

Subject: Bootstrapping Series #1 - How do you start a product biz from scratch?
From: "Amy & Alex (30x500)" <teachers@slash7.com>
Date: 7/22/2014 12:53 PM
To: erica@simonsstudios.com

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Hi Erica,

You got this email because you just signed up to get the 7 part bootstrapping guide from Amy and Alex. This is part 1 of 7. If you don't want to get these emails, no problem. You can unsubscribe down at the bottom.

So let's get to part 1 - are you ready to kick ass?

I kicked off 2014 with an [essay](#) about having a "Fuck This!" moment. In that essay, I asked a pointed question:

What do you want to have accomplished by this time in 2015?



That essay was a a 3,000+ word education bomb I dropped on ya, a lot of philosophy and reflection and stories and examples. And believe me, all those things are important. But they're important only because they help you act.

It's *acting* that delivers results. So, let's talk action:

You've had your "Fuck This!" Moment (FTM). You're ready to make big things happen over the next year.

That means you should focus on making *small things* happen in the next 90 days.

Why? Because year-length goals are too big, too long, too distant:

- First, it seems like you've got plenty of time. Which leads to 335 days of "I got this!" followed by 30 days of self-loathing.
- Second, if you want to make \$15k by July 22, 2015, that doesn't really tell you a damn thing about how to make your first \$50 three months from now.

But 90 days... that's on the horizon. That's soon. But not *too* soon. It's just enough time to research, write, make, and even ship a [Tiny Product](#).

A 90-day mini-goal makes it very clear that...

- You can't afford to take *unnecessary risks*, or waste time and effort. That's how you end up right back where you started. F that!

- You can't *wait to deliver value*, you can't *wait* to make a sale. The longer you wait, the more your motivation suffers. F that!
- You can't waste weeks or months (or years!) working on something in isolation, without eager customers *clamoring* for you to "Shut up and take my money!" F that!

With 3 months on the clock, every little thing you do must be effective at bringing you closer to your goal. That's the kind of constraint that creates success.

So what CAN you do in 3 months?

You can:

- Find an audience who values & pays for solutions
- Figure out what they really need... that you can make for them
- Create way to reach them, persuade them
- Outline, produce, and ship a Tiny Product to kill their pains

And that, my FTM friend, is exactly what you're going to read about over the next few emails. (Surprise, it also happens to be the very foundation of our 30x500 workshop. :)

Now that you're on board with a 90 Day Sprint... what's next?

Keep your inbox peeled for the next email in this series that Alex and I have prepped for you:

"Why an idea is a terrible thing to base a business on"

It'll hit your inbox tomorrow!

- Amy

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228 Park Ave S #14450 New York, New York 10003 United States

Subject: Bootstrapping Series #2 - Screw Ideas before they screw you
From: "Amy & Alex (30x500)" <teachers@slash7.com>
Date: 7/23/2014 5:01 AM
To: erica@simonsstudios.com

Want to read this email in your web browser? [Click here.](#)

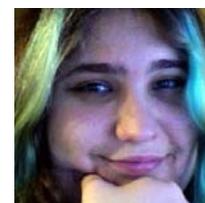
Heyyyy, Erica!

You got this email because you just signed up to get the 7 part bootstrapping guide from Amy and Alex. This is part 2 of 7. If you don't want to get these emails, no problem. You can unsubscribe down at the bottom.

Now, on to part 2 - why your biz "ideas" are setting you up for failure.

So, Erica, are you waiting for a great idea? Are you looking for ways to come up with one? Are you already working on one?

If so: Stop!



An idea is a terrible thing to build a business on.

A "Great Idea™" will make you its bitch.

Everything you do will become about the idea: You'll worry that it'll get stolen. That somebody else will launch the idea before you do. That the idea is not good enough. That it's too big, or too small. That you'll finish your product and ship it and find out that... it was the wrong idea.

And will anybody pay for it, anyway?

If you're serious about getting a product out the door in 2014... that's not gonna work. There's no room for that in your new 90 Day Strategy. You simply don't have the time to sit, wait, fret, hope.

And you don't have to.

Some folks try to patch the "ideabitch" issue by saying: *Don't have just one idea... have lots of ideas!* But that still puts the idea at the center of your universe. You become slave to the idea of the Idea: How do you have them? How do you know if they're any good? The problem remains.

The solution is to put ideas in their place. Which, by the way, is "dead last."

Here's how:

In 30x500, you don't start with an idea. You start with something better: an understanding of your (potential) customers. And a step-by-step process to

get their eyeballs, their attention, the interest... and their wallets.

FIRST, you learn how to find out what your audience already *needs* and wants. From research, from volume, from observed behavior — not from guesswork or supposition or "One client told me that..."

THEN you learn how to systematically generate solutions — product concepts! — from these needs and wants. You'll produce a ton of them, none so "Great" it can't be discarded. These are not ideas; they don't come from inspiration or the inexplicable firing of neurons; they come from an application of a logical system that matches up pains and solutions. No burst of genius required.

THEN you learn to take these concepts and write *words* that make people want to buy. And you start using them, in blog posts and landing pages.

Finally, you turn THAT into a product.

These steps are themselves a funnel — they start out broad and narrow at each step:

1. **Research:** Gobs of research.
2. **Generate:** Many product concepts from that research. (Easily 20-40.)
3. **Write:** 10+ pitches for the most viable of those concepts.
4. **Choose:** One pitch. Use viability criteria to pick the pitch that you can build the fastest, the best, that helps your customers the most.
5. **Build.**

And when you build, you build knowing that you have the evidence, the research, the connections, the clear thinking, and the special insight into your customer base that you need. **You'll be confident that you can build something small, fast, and useful that your customers will already want.**

The entirety of [30x500](#) is designed to get you to this point. And you can use it again any time, any where. On demand.

So a "A Great Idea" can never trap you again.

Stay tuned cuz the email in this series is a deep dive into one of these steps — the "write a sexy pitch people can't resist" step:

"How to write so wallets will open themselves"

Cheers,

Amy

PS — What does the result of this 30x500 process look like? Well, [check out this service](#) created by alum Robert Williams. He took 30x500, [applied what he learned to create Workshop](#), and hit at high 4-figures monthly recurring revenue within 5 months. Yeah, man!

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228 Park Ave S #14450 New York, New York 10003 United States

Subject: Bootstrapping Series #3 - Your selling sucks...and you can blame flight attendants.
From: "Amy & Alex (30x500)" <teachers@slash7.com>
Date: 7/24/2014 5:01 AM
To: erica@simonsstudios.com

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Hi Erica,

You got this email because you just signed up to get the 7 part bootstrapping guide from Amy and Alex. This is part 3 of 7. If you don't want to get these emails, no problem. You can unsubscribe down at the bottom.

Now, on to part 3 - why flight attendants are to blame for one of your worst selling habits.

Editor's Note:

Today, let's talk about earplugs, parking lot sellers, flight attendants, "validation," and all the shitty selling habits they teach us from practically toddlerhood.



But first...I want to introduce my partner-in-crime, Alex Hillman. The rest of this email was written by Alex...operative word being "was". As in, *was* written by Alex. And then, uhhh, I edited the crap out of it and by "edit" I mean "now it sounds like I wrote it". I'm sorry Alex.

You'll be hearing more from Alex later in this series, and you should definitely remember that Alex is here cuz he's a great teacher and my full partner...I'm just a terrible editor.

Enjoy!

A while back, Amy and a few of our friends went to a monster truck rally for the first time.

Sidenote: these friends immigrated from Siberia, and in their first year, they really took on the task of "Doing America." Better than most of us lifers. Hence the monster trucks!



While they were walking through the parking lot, Amy heard someone yelling:

"EARPLUGS! EARPLUGS for ONE DOLLAR"

As if he were selling popcorn or peanuts or ice cold water at a baseball game.

Amy didn't buy earplugs. In fact, she thought the earplug guy was weird. Who buys earplugs in a parking lot? Smart People In The Know, apparently, because it turns out that monster truck shows are REEEALLY LOUD.

So, let's review:

1. Earplug guy missed out on Amy's money
2. Amy's ears were ringing for two days

Who wins in this situation? Nobody.

What went wrong?

Well, traditional startup advice says: Maybe Earplug Guy didn't validate.

What if, instead of shouting "EARPLUGS, EARPLUGS ONE DOLLAR", that guy was validated his idea by talking to people about his product:

"The best feature of my product is..."

"It's just like AirBnB, but for..."

"My product allows you to..."

"It's the best..."

Maybe he should've run some Google Ads and funneled people to those phrases on a web page, and analyzed the click-through rates. Maybe he should've said, "These earplugs will protect your ears."

Would that have made a difference? Nope.

Earplug Guy made the same mistake that we've all been hard-wired to make:

His "pitch" left ALL the intellectual work to the reader/listener.

Amy isn't a hermit. She knows what earplugs are for. She also values her hearing. But Amy doesn't live in the Nascar Belt -- so she had no idea that Monster Trucks = Deafening. She didn't know she had a problem. She wasn't looking for a solution.

So no matter how many ways Earplug Guy might talk about the features and benefits of his earplugs, Amy never would have bought them. In her reality, parking lot earplugs made no sense at all... so she just kept walking.

Even though she would have benefited from those earplugs.

That's why the word — and the process — "validation" is horseshit.

According to the startup "gurus," here's how you're supposed to go about it:

1. Write a sales pitch like the above — "Earplugs, \$1! The best earplugs! Blocks more sound than our top competitors! Nice soft foam! Molds to your ear!"
2. Put it on a page.
3. Drive traffic with ads. Talk about it to people. Hold "customer interviews."
4. Wait for... sales? And when they don't come...
5. Give up. Failed experiment.

The problem: when you pitch this way — whether you set up a page and write about your product this way or "get out of the building" and conduct "customer interviews" (customer interviews, by the way, aren't an effective way to do research. More on that in an upcoming email.) — you're not "validating" a damn thing because you're not *communicating* a damn thing.

You're just shouting "Earplugs, earplugs, really nice earplugs, better earplugs, the best earplugs, they really block sound, One Dollar!" into the crowd.

Nobody's going to pause, reflect, and think: "Wait. He's selling earplugs. Does that mean something? Do I need to think about earplugs?"

Sadly, this pathetically ineffective pitch is what comes naturally.

Because that's how 99% of the world 'communicates' with us:

"We apologize for any inconvenience..." and "Your call is important to us...please stay on the line for our next available representative..." and "Please use caution when opening the overhead bins, as heavy articles may have shifted around during the flight..."

Every time I'm on a plane, I hear the words that the flight attendant says. But do they make me think, "Gosh, I was going to reach for heavy articles with impunity but now I will be careful because they may have shifted"?

Nope.

Real humans don't talk to each other this way, because humans don't listen to each other this way. So it's no surprise that startups who business-speke and jargon their way through "idea validation" fail. Over and over and over. And then they claim that they learned something about the product, or the market, when all they really learned is that nobody's listening.

They're not testing what the audience needs & wants.

If you want your customers to cry, "Shut up and take my money!"...

...you're going to need to unlearn this terrible habit. You want to pitch so that people will listen, and respond, and most importantly you want them take action with their wallets.

Forget features. Forget benefits. Forget talking about your product.

In our next email, you're to learn how to write a persuasive, effective, human pitch, 30x500 style.

And you really don't want to miss that!

-Alex

PS — If you want to sneak a peek ahead in the process and get a little practice, take a few minutes to study these pitch pages (both created by 30x500 alumni): [Sketching with CSS](#), [Egghead](#)

What do these two pages have in common? *Hit reply and let us know what you notice!*

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Subject: Bootstrapping Series #4 - the two elements of a crazy effective pitch

From: "Amy & Alex (30x500)" <teachers@slash7.com>

Date: 7/25/2014 5:01 AM

To: erica@simonsstudios.com

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Hi Erica,

You got this email because you just signed up to get the 7 part bootstrapping guide from Amy and Alex. This is part 4 of 7. If you don't want to get these emails, no problem. You can unsubscribe down at the bottom.

Now, on to part 4 - how to talk about your product so that people will listen (even if the product doesn't exist yet).

Did you catch the little exercise at the end of yesterday's email?

Take a few minutes to study these pitch pages (both created by 30x500 alumni): [Sketching with CSS](#) and [Egghead](#). What do these two pages have in common? Hit reply and let us know what you notice!



If you haven't already, go ahead and take a look now. It's okay, I'll wait right here!

...

...

So, what did you notice about these two pages?

And, just out of curiosity...did you take any notes?

We'll come back to your observations in just a minute...

But first, let's recap this series so far and remind ourselves what you've learned:

- You know why you should shrink your 1-year goal of having a successful product business down to a **90 day goal that you will actually act on.**
- You're wise to the warnings of starting your biz with a "great idea". You don't want that idea to make you it's bitch! **You'll start by figuring out what an audience needs & wants.**

- You're aware (probably painfully aware, now) that idea validation is a load of horseshit, and that a mix of self-centered, robotic communication habits we've learned our entire lives are even worse. **You need a persuasive, effective, and human way of communicating with your audience.**

These 3 things go hand-in-hand: the achievable baby steps, the research, the audience, and the persuasion.

In 30x500, you learn how to start building that connection by writing effective pitches. And that's also what I'm going to be sharing with you in this email today!

So why a pitch? And what exactly makes for an effective pitch?

In this email, you're going to learn two of the most valuable pitch-writing techniques that we cover in 30x500.

To be clear, I'm not talking about an elevator pitch, which is a 15 second description of you and your product. Because once again: that's all about you.

"The only way to get somebody to do something is by giving them what they want."

- Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

It's true that you **can't make a sale without a customer**, but you can absolutely **make a sale without a product**. A great pitch can be used to grow your audience, and even to make pre-launch sales, before you even start building your product.

A great product is important, but it's not the critical piece. The critical piece is your would-be customer's willingness to buy. That's where a killer pitch comes in.

Sidebar: I shouldn't have to say this, but don't be a dick

Amy and I never, ever suggest that our students do anything shady or "growth-hacker-y."

Many of our students have succeeded with pitch-first development and made THOUSANDS (sometimes tens of thousands) of dollars before building the actual product.

Trust takes work to build, and is easy to destroy. Never take people's money unless you have a solid plan to follow through (and are fully confident you can and will).

Got it? Good.

So, let's talk about the 2 most critical parts & techniques for writing pitches that have your audience flinging cash at you.

Open these links up in separate tabs or windows if you haven't already: [Sketching CSS](#) from Sean Fioretto and [Egghead](#) Joel Hooks. Seriously. Do it. I'll wait.



Technique #1 - Who's starring in this movie?

Quick Exercise: Search for how many times the word "I" appears on the Sketching with CSS page.

I get TWO mentions of "I"; and one of them is in a customer testimonial.

Compare that to the THIRTY ONE of times "you" occurs on the same page.

The first element of an effective pitch is: The reader is the star. The pitch is about them, their abilities, their problems, their desires, and their goals. The pitch needs to describe the things that they want to achieve, but can't.

It's not about the product — because until you have a compelling reason, you won't care "what the product is." It's not about you — it doesn't matter who you are, even if you're internet famous, which Sean will tell you he most certainly isn't. [Internet fame won't help you sell shit.](#)

It's not that people think your product sucks, or even distrust you. It's just that the nature of humanity is one of self-interest. People are so busy and overloaded worrying about their life and their problems that they simply don't have time to think about you, and what you want. Or your product. Or its features. Or its benefits.

They don't have the mental resources to pay attention to *everything*.

When you make your reader the star, you cater to that natural self interest.

Besides... they're more interesting than a book or piece of software.

Technique #2 - Prove you understand them

Remember that *"Shut up and take my money!"* effect that I talked about in the last email? I don't know if you noticed, but that's a cry for help. And relief.

How often do you read a product description and think,

"That's cool, maybe I'll buy that at some point."

And then how often do you close the tab, never to return? "Cool" doesn't equal sales.

Compare that to when you're really stuck in the mire, and have been thrashing for a while. Think about the feeling of finding a solution. The relief of even knowing that relief is possible.

How quickly do you reach for your wallet, then?

Take a look at the opening excerpt from the pricing page for [Egghead](#).

Professionals invest in their skills.

There are only so many hours in a day. You've got deadlines to make. To stay relevant means you must constantly learn.

Knowledge is scattered across the internet. It is buried in thick books. Hidden in documentation alongside features you will never need to use. Crammed into 6 hours of boring Powerpoint style online courses.

- ❓ What's important?
- ❓ How can I get from 0 to productive as quickly as possible?
- ❓ How are other professionals successfully shipping software?
- ❓ **Am I wasting my time?**

Time is precious.

As a professional, you know what it takes to **stay current** with fast moving web development technology. You also know that there are only so many hours in a day.

What if you could stay current without wasting your time?

The second element of an effective pitch is an accurate and vivid description of the reader's pain.

It makes them feel, "Yes, that's it exactly! You get it!" — and that catches their attention. That makes them begin to hope that you can help. Then you can show them how you can help and why they should trust you.

This is the opposite of an elevator pitch, that talks about the product, or your industry experience. It's also the dead opposite of "Earplugs, One Dollar!"

A great pitch isn't limited just to selling products. The pitch keeps on giving: You can use it to scope your product, figure out how to grow your product, generate awesome marketing content, and a lot more.

And a pitch will never make you it's bitch. It's not about being cool; it's not about a thrill; it's about serving people, helping them.

So... how do you get the elements of an effective pitch without having "ideas"?

At the beginning of this series, you learned the danger of starting a business with a "great idea". If you're not supposed to start with ideas, how do you decide what to pitch?

The accurate, vivid pains — where do you get them?

Research, my friends. The answer is unsexy, but damn, it works every time. To sex it up a little bit, we call our 30x500 process "Sales Safari". But it's research. A very unusual way of doing research, but still, research.

In 30x500, you learn our special process to use the internet to uncover festering pains. And then you can follow our step-by-step process for wielding that knowledge like a laser... to write pitches that describe reader problems with precision, grabbing their attention, and opening their wallets!

In the next email, Amy's either going to try to make research sound exciting (knowing full well that we already used up the monster truck story for this series), OR she's going to show you the difference between our research process, and ineffective "research" like customer interviews.

Either way, I promise that when you see how Sales Safari actually removes all of the guesswork and risk from launching your business, you'll wonder why you hadn't thought to do it sooner.

-Alex

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228 Park Ave S #14450 New York, New York 10003 United States

Subject: Bootstrapping Series #5 - customer interviews... #*\$(@!
From: "Amy & Alex (30x500)" <teachers@slash7.com>
Date: 7/28/2014 6:00 AM
To: erica@simonsstudios.com

Want to read this email in your web browser? [Click here.](#)

Hi Erica,

You got this email because you just signed up to get the 7 part bootstrapping guide from Amy and Alex. This is part 5 of 7. If you don't want to get these emails, no problem. You can unsubscribe down at the bottom.

Now, on to part 5 - why even hearing the word "customer interviews" make me want to hurl.

Let me tell you a not-so-secret, Erica:

I'm a delicate (if foul-mouthed) little snowflake. Wanna make me feel nauseous with just a word? Dress up as a clown or send me a video clip of The Muppets. Or just whisper in my ear:



- pivot
- growth hacker
- lean
- validation...
- or the latest addition, "customer interview"

Uggggggh.

The more craziness and failure and repetition I see alongside a given word, the more physically ill it actually makes me. Yes, yes, I know, totally fucking precious, but it's a fact. Hang out with me and you will hear "*that makes me nauseous*" way more than is statistically probable.

And **lots** of people have been talking to me lately about Customer Interviews and it's driving me crazy, because it's an idea that has grabbed tremendous mindshare and yet it is also COMPLETE BULLSHIT.

Here's why Customer Interviews are good for nothing except increasing my Pepto Bismol intake:

They're called 'customer interviews' but the *actual approach* is to interview people who have *not* yet given you money, and are ergo not customers, but maybe, maybe potential customers. They've got no skin in the game, no frame of reference to build on.

You rely on your interviewees being experts at research & development -- you trust them to identify their own pains with unflinching honesty and

accuracy. To remember, in essence, exactly what they do, all day, every day.

And to be willing to tell you about it.

And to be able to imagine a world *unlike the world they inhabit*, with a different workflow, different tools, different outlook, different life.

You rely on them to accurately identify the causes of the pains they *do* identify.

You rely on them to be wholly rational.

They must not care about your feelings at all — to not be, in fact, the kindly people they must be to accept your interview request — because they will be too friendly, too supportive, too optimistic, too nice... which of course results in worthless data.

You need them to be people who always do exactly what they say they will.

In short, you need Magical Super Business Princes and Princesses. They have to be able to feel the pea from beneath 7 downy mattresses, and be able to extemporize eloquent treatises on the subject, AND also not give a shit about hard-wired pro-social human behavior.

I may be a snowflake, but that, my friends, is a *unicorn*.

PS: Unicorns aren't real.

The ugly narwhal reality (narwhality) is...

- Almost all productive people are far too busy to remember everything they do each day because they're Getting Shit Done.
- Almost all people are numb to their own pain.
- Their most dangerous problems aren't the minor irritations that sting, but the dark shadows that lurk below the surface, unsaid, unnoticed, unmanaged.

And while many people will say, "Sure, I'd pay for that" --- few will do it. Even if you ask for money right then [*a popular revision to the Customer Interview approach*], they may cut you a small check out of awkwardness and -- this is key -- because you're in the room with them, they actually believe in it.

But when you're gone... the subtle web of social obligation and self-deception is gone, too.

So: People are locked into their existing reality, they can't accurately identify their pains, or their cause -- or when they do, they identify minor irritations and not bigger problems... AND you can't trust what they say.

This, my friends, is why the smartest business minds have said:

"If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses."
— Henry Ford

"It's not the consumers' job to figure out what they want." — Steve Jobs

"A public-opinion poll is no substitute for thought." — Warren Buffett

And it's also why, when research psychologists design an experiment, they almost always hide the note-taker, the measuring equipment, and sometimes just leave a person in a room, alone:

If you want to know what a person really values, what they really suffer, what they really do, what they really pay for... don't listen to their words, observe their *actions*.

That, by the by, is the field of ethnography: Watching how people use tools and processes and how they interact. (**Watching, not asking.** When you ask, you risk a [Margaret Mead](#).)

Ethnography is the foundation for Sales Safari, the boring-but-amazingly-effective customer research approach Alex and I have designed.

So.

This is a long email, I know. And a lot of the emails I've been sending you (including this one) are about Why X Doesn't Work, not how to *do* it the *right* way.

Well, this one's about Why Customer Interviews Don't Work... and it's also about how to do it the *right* way.

I'm about to link you to a video that will *show* you how to start doing things the right way.

This video is a bit old, and outdated. (That's why I'm giving it away.) Since then, we've made Sales Safari a million times more concrete, step-by-step, and systematic. Based on what we *saw* our students do when we *watched* them use the old process.

But, even though it's a bit outdated, the research process shown in this video is already eons ahead of "ask them."

[Give it a watch and let me know what you think!](#)

Yours, in pepto pink,

Amy

PS — This next bit won't make much sense until *after* you watch the video above, so go ahead and click that link, then come back.

...
...
...

Fact: There *are* candles that are safe from cats. They're remote controlled, battery operated, flickering LED candles. They look almost perfectly real, they cost \$30 each, and I own 8 of them (along with 3 cats).

This shit WORKS.

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228 Park Ave S #14450 New York, New York 10003 United States

Subject: Bootstrapping Series #6 - what if I'm a "nobody"? Who's going to buy from me?
From: "Amy & Alex (30x500)" <teachers@slash7.com>
Date: 7/29/2014 6:00 AM
To: erica@simonsstudios.com

Want to read this email in your web browser? [Click here.](#)

Hey Erica,

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Now, on to part 6 - where you learn our system for building an audience, no matter how unfamous you are.

"Oh, well, it was easy for Amy to launch Freckle and her classes and ebooks and stuff. She's *internet famous!* Her husband/business partner...he's *internet famous* too. And Alex runs a coworking space known all over the world. Nobody knows who I am, this stuff can't work for me!"



We hear this a lot. Let's talk about it.

Quickly now... How do you know Amy? No, really. How do you know her?

Don't just skip your eyes to this paragraph. Pause, answer the question for yourself.

Can you remember?

Amy's been writing online about tech, design, and biz topics since... 1998. Yeah, that's right. **1998**. She ran a daily Mac news & commentary site, wayyyyy before it was cool.

But you – and the other 3,850 folks receiving this email – probably don't know Amy from those days. Very few folks do, myself included (for the record, Amy and I met in line for coffee at sxsw, 2007)!

So how did you find out about Amy? Maybe you know her from back in 2005, when she began writing about her difficult experience starting with Ruby & Ruby on Rails.

Orrrr... given that you're on this email list, you likely found her just recently, from one of her business bootstrapping essays (hilariously cat-filled Twitter feed).

The point here is that each time she changed topics – from general tech, to Rails and design, to business & bootstrapping – she lost almost all of her readers. Every new audience has had very little carry through. So she's

learned a lot about building a readership, from scratch.

Trust me: You don't need to be famous to bootstrap a nice profit. Hell, whatever you may think, Amy, Thomas, and myself are only really "famous" in our relatively tiny circles.

Ramit Sethi mentioned he has over 200,000 people on his mailing list. This list is under 4,000. Ramit has 50 times more readers than we do, and I still constantly meet people who don't have a clue who he is.

You see, when Amy and I talk about how Internet Fame Doesn't Help You Sell Shit, we know whereof we speak.

So how are you supposed reach people without "fame"?

In the last email, we talked about how to write a persuasive pitch that'll hook a potential customer by their pain, and draw them in to find out more.

But the next question we usually get is, "How do I get people to look at my pitch?" I'll be straight with you – the answer isn't as sexy as fame (and only marginally sexier than "research").

Pitches get people listening, but their attention alone doesn't translate directly to sales. Rather than sitting around and waiting for sales (and never knowing why some people buy and others don't), or plastering a link to your pitch all over the internet, you need a way systematically build trust with the audience before they even see your pitch.

If you've learned anything from this series, it's that 30x500 is full of systems. Amy and I love a good system. We're weird like that.

Maybe you've heard about content marketing. The basic concept for content marketing is pretty simple: you create content, people like it (and share it), and then you point them to your product. But it's not exactly a system, per se. In fact, let's look at step 1.

Create Content. In the land of "actionable advice" telling someone to create content is about as useful as telling somebody to "just eat healthy and exercise". We know it's good for us, but we don't do it. Why?

If you've tried to take a stab at content marketing, you've stared at a blinking cursor before. "What kind of content should I write?" By the time you're even asking yourself that question, any motivation you might've had is gone.

How can you be sure that the time you spend on creating content is worthwhile?

Enter, your system for building trust and writing great content - the ebomb!

Ebombs - or education bombs - are a very special and specific type of content marketing that you can learn how to create in 30x500. The best ebombs don't just educate the reader, they give the reader a result. A fix. A tiny win.

Ebombs can come in many different forms - written, recorded audio or video, code samples and more. But in all cases, ebombs deliver a tiny win.

Once you start creating ebombs, you can drop them where your audience can find them. Ebombs lead to people signing up for your list, where you can continue to build trust with more ebombs. And thennnnn....you'll actually make sales when those people see your pitch.

Not to mention that people will share your ebombs when you help them feel a tiny win.

Ebombs are the secret to jump-starting a virtuous trust building cycle that's a MILLION times more valuable than being "famous".

If you can help one person, you can help a hundred (or a thousand, or more).

We cover a bunch of different types of ebomb types in 30x500, but today I'm going to share my personal favorite secrets for creating ebombs.

Even the tiniest amount of visibility on the internet comes with a pretty predictable result: strangers who email you out of the blue with questions.

Nearly everyone I've spoken to about this problem faces the same conundrum: they feel like a jerk totally ignoring the person and saying "no", but it's not good for business (or even possible) to give away free advice to everybody who asks. Helping people feels good, but it doesn't seem to scale very well.

Here's the realization that changed my approach: if one person in your audience has a question, there's a really good chance that other people in your audience have asked, or will ask, the same question.

So when you replying to that single person, you can easily turn your answer into an ebomb that others will benefit from! You'll want to do some minor editing to provide any missing context in the blog post version.

Note: You should also be sure to check with the person you're replying to – I've had exactly ZERO people tell me that I'm not allowed to publish the free advice I just gave them so that others can benefit from it.

Some people may want to be kept anonymous, others won't mind being mentioned by name. You just don't want to catch them off guard by having them find the email you sent them up on your blog.

And as an added bonus – now that you have this ebomb on your blog, the next time someone asks you the same question you can just link them to the

ebomb, which will invite them to join your list for more helpful tips and how-tos in the future! You save time, effort, and you look like a pro because you've got an answer prepared, AND you can continue to build trust with that person using your list. Boom.

There's one more unsexy truth to help you bootstrap your product biz.

In the next (and final) email of this series, Amy's going to show you the difference between typical "fanfare" style launches that you see on Techcrunch and HackerNews...and launching the 30x500 way, which leads to sales from day 1.

Stay tuned :)

- Alex

Want to stop this 7 part bootstrapping guide, but get other helpful advice & expertise about bootstrapping in the future? [Stop this series now but stay on our list.](#)

Don't want to ever email from us again? No worries, you can [unsubscribe](#)

228 Park Ave S #14450 New York, New York 10003 United States

Alright, Erica,

You got this email because you just signed up to get the 7 part bootstrapping guide from Amy and Alex. This is part 7 of 7 - the last email in the series!

So let's wrap this series up with a story about a failed launch, and how you can avoid the same mistake.

It's every bootstrapper's worst fear:

Reload, no new messages. Reload, no new messages. Your brand-spanky-new product is online, open for business, you announced its launch, and... crickets.

Where are the early adopters?

Where are your first sales?

Are you a failure? Did you not validate? Does nobody want it??

What does it mean!?

Hold up. Don't have a heart attack. What does it mean? In all probability it means nothing more and nothing less than this:

You skipped the boring, poorly defined, non-rewarding work... and went straight to the fun stuff, the stuff you know, the stuff that got you into your career -- design, code, writing. And then, when you were "done," you simply put your product online and waited for the cash to roll in. All it takes is a good product and it'll sell itself, right? Wrong.

Whoops.

This an incredibly common mistake -- probably the third most common mistake Alex & I see. But, no bones about it, it's definitely a mistake. It's not just "a part of life."

If you can build a product that provides value, you can launch to instant sales. Full stop. It's not just possible, it's repeatable and predictable.

All you've gotta do is play your cards right:

- Kill a pain people actually have
- ... for people who pay for things
- Ensure your pitch is super persuasive

- Get people stoked up to buy it
- ... and get their eyeballs on that pitch
- Close the sale

You learned all about how to do these steps in the first 5 emails of this series.

And in the last part, you learned about ebombs -- droppin' knowledge on your readership to build your readership. These things go together, my friends. That's how you create that cycle above.

Here's how you make it happen, once you've found your paying, problem-solving audience online and Safari'd the crap out of them:

1. Take your long-ass list of pains that you've Safari'd.
2. Write little blog posts, or make little videos or podcasts, or little slide decks, or little code snippets that help kill tiny, laser-focused aspects of those pains. These are ebombs.
3. Drop your ebombs where your audience hangs out (aka Watering Hole)
4. On each ebomb, give your readers a call to action (CTA): Get on my email list for more of this awesomeness.
5. Email the list more ebombs. Say, once a week.
6. Rinse & repeat.

Then, when you've built up a warm, tidy little list, you can prep for your launch.

Launch content is made of ebombs. It's not wildly different. A Launch Sequence is simply tailored ebombs that are relevant to your product, written to be read in a sequence, where each one is both useful but tantalizing.

Each ebomb in a Launch Sequence builds up to the next ebomb, and that builds up desire for the product.

That's it. Really, that's it. That's the process.

Sounds boring, right?

Yup, it can be, if your goal for a product biz is just to be able to noodle about Doing Your Thing (dev, design, writing). But if your goal is to help people and make money, launching may be difficult, but it's fun.

Why do I say it's "difficult"? It's such a simple process. I know it sounds simple, and it looks simple, and therefore it looks easy. Right?

But a simple-to-understand concept doesn't mean it will give you easy execution.

Creating magnetic content, and a desire-building launch, will be difficult if...

- you haven't done it before
- if you don't know which pains to write about

- ... or how to find them in the first place
- or how to write a pitch that tantalizes
- or how to persuade

Which, of course, is exactly what you'll learn in the 30x500 bootcamp and exercise program. Our lessons are laser focused, our process is step-by-step, and the live exercises and guidance keep you on the track to building your business, brick by brick.

(See what I did there?)

As easy to understand / tricky to implement it may be, it's absolutely worth every second of effort & education you put into it. This process works.

Here are excerpts from 4 emails from 30x500 alums that landed in my inbox just in the past day:

"The landing page brought me 100 subscribers"

"This ebomb exploded (80 tweets)"

"Got my first 2 signups!"

"I've had 7 nice replies thanking me for the info in the hour or so since I sent it and 2 enquiries about doing some consulting work"

Boring? Maybe. Repetitive? Maybe. Profitable? Absolutely. Where there's muck, there's brass.

If you've enjoyed this series -- especially if it's helped you take action -- please hit reply and tell us what you learned and applied.

Amy & Alex

p.s. Still looking for more guidance? We have another 30x500 Bootcamp coming up soon. If you want to skip the line, reply and ask us to send you a link to apply before our official launch.

The last Bootcamp sold out all 30 seats in record time, so applying early is the best way to make sure you can get a spot!

