

MAKE WHAT YOU MAKE MATTER

(to those that matter most)

A LITTLE BOOK ABOUT BUILDING A MORE PURPOSEFUL BUSINESS
WRITTEN BY IAN RHODES

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INTRODUCTION

All this stuff we marketers love to talk and write about. The strategy. The content we tell you to create. The conversations we ask you to start. The thinking. The doing. There's still something missing. The connection between your content and your craft. That's what we miss in our pursuit of 'best practice' marketing.

How do we make what we make matter?

I'm not talking about the quality of content you create or the quantity. I'm talking about how you fundamentally connect your product(s) you create or resell, the service you offer, with your audience. The people that matter.

An example of truly smart marketing

I'm fascinated by the success of my local family-owned brewery. 2 years ago you'd struggle to find a mention of Robinson's Brewery outside the North-West of England. A brewery, trading locally, for over 175 years. A brewery steeped in heritage. The recipes. The process. The brand itself. Until 2 years ago Robinson's had been a local success story. People know Robinsons. They rely upon Robinsons to produce a great tasting brew.

Then things changed.

The local success story became a global success story.

Sales exploded.

Robinson's are exporting their new product to over 42 countries. A new product that pre-sold 300,000 units (pints of beer). 1 million units in the first 8 weeks alone.

It's a story most business owners dream of. From steady to explosive growth.

This is the story of just one local business in one global industry. It's a story being replicated right now across a vast array of marketplaces.

The trigger?

Collaboration. Collaboration with a global brand. More precisely, a global band.

Iron Maiden. You've heard of Iron Maiden. Everybody has heard of Iron Maiden.

Quick stat check

- Formed in 1975
- 85 million record sales
- 37 albums
- Over 2,000 live shows.

Online?

- 8 million views on their own YouTube channel
- 13 million followers on Facebook
- 1.3 million Twitter followers

Hell, even 55,000 whatever they're called on Google Plus.

The connection?

Bruce Dickinson. Lead singer of Iron Maiden. He's a bit of a real ale buff. He decided he wanted to create his own ale. An Iron Maiden branded beer.

His team contacted a variety of brewers up and down the country.

Can you imagine the response? The vision of the pub tills ringing? Why wouldn't you want to jump into a partnership with one of the most iconic brands in music?

'Yes Bruce, please! Please! 3 bags full (of hops) Bruce' Let's remember. Pubs across the UK are closing at a rate of 31 a week. Local breweries would naturally grab at the opportunity to boost sales.

Robinsons response was a little different. They asked questions. Just how serious was Bruce? 'Robinsons are the only people I have had to audition for in 30 years'. Robinsons put Bruce Dickinson on trial. They looked at this as a long term partnership. Did Bruce? Robinsons even set up a taste test to validate his palette. To ensure he was authentic.

It's that response (alongside their own passion and knowledge) that allowed Robinsons to prove their viability as a brewing partner.

That's point one I want to address in this book. No matter how big the marketing opportunity your business may face, don't consider the short-term spike. Look to the long-term strategy. That's where successful partnerships work.

So, Bruce & Robinsons developed [Trooper](#). More precisely, *'A beer created by Iron Maiden. Hand-crafted by Robinsons.'* Never overlook the importance of a great tagline.

2 years on Robinsons have sold 10 million pints of Trooper. 50% of all orders coming from outside of the UK. It's the 3rd fastest growing beer on the global market. 3rd only to companies spending vast amounts of budgets to push their product onto the shelves and into the hands of the consumer.

Alongside global success, Trooper is also stocked at all the major UK supermarket chains. UK supermarket chain Morrisons named Trooper their fastest selling newly launched beer.

So, you get it. Trooper has been a phenomenal success. **However.** What can we learn? Unfortunately, we're not all in the position to partner with a global brand to increase sales. What impact does the Trooper story have upon your own business?

It's simple. We need to start making what we make matter (to those that matter most).

Would Trooper have been such a success without the collaboration with Iron Maiden? Without the opportunity to leverage Iron Maiden's huge fan base?

Would Trooper have been such a success if Iron Maiden simply endorsed the production of Trooper rather than creating the product itself?

I'm confident the answer to both questions is no.

Yes, before your product can experience significant growth you need to be prepared. To produce and distribute at scale. Your infrastructure needs to be readied. If you woke up to a 100% increase in orders could you manage to meet demand? Few would say yes.

Those 300,000 pre-orders told Robinsons all they needed to know to prepare production.

The achievement is down to two primary influencers:

- A great product
- An even greater story to be told and shared

To create something that doesn't simply 'stand out' but something that resonates with your intended audience. For Robinsons, the audience was both Real ale connoisseurs and heavy metal fans. They created a market that merged the two as well as captured the interest of those in-between.

MAKING WHAT YOU MAKE MATTER

We all know that we should be creating more (and better) content to help grow interest in our products and our services. We're bombarded by a ream of buzzwords telling us to be more engaging, tell better stories, build personas, be authentic, be human, to listen, to help, to do all the things that we should be doing to build relationships with our audience.

None of it matters if there's a true and meaningful purpose behind our craft.

I want to share the story of 5 further businesses with you. Businesses that have achieved success through making what they make matter.

It's all too easy to tell our audience how we're the leading this, that and the other. Similarly, we can add as many pop-ups and overlays to our website to grab email addresses and grow our numbers.

We can also mimic the actions of the success stories. We can pursue best practice and buy interest in our products. Still, nothing matters if we're not creating something that is meaningful and purposeful for our audience.

Put simply. It's all too easy to make our products appear ordinary. The template-driven approach to marketing no longer applies. We look like our competitors. We sound like our competitors. We're stuck in a situation where the only differentiator we can rely upon is price. That's a dangerous place for your business to operate.

I want to share with you 8 ingredients of businesses making what they make matter. I'll share the story of 5 businesses who are employing these elements into their own success story.

We'll then discuss what we can learn from these businesses and what you can takeaway from their stories and implement within your own businesses starting right now.

LEADING YOUR PEOPLE & DELIVERING YOUR CAUSE – HUCKBERRY.COM

“**H**ey humans...” It’s not a good way to introduce yourself is it? That’s what happens when you create for everybody. One size fits none. Nothing sticks. You simply create something for the mass market.

There are few businesses in that privileged position. They’ve had to work for it. Think Amazon. Not even the leading car manufacturers spread their product range wide enough to grab the attention of the outliers.

It is a tough decision. To sit down and decide who your products don’t represent as well as those that they do. Nobody likes to cut off opportunities. The web design company that also offers marketing services. When our chief purpose is to profitably grow our business, we rarely like to miss revenue opportunities.

How would you grab the opportunity to bootstrap the growth of an outdoor gear online store? A \$7 billion industry and growing.

The conventional approach is to stock the shelves with products you know people are already purchasing. To follow the trends and react to the demand of your marketplace.

[Huckberry.com](https://huckberry.com) have taken a different approach. Founded in 2011 by two keen outdoors loving ex-investment bankers. The idea was to create a members-only marketplace where they would sell the products that they would buy themselves. To be the people who they sell to. It’s a remarkably powerful perspective.

They spotted an opportunity to sell products focusing upon functionality as well as style. Not just the brand names their audience are accustomed to

seeing or the typical range of obvious products. They sourced products (oftentimes dropshipped to assist cash flow) from lesser-known brands who shared their same passion for the outdoors and outdoors pursuits.

Huckberry also made a bold move in making their store a members-only experience.

That decision fuelled the content that Huckberry created. Knowing that they were, effectively, placing a gate in front of revenue-generation opportunity (i.e. sales) they had to deliver something extraordinary. A very powerful and resonating message to their audience.

They had to make the content they created matter.

Huckberry's growth is fuelled by their twice weekly email newsletter.

Huckberry don't simply sell products. They tell the story of the brands and people behind those products. It's a tremendous approach to blending the commerce and content channels we (as hobbyists) are accustomed to finding under separate brands.

As Huckberry describe themselves on their About page... *'Huckberry is like your favorite story, your grandpa's favorite store, and your favorite magazine all rolled into one.'*

It is this combined retail and storytelling approach which has enabled them to create partnerships with the producers of the goods that they sell. Smaller niche brands are provided the opportunity to share their own unique story with a far greater, readily engaged audience through the Huckberry newsletter.

In an [article](#) on Basecamp's 'Signal vs Noise' blog co-founder Richard Greiner states, *'We're trying to get people's mind share instead of wallet share. You're building a relationship with these people. ... Our mentality,*

that we are what we're selling — people can really feel that and identify with that'.

That led them to the decision to not simply 'sell'. Their email newsletter is a service to the people that matter most. Their loyal subscribers and brand advocates. They know that there's far greater worth in providing an email newsletter of value to their audience than simply pitching product after product.

Each one of those email newsletters is signed off with a simple message of 'see you out there' alongside an inspiring image of outdoors pursuit either submitted by Huckberry followers or the team.

This is about building comradery through community.

Huckberry's Facebook page has close to 100,000 likes. It acts as a brilliant tool for Huckberry to share their themed categories and present the makers who create the products they stock.

Unlike your typical ecommerce categorization, Huckberry have taken a magazine themed approach to their content creation. Products are curated into themed '*buying guides*' supported by content, storytelling and imagery, that creates experience.

Right now there's a guide for Tactical Bags – military-spec backpacks and holdalls – supported by stories of personal endurance.

SELLING THROUGH SCARCITY

Nothing inspires us to act like the knowledge an offer will not be around forever. That urge to act knowing that a product is on sale, or the '*limited time opportunity*' is ending soon. A proportion of the products stocked at Huckberry are available in limited runs or for a limited time.

As Huckberry focus our attention on the backstory of a brand we're fully aware that we need to act in order to take advantage of the discounted prices on display.

When you consider the principles of influence raised by Robert Cialdini in his seminal work '[Influence](#)' Huckberry have cleverly integrated psychological initiators into their offering.

Social Proofing – the community of followers of Instagram, Facebook & Twitter, offers confidence in purchase. The conversations that take place. The fact that Huckberry announce they are a 'team of writers, designers and above all else doers'. Before you buy from Huckberry, you first of all buy into their story, their people, their offering.

Reciprocation – nothing happens until you provide your email address. You're outside the gated community until you offer forward that connector.

The Huckberry homepage value proposition is to *'deliver the coolest gear at the best prices, inspirational stories, and a hell of a lot more to your inbox every week'*.

That is the trade off the Huckberry customer makes. Their email address in return for access to the offers and stories. To give and take. Take and give.

Scarcity – as mentioned above, the majority of products on offer are for limited time periods. The motivation to act is based on the fear of losing out. We're human. We love a good bargain and we love a good story to share.

Authority – Huckberry are doing the hard work on our behalf. Sourcing the products they know their audience will love. They are championing the cause of their audience. They understand the intrinsic nature of the lover of the outdoors. The blend of functionality and style. Something routed beyond the simple idea of '*fashion*' that we'd associate with more

mainstream outdoors brands. This is, as Huckberry say themselves, about the doing.

Liking – Businesses don't speak. People do. When you read an article on Huckberry you sense that article is written for you. Just you. That kinsmanship is a huge influencer on what we buy and where we buy. The personal touch, the personal nature by which Huckberry share stories, creates a connection that you won't shy from.

Commitment & Consistency – in the 3 years I've been watching the development of Huckberry their message (and audience focus) has retained absolute consistency. Catering to people who are likeminded and of a similar personality to the founders themselves.

This is still a heavily male-oriented offering. For the products that aren't directly related to outdoor activity, they're commonplace in the mindset of the outdoor-loving individual. The storytelling and the associated imagery are at the very foundations of the Huckberry experience. This isn't about the products you buy, it's about what those products allow you to achieve.

Even the imagery on the homepage is submitted by a Huckberry Ambassador.

Advocates of the highest degree. Advocates that will continue to tell the story of the products they buy long after the transaction is made.

You can be sure the Huckberry name resonates throughout those stories. It's woven into the fabric of the digital brand.

Huckberry don't create product. They're a reseller. What they '*make*' is community. A community of likeminded individuals. Call it a niche. It's more like a mindset. A community where content drives commerce. The 3 cornerstones of their business. Commerce. Content. Community.

Huckberry inspire purchase. They tempt with offers that arouse interest. They sell through the stories of those products and what those products represent.

There is so much for retailers to learn from Huckberry's approach to online commerce. The impassioned tone of content lets you know you're in good hands. Trust isn't something you earn easily.

- The careful curation of the product range
- The behind-the-brand storytelling
- The emphasis on 'we're in this together'
- The success of a truly purposeful and consistent newsletter
- The striving to offer something above and beyond expectations
- The use of, but not reliance upon, limited time offers
- The integration of story and product within category pages

I challenge you to find something you won't admire about this bootstrapped US west-coast retailer.

SHARING YOUR KNOWLEDGE (AND PROVING YOUR PASSION) - GOULETPENS.COM

I love the business I'm about to discuss. I stumbled across them 2 years ago and I was hooked. As a consumer and as a marketer.

There's creating content and then there's creating content of value. This company create valuable content in abundance. Introducing [Goulet Pens](#). Like Huckberry, Goulet Pens are a reseller. A family business. A *'local company where the locale is based on your interest, not necessarily your geography'*. That's how owner Brian Goulet introduces his business in their 1 minute *'about us'* video.

Goulet Pens sell pens (you'd have never guessed it...) We can buy pens from anywhere. The local store, the stationery shop, the petrol station, the department store. Pen's are all around us. What makes Goulet Pens different? They cater for the enthusiast but inspire the unaware.

If you stumble across Goulet Pens, without intention, you'll become an enthusiast too? Why? Because of the passion for writing that oozes out of every aspect of the Goulet Pens website and supporting content.

From the homepage, Goulet Pens are just like any other retailer. Scrolling imagery and links to bestselling products. It's only when you begin to dig deep into the site (when you start considering whether a new pen tickles your fancy) do you start to see the depth of expertise at hand.

20 guides in their *'Fountain Pen 101'* video section. Lefties? Probably like me, you didn't know a lefty *'pushed'* rather than *'pulled'* on the nib. I found that out today [reading this article](#). There's a 12-minute video providing recommendations for our left-handed friends. Just one example of the knowledge shared.

The products themselves? There are 5 years' worth of product reviews available. You sense that each pen stocked by Goulet Pens has been chosen because it fits a particular purpose. A particular writing style.

Each product description isn't your typical 'off the shelf' sales pitch provided by the manufacture. It's a further example of the depth of attention Goulet Pens present through the content they create.

What do I really love about Goulet Pens? The fact the site isn't plastered with discounts and offers and flashing sale imagery. You become so immersed you don't consider leaving the safe hands of Brian and his team. Price becomes secondary. He and his team and the value. They guide you to the pen that will matter to you.

It's called impactful marketing. There's so much we can learn about creating impactful, purpose-driven content from Goulet Pens.

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE PRODUCT...

The pen is simply a writer's tool. Buying a pen (correction... investing in a pen) you want to witness the pen in action. The clean strokes of the pen. The quality of the output. Brian has created '[The Nib Nook](#)' an interactive tool that allows you to view examples of when pen meets paper (80g white Rhodia dotPad paper to be precise). This is the changing room. You get to try it on and see if you like what you see. There's 100s of pen styles to view. One at a time or alongside each other. No stone is unturned. This is a true experience in online shopping.

The list of advice and guidance on offer is endless. This isn't a case of walking in your customer's shoes. Brian and his team have upstreamed every aspect of the pen buyer's experience and created content to suit.

The content flows (pun intended) into the business model itself.

The '[Ink Drop](#)' where you receive samples of ink on a monthly subscription basis. All documented in an email detailing the inks you'll receive and how you can buy the ink by the bottle.

Email? There's the weekly '*Goulet Communique*' providing a review of the latest reviews, content and offers, videos and a '*message from the Goulets*' providing a rundown of what's been happening that week at Goulet. Always signed off '*Write on... Brian & Rachel Goulet*'.

The social figures?

- 12,000 likes on Facebook
- 8,000 on Twitter
- 26,000 subscribers on YouTube

The latest video, Goulet Q&A Episode 91 is packed with knowledge and the length of your typical Hollywood blockbuster... 82 minutes.

Talk about engagement. A week old video has already received 73 comments. None of the YouTube stalker (oddball) comments you see usually see. This is guidance, feedback and conversation taking place. This is one engaged community.

Just go to www.GouletPens.com and immerse yourself for 10 minutes.

There's so so so much we can all learn. This is a business brimming with passion. You can just imagine how it shines through customer service and the purchasing process. One word? Trust.

Goulet Pen Co share knowledge and passion. It's what makes what they make matter.

SHARING YOUR PROCESS (THE INSIDE EDGE) - GROOVEHQ.COM

We're comfy sharing the good times. What about the not so good? [Groove](#) build help desk software. The ticketing systems for when you outgrow email. *'Awesome, personal support'* as Groove prefer to refer to it as.

A quick search for *'help desk software'* and you're inundated with dozens upon dozens of software provides vying for your business. Start-ups through to Microsoft all pitching their software as the best product for your immediate needs.

So, you're Groove. A start-up with a great product and a widespread audience of growing businesses. What do you do? In a saturated market where you have little chance of standing out. Let's face it, most of these businesses are pumping out content all day long talking about their product benefits and *'10 great reasons to register...'* SaaS companies are tuned into the content creation model.

Groove seek the common ground. The area beyond the *'Me provider. You customer.'* stance. They've gone against the idea of chasing the product-led pain point. They've found a connection that's really rather smart.

We're in this together.

Growing start-up businesses. The struggle all start-ups face. Growth!

So, Groove founder, Alex Turnbull decided to create a blog he *'wished existed when I started my first company'*. A documented journey, warts and all, to their monthly revenue target of £500k.

Alex covers all the topics the start-up founder needs. Life as a business founder. Start-up growth. Content marketing. He shares his business' story.

- How they attracted 1000+ private beta signups in 7 days
- Why they declined \$5m of capital 6 months in
- How they wasted £50k on designing the wrong website

The documented journey started in September 2013 as Alex looked to reach his first initial target of \$100k monthly revenue.

He talks frankly. About his desire to ride Groove out for the long haul. Building something substantial. A feeling drawing empathy from many start-up founders.

Groove's story (found at www.GrooveHQ.com) is enormously compelling. You know Reality TV? It's like that. Just interesting. A lot more interesting.

Two years on more than 50,000 people (people that represent Alex's target market!) are now following the Groove journey.

THE BOLD APPROACH

This takes guts. Alex is hugely transparent in his emotion and his willingness to share his learning. To pass on (again... to his target audience) his own experience.

What does this have to do with Groove growing a profitable business? Everything.

WHEN THE STORY IS THE BAIT IN THE OCEAN (NOT THE POND)

The story reaches out well beyond the pool of paid search advertisers paying big bucks to reach those that have made the decision to research helpdesk software.

As we get to know Alex we get to know his company. As we get to know his company we get to know how he helps businesses. That business, more than likely, mirrors the situation you (the reader) are in as you grow your own business.

He inspires you to ask ‘would we benefit from help desk software?’. When you ask that question what is the likelihood of you shopping around? What is the likelihood of you not wanting to help Alex in his own business growth endeavour? To be part of the story?

Consider the size difference in audience. The startup community (vast) versus those seeking help desk software (narrow).

Alex isn’t growing his market share. He’s growing his market’s size. It’s a bold approach few of us have the audacity to pursue. Why?

We can take comfort in competition. The easiest approach for any business growth pursuit is to fish at the bottom of the funnel. It’s dangerous territory. Introducing your product as the prospect’s focus targets price? What do you have left to compete on? The price tag.

Groove aren’t too concerned about that pond. There’s little space left to cast your line.

THE SMART MARKETER’S ‘WHAT-IF?’ MOMENT

Alex has asked the question ‘what if the only place our business can truly thrive is the market that we create?’

When you appreciate the vastness of your potential reach, does it make sense to focus on the lower reaches of the funnel?

When you know that your product is of value to so many. When they may not (as yet) know they need it. Is the solution to find common ground above and beyond the product that you have created?

THIS IS YOUR CONTENT MINDSET

Having the confidence to reach out and build a community of like-minded individuals. To look beyond your industry and ask questions about the

commonality between your own cause and their's (your audience). To champion a way of thinking.

Just like Huckberry and Goulet Pens. The content created by Groove is about sharing knowledge, experience and insight. Delivering authority.

It's a daunting task to build and deliver a content strategy at a start-up business. Just what can you talk about that hasn't already been covered? How do you make yourself stand out when so many conversations are already taking place?

It's called outside the box thinking. Looking beyond the constraints of your own industry. It's a horrid cliché, but in an industry where your primary differential is your price? It's required process.

Alex doesn't pitch his product (if he does I've missed it). **However.** As a regular reader of his articles you know all you need to know about the business Alex is in.

He documents how he has tested different price models. Do they charge a flat fee? Do they price as their competitors do? Do they offer a base mode and charge extras? Whether you're in the software business or not, all vital questions we consider at the early stage of business growth.

As the business founder, Alex has placed himself at the heart of the Groove story. The ongoing story of a startup's task to reach a revenue goal. Smart isn't it? A captivating story that doesn't rely upon the delivery of an expert viewpoint. Rather, an experienced viewpoint. Something that is occurring right now. As I say, Reality TV at it's very best.

What Groove make matters to us as we have the inner perspective. You find yourself rooting for Alex and the growth of his business. This isn't just another faceless piece of software. This is the inside track on how to (hopefully) grow your business as you learn the success and failure handed down by another entrepreneur.

NO HOLDING BACK

Maybe it's the emotive content of Alex's writing that really draws connection? He recently posted about the death of a close friend to cancer. How it had led to to rethink a lot about life and business. As he considers 'Building something matters. Leaving a legacy matters. Doing something with my time and energy that makes life better for others matters.'

Beyond the software. Alex is making his own story matter.

Alongside Alex's start-up blog, Groove also offer 2 further insights into their world.

['The Groove Report'](#) offers a behind-the-scenes look at the Groove product itself.

There's also the ['Customer Support'](#) blog where Groove's '*marketing guy*' Len offers weekly advice on all angles of online customer support.

Struggling to find innovative ways to grow within your B2B niche? There's a stack we can learn from Groove.

CREATING SIMPLICITY (AS EVERYBODY ELSE COMPLICATES) - CASPER.COM

What a thankless task shopping for a mattress can be. Cavernous rooms full of products where we (as consumers) are meant to differentiate between select foams and spring tensions. If there's ever a market ripe for disruption, step forward the mattress industry (and Goldilocks).

According to the International Sleep Products Association (yes, that's their actual name...) the US market alone is a \$7bn industry. Over 35m mattresses (sorry, sleep products) shipped. Alongside water and a roof, sleep products are on every human's wishlist.

In summary, yes, we're looking at an extensive market here.

Let's raise the question again – how would you differentiate your product in such a competitive marketplace?

ACKNOWLEDGING THE PAINPOINT OF SHOPPING

We spend 200,000 hours in bed. That's probably more than the amount of hours we spend staring at the screen of our phone. We should be comfortable investing in a suitable 'sleep product' to assist us with our own sleep requirements. Right?

Researching for this little book I spent a couple of hours looking at the way mattress retailers sell their products.

It's painful. I want those hours back. Now.

It's almost as bad as the in-store experience. Lumps of foam with features including ortho-memory, dust mite resistance and supportive premium reflex foam nothing can and will stand out.

You know different.

Allow me to present [Casper.com](https://casper.com).

Just the tagline itself told me all I needed to know. '*Better Sleep For Brighter Days*'. Isn't that what we're all really searching for? Those 35million purchases we mentioned earlier. Consumers burdened with talk of features that mean little to anybody as we trudge from one rectangular king-size polyester foam box to the next.

All we are really looking for is the assurance of a decent nights sleep.

That's the flag Casper fly.

Founder Philip Krim started selling mattresses whilst at college in Texas. He already had inside knowledge of the industry prior to launching Casper.com in 2014.

He understood the conventions that held the industry in the dark ages thanks to the duopoly of business that dominate the mattress landscape.

So. Here's what Philip and his start-up team did. They built a product that they believed in. One product. Let's just call it the '*Casper mattress*'. Or as Casper refer to it, '*one perfect mattress*'.

In a world full of '*hustle*' talk, through the content Casper create they are gently reminding us of the importance of sleep. Their regularly updated blog, [Pillow Talk](https://pillowtalk.casper.com) curates stories and offers advice for us all on the benefits of sleep.

Casper, unlike their competitors, stand for something. A better night's sleep. They've thrown away the convention of an aging industry by making their product fun. It seems bizarre to say that. Making a mattress fun? (oy, not in that way...)

There's a brilliant example of the new marketing phenomena of unboxing on display too. You receive your Casper mattress compressed into a 4ft box. Customers are willingly sharing the moment their mattress springs out of the box across all social channels. 'HOW COOL IS THIS?!' Again, a quick reminder, we're talking about a MATTRESS here... I have no idea of who made, or where my own mattress was made. Few of us have. Casper are realigning their industry with the consumer as they build their own brand less ordinary.

The Casper price range starts at \$500 for the twin size and creeps up to £950 for the Cal King. That's your choice. Size of mattress. No extra springs. No dual layers of this that or the other on offer. Mid-priced in a market where pricing is a prime differentiator. How are Casper alleviating the issue of online-only sales in a market where we like to test feasibility (is this bed bouncy or hard) offline?

A 100 night-free trial alongside a 10-year warranty. What further validity do we need of Casper's confidence in their product? Plus, there's a 0% financing offer to sweeten the deal even further.

Has Casper been a success? You bet. \$20m sales in its first 10 months. Sales fuelled by brand evangelists retelling the story of their mattress purchasing experience. "Did you hear the one about the mattress delivered in a box?" New York City residents have the added tale of mattress delivery by bicycle courier.

Casper's social media strategy is focused on the idea of making what they make matter.

The simplicity of the product range. The fun way they share their own story. The product delivery. The embracing nature of their focus on sleep. It all adds up. It all creates something quite unique in a marketplace in dire need of innovation.

Customer engagement is central to the success of Casper. With no story to tell, Casper wouldn't success as an internet-only operation. The Casper mattress is a story in itself (dreams and all).

BEING PART OF SOMETHING & BUILDING REPEAT BUSINESS – BEERBODS.CO.UK

I started off with a beer story. I'll finish off talking beer. This time I'm looking at another company close to home, here in the United Kingdom.

We're comfortable subscribing to magazines, digital TV, mobile phone providers, maybe even razor blades (think [Dollar Shave Club](#)) ... how about beer? Fancy a few bottles delivered to your door each month? You will once you hear about the brilliant UK start-up [BeerBods.co.uk](#).

Under the slogan '*Drink Better Beer*' BeerBods founder Matt Lane has created a business model built upon the idea of '*co-ordinated consumption*'.

Let the founder explain. Matt states "*I love beer that you can chat about with friends. I wanted to get more people drinking that kind of beer*".

As a subscriber you pay £36 each quarter to receive a box of 12 craft beers delivered to your door. Each Thursday BeerBods subscribers unite on social media to crack open one bottle and discuss the individual merits of the beer.

Profitable from year one, BeerBods raised £150,000 through crowd-sourced investors in little over 36 hours in 2014.

Offering 22% equity, BeerBods received investment from 101 individuals including one person prepared to pay out £10,000 for their own share in the business.

The story of BeerBods is told through their website. From 2011, when Matt held beer tasting events in his own shed, demand grew. He placed a simple message live on his new domain, BeerBods.co.uk, explaining how he intended to set up a beer club subscription service if 20 people agreed to

register. 250 people signed up with the first day. A sign of what was to come. No pressure Matt.

The story continues in true entrepreneurial fashion. The credit-card debt, the favours pulled in, the way the business is managed during the early days as a part time venture.

Working with local breweries, BeerBods are working smartly to identify beers that tell their own story. The weekly email sent out prior to each online *'tasting session'* gives the back story of the brew, the brewery and its people. It ignites discussion during the Thursday tasting session as you join *'the best beer club in town'*.

BeerBods is more than just a self-treat for the ale enthusiast. It's a brilliant gift with subscriptions ranging from £36 to £144.

The theme resonates throughout the site and service. To *'get more people drinking better beer'*. Yet another simple proposition in a market saturated by choice.

Growth is fuelled by the subscribers themselves. As Matt commented in a recent blog on their website *"we thought giving our marketing budget to our customers beats pissing it up the wall on advertising any day of the week"*. I just love that sentiment.

Subscribers receive a pack including vouchers to offer to friends, flyers to hand out and posters to display. Incentivised word-of-mouth is the primary source of growth for BeerBods. Matt's looking to *'grow slow and grow strong'* as he plots the future for his sustainable business. The antithesis of the heavy investment in social and paid search advertising we see from investor-backed start-up propositions.

This is organic growth at it's very finest. Fuelled by advocates who share ownership of the business and its mission.

The key to the future success of BeerBods is drawn from the community that they create. The enthusiasm they nurture is crucial.

Subscription models do suffer from churn. This is something I've learned from extensive work in the SaaS (Software as a Service) market. You have to keep your service top of mind. People become distracted by new pursuits. There's a two-prong approach to the marketing strategy. Acquisition and retention. There's little point investing all energies into growing your subscriber base if there's a large percentage becoming disinterested after a few months.

I love the simplicity of the proposition. BeerBods thrives upon the connoisseur element of the marketplace. Beer enthusiasts (I don't mean beer guzzlers here) know their beer. CAMRA (The Campaign For Real Ale) has over 160,000 members across the globe with over 200 branches alone in the UK. CAMRA supports *'the pub as the one place in which to consume real ale'*.

The homebrew movement is gathering pace in the US and UK markets. People are making time to brew and consume beer in their own environments. BeerBods celebrate how the modern consumer acts. Unfortunately, we're sometimes a little too busy to find the time to socialise and head down *'the local'*. Now, we can talk real ales and share our views from the comfort of our home, or with our friends, courtesy of the #BeerBods hashtag.

Consider what BeerBods are making.

It's not the product, they're sourcing from external suppliers.

It's not the platform, they're using existing social media channels.

It's the community. The subscriber base of keen real ale enthusiasts who rely upon BeerBods to dispatch great beers they're going to love. New

brands that they may not have found themselves from across the UK. New tastes. New stories.

BeerBods are curating community through the stories as well as the products. As the BeerBods brand strengthens it will allow them access (through buying power) to new brands, one-off editions and products we wouldn't be able to source ourselves.

I'm talking in cold terms such as '*sourcing*' and '*products*' to hopefully align the BeerBods business model with your own industry.

Do you simply supply products, or discover new products on behalf of your own community? The model isn't too dissimilar to Huckberry we discussed earlier. The idea of discovery. Inspiring our audience with products we know they'll love.

Retailers, in particular, become reactive to the existing trends of their targeted consumer. The brands. The range. The bestsellers. What if you could create a level of trust behind your brand allowing the decision making process to be owned by you, rather than your consumer?

8 INGREDIENTS OF A BUSINESS MAKING WHAT THEY MAKE MATTER

6 stories of businesses doing their own thing. Ignoring ‘*best practice*’ and serving their defined audience with a product/service built upon trust and innovation. Rethinking the marketplace. Rethinking how we can inspire our customers.

6 businesses fuelling growth not through advertising spend, but through the content they create and share. Presenting the story of their business, their founder’s mission and the purpose behind their journey (to serve their audience).

Sure, 5 of the businesses I’ve discussed are still in the very early stages of growth. None are more than 5 years old. All businesses are vulnerable to the actions of competitors or the waning support of their consumers.

How are these market makers erecting barriers and fuelling sustainable growth through the relationships they build within their own community?

What are the ingredients of a business that truly matters to those that matter most?

JUST BEING HUMAN

It does sound like a cliché to talk about the '*human element*' of marketing. It's just a point that cannot be emphasised enough. Again and again.

Review the stories presented. Take a look at each of these businesses own websites. They ooze personality. They ooze honesty in presentation. They don't carry the traits of template-driven business. They're (very much) doing their own thing.

There's no talk of being '*leaders*' within their industry. There's no fluffy mission statements where they present their case '*dedicated to customer services*'. These companies hold the needs, wants and desires of their audience at the very heart of what they do. It doesn't need to be embellished in one-size-fits-all bland content. It's unique. It's memorable.

The personalities of the founders and content creators delivers the brand's own personality. The blend of perspective and authority that doesn't simply grab attention. It retains attention? Why? Because this is the very basics of successful communication. People talking to people.

Too few of us sign off the blogs we write or the emails we send. We stick to the generic copy that feels comfortable. To talk '*on behalf of our business*' rather than '*as the business*'.

The human touch is critical. Not just with the 5 businesses I've highlighted. With your own business. Show some character. Give opinion, don't simply tow the dutiful line of attempting to be 'helpful' or even worse, self-promotion (I don't really need to know about your recent golf day). Share knowledge as well as information.

There's no better feeling than the incoming call where your prospect already feels they know you and what you stand for.

RECOGNISING & CHAMPIONING YOUR CAUSE

What's the purpose behind your own business? How does that purpose reflect in the content that you create?

All too often in business we leave the key ingredients (those that connect us with our consumer) on the backburner. We dilute our craft with generic talk and present content with no direction.

Where do you want to take your audience? Are you there to share your knowledge? Are you there to inspire beyond the norm? Are you there to challenge people to rethink what they thought they knew?

What impact do you want to have upon the people that matter to you? What message resonates through the content housed within your blog? Do you have a value proposition that is unique to you? What emotion are you trying to draw from your consumer?

None of this matters if your business isn't led by a specific cause your audience can relate to.

Is there a particular pain point that you recognise that you can take ownership of?

Rather than considering your niche as a particular location or demographic. Consider your niche as a shared mindset of individuals.

Once you isolate that cause you have one of the strongest emotion-fuelled differentiators in your arsenal. Utilise it.

CLARITY IN YOUR PROPOSITION

We're always busy. Trying out new platforms, testing new marketing tactics, hiring new staff, often times our core message can (and will) become muddled.

Consider your audience. First time visitors. People don't simply hand over their email address without just reason. People don't spend their limited time rummaging through websites to get a better understanding of what they're meant to deliver us. Now, consider how clear your message is, from the homepage to the subscription box to the list of blogs you present. Theme is important. Clarity of that theme is crucial.

We get so involved with the production of our product and the desire to grow our audience that we lose touch with what matters.

Take a wander down the journey path of your own website. Is it easy to understand what it is you actually do? How are you tying your blog articles into what you help your audience accomplish? Is there a stepped approach? A 1-2-3 outline of what you help people to achieve? If I want to dig deeper to find out more, how easy is it to access that information?

Keep things simple. Just remember that humans are naturally cautious species. We're also, naturally, curious when our interest is evoked. Does your story lead to your proposition? Does it all make sense to the first-time visitor?

"We Help Grow Business" is such a common theme in B2B. Are you trying to be smart with your message and falling foul of an approach that is simply too generic?

CONSISTENCY IN DELIVERY

As we're busy experimenting with frequency of delivery and theming of our message, is there a consistent importance of '*being there (and being there often)*' for your audience?

What are you doing to own people's time? The BeerBods Thursday evening moment? The weekly Goulet Q&A video? The consistent '*See You Out There*' delivery of the Huckberry newsletter?

The channel you choose does matter. The consistency of how you utilise that channel matters even more.

Like me, you're probably burdened by discussion of '*best practice*' in the field of social and content. This idea that there's a '*right time*' to send your message and a '*right way*' of theming your message.

Step back. Really. Does it matter what works for everyone else? One of the best marketing emails, delivered by [Chris Brogan](#), is delivered at 9am on a Sunday morning. Did the pursuit of best practice inform Chris that this was the right time? Of course not. He works hard to own that time slot in his reader's home life. When your head isn't filled with tasks and numbers. Probably the one time when you can embrace new found knowledge and reflect on your own circumstance.

Celebrate hump-day. Celebrate Friday afternoon. Drown the sorrows of Monday morning. Pick what you believe will work for your audience and work hard to own that time slot in your audience's diary.

Think about it. Why do we see Christmas TV advertising earlier and earlier each year? Advertisers are vying for our attention. A belief that '*getting in there first*' will somehow influence our decision making. As much as we may hate it. It does happen. Not the one off. But the consistent approach.

EARN THE RIGHT TO TALK ABOUT YOU....

This may contradict a lot of what you read. It's not **always** about your audience. The product? Of course. The proposition? Absolutely.

Don't forget about the process. The thought process as well as the mechanics. Groove exemplify the idea of sharing insight and knowledge. They're building and sharing an ever evolving live case study. They're sharing the eureka moments and the woes. They're peaking our curiosity. That's one hell of an important attribute of your marketing. To create curiosity. To allow '*behind-the-scenes*' access to your people, your product, your perspective and your process. Call it the 4 P's of brand differentiation. Consider your process as your own autobiography. Where you tell the tales of business.

Demonstrate your authority in your subject matter. Keep it simple. Keep it aligned with what your audience is looking to achieve. Most important of all? Keep it real. Emotion and all.

When your audience trusts you and believes in you your position is strengthened. They're no longer simply buying from you. They're buying into you. One simple change of perspective makes a huge huge difference to our own (as customers) buying decisions.

Use your content to ask the right questions of your audience. Leverage your expertise in the pain points your audience are already exposed to. Alert them to pains they may have not yet felt. '*Did you know left handed writers required specific pens?*'

This gives you the permission to share your own story and your insight. The deliver the guidance your audience requires from your own experience. It's not all 'me me' or 'you you' It's 'you and I'.

INNOVATE WITHOUT DISRUPTING

Each of the 5 businesses presented are outsmarting the competition. They're finding new ways to reach the hearts and minds of their audience.

We talk about disruption too easily. It's not always the end goal. Don't let the idea of revolution rather than evolution stop you from doing what you believe your customers want.

Each of their founders has walked in the shoes of your customer. They've stepped back (still wearing those shoes) and reconsidered their approach.

Anyone with a license can dispatch beer by the dozen bottles. Few will have thought about creating a membership, a community, around that product dispatch. The idea of taking a tradition meeting place (the pub) and transforming it to the online environment (the social platform). Tweaks sometimes aren't enough. It doesn't mean, however, that we have to disrupt.

Acknowledge what your audience loves. Consider new ways to deliver it. Own that method of delivery. Never **never** overlook email as your primary route of correspondence.

Groove acknowledge the desire of their audience. Business owners striving for business growth. Their content hits that target and they've found a smart way to associate their product with their audience.

It's not always the obvious association between content and craft that delivers success. The 'this is what you want & this is what we create' commonality is one employed by your competitors. Your task is to outthink the competition. Innovation in your business model sits at the heart of that thought process.

LEAD DON'T FOLLOW

Do you want to bring in new ideas to how you present your products and market your business? Do you love the idea of building a database of subscribers who have built into what you're seeking to achieve? That are attentive and ready to share the journey with you?

Look beyond your own industry walls. Inspiration will come from further afield than what's currently happening in your own industry. That's the reason I've created this little book in the first place. To share the stories of businesses I've found through my own experience and research.

We're talking about a pen supplier, a beer retailer, a software company, an outdoor goods retailer and a mattress manufacturer. This isn't cutting edge technology we're talking about here. It's people doing smart things with the platforms they have available to them. No huge investments. No mass advertising to reach their market.

Each of these businesses started at zero in the past few years. There's a lot we can learn.

What they have done is translated existing business models and marketing ideas from neighbouring industries to their own. We've seen products simplified in the way Casper have done within a variety of marketplaces.

What these companies have done is demonstrated something new within their marketplace. They will be copied. They will be challenged. There may have been businesses doing what they did before them (we just didn't hear because their marketing did not resonate).

What they are doing is taking the lead. Naturally, they are aware of the movements of their competitors. Just like we all are. They are just taking

advantage of their ability to grow their audience through the content they are creating.

KNOW YOUR HOOK

We are marketers. We are in the business of winning and retaining the attention of our audience. That's a role we can now rely upon the content we create to fulfil for us.

As hard as we may try there is still the requirement of 'nurturing' relationships with our prospective customers.

Consider the actions you want your audience to take. Those actions sit at the core of your own marketing strategy. Outline the journey from the very beginning. What is it about what you do that will appeal at those very early stages?

You're looking to educate your audience. Don't assume the journey you're outlining is the journey your audience want to be taken along. There will be detours along the route. Your Call-to-action statements and the content you share act as the signposts. To deliver direction. Justify those actions.

If your audience like your latest blog post what are they going to love? More of the same? Or a taster of what's ahead on that journey? The next step?

Huckberry's success is built upon their email newsletter. It's the gate that allows access to the products they've sourced. The club they want you to join. Their hook is the 'basecamp for inspiration' that their newsletter delivers. That's the current proposition front row centre on their website. It's very clever. It's intriguing. It creates curiosity. The opening gambit on the Huckberry adventure.

Ask yourself, "*what's your hook?*"

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Thanks for sticking around. I really hope you enjoyed what you've read and it's given you food for thought with your own business.

My own hook is 'I unshackle businesses from the constraint of conventional marketing tactics.' This is what, I believe, this mini-book represents. I could have broken it down into separate articles. I could have provided more thoughts and stories to reinforce the idea of making what you make matter.

To break convention, we first of all need to understand what makes what we make matter.

Rarely is it the materials we use or the colours we offer. There are dozens upon dozens of ways we can influence our audience's decision making process. The influential tactics documented by Robert Cialdini we touched upon earlier.

The clever marketers dig deeper. Those connectors don't rely upon superficial activity. The *'order today with you tomorrow'* approach.

The clever marketers rely upon emotional connection. They deliver a purposeful difference through the content they create to market their products.

We can leverage what makes our products different to a certain extent. We can also discuss the purpose behind what we do until we're blue in the face.

It's the merging of purpose and difference that connects with our audience.

The role of the content you create within your business is to deliver and take ownership of that purposeful difference.

When you first saw the title of this little book you may have considered it's relevance to you and your business.

You may have thought, '*we don't 'make' anything*'. You do. You make connection. Emotional connection. Whether you're lawyers, consultants or designers, retailers or service providers. To request people take the actions you require you need to consider the emotion that you're looking to unleash. As we've demonstrated today:

- Empowering your audience with knowledge.
- Inspiring your audience to commit to join.
- Empathising with the journey your audience are on.
- The feeling of togetherness that your subscribers receive.
- The reassurance that your product has been made with the recipients' goals in mind.

Even if that's just a good night's sleep.

Take ownership. Make what you make matter.

Thanks for reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Rhodes". The signature is stylized, with the first letters of each name being prominent.

Ian Rhodes

Founder of Brand Less Ordinary

ABOUT ME

I'm a UK-based independent digital marketer providing clients, across the globe, marketing consulting and strategy workshops.



I share my learning through podcasting, blogging and conference speaking.

A marketer doing my bit to inspire business founders & marketers to avoid conventional marketing tactics and start building their brand less ordinary.

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Please feel free to share this little book. It's why I created it.

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