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Affordable ways to find new customers now.

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Hi, I'm Andy Choi with the Verizon Business team. I want to welcome all of you to our Small Business Webinar Series. Now, these webinars are designed to give you some expert advice. We feature experts offering professional insights and ideas all about coping with these fast moving times and how your business can continue to succeed. I have the pleasure of introducing you to our host and our guest. Our host is Julie Hyman. We're super lucky to have her. Julie has covered financial markets for 20 years now. She's an anchor at Yahoo Finance, and she currently hosts On The Move alongside Adam Shapiro. Our expert today, we are excited to introduce Mr. Steve Strauss. Steve is an author and a small business columnist for USA Today, and he'll be talking about easy, affordable ways that you can find new customers right now.

So, without further ado, let's send it over to Julie and Steve.

Julie Hyman

Steve, thank you for joining us. Take it away.

Steve Strauss

Great to be here, Julie, thank you so much. Talk to you again soon.

All right, everybody, let me share my screen so we can look at my deck. So, great to be here, and I want to thank you guys for taking the time out of your crazy day— we're all having crazy days right now— to be here, to work on your business, and I want to thank our friends at Verizon for doing this today, for helping us all learn how to get through all this, and this is truly, as I said, a crazy moment, but I am reminded of a great quote by the late great Paul Harvey. You may have Remember him, “Good day”. He said, “In times like these, it’s good to remember there have always been times like these.”

Now, of course, this time is unique. We've never had a pandemic before, but we have gone through severe contractions of the economy. In 2008, we all remember that one. Personally, for me, I went through this very intensely at the turn of the century in 2000/2001 when the dotcom bubble burst, and so a lot of people who are listening today, maybe you're starting a business and you need customers, or maybe everything contracted and you need customers because we've lost customers. I've been through it and what I'm going to share with you today are some things I've learned along the way. I've been writing for USA Today for over 20 years, I've been dealing with small businesses and talking to small businesses and entrepreneurs for longer than that, but at that moment, I used to practice law. Now, I don't practice law anymore. I came to my senses long ago and it turns out I'm a much better writer than I ever was a lawyer, and suing people for a living wasn't very fun. So, around the turn of the century, when the dotcom bubble hadn't burst yet, I was creating content. I was writing for USA Today and people wanted content. Content was a new thing at the time, but when the dotcom bubble burst, I lost 75% of my clients, of my customers, and it was super scary, and then all of us, there's a lot of people who are scared right now, but I'm here to tell you, we can do it. I survived that I learned some things. I've met a lot of other people who have learned some great tricks, and so that is what we're going to share with you and talk about today.
Finding new customers, how do you do it? And how they're going to come find you. Then at the end, we'll do some Q&A.

But it is like this. The problem is there is a need for new customers. Now, here's my slide, take a look, which one do you think we are? Oh, of course, we small businesses, we're the little fish on the left. Often small business gets the short end of the stick. If you just look at what's happening right now, boy, it is small business that has been affected most by this sudden downturn due to the coronavirus, but small businesses have advantages that medium sized businesses – there in the middle – and large corporations don't have as much, and one of those is we can turn on a dime. We're agile and quick, at least we're supposed to be, and that helps us a lot. I'm reminded of a woman I know named Gini Dietrich. In 2008, Gini had a very successful offline business. She was in the PR business and doing a lot of PR and all of a sudden, the housing bubble burst. We had a sudden downturn. A lot of people lost a lot of clients, and what did Gini do? Well, Twitter at that time was very new, so she thought, I've got to do something different. I had just written a column about Twitter saying, should you tweet if you're a small business? Now, it became, at that time, the most retweeted thing I'd ever done and not for good reasons, because a lot of people were saying this guy, Strauss, is an idiot, and Strauss was an idiot because I said, no, you shouldn't tweet, this social media thing isn't really a thing. OK, I didn't quite get it at the time. I later did get it, and I have my Twitter following and social following, but Gini Dietrich wrote me afterwards and said Twitter made the biggest difference when the economy turned in her business, and what she did is she went on Twitter and found every discussion she could find about her industry, franchises and PR and things like that, and she started meeting people she otherwise wouldn't normally meet. She started having conversations with people she wouldn't normally have, and all of a sudden, because of turning her business into an online business, and go and using Twitter to meet new people, and this is what she taught me, well, her business actually grew that year.

So, what we're going to talk about are ideas. I'm going to be sharing a lot of ideas with you today. Take the ones you like, ignore the ones you don't like, whether you lost a job or started a business, or are starting a business or have a business, whatever it is, what I want you to know is there are still people out there hiring and they need help.

The solution is, we've got to find customers. There's two ways to do it. One is you find them and the other is they find you. Now, in my experience, well, there are two things I want to say about this. The first is, you find them, number one here on the left. It is great because it's quick and immediate, and it allows you to take proactive work to get customers now, but what I also want to say is that the long term play, and look, coronavirus isn't going to last forever. There is going to be a time after this is over, and if you prepare yourself now for that, that is really great. Warren Buffett once said, "Buy when everyone else is selling and sell when everyone else is buying". "Buy when everyone else is selling and sell when everyone else is buying", and I think we can all say, yes, but Warren Buffett knows something so this idea where they find you, what I'm going to talk about here is building a brand, advertising, things like that, allowing people to come find me, because when they find you, that really means that they want to work with you.

So, the question is, this is the first question you have to answer, whether you find them, or they find you, and the question is, why should someone hire you? I have a friend who right before this coronavirus hit was about to start a food cart. I'm up in the great Northwest and food carts are a big deal up here, and he had a great plan for a cart, and he's going to do tacos and catering and business, and had a great business plan and was going to invest a lot of money in a big idea, and then fortunately, actually, for him, this happened before he had sunk a lot of money into it, and originally his idea was, well, people are going to hire me because I make the best tacos, and I have great catering experience and background, but now he's thinking, what do people want? Well, what people are going to want after this is over in a month or three months or six months, or next year, whatever it is, they're going to want a cheap, affordable lunch. He thinks people aren't going to hire him to do big, expensive catering, but they will hire him for the $5 best lunch in town, so he completely is revamping his business model, and that's what he's going to do. His question is who's going to hire him? How can he help them? How can you help them? What problem do people have that you can solve, and how can
you save them time or money or do something better? That's the first question you have to answer if we're going to go find ourselves some new customers and some new clients.

Now, let's talk about how to find these customers on a shoestring. There's three ways to do it that you're going to go out and find them. One is good old fashioned prospecting, the second is something that was pretty great called supplier diversity programs, and I think you're going to really want to learn about this, and then the third is social media.

The question today about prospecting is this: Who has the budget to hire you? Now, in all likelihood, if you're a B2B business, or you've been a B2B business, or you're thinking of doing—B2B meaning business to business, maybe small business isn't your best idea right now. Maybe it is, in fact, larger corporations who have the budget to help you, so what I want to do right now is help you find the right larger companies who still have larger budgets, who have the money to hire small business, and it is a four-step process. I mentioned this idea, in the last downturn, another way you can do it is by putting yourself in front of large companies. I was listening to KNX radio in Los Angeles a couple of years ago, and I heard a story about this animation company, and they wanted to get into business, and so they went out and prospected with all of the right companies in—they moved to Los Angeles, they moved to Burbank, they went to lunch in the right areas, and also they met all sorts of people in the movie industry who were able to help them. They put themselves actually physically in the line of someone who could hire them. That's one way to do it, so what I want you to do is make a list of possible targets because that's what this company did. They made a list of all the big companies that would hire animators and business companies and went out and tried to meet those people, so who are the obvious contenders for you in whatever it is you do that might have a need for what it is you sell. Look at your competitors, maybe they have been working with some large companies. Look at these different companies that you do work with, and what you want to do is make a list... and be outrageous. Think big. Think out of the box. What did Gini Dietrich do? She started going onto Twitter. She'd never done that before. Where did these guys that I heard about on the radio do? They moved to Burbank to go meet people in the movie industry. So, use Google, look at industry news and publications and things like that. You can look at annual reports. You can look at your competition. You do all of these things and you're going to make a list of people, companies, that you can start to do business with. That's the biggest, wide part of the funnel.

Then the question is, who within that company is going to have the budget to hire you? What you want to do is find the key decision makers within these companies, so where are you going to find these decision makers? Well, if we think about it, there's lots of ways. Company websites. Let's say you identified a company that you do work with, or maybe hired you in the past, something like that, and you think they might have a need for your small business, and look, large companies spend billions—thats B with a B, billions of dollars hiring small businesses. They still have budgets. Yes, a lot of people are out of work, but you know what? Most people are not out of work. Most people are still working, most companies are still going, and they need help, and that might be the help that you can give them, so do a Google search, go on the company website. LinkedIn. What is LinkedIn, but the best place ever to go find someone within a company who has the right name and title and budget for what you are looking for, and I'm going to get into that in the next slide. Twitter, your own network, and you ask if you can find someone within the company that you know that—well, ask them, who is hiring, who has budget, who has the need for what it is I'm selling? So, I want you to cast a wide net. Think big, look broad, and then find people within these different companies who might need what you want to sell to them.

Now, who has the budget to hire you? These are the different kinds of titles you might look for. If you're going to go to LinkedIn, you want to look for the VP or the senior manager of the division of whatever it is you sell. Maybe you do cleaning and you saw cleaning supplies and they need cleaning supplies. Well, you want to find the VP of that. Maybe HR, maybe it's the purchasing manager, the sales director, the sales rep, and this last word on the right, procurement manager. Boy, procurement is a huge thing and I want you to think about that. Those are the people who actually have money and budgets to hire small businesses, so you
want to maybe go to LinkedIn, go on the company website, find out who does procurement – that's the magic word – and that's going to tell you a lot about what you need to know and who you need to pitch to.

Alright, and then the question is, you've got to pitch, right? Look at that first bullet. It's so important. It's not about you. It's about them. It is not about you, it is about them. What you have to do is show someone why hiring you helps them save money, make money, make their job easier, make their life easier, whatever it is. Now, I know [inaudible] and pitched at least 10 times a day for companies who want me or PR people or whoever it is, they want me to write about their client and their client has a new app or a new startup or a new book, so what works and what doesn't when you pitch someone? Here's what I will tell you from experience. Do not send a long, detailed eight-paragraph pitch to somebody. Nobody will take the time to read it. Nobody wants to read it. What you want is a pithy, quick subject line that will intrigue someone, and then a one to two-paragraph quick hit about who you are and how it is you can help them. In my case, when someone writes me and says, hey, Steve, I read your column about starting on a shoestring and I loved it and I've got a shoestring business that I think you'll really love to hear about and here's why we're different. That's interesting. OK. Find out who the person is, find out something about them, make it personal, make it intriguing and offer them something that they haven't had before or something unique or something better about you, that is what works. Do not bore them. Do not go into minutiae detail. All you're trying to do is just get them intrigued enough to write you back and want to hear a little bit more.

Then you can put together a proposal. Your proposal could be written, it could be a PowerPoint; I see a lot of a lot of proposals from people these days that are PowerPoints, and it's a really clever way to get someone's attention rather than reading six pages of a pitch or a really long email that nobody wants to read. There was a time when we did in-person pitches and those days will be back, and this thing on the right called a request for proposal, any company that you go and identify will have on their website probably an area called RFP, request for proposals. These are needs the company has already identified and they know what they want, they know what they're looking for, and they're putting out a broad announcement to everybody that we are looking for a proposal on our need for hiring someone to give us new cleaning supplies for our business, so find out if there are any RFPs within the company that you have identified.

Finally, prospecting, the fourth step is you've identified the company, you've identified the person, hopefully they're going to have a budget, you pitch them, they wrote you back, and then you've got to really... now you can go into detail. Now, it's interesting. Now, they're intrigued enough, but what you want to do is forge a relationship. Look at that second bullet point, forge and connect and create a conversation with somebody. It looks like somebody wrote a deck with a couple of typos in it. That's all right. So, you want to you want to get this person intrigued by you and, this last bullet point you want to create a champion for you within the company. You want someone to like you. Business is truly often all about relationships, so what you're trying to do is create a relationship with somebody, crack a joke, make a friend, find something in common, then you pitch them your big idea, why you're different, why you're better, why you're special, and that's going to make the difference. That's how you prospect quickly; in eight minutes, that works, and if you do that to 10 companies – what's great about shoestring marketing, that's what we're talking about here is shoestring marketing and starting a shoestring business and using inexpensive ways to find customers, is it doesn't cost a whole lot of money, but it takes time, but that's OK. We all have a lot of time these days, a lot of people have a lot of time these days, so I'm asking you to invest your time and not your money and that's going to make a difference.

If this is interesting to you, I am starting a new Facebook group. I'm not here to sell you on my Facebook group. I am starting one on starting on a shoestring. If it's intriguing, you can go over to my website, which is TheSelfEmployed.com. You can see that at the very bottom at the bottom right, TheSelfEmployed.com, and learn more about how I'm going to be helping people start and grow their business with a lot more shoestring ideas, kind of like the ones I'm sharing here today.
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Now, let’s talk about supplier diversity programs, my second idea for how you can go out and find customers. Supplier diversity programs are proactive programs that encourage large corporations to find suppliers who are minority-owned, veteran-owned, service disabled-owned, women-owned, LGBT-owned, historically underutilized. Large corporations actually have legal mandates to hire these kinds of people. Look, here we are with Verizon today, and I look at the Verizon supplier diversity program, and I’m going to read it to you. “At Verizon, Supplier Diversity and Inclusion is a business imperative. In 2019 alone,” – get ready for this – “we spent directly and indirectly, over $5.8 billion in goods and services with diverse suppliers, including minority, women, veteran, service-disabled veteran, LGBT, and disability owned businesses” So, if you fall into one of these categories, and you can go get certified, there’s a lot of different companies, just do a Google search, who can certify you, well, fantastic, then you can go apply for one of these diversity programs and, boy, you’re going to find some customers that way. It’s pretty fantastic. Billions with a B is available this way.

And then finally, how to go find customers is social media, right? It is social. It’s called social media, so LinkedIn is the best tool for this, I think. I mentioned it earlier, but use your LinkedIn research to find companies and people with those titles that I’m talking about. Go onto Twitter like Gini Dietrich did, find hashtags related to your business, to your industry, to your company, find the people who are tweeting. Like in my business, I look at the hashtag #SmallBiz all the time, and there are people in there I’ve never known before, but I get to meet them and who knows, you may end up being able to forge some new relationships. Facebook, of course, Facebook Groups are very similar and can do a lot of great… there’s a lot of great ways to use Facebook to find people. So, lots of great ways to go out there: social media, supplier diversity, prospecting, you go out and find them, but here’s a couple of social media ideas.

There’s Gini on the right. Look at Amra and Elma Beganovich. You can Google my name and their name, I wrote a column about them last year. These two women are amazing. One has an MBA, the other one is a lawyer, both had jobs they thought were pretty darn boring, and they decided they wanted to become social media influencers, and they did it, and I tell you in my column how they did it, but they completely changed their careers, and making a whole lot more money than they ever used to, and they did it with social media. They’re really creative, really great businesswomen, and check them out for another way you can use social media to get out there and get your name out there and get people to find you.

So, in fact, that’s what I’m going to dive into here in the second part, how to get customers to find you. There’s four basic ways, you can become a thought leader. You can use advertising, SEO (Search Engine Optimization), and content marketing. Those are the four.

Now, being a thought leader is a long term play. This is for when the coronavirus is over and a year from now you put in a lot of time and work into getting people to notice you, but when you become a thought leader, when you become a leader in your industry, and then you’re going to get noticed and people are going to want to work with you because you’ve created a name for yourself, so this isn’t going to help you next week, but it is going to help you next year and it’s going to help you make a whole lot more money. How do you do that? You go out and speak at events online now using webinars. You get a podcast Everybody seems to have a podcast now, and all those podcasts need guests, so in your industry, in your field, start to get onto the podcasts. Pitch a story to a PR company, to a writer, like people pitch to me all day long, and give them a clever way to write about you. And then this last idea, create a social media following, and then you create a social media following, and then you create a social media following. Because also when you get Twitter followers, when you get Facebook likes, when you’re on Instagram, people will start to notice you and they’re going to start to pay attention to you, and if you can write blogs and write articles and have a website – and it’s not an easy thing I’m saying, but it’s really valuable, and can make a huge difference because people often are going to start to seek you out, and they’re going to hire you because you are a name within your world, and that, my friends, is the magic, really. Of all
those slides here, the one that's going to make you the most money and get you customers, not tomorrow, but customers that are going to make a difference, I think this slide is going to make a huge difference for you.

Second, advertising, right? So, what is advertising? Look, often when you're in business, I think it's like being alone in a dark room. You know you're there, but no one else does. How do you then tell people you're there? Well, you advertise. That's how you switch on the light, and let people see that you're out there, so you can do it on Google, on Bing, on Facebook. Boy, Facebook's pretty great for advertising these days, and advertising is on sale because we are in the middle of the coronavirus, because of COVID-19. Advertising is cheaper than it used to be even a month ago, and so doing some pay-per-click ads are is pretty easy, and it's not a very expensive way to get people to find you Google Keyword Planning Tool, so this is a tool that's out there on several different sites. Google has it, but other sites have it. They're going to help you figure out the great keywords that you're going to want to put in your ad, and then you put those in your ad, people type those words into their search bar and your ad pops up, and all of a sudden they like your ad. You don't even have to pay for that ad until someone clicks on it. That's what's so beautiful. Pay-per-click is great because often it's not someone who sees your ad but someone who clicks on your ad, and anyone who clicks on your ad is a qualified lead. That's someone who likes your ad enough to be interested in what you're doing, so use your keywords, get people to find your ads, and all of a sudden, you've made a potential connection with somebody.

Number three, SEO (Search Engine Optimization). So, let's say you sell flip flops on your website, you want people to come by your flip flops? Well, you write articles about the greatest flip flop in the world, and you write blogs and get people to comment on your blog. You create videos about great flip flops or people using their flip flops in wherever, on the beach, wherever. You link out to flip flop sites and you get other sites with shoes to pay attention to you. Then you get an SEO plugin, a search engine optimization plugin, for your website. You do all these things also in your page about flip flops and it is going to start to get attention from Google and the other search engines and get ranked higher and, boy, this is pretty great too. You've done all this work, you have a great page that's all about flip flops with videos and articles and people linking to it, it's going to get ranked high and they are going to pay attention to you, and they're going to click on you.

And then finally, content marketing. Content marketing is really great. If you read an article today, you see them all over the place, you create some great content about whatever, let's say it's flip flops, about going to the beach, and it's a really good article, and in the middle of your article, you have a link to your flip flops, or you create a really cool video and within the video, they can click over and find your flip flop page, you add some links, you use your social media, you use your network, you get it out there. Content marketing is a great way because people, especially now, are all online and they're using content and they're reading content and looking at content, and if you can get your content out there and ranked high, and you have a link to your website, that's all, all of a sudden, it's going to work, people are going to find it and they're going to come find you.

I have one more bonus idea I want to share with you before I sign off and take some questions. Here's, by the way, an example of content marketing. This is the National Aquarium on the bottom left, they made a really cool infographic that anybody might want to read, and so they read his cool infographic about octopuses, or octopi, and they learn about the National Aquarium. Can't you do that? I can do that. You can do that. We can all do that. Not very hard, but people are going to share it. Boy, infographics, people share them all the time, and that's a great way to get your name out there, to get people to find you, and then also they're going to come look for you.

This is my bonus tip: There are all sorts of marketplaces out there, and this has nothing to do with anything else I talked. Upwork, if you if you sell services, you're a designer, you're a writer, you're a photographer, whatever your service is, you can go to upwork.com and bid on projects or have people find you. I hire people on Upwork all the time. Sometimes they create content for me. I have someone who's creating a logo for me right now using Upwork. If you're an artist, Etsy is a great place to sell your stuff.
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If you have stuff to sell, eBay, or Amazon where I have an article on how you can start to sell your things on Amazon. I wrote that just a couple of weeks ago – last week, actually – so find my article, and it'll teach you about someone who's making $3 million a year of goods on Amazon, and they've done that in three or four years, so you can all of a sudden become an Amazon seller and who isn't on Amazon a lot these days? Finally, Craigslist. Why do you go to Craigslist? Because you want to buy something, or you want to sell something. A lot of people are on Craigslist a lot are people looking to buy and looking to sell, so you could be there too. So, here are five other places you can sell your services, sell your goods that are going to make a difference.

In the end, you want to have a great pitch, why you're unique, different, and better, why you're going to solve someone's problem. Maybe you're going to make sure in your pitch to mention who else believes in you, people you worked with, and then you do your great presentation.

That's me, Steve Strauss. there's my book, The Small Business Bible. I mentioned my site TheSelfEmployed. If you want help starting your shoestring business or growing your shoestring business, go over there. I encourage you to do that, and I am going to now take questions. You can also, by the way, always email me. I'm sstrauss@MrAllBiz.com, and I'm going to send it now.

Over to you, Julie?

Julie Hyman

Thanks, Steve. I liked the National Aquarium example in particular, especially as a native Baltimorean, so thanks so much, and let's take some questions from folks.

So, we are going to take some questions right now. Steve, thank you for all of that, a lot of details, and just to remind folks of a couple of things before we go on. One, you will be able to watch this presentation and the Q&A on this website afterwards, along with all the materials that Steve just presented, and in addition to that, if you want to submit a question and you haven't already, there should be a place to do that at the bottom of your screen. We have gotten some questions thus far, Steve.

So, you gave a lot of ways for people to get in touch with various potential clients, and potential targets here, and people were asking about the role of in-person, especially right now, because you can't... you're restricted in many places from doing that, so what tips would you have for people on that front?

Steve Strauss

It's a great question, because I think it is the question we all have right now, and as we all well know, Julie, we are living in a different world, and so we have to take that different world into account. Typically, I would say that nothing beats going to meet someone in person, shaking their hand, cracking a joke. We all know that, and we all miss it, and we can't do that. It's just... even if you can go, having a mask on or gloves on, it's so cumbersome, so I really do think that what people have to think about now is, at least for the next, who knows, six months, a year, whenever it's going to be, all online and over the phone and texting pitches are the way you're going to have to go. I do think what's going to take the place in some cases, we're going to Zoom chat, great. We can call someone, I think really, that is going to make a big difference. You're going to be sending your pitches by email in all likelihood, so you're going to send someone a pitch, and then you're going to get on the phone and you're going to try and create that rapport, because one of the things I really do want to emphasize is people do hire people that they need something done, but someone they like, and so if you can create that emotional connection with the person that you pitched, and if you can do that over the phone or a Zoom chat or something like that, that's what's going to work. I do think for now relying on a physical or in-person pitch while it will be nice when we see it again, it's not going to be [audio] for a while. Would you agree with that, Julie?

Julie Hyman
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What's that?

Steve Strauss

Would you agree with that?

Julie Hyman

Yes, I mean, that seems to be the way. I mean, that's the option right now. You just have to be creative about it, it seems like. Someone is writing into ask what you think about video emails as a way to pitch yourself – rather than just sending text but actually sending a video to someone and I wonder if you're someone fielding those requests. I mean as a journalist, I get a lot of pitches from PR from people who are trying to pitch stories, and it does take a certain something to make an email stand out. I wonder if video would be that thing.

Steve Strauss

So, like you, I get pitched all day long, and my inbox, like your inbox, is flooded, and a lot of people's inboxes for all sorts of reasons. How do you stand out? So, I love video. Now, whether you embed your video into an email as part of your pitch, or maybe you embed it into your PowerPoint as part of your deck, or you have it on your website or you have it on social, we are in the era of people watching video online. Everyone loves to watch video. In fact, statistics show that if you have an e-newsletter, and you lead your e-newsletter with a video as opposed to an article, it gets clicked on and clicked through maybe three to four more times compounded than it normally would, so video is a great idea, and I think it's also a way, when you can't meet someone in person, that does allow you to show some of your personality, to be creative, to make it personal. All those things that you need to do anyway. If you can do it in a quick short video, one minute, two minutes, long videos longer than three minutes people generally don't watch, but if you can keep it snappy peppy then I think you're great.

Julie Hyman

So, people have some questions about SEO. Someone is asking, “Would you rate the value of hiring an outside contractor for a small business versus self-taught SEO?” And then someone else wants to know, “What's an example of an SEO plugin?”

Steve Strauss

Great question. Let me take the second question first. One that I use on my sites on, TheSelfEmployed and MrAliBiz all those other sites I run, it’s called Yoast Y-O-A-S-T, Yoast, and it's a WordPress plugin, so I don't know if Yoast makes it for non-WordPress sites, but so many of us do have WordPress sites. If you have a WordPress site, Yoast is a free or very inexpensive plugin that you can add, and it’s great because you write an article and then the plugin just tells you, you need more keywords and this word doesn't work, and it'll give you like a red versus a green. This is a go, this part of your article. This is a red, that part of your article. So, Yoast is really great and it’s dummy-proof so good for someone like me, and if SEO isn't your thing, well, it'll show you how to do it, so that's one way to go.

Hiring someone... you hear that hesitation in my voice. I like it. I like hiring experts when you don't know something, and you can get someone who's better at it, but there are a lot of so-called SEO experts out there who charge you a lot of big money promising that they're going to get you on the first page of Google. I have made that mistake. I've hired those people. They did not get me on the first page of Google, and I'm not the only one, so it's not just Steve telling you this. This is common knowledge. You've got to be really careful, so if you want to hire an expert, do it. They come in a wide range of prices, but do your research. Go on LinkedIn,
see who they are, Google them, find reviews about them. One of the great things is reviews are out there now, so find someone who has high reviews and reasonable prices, and look at people who want to get hired right now, so you should be able to find someone who can help you at a pretty affordable cost. Now, what that is depends on how big your needs are, but I do think hiring someone, when you can find the right person and you can find it for the right price and you can afford it, is a really smart way to go.

**Julie Hyman**

I've seen a couple of questions that come back to the question of tone in various ways. Someone wants to know if you're sending out email prospects, for example, how do you avoid looking like a spam or a scam? Other people want to know, one person writes in to say they're a travel advisor who doesn't have a business right now, how do you know when to come back out and market to people? So, I think it's always tricky, right, when you're [audio] pitch people, but I think right now is particularly tricky because people's, perhaps, defenses are up, or they're a little more wary than they might be at other times.

**Steve Strauss**

Yes, as well they should be. There are a lot of scammers out there. One of the things you can do is make your pitch personal, so if I'm going to pitch Julie, I'm going to find out that Julie works for Yahoo Finance, and I'm going to go on Julie's website, I'm going to go on Julie's social media, and I'm going to find out Julie wrote an article about whatever Julie has written an article about, or she did a show recently and interviewed someone I really liked, so then, when I write Julie, I don't look like just a person off the street who's pitching her like spam, but I say, 'Hey, Julie, I saw your recent thing on Yahoo Finance where you interviewed Cramer, and that was really a great interview, I'm thinking that you might be really interested in this idea that I want to share with you.' If you do that with whoever you're pitching, all of a sudden, you're catching – people have egos. We all have egos, so we like to be told, 'Hey, Steve, you wrote a great article.' Oh, I did. Well, that's pretty great, and then if you can make your pitch about... as I said, it's about you... it's about them and not about you, make it personal as you intro yourself, and then you show how you know what they need, and what you're doing is here to help them. You're not here to sell them, you're here to help them. It's a fine line. It's not an easy thing to do, but if you keep those things in mind that people want to know that you know who they are, and that they need help, and you can help them, I think the chances of them reading your email, and if you don't make it five paragraphs, you just start with a snappy one or two paragraphs to start with just to intro yourself is probably the way to go.

**Julie Hyman**

Yes, and I would say that goes for journalistic pitches as well, that you try to be specific and try to give background information in some cases. Related to that, are you seeing that there's any level of social media burnout, because so many people are stuck at home because they're on social media a lot, and you could say, this person says in their question, many people are oversaturated with digital communication, so how do you create that social media campaign that creates interest?

**Steve Strauss**

Yes, it's a great question and there is something to be said about that, and yet that is the world we are in right now, people are on social media, and that is how you have to communicate, so that's just one of the obstacles you're going to have to deal with and get around, but there's other things you can do besides social media, like what if you drive people to your website? I think the website is still often the core place of where you're going to sell yourself and sell your product. Or you create a great list. This is kind of old school, but e-newsletters really work and if you can give something away for free – here's a great little trick. You write a little e-book or a little video or something, you give it away for free in exchange for someone opting in, giving you their email.
address knowingly, and then all of a sudden you're creating a list, and you create a list of people who like you and want to hear from you again, and then you can write to your list and say, hey, we have a new sale going on, so on your website, give something away, give away a little tchotchke, whatever it is, get get a name, build your list, and then that list really is gold because these are people who like you and don't mind you... if you send them great information and then every now and then you tell them you want to sell them something, they're going to maybe want to buy it from you.

**Julie Hyman**

Yes, and I feel like there's been a resurgence in the whole newsletter. You said it's old school but I feel like that the newsletter seems to be having a second life right now, the e-newsletter.

I've seen some questions about content creators, finding content creators, photographers, copywriters, and not only finding them, but finding reviews of them so you know which ones are the best ones.

**Steve Strauss**

So, there's so many places to find content creators inexpensively. There's a site called Fiverr, F-I-V-E-R-R, people sell things for $5 as a starter, as a loss leader, because really what can you get for $5, but you can actually get a lot for $5, but you can get other content there. So, Fiverr is a great site. I mentioned Upwork. Upwork is a really valuable site where you can either list the project you need, and people will bid on the project and give you different prices, or you can say, I need a 1,000-page article on the history of octopi, and I'll pay $250 and you're going to get people who are willing to do it, so those are two sides that I think are really pretty great to find content.

**Julie Hyman**

Yes, you've got octopi on the brain because of that aquarium infographic.

Someone writes in to say that they have an online jewelry website, and they want to know if it's worth buying leads from Facebook, and how do you figure out the algorithm and how all of that works?

**Steve Strauss**

Yes, so I think Facebook is really pretty amazing right now. Advertising on Facebook is really a great tool for small businesses, because you can micro target who you want to reach. If you are a photographer in Boise, Idaho, you can make sure that the ad you place is for people who live only in the five zip codes in Boise and who want a photographer, and all of a sudden, you're reaching a very narrow segment, and you're not spending a lot of money to find those people because you're not advertising to all of Idaho. You're only advertising to those those 50 or 2,000 people in Boise who want you. So, micro targeting on Facebook or Google is great, and buying leads from Facebook, it can work. You just have to be careful about the quality of the leads, of course, which was the whole question, but again, if you target specifically what it is you're looking for, then you can be pretty sure that you're going to get at least something. I always say start small, test, see if it works. If it does work, then you can roll it out, so drop $100 on your test, drop a couple of hundred dollars in your test. If that leads to some more money, then you know, oh, I just found a new little profit center.

**Julie Hyman**

Last question I think that we have time for here. There's a business that's been around for 17 years that wrote in, and I imagine there's some other people maybe who had an independent business in the past, and then had a salary job, and perhaps have lost
it right now, so they're looking for new leads. Maybe the information they had for their old clients was phone numbers and addresses, because it was in an era when not as many people were connected, how do you now find that information and find either your old clients or those new clients on social media?

**Steve Strauss**

So, that is really where LinkedIn comes in. LinkedIn is a great tool for finding whoever you want to find, and if you can't connect to them, then maybe someone you know is connected to them. One of the cool things about LinkedIn is it'll say you're one – I forget the word they use – generation away or Kevin Bacon away or whatever you are from knowing that person, so you find the person that you know who knows that person and you get an introduction, and then you can meet with them on LinkedIn, and then you can find whoever else who has the information you need. I have a friend who built his whole business on LinkedIn. He sells really great memorabilia of sports stars, and he goes on LinkedIn, finds someone he knows who knows the star, gets an introduction, makes a sale, so he's built a business on LinkedIn, so social media works if you work it right.

**Julie Hyman**

Yes. Well, Steve, this has been really interesting and educational for me as well. I hope it was educational for the folks who have been watching and listening, and again, just want to remind everyone you can rewatch this presentation in its entirety, including the Q&A on BrightTALK after this. I believe Verizon will also have a link to the presentation, and you can find Steve Strauss on social media. You can find me on social media, @JulesHyman is where I am on Twitter.

**Steve Strauss**

People can find me at usatoday.com or am I at my website, TheSelfEmployed.com, and thank you, and I want to thank Verizon and everyone for being here. We can do this.

**Julie Hyman**

We can do this and hopefully a lot of people will.

Alright, thank you so much. Appreciate it.

**Andy Choi**

And that's it for today's webinar. Our thanks to Julie and Steve for all their insights into finding new customers right now. Now, in the Attachments tab, you'll see that we are sharing the slide presentation from today. You can check out the other webinars on our BrightTALK channel page. Go to Verizon.com/business, click on webinars under Resources at the top of the page there.

Now, you can register now for our next webinar as well. That's next Wednesday, May 27. We are excited to have MissKedma Ough talking about alternative funding sources, so I hope you'll join us Wednesday and for our next round of Small Business Webinar Series. Thanks for joining us today. Have a good one.

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