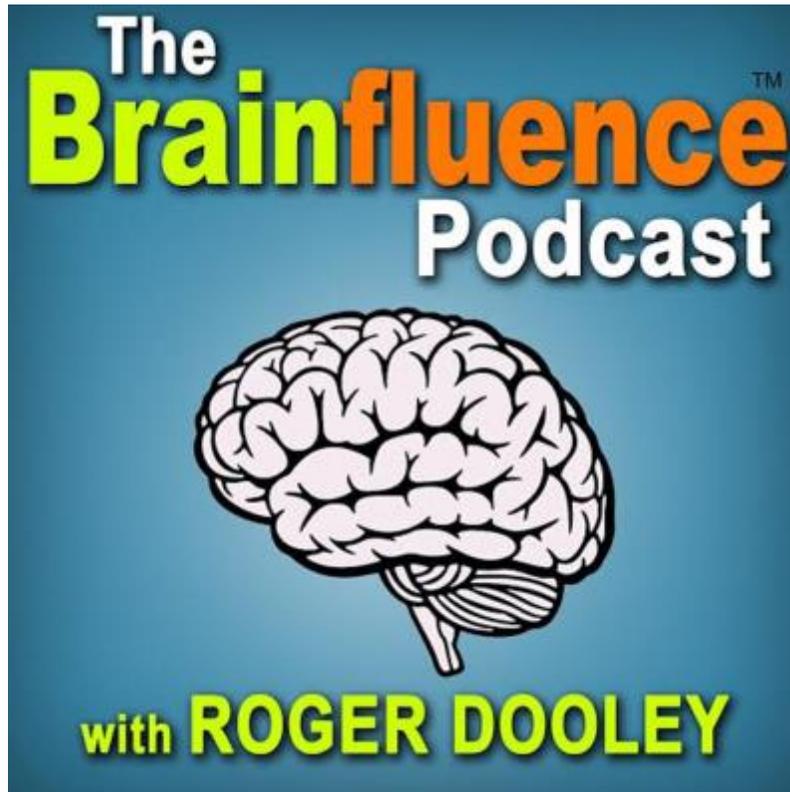


Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host



Roger Dooley

[The Brainfluence Podcast](#) with Roger Dooley

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

Welcome to the Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley, author, speaker and educator on neuromarketing and the psychology of persuasion. Every week, we talk with thought leaders that will help you improve your influence with factual evidence and concrete research. Introducing your host, Roger Dooley.

Roger Dooley: Welcome to The Brainfluence Podcast, I'm Roger Dooley. Joining us this week is my friend and fellow Austinite, Noah Kagan. Noah has a knack for being in the right place at the right time. He was employee number 30 at Facebook and number four at Mint. Now he's the chief sumo at sumome.com and AppSumo. Most importantly, he's one of the best-known taco connoisseurs. Since Austin is the taco capital of the world, that's like being one of the top sommeliers in Paris. Noah now has a new podcast too that I'm sure that we'll learn more about. Noah, welcome to the show.

Noah Kagan: Thanks for having me, Roger.

Roger Dooley: Great. Now, we were going to do this over tacos but decided to connect electronically instead. I know our listeners will probably appreciate the sound quality, but I haven't had lunch yet so that growling noise you hear will probably be me thinking about tacos. For those of our listeners who may get to Austin, do you have any recommendations for taco joints?

Noah Kagan: Yeah, I'd say Taco Deli is the best tacos in the world, to go get the cowboy taco. It's probably true for marketing and business in a lot of different things, one, there's a lot of different taco places in a lot of cities, and two, different taco places are good at different things. Rosita's on Riverside is good for pastor, and Pueblo Viejo has really good breakfast tacos. So each place kind of has its own strengths.

Roger Dooley: Great. Okay well, that's really good. Really, the place that I mentioned to you when we were talking via email before this is really a

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

no-name place. It's located inside a Texaco station. There's no sign on the outside that makes it look like anything other than typical sort of convenience store gas station, but there are always three ladies in there making fresh tacos to order, they're very efficient. Their clientele is great because it's this mix of construction workers and guys in suits and students. It's right across from our closest high school. Extremely popular, but you have to be in the know. Somebody has to clue you in because you would never know it was even there.

Anyway, Noah, so are you really good at picking employers or just lucky, or what? I mean, being early at Facebook and Mint, that was either some really good decision making on your part, or you got lucky.

Noah Kagan: Yeah. You know what, you always hear in interviews things, like it's all luck or it's not, I'm like, "I don't know." I think luck is how, I think there's definitely an equation of the harder you work, the more lucky you become, I definitely think that's a function, also some timing. What I think I've done well from those two jobs and also even to present with sumo.com, I've just gone and really explored my curiosity. I've gone really after problems that I personally want solved and I personally used. If you look at my career, Facebook I was like, "I'm using this all the time, I use it to communicate with friends, it's something that I'm using it all the time, let me go work on that." I did not know anyone there, but I knew that I really had a lot of problems and things I wanted to solve there.

Then Mint, I actually didn't even get the job there. The story always sounds nice on the highlight reel, but someone said, Dave McClure, was like, "Hey, come check out this product, see what you think." I was like, "Oh my God. Personal finance, I love. Everyone wants to save more money, and it's free. I'll do whatever it takes to get a job here." The founder, Aaron, actually said, "No, we can't hire you because you don't even know how to do marketing," which was true, and they were hiring a director of marketing.

I was like, "I know I don't know how to do marketing, but what are you trying to accomplish?" He said, "Well I'm trying to get a certain amount of users over a certain period of time." I said, "Well, let me pull together a plan

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

and show it to you, and if you think I can execute it, then you can pay me to execute that." Because I believed in the product and the vision and the mission of what they were solving so strongly that I even worked for free for that week putting together the plan the he ended up accepting and hiring me for.

Then even with Sumo stuff, we started AppSumo, I saw a Groupon and I was like, "Oh that's a really interesting way of distributing products." Right, like kind of a daily deal thing, and that's ... Seven years later, AppSumo is still doing well, and then sumo.com, we've seen this trend in technology where I'm like, "Man, there's so many damn ..." You know, for your website, Roger, I'm sure there's so many tools out there and there's all these different products and there's all these different prices for marketers. I was like, "Why aren't there just one place where I can just get all my tools and they're all good?" That's what sumo.com or used to be SumoMe, but now sumo.com has become. This is just really solving my own problems.

Roger Dooley: Right, well that's good. I want to get to AppSumo and Sumo, but jumping back to Mint, what did that plan look like? I know, I've seen some descriptions of this and you had some pretty specific goals in there that you ended up actually exceeding. What did the plan look like and how did you do it, because when you joined them, Mint was not particularly well-known, right?

Noah Kagan: Well, I mean it wasn't even public.

Roger Dooley: Okay, so yeah it was-

Noah Kagan: I mean there was nothing.

Roger Dooley: Nothing.

Noah Kagan: I mean I think, you now it's interesting a lot of-

Roger Dooley: This is a good lesson for our listeners too because, starting from nothing is always one of the hardest things to do, I mean, coming into someplace that's successful and making them more successful

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

that can be difficult as well, but not quite the same as starting from ground zero.

Noah Kagan: Completely. Well it's specifically interesting with hiring, I actually avoid the super successful companies, because generally the people you're hiring there, that came in later, aren't really affecting that growth or that success. They're kind of just riding their coattails and so I'm like "Who's created something that's moderately successful but I can tell that they've figured it all out themselves?" For Mint, it's funny I actually pulled up the old plan, I actually use a lot of the fundamentals that I invented or created or just figured out back then. Some of the major takeaways for your audience that were interesting Roger, is number one I started doing marketing, this is not really apparent, but I actually started doing the marketing for Mint nine months before we ever launched.

And I think that actually a very valuable lesson for all marketers out there is that there is a lot of time we try to start eating our garden right after we planted our seed. Meaning that we're like, "All right, I'm launched today, let me go to marketing.", and Mint planted our seed and started watering it and tending it for nine months. And so by the time we launched we had this pretty massive audience, and we understood our audience really well because we spent so much time preparing. I think people start their marketing way too late.

Roger Dooley: Well, that's probably natural tendency. I think it's like, "We've got to work on the product, we've got to get the product right.", and then finally, "Hey, they product is almost right. Okay, we need to think about marketing it now so that we can launch in a week or two." And obviously it's too late then.

Noah Kagan: It's too late, and you know why that is? I've actually understood it because through that myself, which is, it's safer and easier and less scary to work on the product than actually do the marketing because the marketing is the moment that people see you and they can judge you. It's the moment that you're kind of putting yourself outside your computer or your office or your building or your home, garage, whatever.

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

And people are like, "I don't like what you're doing.", and you have to actually face fear and you have to face rejection.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, well is there a conflict, you think, from a marketing standpoint because you hear about "Get the minimum viable product out there, even if it has warts and get some feedback and so on." At the same time as a marketer, you want to present the most polished products so the people like it and tell their friends about it and so on. How do you resolve that conflict?

Noah Kagan: I think the, not I think, what I've realized is that it's really just the, what is the actual problem you're solving? Because most people don't care about the nuances of everything else, they care about, "Okay, what's the problem and are you solving it in a way that actually matters to me or not?", and then dressing it up and things like that, evolve over time.

And what I've realized, for a business specifically, is that everything iterates and improves over time, right. But you don't win generally if you just sit in your closet or you sit at home, thinking in a closet, and just kind of wonder if this is what people are going to like. I think the more that you get out there and get that real feedback, the more you can iterate and improve.

One of my favorite examples is you look at the iPhone, the iPod, excuse me. If you look at that original thing, would you have ever imagined that that would take over the smartphone market and become almost a trillion dollar company? No. And I think that's true for product and marketing in general, like you've got to start it today, get that feedback and then keep improving and iterating over time. And not saying to go out and put out an ugly product, and lot of people will use that as an excuse, like, "What? I just really need it to be higher quality."

I've waited a lot of time and I've spent a lot of money making them the super high quality but the essence is, have I created the core thing that really, I can see if people want or not. And that's really what you need to focus on. I've found limitations of money and time and marketing and in

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

building the product really help people. Helped me a lot, and other people too.

Roger Dooley: So the limitations what, make you focus?

Noah Kagan: Limitations are creativity. Limitations create the best creativity, right. So if you can limit the amount of time you have or limit the amount of money you have, you will create creativity. I think when you have too much time or when you get too much money it's easier for you to just be kind of superfluous and just start wasting. So with a lot of the things I've done I'm like, "All right, well if I had to do this in a shorter period of time, like what would I have to do?", and that actually increases the amount of creativity that I can have.

So with Mint it was like, Aron gave me like, "Hey, you don't have that much budget, you don't have that much time." It ended up being six months to get a certain amount of users signed up for the product. I was like, "All right, I've got to figure that the hell out.", and maybe that was even too much time. But I generally see this as a major thing when a lot of companies where they extend the period of time and it almost always goes over too.

Roger Dooley: And money certainly is like that, where I think the expenses will expand to fill the amount of money available. I've seen that happen to lots of entrepreneurs where they either achieve some success and build up either a cash nest egg or they get some funding and immediately they start trying to do things the way they should be done and blow through it really quickly.

Noah Kagan: Yeah, I was hearing Nolan Bushnell say it, and I think there's definitely this laziness that experts get and the idea there is that, "Well, that's how it's always done.", and I think when you don't have an expert around, you'll actually be like, "Oh, well how do I invent something new that hasn't been done?", and that's when you're going to get more of the growth and success that you'll probably be surprised with.

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

Because a lot of people are like, "Well, you always have to do this marketing, and you always have to do this.", and it's like, if you're doing what everybody else is doing, I've always believed it will be harder for you to succeed. If everyone is doing the same ads, if everyone is buying Facebook ads and stuff, doing the same kind of stuff, how are you going to get ahead of them? And it's not by doing the damn same thing, it's being creative and figuring something else out.

Roger Dooley: So what did you do at Mint to build those users? Did you use content marketing or did you create some viral sensations? How did you manage to grow the list in advance of the product launch?

Noah Kagan: Yeah, so I'll give you a few of the framework that I still use to this day in every one of my businesses and projects. Number one, create a very specific goal with a really clear timeline. And people are like, "No, you've said that before.", and I'm like "Yeah, because that's what always works for me, and until that changes I'll keep saying it." So we had a goal, it was about a 100,000 users in around six to twelve months or six to nine months, I'm not sure the exact number. But most people ask marketers, they don't pick a specific goal and they don't put a specific timeline because that is the only way you can track if you're on progress or not, and then you can adjust things accordingly.

Number two, you map that out monthly. So you had your monthly goal and then I think Mint did a few things very well. Number one, we had a very specific target user. So we went out and interviewed people to understand which user are there a lot of, but also very targeted that they would demand this product, they would be begging for this product. And I think for us, specifically, that really helped. So our target customers were very specific two people. Number one, YOPO's, or young professionals, so anyone who just graduated college, their making 50,000 bucks, their probably a guy, their into tech and they kind of want to just understand their money because it's new to them.

So that was number one, and number two was personal finance blog readers. So these people are either penny-pinchers or their really

[The Brainfluence Podcast](#) with Roger Dooley

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

interested in how do they maximize their credit cards and the amount of money they're saving. And we interviewed a bunch of people, we just went and talked to them, not complicated. And that's something I still struggle with and I always want to improve on is, how can I get a tighter target market, because the more that you find that, I found that marketing is easier because you can find the easier and likely you can convince the easier because it's specifically for them.

It's kind of like our taco story to begin with. Like, if you have the pastor tacos which Rosita's does in Austin, it's very easy for you to market like, "We are the best pastor. Not chicken, we have it but not best at it.", and you get known for that and people will come to you for that.

Roger Dooley: Maybe not everybody knows what a pastor taco is, not to send us down a rabbit hole.

Noah Kagan: It's just like a red pork taco, it's delicious. And they have the best one because they specialize in that and then they promote that and that's what they are known for and they've had a lot of success. And I think when people try to get known for a lot of things, including myself when I was trying to get know for a lot, like you get know for almost nothing. So I'd say with Mint we picked very specific target customers and I think we had good approach to actually getting them. So we came up, what I've realized from Mint and especially with appsumo.com, our Groupon for geeks, what I've learned that was such a mind blowing moment for me was that the marketing that works at one company, won't work at another company. Because everyone is like, "You've got to do content marketing or you've got to start a podcast, you've got to do YouTube or you've got to buy Facebook ads.", and what worked at Mint really strongly was content marketing.

Like we, and I can talk about more of the strategy, but we did a lot of content marketing specifically and at AppSumo, I spent a month, or was it twelve months, excuse me, doing content marketing and it never drove us anything. So you have to understand the framework of "Pick my target,

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

have my goals and have options that you're going to consider for that marketing and see what one actually works."

So for us some of the specific tactics, because I know people always love hearing that, we went out and sponsored every single personal finance blog and a lot of the personal tech blogs for young people. We didn't go after the major sites because generally I think their overpriced and if people are advertising on their generally going to be market price, meaning you're not going to get a deal. So you've got to go to the smaller sites and kind of aggregate them. So you can use buzzsumo.com or google.com or even search on Twitter or whatever, it's not that hard, just make a list of all the ones that target those specific two customers you picked.

So we went and actually just gave them money, I think either between \$200 and \$500 and like, "Hey, can we just put a badge on your site?", so that was number one. Number two, we collected e-mails, so we knew that if we had an e-mail list that when we launched we'd be able to communicate with all these people. So kind of sumo.com, it's not even a shameless plug, like that wasn't around then but that would have been helpful.

Number three, surveys. Surveys were actually a really good way of finding people who would be our ambassadors. So when people would join our newsletter we'd be like, "Hey, can you take the survey?", and we'd learn about where do they hear about personal finance. Like, who's the person who tells them about personal finance, what tools are they using now and do they want to be a VIP? And so then we'd actually engage our VIP's with product updates, we'd do the town hall form, and remind you, this is seven years ago so I'm trying to remember everything. Maybe nine years by now. But surveys in general just really help us understand our audience and it helps us target loyalists, like our VIP's, that we can actually use as ambassadors to help spread our word.

Roger Dooley: Right, and that makes a huge amount of sense. Surveys, I think, can be really engaging and particularly if it's presented in sort of a fun way, more of a quiz than a, a marketing survey that engages people,

[The Brainfluence Podcast](#) with Roger Dooley

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

plus it tells you then how to market to those people. So it's kind of a double whammy.

Noah Kagan: Yeah, they tell you everything, it's crazy. The other thing that was interesting about our content marketing strategy specifically, so we did surveys, we did the sponsorships, then our content marketing, here's the stupidest and laziest way you can do content marketing, just go interview the people you want to meet or the people that you want their customers.

So I actually went on to personal finance bloggers and young professional bloggers and I was like, "Can I just interview and promote you on our site?", because I'm promoting them and it was a way for also to, you know, so I get content out there about interesting people and it is a function of how much you put into it. So I made really good articles about what they do with the personal finance and the they subsequently built a relationship and were able to connect with us so when we did launch, they would mention us.

Plus it started giving us content for the site. The second thing, you know, this is funny. I don't think people would expect-

Roger Dooley: So it was combination of influence or outreach plus content creation.

Noah Kagan: Exactly, exactly. I think you have to figure out in your content strategy two things, well there's two things that really helped us. Number one, what is your angle? So in our angle back then it was like what was in, you know, the capital one thing, what's in your wallet. So we went out to all these people, people that worked at the company and externally and was like, "What's in your wallet?", and that's what we made our blog post about.

So pick an angle that you get known for and be consistent with it. So every, I don't know, Tuesday and Thursday, so like for my podcast for instance, every Tuesday's a new episode. And people actually start getting

[The Brainfluence Podcast](#) with Roger Dooley

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

used to that, they start looking forward to Tuesdays. Kind of like your Sunday morning coffee and newspaper or bagel, I love bagels.

Be consistent in your marketing and that is a gr-, it's one of like, it's not secret but it's one of the quiet secrets to be successful. Be consistent and sustain it for some period of time and you will get results. So we put those out consistently.

The second thing that really helped me with Mint, and this is not something I think that people would ever guess, is that you hire people. And you're like, "Well, yeah, no, I've heard that before. Thanks, you're stupid.", but specifically with marketing, I actually hired someone to run the blog really early on before it was ever thought of to have interns or have a blog manager.

The point being is that find the marketing channel that shows promise and figure out a way that you could multiply your results from it. So I knew if I could do more content, I'd get more results. So I hired a guy, this guy named Viet who was in the industry, stopbuyingcrap.com, and I was like, "Viet, come up with a list of blog topics, let's try to prioritize them based on google keyword search.", because you could see the data back then, "And just go write all of them." And he did everything, and Viet was amazing, I loved the guy and we're still friends to this day.

But that actually was a significant game changer for me, because if you want to grow a business the only way you can do it is multiplying yourself, either through software or people. So Viet was one of the key things that helped me multiply the content on Mint, which you know, was one of the things that I actually use to be known for.

Roger Dooley: So Noah, let's talk about AppSumo a little bit, I'm actually a customer, I've bought some Scrivener stuff there, either the software or training or both, I'm not sure which. Actually Scrivener is such a learning curve, you could probably make money by giving Scrivener away, underwriting that and then just selling the training afterwards. But as you mentioned, it's like a Groupon for tech products where you see software

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

tools, digital content like graphics and all that kind of stuff, usually at a great discount. But I'm curious how you managed to get that going from ground zero, because there you've got sort of a double problem.

I know, I years years ago started a direct marketing business, back in the days of paper catalogs and one of the challenges was actually finding products, getting people to talk to you if you didn't have a customer base, and of course to get the customers you've got to have the products. So you're starting off with basically little or no mailing list so you can't necessarily make big product commitments or make vendors promises of what you're going to deliver to get those unique deals.

And I think that's one thing that sets AppSumo apart is the fact that the deals tend to be fairly unique. It's not something that they can just, a person can type into Google and find 15 other people offering that same deal. So how did you manage to solve that chicken and egg problem of getting the early customers and getting those early deals?

Noah Kagan: What I've realized in businessmen, so if you want to be on someone's show for a podcast or if you want a partnership or if you want to work with anyone, all you have to do, it's very simple, you just have to do the WIIFT. And I love the acronym, I use it all the time, "What's in it for them?", WIFT. And so many people approach me like, "Hey, can you like do this for me?", I'm like, "No, I don't know you and I don't owe you anything. Like, I only owe my parents coz they made me." And so, I think most people kind of neglect that and the whole point for me is how do you approach people, which is in their best interest and selfishly, you also get what you want and you're transparent about it. You're not trying to hide anything.

And so in the beginning of AppSumo, I approached Imgur and I say, "Hey, you have a product you're selling, it's probably selling fine. Why don't you give it to me, I'll sell it on myself for like a week and I'll do a deal on it. I'll sell it for-", I think he was selling it for 24, and I was like, "Hey, I'll pay you \$7 for every one I sell.", because it doesn't cost them anything, it's a

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

software. And he said, "That's fine.", because for him there's no downside, right, there's no risk.

I think I heard something recently where it's like, "How do you create no risk and a win for that person?", because for him there's no risk and if I sell it, he makes money. And it's for a short period of time so there's really not a lot of exposure of risk. And then it's like, "Well, how do I get people to buy it?", and so you have to work backwards. I always think marketing is basically three things. It's who is the customer, where are they and what's the problem you're solving?

So who's the customer for Imgur? It was Reddit, you know the hosting and everyone on Reddit uses hosting. Where are they? They're on Reddit. And the problem is they want to host stuff. So I just went on Reddit and funny enough, I actually just e-mailed the founders and I asked them out to breakfast and I said "Hey, can I get some free ads?", I actually just, "Hey I'm going to promote Imgur, it's a product your people love, I think they'd like the deal. Do you think you would give me ads for a week or two?", and they're just like "Sure, why not."

And so I think the point there is find the audience but also be willing to ask for things. And you've got to practice it in small ways. Like, I always tell people the coffee challenge, which is got to anytime you get a coffee or a tea or taco and just ask for 10% off. And the point is not about being a cheapskate, the point is just practicing asking, building that habit and getting comfortable asking.

I was talking to this multimillionaire a few weeks ago and he asked for a discount. I'm like, "Dude, you're rich. You're rich, why are you doing that?", he's like, "This is why I'm rich," and I was like "Oh, that guy is good." So yeah, that's where it started. The second strate-, it's gone through phases of how we've grown it and I think that part of the stories are interesting.

So we did that and it sold like 200. The second time I did a next deal, is I went to Lifehacker, the website, and I love Lifehacker and I said, "Well,

[The Brainfluence Podcast](#) with Roger Dooley

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

let me work backwards. How do I-", and this is an important part for marketing, "How do I get their audience? How do I get Lifehacker excited to promote me to their audience?" So what I did was two things. I e-mailed them and I said, "Hey." They didn't know me, I didn't have status or anything. I said, "Hey, if I get the best deals of Lifehacker and put them in a bundle, do you think you'd write about it?", meaning I'll go through Lifehacker and find the most popular articles you've written about software, call those companies up, put a deal together, a bundle of them and you guys can be the exclusive, even better, right, they get an exclusive to write about it.

And they said, "Well, we can't promise it, but okay, that seems pretty cool." So I've kind of built a relationship, I went through Lifehacker, hit up these companies like Remember the Milk, Evernote, MindMeister, RescueTime, I think one more. And I was like, "Hey, Lifehacker is probably going to promote this. Do you guys want to be in a bundle together and just give me like a decent price on your product and you get free promotion. You get free promotion and money, it doesn't cost you anything." And they're like, "Sure." So we did that and that was a really great lesson of just work backwards of what you're trying to accomplish.

And they we kept iterating the model from there. The next one we actually went to all those companies again, I asked someone else, I was like "Who do you think the company should be?" I actually made all those companies promote, right. So then I actually gave them marketing material and I said, "Hey, in this partnership, in this bundle why don't you just promote it to your unpaying customers or your old customers or your free customers and see if it's a way they'll actually buy from you? Coz now it' in a bundle." So those companies then went an multiplied and promoted it to their customers about the new deals.

Roger Dooley: And in each case I think the theme is applying that "What's in it for them?", not going to folks, hat in hand saying, "Hey, I'm trying to get going here, I need your help." You're showing how you could help them and give them something that, you know, they don't have at the

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

moment. And it may not be, in the case with software companies, it might not be their full list price but in the other hand if the cost is zero, it's money that they didn't have before. And same for Lifehacker and so on.

Noah Kagan: Yeah, I mean, it applies for all aspects of business, and this is just one way of doing marketing but it's way of running your life and running lot of stuff. So like for you, Roger, let's say we didn't have any relationship any I wanted to be on your show. Right, most people will be like, either they have their assistant or some random person e-mail you like, "Hey, please put me on because I want attention.", and you're like "I don't know you."

So I think you have to approach people with wit. I think three options is like, if I didn't know you whatsoever, I would say "Hey, Roger, you don't know me but I have my own audience that I'd love to promote your show to, how does that sound?" And you'd be like, "That sounds great.", and so it's like, "Well, why don't we do an interview and I'll promote it to my audience?", and that actually builds a relationship. Or secondly, I could go research all your episodes, find the most popular ones and the propose like, "Roger, this has been your two most popular episodes, what if I got you this guest or what if I found you this content related to those so that you could have another popular episode?" You're like, "That sounds great."

And so it's more of working backwards from how do you get what you want from helping everybody else get what they want.

Roger Dooley: Right, that all sounds really good too, Noah, so we could work out the details of that after the show here. No, it's definitely true, and I've found that because I've certainly had really prominent authors on the show and a Nobel Prize winner and whatnot, and they weren't doing it to be nice to me, they were doing it because they had a book to promote or they had some message that they wanted to get out for whatever reason. So definitely works.

And one thing I've noticed about your communications with AppSumo, I don't know about SumoMe but I'm guessing their probably

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

quite similar, is that you use a very informal style, it's very conversational, very friendly, you talk about tacos, you talk about just sort of random little interjections of thoughts that don't really seem relevant to the marketing message but create this very conversational tone. And I'm assuming that's by design, but I'm curious how you hit on that?

Noah Kagan: Yeah. I never wanted to do it, to be straight, I hate e-mail. I don't think anyone loves getting more e-mail, so AppSumo was a Groupon for geeks, we're a newsletter business. And then sumo.com is we help people grow their e-mail list. My friend Neville from Kopywriting Kourse, with two K's, actually was like, "Let me just e-mail your people something fun." And he e-mailed it and it was the first time we almost made five figures sending e-mail. Because I never wanted to bug people, I thought they don't want to hear from you. And it was actually one of the big lessons is that if people like you they want to hear from you more. It's like your wife, if you like your wife you don't want to hang out with her every few days, you want to hang out with her every day, or your husband. Right, you're like, "You're cool, let's keep hanging out."

And that's true for your customers and I think people are a little nervous about that so how do you test it maybe a smaller way, like maybe you send an e-mail to 10% of your audience every few days, and you'd be shocked that more people want to hear from you more often than you think. Assuming you're not sending them crappy stuff.

The other things that were interesting about the way we look at our Sumo e-mails, just in general, and even from my personal e-mails, is one, they should be valuable whether the person buys it or not. They should get something out of it whether they buy or not. Number two, it should be funny. It doesn't have to be funny for funnies sake, but I think if people have fun and get something out of e-mail whether they buy or not, they're going to appreciate your brand and you as a person no matter what. So that's number two.

And number three, I will say at the end of it, most people kind of, sometimes when we hire writers they try to be super funny or they try to be

[The Brainfluence Podcast](#) with Roger Dooley

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

too crazy, and it's like, that's not the point. The point ultimately is, we're also trying to sell. It's like this is an e-mail that's trying to motivate someone to make a purchase. Because generally I noticed with e-mails, there's three types of people, there's the ones that are going to, you could literally send an e-mail, like "I don't like you. Here's the link to go buy it.", and there's people that just buy it.

Then there's the people who are like, "I just do it just because I'm a hater. I'm a troll, and whatever anyone sends, I don't care. But I want to see it, but I'll never buy anything coz I hate them." I don't know if you have certain brands like that, I do, I'm like "Oh, I hate those guys." But I still, kind of at least sometimes want to see what they're doing.

And then the middle group is who you're trying to appeal to. It's the 60 to 80% who are on the fence so you have to educate them, show them some value and then convince them why, if they're the right person, to make that purchase. And I think people kind of miss out on that.

Roger Dooley: Before I forget, I mentioned that you have a new podcast. Why don't you tell us about why did you decide to do a podcast and what kind of, we'll listen to a few of them, but why don't you explain what your focus is, what kind of content you have and so on?

Noah Kagan: Yeah, I'm still exploring it. I think, Roger, one of the biggest things I've realized for myself and everyone out there is I want everyone to love what they work on. I want everyone to be excited to be excited to get to do what they do every day, and get paid for it. And for me, promoting people that I love or exploring topics that I love is just something I'm interested in and now I'm just recording when I talk to people and putting it out there. Or just different ideas, so like I tried waking up at 05:00 a.m. and I put that out there. Or I had lunch with the founder of 1-800 Contacts and he just had some amazing stories, so I think I got to this moment where I was like "Man, I really hate that I can never listen again to certain conversations or certain thoughts that I've had and think that there will be other people out there that do it."

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

The moment that I had the super clarity about that I wanted to go do the podcast is, and this was a specific question, "What would I work on even if I didn't get paid? Like, what would I work on even if I didn't get paid?" And it was really fascinating because I was like, "Man, I would do these podcasts for free.", and I do. I'm not doing any sponsorships or whatever, and it was just really satisfying to realize that. And I think that that doesn't just apply to my, it applies to what anybody's doing in their professional life.

And so it's been amazing man, like I will tell you, it's been a great conduit where because I'm doing it, it's opened up other aspects of my life and open up opportunities to meet people, to think about things. It kind of is like, gotten the gears going in so many different parts that I've really been appreciative of.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, I've been at it for a little while now and I find the same thing. You get to talk to interesting people and sometimes you may not think a conversation is going to be all that interesting but you say, "Okay, I'm going to do it.", and you end up finding out some really interesting ideas as either you read the book beforehand or as you engage the person in conversation. It ends up being a great experience, and not just for you but for the listeners a well. So I think you're going to have fun with it and I've enjoyed listening to the ones, I guess you just had one with a restaurant too that was really interesting.

Noah Kagan: Yeah, I was going to Chicago and because I have the podcast, Noah Kagan Presents, I was like, "Let me hit up my favorite restaurant in the world.", which is Alinea. And I was like, "hey, I'm doing this show, I'm going to promote it.", I don't have a ton of people, you know, it's decently sized. And I was like, "Hey, I just want to share your story more.", because you know, that's what, I don't want to say I live for, but I love doing.

And I created that opportunity, you know I learned some valuable lessons from him. Like from him, he shared a lesson about if you ever meet someone that's amazing, or find someone that you're impressed with their

[The Brainfluence Podcast](#) with Roger Dooley

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

work, do whatever it takes to work with them. And that was a great one, or another thing we talked about was we limit ourselves. He's like, I was like "Do you ever get tired of great food?", he was like, "Well, do you ever get tired of good sex?", I was like, "No."

And I thought that was just really interesting insight. So I'm realizing how much more I'm learning. And so, anyone can start in whatever kind of area they're interested in. It doesn't have to be a podcast. From a marketing perspective, I'll tell you, Roger, I've actually found YouTube as a much more interesting marketing channel and opportunity. And the podcast is definitely, it's a different audience and it's different level of relationship you create with that audience.

Roger Dooley: Once I get past 24 hours in a day, that's when I'll get serious about my YouTube channel. We're just about out of time here, Noah. Let me remind our audience that we're speaking with Noah Kagan, head taco chef at AppSumo and SumoMe, or actually sumo.com now, and the host of the Noah Kagan podcast. Noah, how can people find you and your content online?

Noah Kagan: Yeah, well can I give one more tip, Roger, do we have time for that?

Roger Dooley: Oh sure, absolutely.

Noah Kagan: So here's one thing, so people like yourself just said, you had a really interesting point, like "I don't have enough time." And everyone have the same amount of time, and the question then becomes how do you multiply your time, or how do you get more time? And so from a marketing perspective one thing that I've been doing lately and I'm starting to share it more because I'm like, "Holy-moly, this is like really damn good.", is I call it content multiplication. And so what content multiplication is, instead of taking one idea and just putting it on your blog post, make one idea and multiply it across every single medium, respectively.

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

So for example, we brought sumo.com for \$1,5 million. And the content multiplication is, basically I create a YouTube video of it first, then I take that transcript and create a podcast, that podcast, I hire a writer to make a blog post and then I hire another writer to help create a guest post somewhere else. And so that one topic and different mediums can now spread much more significantly. And then I'll post it all on social media.

So I just want people to start planting the seed about content multiplication and instead of always trying to come up with new things, take the things that are already popular, like let's say for you Roger, you had a popular podcast episode, the most popular one. Take that, make YouTube, make a blog post, make guest posts, do social on it, and maybe every six months take that podcast and put it back to the top of the list. Or do an episode talking about that podcast so you're multiplying the results of something that you know is working.

Roger Dooley: Great stuff, great ideas. I've done a little bit of that but not nearly enough and that's really a great lesson, because obviously what you're saying now is that if you put the effort into creating this initial piece of content and perhaps talk to somebody that you simply just cannot call up on the phone every day and chat with, it's a great way to leverage that and actually invest fewer resources in the additional content, than would if you just started creating stuff new. So good stuff.

So how can people find you Noah?

Noah Kagan: If you're looking for any of the marketing tools or products that we've built, appsumo.com, Groupon for geeks, sumo.com which is all the free marketing tools we've built, and then for myself if you're listening to this on your phone, if you want to hear more about my idea, Noah Kagan Presents podcast or okdork.com, which is the blog put all my ideas out on.

Roger Dooley: Great and we will link to all those places on the show notes page, at rogerdooley.com/podcast and we'll have a text version of our conversation there as well.

Noah Kagan's Growth Hacking Secrets

Noah, thanks for being on the show and there's so much left to explore because I do want to hear the story about sumo.com, that's got to be a great one. We'll hold that one in reserve for the next time.

Noah Kagan: Okay, anytime you want, man.

Thank you for joining me for this episode of the Brainfluence Podcast. To continue the discussion and to find your own path to brainy success, please visit us at RogerDooley.com.