it shifted from a, a smaller number to a larger number? So regardless of what that number is, we, we just want to ensure that the dial has shifted. So I think, you know, there's other metrics that are important, like completion rates, like, um, but I think because of the, do it yourself, do it with others and, and do it together, that's the one metric that we know as a business that has meant that we've, we, we're reaching our vision. We're creating impact. We're building capability for the people that we serve.

Trudy Rankin ([19:50](#)):

Yeah. Yeah, no, I think that, that's really, really important. Actually, that, that, and that raises another curious question. Um, one of the things for our people, you know, the who we, we help get their business set up and, and they get to the place where it is set up and, and, and they're really quite confident in it is, is that when they're first starting out, one of the biggest barriers is, is, is that they feel very unconfident, if that's even a word, they have very little confidence in their knowledge and understanding of technology. Do you find that, that's the same with your, with the people you work with?

Sam Hurley ([20:23](#)):

Yeah, definitely. And again, be it, I think there's 'ca- because there's so much choice. And if you look at the MarTech world and how that's evolved, you know, even over the last three years or, when, the last five or 10 years, there's just so much choice. And, and, you know, as humans we, we don't deal very well with a lot of choice. And, and there so, so much that you can do and getting the right ones. And I think the other concern is always like, "Oh, well, which one will work for this? And will that talk to this system? And, you know, will I have to unravel it when I grow?" And, and, and, and that leads to a bit of, uh, I suppose, um, decision fatigue. (laughs). Uh, and that can lead to a, a bit of, you, you know, a lack of confidence, basically in what to choose.

Sam Hurley ([21:09](#)):

And I think because there's so much out there and, um, it's hard to do the research because there, because there's so many different solutions. Um, so, so you, you'd look for guidance. So I th- and again, I think once you, 'cause a lot of the technology solutions now are really quite intuitive and, and, you know, on- if you've got an iPhone, for instance, once you, once you get on some of these platforms, you can kind of figure your way around. Like, you know, if you can't, then the UX designers are doing a very good job, (laughs), for the, for the technology, um, applications.

Sam Hurley ([21:43](#)):

But, um, bu- but I think once you get used to them, then, you, you know, then your confidence builds. But again, it's like anything new. It, it can be scary for the first time. And, and, um, and so it's just a matter of sort of getting out there and, and maybe, you know, choosing those platforms that are, you know, simplified, that don't have all the bells and whistles. And, you know, and, and definitely when it comes to CRM systems or email marketing or marketing automation, there are, there are, there are technology solutions for absolute beginners that will just help you make sure you send an email to someone when they, um, you know, request information at two o'clock in the morning.

Sam Hurley ([22:27](#)):

And that's what you want to do. You just want to be, make sure that you're available to your customers. So it's about choosing the solution right for you. And I think maybe, you know, it's looking to guidance from people like yourself, Trudy or education that helps you say to cut away from all of the, the noise of the technology solutions out there and say, "Look, just start out with a really simple email provider like this. Don't worry about all the, the other things that, you know, as yet, and just get started."

Sam Hurley ([22:55](#)):

And I, I think getting started and having a bit of an education around how it works and what it's going to do will, will help. So building that understanding. Um, and I think a lot of the technology providers have their own resources when it comes to education. Um, so it's useful to look at those, but as I say, yeah, then you sought to seek out experts such as yourself, or know on the technology side that can sort of guide people in the right way.

Trudy Rankin ([23:23](#)):

Yeah. I, I, I'm, I'm smiling a little bit because you, you wouldn't know this, but I just did a podcast episode that's going to be released shortly about how to choose the five questions you need to ask, uh, to choose your email service provider. And we've also created a diagnostic tool that, that then puts those questions into a format where you can answer the questions online and it'll pop out a result you. Because the, the confusing thing is even for something as simple as email service providers is, is that

there's a lot of them. They all offer pretty much the same thing, but as you said, there are some that are better for beginners and there's some that are better for more advanced people. And it's, if you don't know what you don't know, you don't know what questions to ask-

Sam Hurley ([24:03](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Trudy Rankin ([24:03](#)):

... and what research too. And they do all have really good. Most, all of them have really good help in tutorials and modules and things like that. But if you don't know what to ask, that's not a help at all. So, so that's, that's going to be coming out shortly. And so we've got this tool that's ready. So people can go online, answer a few questions and it'll spit out an answer for them about the best one. And it gives them some choices as well, you know.

Sam Hurley ([24:24](#)):

Or we could have planned it. We, just so people know as well that I, I go through this situation equally. You know, there's so many solutions even for our stage of the journey, you know, and, and I'm a bit of a tech nerd. And so I'm like, "Ooh, look at this shiny new technology, [inaudible 00:24:40] could we implement that?" So, so, you know, like it, it doesn't go away. (laughs).

Trudy Rankin ([24:45](#)):

No, no, it definitely doesn't because we, you know, we, we do the same thing. We have, when we're looking for software platforms that are going to help us achieve the next level on our business. You do have to go through this whole process of asking-

Sam Hurley ([24:56](#)):

Hmm.

Trudy Rankin ([24:56](#)):

... questions, talking to people who are using something, trying to figure out what we want to do with it, making sure we have a checklist that you go, go through and does it do this? Does it do that? Does it do that? And yeah, so it's a really important thing. But, but it's like everything, if you, if you put the time into researching it and, and do the best you can with researching it and trying to understand it, you're going to come away more knowledgeable so that when somebody does give you some advice, you're going to be able to know whether they actually know what they're talking about or not.

Sam Hurley ([25:26](#)):

Yeah. Exactly, yeah.

Trudy Rankin ([25:26](#)):

Yeah, yeah. So I think, I think that's really important. So, so it, you know, it's kind of interesting. So we, we've talked a little bit about, um, about data and how important that is and how important it is to develop the confidence, uh, to be able to take steps forward. What other tips could you give our listeners, uh, in terms of what kind of marketing skills do they need, uh, to have as they work hard to grow their business?

Sam Hurley ([25:48](#)):

Well, I think, you know, strategy, understanding who you are, what, why you're, excuse me, doing what you doing, what your vision is, what your goals are, what makes you different? So, um, what makes you unique? And who your target customers are? I think that's pretty standard for your strategy. And I'm, and I'm sure you talk about this as well, Trudy. 'Cause we both have s- very similar values.

Sam Hurley ([26:11](#)):

And I think then it depends what stage you're, you're in. So, you know, very early stage, you've kind of got to find customers as, as quickly as possible. And, um, and, you know, and, and getting those customers will then help you fu- fuel your next sort of growth. Um, we talk and so there's two aspects to this. There's the, what are my, what are my short term wins? Or my short term return on investment? Where can I find customers now, while I'm making sure, um, this my voice, while I'm making sure that my bucket, when I'm bringing those customers in, doesn't have any holes in?

Sam Hurley ([26:50](#)):

So w- we kind of have to do that in parallel. And often, you know, the focus for ma- many is, "Okay, I need customers, I need customers, I need customers." And they bring them in and there's holes all over the bucket and they come in and they lose them. What I mean by that is that, um, you know, you bring them to your website, but you, you know, you have really a form and people don't want to fill it in. So you lose them there. Or there's like a five step process to purchasing your products. So you lose them in, in that, in that respect. Or you don't have the right information for them to make a decision on whether to purchase from you or you don't have social proof.

Sam Hurley ([27:28](#)):

So you kind of need to ensure that, that all along that journey, that customer's journey, that you have the right information and the right experience for them, so that when you do those activities that are going to bring the customer to that funnel, that you, you keep them, that you, you know, you lessen the amount of customers that you lose. So that you're getting maximum return on, on your investment, whether that's monetary or whether that's time.

Sam Hurley ([27:56](#)):

And especially important for those starting out is you need that maximum impact. But whatever activity you do, you do, you need to get the maximum impact because your time and your resources generally tends to be pretty low. So, so, so those two things work in turn. And what can I do that's going to, um, get me customers quickly? Often one, one of the first things that we look to do is actually look at partnerships, you know. Who, who out there has a similar sort of target audience to you that you can partner with, where you get access to that audience and they get access to your audience, if you have one, um, or, you know, the partnership is about building your audience?

Sam Hurley ([28:38](#)):

And, and you can work together, whether that's, you know, competition on Instagram. And I've definitely seen an increase in those over the, the last few minutes. You know, whether it's a, you know, a competition, you're giving away something for free, or whether you're contributing ideas for someone else's blog, people need content.

Sam Hurley ([28:56](#)):

So there's things that you can do that don't necessarily have to cost money. If, if the intent for your product or, um, services is high, you know, the search is high, then potentially you could look to Google ads or paid search. That might be something that you could do. But I would say, I'd, I'd suggest only doing that if the intent is really high, people are actively searching for what you provide. Um, because then, then you've got a chance of getting in front of them. Without that you can, you know, Google ads can be a bit of a rabbit hole and, you, you know, it can increase significantly. You can learn a lot from what people search, but then, you know, for beginners, I'd steer away from that just to, to start with.

Sam Hurley ([29:37](#)):

Um, and then the other thing is if, if it is that you already have customers, so you, you, you've got some traction is, is to think about them, you know. It's actually, actually cheaper to market to your existing customers than it's trying to get new ones. So where can you provide added value to those customers? Where, you know, can they purchase from you again? Or how can you, how can you get them to refer you to others? Or, you know, how can you make sure that they advocate for your business?

Trudy Rankin ([30:05](#)):

Yeah, no, I think that, that's really important. And in a sort of, you know, we, we've talked a little bit about email lists and things like that. And we ta- you know, audience, you know, who's your audience and, and how do you grow your audience and, and people, people, I think it's been interesting. I, I'm just reflecting a minute on a conversation that I had, not, not long ago, where, where somebody asks, how many people we had on our email lists. And when I told her, she said, oh, you know, basically, you know, she felt, I, I won't exactly say what she said, but she, she felt it was small compared to what she was expecting. And, and she was kind of going "Do, do, as I say, not as I do." sort of a, sort of a mentality. And I went, "No, no, no, no, no."

Trudy Rankin ([30:49](#)):

For, for the audience that you're working with, you want to make sure that the people that you're talking to are the right people, not just, not just numbers for the sake of numbers. So, so how do you, how, what kind of things could you suggest in terms of, um, when you're reaching out to people, how do you make sure that the people that come in and join your email list or your audience are the right ones?

Sam Hurley ([31:12](#)):

Yeah, that's a really good point. And when, when we talk about that, the sort of vanity metrics, you know, I'd rather have an email list of 100 where each of them bought than an email list of 100,000 where I only got like, you know, sort of a 0.5% conversion rate. So it's, it's really about how you engage them. And it's all down to the messaging and, and understanding the value you provide. And the only way to do that is actually to understand who your customers are.

Sam Hurley ([31:36](#)):

Um, so you, we oft- often recommended, um, if you're just starting out, um, to try, and identify, uh, first of all, your value, what makes you valuable in the market? You know, what are your differentiators, uh, against an alternative? It might not be a competitor necessarily, it could just be an alternative to what you're providing. What, what are those strengths or values? And then what kind of person actually seeks that, that value out?

Sam Hurley ([32:05](#)):

And then if it is that you don't know any people like that, you know, could you do a focus group? And you can use one of the, you know, freelance, um, uh, like Upwork or Freelancer to try, and actually, you know, source people that, that match the sort of discretion who would value these things. And then, you know, talk to them, have a, you know, a focus group. It's not about saying your product or idea or service, it's about just understanding them as people and understanding what's important to them and what their goals are and what their challenges are.

Sam Hurley ([32:40](#)):

And the key here really is, is to sort of delve into them to a certain degree that when you're creating your messaging on your website or in your email, um, that you're talking their language, you're talking about what their needs are and, and how are you going to help overcome them or enhance their life in some ways. So that, so resonates with them.

Sam Hurley ([33:00](#)):

And, and, and so then you're starting to attract, um, the people that it will resonate with. And, and the more focused you can be on that value and those particular people and the more niche you can be the better, especially when you're first starting out, because if you try, and market to everyone, you market to no one. You know, being niche, you know, think about the psychographics as well as the demographics, you know, what makes these people tick and talk them, use the language that you've got from, um, the focus groups.

Sam Hurley ([33:29](#)):

We often and for our clients, you know, look at their survey data and use the language that the customers have used in that, in the language, in the messaging, so that we, you know, we're replicating how they might talk. Um, and, and so then you're, you're starting to, to probably resonate with the people that, that, that makes sense too.

Sam Hurley ([33:48](#)):

Um, I think about, and, and maybe this is a good idea for those and that just starting out too, you know, think about the, the brands or the companies that you really like, and what is it that you like about them. And, you know, look at their emails too and look at the language that they use and look at, you know, w- what is it that a- appeals or it's making you feel connected. And as humans, that's what we're looking, we're looking for that connection. And, and we'll stay loyal to, to people where we feel connected.

Sam Hurley ([34:17](#)):

So that's what we're trying to do with our messaging is we're trying to connect with people that have similar values that, that value us for what we do, that love us for what we do. Um, and so that they'll feel like, "Oh, yeah, I'm in the right place. I'm, you know, at least, I'm going to buy from these people, I like this person, I like what they're about. They get me that kind of thing." Yes.

Trudy Rankin ([34:36](#)):

Yeah. It's just that whole know, like, and trust factor.

Sam Hurley ([34:39](#)):

Yes.

Trudy Rankin (34:40):

Um, and, and, and, you know, there's the, there's the, there's the, the usual, or I guess the, the wisdom, the, the known folk wisdom I guess around the number of touch points that people have to experience before they get to that point where they do, they like and trust you.

Sam Hurley (34:56):

Yeah. Seven apparently. So-

Trudy Rankin (34:56):

Apparently.

Sam Hurley (34:58):

... yeah.

Trudy Rankin (34:59):

But, you know, that's one of the things that's interesting about data is, is that it's not always seven.

Sam Hurley (35:03):

Yeah. And it's not always linear as well, which is interesting in that sort of attrition. Yeah. It's really, yeah, um, you know, watching that evolve and, and, you know, as humans we don't take, uh, a sort of linear approach necessarily to our journey. And, you know, you have some people that are impulsive buyers and you have people that are well considered and, you know, so their journey is quite, and that their journeys are quite different.

Sam Hurley (35:27):

So yeah, understanding the different types of buyer, I think that's been important for, um, this time as well, actually, Trudy is, is knowing the change in buyer behavior because of a global pandemic. You know, you have got people that are more reserved that are s- you know, s- waiting to see what's going to happen. You've the, get people that are, yeah, um, just continue as normal or, you, you know, so actually understanding that buyer behavior is actually quite important too.

Trudy Rankin (35:54):

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And it, it by definition, that means you do have to dig more deeply and do a little bit more research, but it's, it's effort that pays off hugely.

Sam Hurley (36:04):

Hmm.

Trudy Rankin (36:05):

So-

Sam Hurley (36:05):

Yeah. And the more you know your customers, the more you can develop a product or service that creates value for them, the more customers, you'll get. So, you know, it's, um, you know, being customer centered, especially in this sort of consumer driven world is, I think is the only way for businesses to succeed into the future.

Trudy Rankin ([36:23](#)):

Absolutely. I 100% agree with that. Absolutely. So, so just sort of, um, I guess, um, curiosity sort of one more, one more question for you before we, we do finish up. It has been really, really great, you know, listening to what you have to say and it's, uh, really useful I, for people I believe who are, who are trying to do their best to grow their business, especially in these times. It's just interesting times. So if, you know, if you think back to your early days when you first were starting your business with your business partner, you know, um, and, you know, that, that, it's interesting to me, like maybe I'll ask you two.

Sam Hurley ([36:58](#)):

Okay.

Trudy Rankin ([36:58](#)):

What made you decide to have a business partner to get started with?

Sam Hurley ([37:03](#)):

Well, that was sort of serendipity. I think actually I read a book called the Art of Serendipity, I highly recommended for people that want to think, um, differently. But then, you, we met in, um, in a pub. Um, Phil, had just done a rebrand of a pub, um, and used a designer friend of mine who said, "You've gotta meet Phil." And I was working for Lonely Planet. There was a huge restructure there. A lot of us were made redundant. I, um, gone back to uni. I was doing the master's degree. I was just taking some time out, sort of assessing what I wanted to do. I was already teaching masters, would you believe. I've worked in senior management and sales marketing, I was thinking, "Oh, I want to give back to the world. I want to be a teacher."

Sam Hurley ([37:45](#)):

And, um, but I was helping some of my friends that have been made redundant start their businesses. One very good friend of mine started, go my kitchen, which is, is a cooking school and restaurant. And, you know, this started on a kitchen table, we're talking about it, um, five years ago.

Sam Hurley ([37:59](#)):

And so, yeah, just really helping, um, my friends. And I met Phil. And he was sort of consulting and we were s- talking about our skills and my sort of digital background and his, you know, sort of from a brand. And we're saying, "Oh, you know, if we combined forces, we could probably, um, do, do well." And, uh, and, uh, one of our values and, and it's something that stuck with us and I'm sure people know the African proverb about, you know, if you, um, you know, do it together then you go further. Um, so, so yeah, it was just, uh, it was only a month later, first July, 2015, that Marketing Entourage was born. Um, yes.

Trudy Rankin ([38:41](#)):

Wow. That's fascinating. I didn't realize that that was exactly when you guys started your, your business, because mine was, I had ju- I was the year I started as well, early in that year. So we, we must've-

Sam Hurley ([38:51](#)):

There you go.

Trudy Rankin ([38:52](#)):

... kind start businesses around the same time.

Sam Hurley ([38:53](#)):

Yeah.

Trudy Rankin ([38:53](#)):

But, but yeah, so, so my, my last question is, is, um, for people who are just starting their business journey and thinking back to, you know, the time when you and Phil first started Marketing Entourage, what would be the one piece of advice that you would give to them when they're just getting started?

Sam Hurley ([39:11](#)):

Hmm, that's a really good question. What would they do? I think, you know, as a p- practitioner, I'm constantly reflecting and refining. We've, you know, we started as a marketing agency and then we were a marketing consultancy. Then we were a hybrid. Now we're an education business, you know, and we've got two of the businesses, (laughs), you know, we have, we have evolved considerably over that time.

Sam Hurley ([39:38](#)):

So I think not being static to, um, to one idea. Uh, just to give you a bit of context, my, um, my dad's an inventor, um, and he, um, he invented, um, this particular program, um, for 3D imagery. Um, he actually took people to court, uh, abo- about 15 years ago of, um, big complaints, uh, over 3D printing and lost and lost our house. But he's been stuck to this particular, he's got about 10 patents and all in sort of 3D. And, you know, 17 years ago, it was kind of ahead of his time, but he's just stuck and said, you know, to him, along these years, you know, what is it that the world need? What is it that people need? You know, don't just stick to your idea and, and be so emotionally attached to it that you can't, that you you're fixated.

Sam Hurley ([40:33](#)):

And so, you know, just like a plant, uh, plants adapts, you know, you can put a plant in water and, or adapt to being, you know, to, to growing in water. It adapts to its environment. And I think as business owners, that's what we have to do. We have to adapt to our environment. We have to adapt based on, you know, who our customers are, what their needs are, what that changing needs are, what, um, the changing environment is, this year has proven it, I think, uh, uh, more so than ever. But, um, not being fixated on a particular thing and being flexible.

Sam Hurley ([41:08](#)):

And, and this book, the Art of Serendipity is about being open, open to these, um, you know, if it is that you're setting out to solve, solve a challenge or a problem, don't fixate on the how, you know, and, and, and that's really probably my advice.

Trudy Rankin ([41:28](#)):

I think that's really, really powerful advice because it means you have to stay attuned what's happening around you. You can't just, you know-

Sam Hurley ([41:36](#)):

Yeah.

Trudy Rankin ([41:36](#)):

... focus and, and, and things and, and, and being willing to adapt. No, that's really, really powerful. Sam, thank you so much for, for being here with us on the podcast. If people wanted to reach out to you, where would they find you?

Sam Hurley ([41:50](#)):

Well, they can find me on, uh, LinkedIn, but the best thing to do, if they want further tips is to follow our Facebook page, Marketing Entourage. Um, we, we, I appear there on a Wednesday afternoon at four o'clock giving my weekly tip. Um, but we often share resources and our new courses and links to courses. So, um, so yeah, our Facebook page is probably the best place to go to get your, your marketing facts.

Trudy Rankin ([42:16](#)):

Well, fantastic. And I know you've also got a YouTube channel.

Sam Hurley ([42:19](#)):

We do. And, um, but I would say it's not quite as good as yours. (laughs). Um, because we're still in, um, we're still in the content planning phase. So we do have some tips there, um, which we link to on our Facebook page. But yeah, Facebook is probably where we update the most.

Trudy Rankin ([42:38](#)):

Fantastic. All right.

Sam Hurley ([42:39](#)):

Thank you.

Trudy Rankin ([42:40](#)):

Thank you. Thank you Sam so much.

Sam Hurley ([42:41](#)):

No worries. Thanks, Trudy.