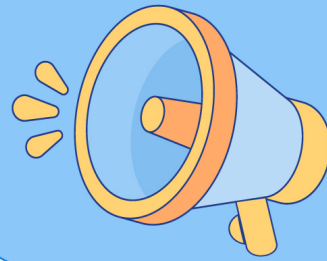


SUMMARY

YOUR FIRST 1000 COPIES

TIM GRAHL



Summary of “Your First 1000 Copies” by Tim Grahl

Written by Lea Schullery

Find out how to self-market your book and sell your first 1,000 copies.

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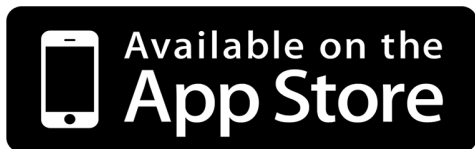


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Introduction

Imagine having a direct connection to thousands of readers who love reading your book. Now imagine those same readers eagerly waiting for your next book. Imagine the possibilities of starting a new book project knowing that there are thousands of people ready to buy it and even recommend it to others! It's time to learn the secrets of marketing guru Tim Grahl who has experience working with some of the best authors in the world. Thanks to his experience, Grahl has become an expert in how reader relationships work and how to use those skills to sell more books. Now you can learn those same skills. No longer do you need to invest in expensive tactics like hiring publicists or going on a thirty city book tour. Instead, Grahl has created a step-by-step plan called the *Connection System* which every author can immediately implement to begin building their online platform. You'll begin your journey by getting *permission* to communicate regularly with your readers, then you'll learn how to engage them through *content* that will be freely and widely available. From there, you'll examine how to connect with new readers through *outreach* and then *sell* your books authentically and naturally. Finally, you'll learn how to *track* everything you do and analyze what works and what doesn't. The Connection System is the perfect way to earn success in today's evolving publishing marketplace. So whether you're a newbie or an established writer, you'll learn exactly what to do to build an engaged readership and sell your first 1,000 copies. "Let's get started."

The New Age of Marketing

Have you ever tried to buy a car from the dealership, only to be sold the new, flashy models by the sleazy car salesman? Tim Grahl and his wife experienced this when they were in the market for their first minivan. As they were walking around, the salesman couldn't tell them enough good things about the brand new models with all the new features they were looking for. The problem? The new cars came with hefty monthly payments.

As Grahl looked across the lot at a few of last year's models, the salesman reluctantly agreed to let them take a look. Suddenly, he didn't have much to say as Grahl and his wife took a look at the older models which were almost identical to the newer ones, just \$10,000 cheaper. So which did they choose? It was a no-brainer. The couple walked away with a minivan that was in their budget without sacrificing comfort and quality. But what was wrong with this salesman? Simply put, he wasn't looking out for their best interest.

You see, a fundamental part of any relationship is trust. And when someone isn't looking out for your best interest, then that person is only looking out for himself. This is where the Connection System comes into play which will help you build long-lasting connections with people who know and trust you. Grahl's inspiration for the Connection System came after reading Seth Godin's book *Purple Cow* where he noticed Godin's commitment to creating trusting relationships online. After reading his book, Grahl mustered the courage to email Godin to ask a question thinking that his email would be lost in the inbox abyss of a successful author. However, just one hour later, Grahl received a response!

Every day Godin publishes at least one blog post, answers reader emails, and continually thinks of new ways to positively influence the world. His writing has changed the lives of thousands, even millions, of lives including Grahl himself. Because of Godin's reliable blog, email, and other writings,

he has created a long-term connection which results in readers buying at least one copy of every book he releases. In other words, marketing today isn't sleazy car salesman tactics. It's not tricking people into buying and it's not unethical self-promotion. Instead, "marketing is two things: (1) creating lasting connections with people through (2) a focus on being relentlessly helpful."

So how should you begin your journey? The best way to gain trust and ensure you are looking out for customer's needs is to offer material for free. There are many ways to do this: you can write a blog like Seth Godin, or even start a podcast, audiobook, or an informative PDF document or ebook. For example, Chris Guillebeau, the bestselling author of *The Art of Non-Conformity* and *The \$100 Startup*, writes and publishes high-value content for his readers. For him, "Flagship content" has been a key strategy in building relationships. He has turned his ebook into an easy-to-read PDF that readers can download with just one click. Guillebeau began by writing a manifesto called *A Brief Guide to World Domination*, a manifesto that describes the core principles and goals of his tribe which has been downloaded 100,000 times. This is the perfect example of how "flagship content can help launch and fuel a successful writing career for the long-term."

It's Not About the Tools, but the Blueprint

Imagine wanting to build a new house and being supplied with a toolbox of all the latest and greatest equipment to help you build it. Would you be set up for success? Probably not. Even if you worked hard, you still wouldn't have all the items you need to build a reliable house. Owning the tools is not enough. In fact, to be successful in building anything, you first need a blueprint.

The same is true for marketing your book online. While the internet gives you a wealth of marketing tools like Twitter, Facebook, Blogs, Email marketing, Podcasts, Online forums, etc., simply using these tools without a plan won't automatically lead to success. For instance, if an author googles "How to market on Twitter," she will find countless articles that will provide her with a vague understanding of how to promote her work on Twitter. So she creates an account and starts posting on the platform. After a few days, weeks, or even months, frustration begins as her follower count is still low, nobody is sharing her posts, and her book isn't selling. "She feels like she's sending tweets in a vacuum." So is marketing on Twitter bad? Maybe. But maybe not. At the end of the day, simply knowing how to use Twitter is not enough.

In addition to tools, you need a plan. You see, every author has a plan to sell her book; however, these plans typically look like this: "Release the book. Pay a publicist. Run as fast as you can to get as much media coverage as possible. Hope the PR blitz converts to sales. Once the initial media push dies out, however, the book sales die off." Instead, the plan you'll learn here will be very different. Your blueprint will begin by locating those who are interested in your books, then you'll work on maintaining their interest during the period between books. In other words, you won't be focusing on the tools, like Twitter, and will instead develop a blueprint and select the right tools to build it.

So let's take a look at Josh Kaufman who released his first book *The Personal MBA* in December 2010. He did just one speaking event for the book, did no major media coverage, and never hit a major bestselling list. But just two years after releasing his book, Kaufman sold over 130,000 copies of his book. He was able to accomplish this with a great plan and blueprint. His plan started months before the book's release in which he built a system of engaging people and gaining their trust long before the book was ever available. So let's begin building that plan.

It's All About the Emails

In 2009, Ramit Sethi was simply a 24-year-old kid with no publicist or media attention of any kind. No radio, television, or newspaper ads. Yet when he launched his book *I Will Teach You To Be Rich*, it immediately became a *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* bestseller. But how? His email list. Three years later, Sethi runs an online business where he earns over a million dollars a year simply teaching others how to earn more money, find their dream jobs, and negotiate big raises. And how does he market his new products? His email list.

Today, the first step in creating a direct and reliable communication channel is an email list. An email list is the foundation of the Connection System and is how authors stay connected with their readers by getting their attention and driving action. When you create an email list, you are receiving permission from your audience to provide them regular up-to-date information about your work. The best part? This comes at zero cost to you! You may be thinking that social media is also free, why can't I just use these tools? Why do I have to create an email list? If you ask any marketing guru, they will choose their email list over all their other marketing tools combined, including Facebook, Google+, Twitter, their blog, and their podcast. But why? Their email list is where they make their money.

You see, in today's fast and busy world, social media has become too noisy a place where people are constantly bombarded with sales pitches and stories that they don't care about. Therefore, when you send an email, you are creating a direct line of communication to your reader's inbox, a place where they are already spending a good amount of time. This direct access to your readers converts to more sales than any other means of communication via social media. For example, Pam Slim, the author of *Escape From Cubicle Nation*, has one of the most passionate and engaged tribes of readers that Grahl has ever seen. So when Grahl helped Slim launch a new video course product, he was most curious to see which marketing tool performed best in converting to product sales. They

marketed the course to her email list and her social media followers and the results were surprising: “For every one sale Pam received through social media, she received 50 sales through her email list.”

You may be wondering how email is so effective. Isn't it old school? Isn't everyone on social media nowadays? While social media is certainly more popular, readers only read about 1% of the total social media updates that fill their feeds. On the other hand, readers usually read 100% of the emails they receive. A staggering difference, right? In June of 2011, Twitter was generating 200 million updates a day, and Facebook was seeing three million photos and messages every 20 minutes. Today, those numbers are even higher. Therefore, social media is flooded with information that often goes unseen so email remains the most direct and reliable way to contact people in the digital world.

How To Build an Email List

Okay, you're convinced that creating an email list is the way to go. So how can you get started? First, you must select which web-hosted platform to use. Smart authors use platforms like MailChimp, Aweber or Constant Contact instead of personal email clients like Outlook or Gmail. But why? Software like Outlook and Gmail are frustrating for users because you would have to do everything manually. Similarly, these platforms are frustrating for readers because they cannot easily unsubscribe, making Outlook and Gmail inefficient and ineffective.

Today, the number of platforms is competitive and growing. And because the technologies change so frequently, recommending a specific tool seems unfair. So visit www.first100copies.com/email to get Grahl's latest recommendation on the best email marketing tool. So now that you know where to start, it's time to focus on building an email list. Why are people going to want to receive emails from you? The answer is to make a specific, compelling offer and expose them to the offer multiple times.

Many writers make the mistake of using generic language like: "Sign up for my news and updates." But what about this language makes a reader want to subscribe? Nothing. It's not compelling enough. Instead, it's time to go back to what you learned before: focus on what's in it for them. You need to make a specific offer that addresses a specific need or want. In other words, you want to provide a "win-win" situation where readers receive something of value and you get a new subscriber.

First, you need to make your offer and expectations clear. For example, a headline that says, "Get daily workouts customized for you," sets the expectation that a subscriber will be receiving daily emails containing a great workout. Let readers know what solution you are offering and when they can expect to receive an email in their inbox. Next, you can gain subscribers by offering to give them something for free in return. For example, the author of *The Fire Starter Sessions*, Danielle LaPorte's

website says: “SUBSCRIBE and you’ll get The Strategy of Desire Worksheet from my book, *The Fire Starter Sessions*.” Offers like these tend to be successful because readers love instant gratification and receiving something interesting!

Next, don’t hide your email signup form. If you want an attractive email list, then you need to make an attractive signup form. Use vivid colors, fonts, and designs to draw the reader’s eyes toward your offer. Make it hard to miss and put it everywhere. At the top of your website, on every page, at the bottom of every blog post, at the top of every blog post. Make sure your readers are seeing it and considering your offer. Finally, make compelling emails and newsletters to keep readers interested in your content.

One way to test to make sure your content is compelling and interesting is to buy someone a beer and then let them click around. An experiment conducted by Xianhang Zang demonstrated how slightly drunk people’s website browsing behavior mimics our distracted online behavior. Therefore, slightly drunk people provide the ideal testing conditions for ensuring that your website appeals to the distracted reader.

Share As Often As Possible

Now that you've created an email list, it's time to focus on the content that you'll be sharing with them. The first step is to make your content as widely and freely available as possible. There are many reasons why this works well. "First, it allows people to interact with your writing before committing to giving up their email address or purchasing your book... Second, it gives bloggers, journalists, and other online content publishers something to link to. This promotes the virus-like spread of your ideas to readers you otherwise would have struggled to reach yourself. Third, it gives something for search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo to index, which brings new readers through online search results."

In the end, you'll build trust and credibility among new readers and other online authorities. So how much content should you be sharing? Contrary to popular belief, there is no such thing as *sharing too much content*. Many authors fear that if they bombard their readers with too much content, then nobody will be motivated to buy the book. This is a rational fear but it's much better than the alternative: releasing a book that nobody knows exists. As bestselling author, Cory Doctorow states, "Obscurity is hard to monetize." Therefore, keeping everything you write a secret until it is bound together in a book is not a smart idea.

In all the years that Grahl has worked with authors to sell their books, never has an author lost sales because they shared too much. In fact, Adam Mansbach's illustrated book *Go the Fuck to Sleep* became released online in its full format but this only drove sales higher. Similarly, Timothy Ferriss worked with BitTorrent, an online file-sharing network, to package his latest book, *The 4-Hour Chef*, which included a free download of bonus content. The result was two million downloads that drove 250,000 additional sales. "The bottom-line: Sharing is how you build your platform."

So what kind of content should you share? There are many things you can share online to generate buzz for your upcoming book. For example, the bestselling author of *Anything You Want*, Derek Sivers, is a self-proclaimed learning addict. Therefore, whenever he reads a new book, he takes notes, organizes them in a text document, and stores them on his computer. Eventually, he decided to post his book notes on his website Sivers.org. Today, he has published more than a hundred in-depth book reviews that share the insights he has learned. This incredible content has helped grow his email list to well over 100,000 subscribers.

Next, you need to ensure that the content you share stays relevant over time. This is what Grahl considers “Evergreen content.” The good thing is that you don’t need to be cranking out fresh content every day, you just simply need to create content that stays fresh over time. An important lesson to remember is this: “When in doubt, create assets.” You see, evergreen content is an asset because it continues to work and deliver value while you sleep. It’s always available and constantly attracting attention, thus building your tribe of followers. Avoid creating something just because it’s popular, instead, “focus on creating assets that will add value to your readers long into the future.”

Begin your Outreach by Targeting Influencers

Now that you've got the content down, it's time to work on your outreach. How are you going to reach the widest audience possible? Successful authors understand the difference between fans and influencers and try to target them both. While fans are people who will buy your book, influencers are people that will get *other* people to buy your book. The popular blogger who will recommend your book to his readers, the popular reviewer on Goodreads who will share her love for your book on the social platform, and the author with a large email list are all people who are considered influencers.

Therefore, you need to interact with both your fans and influencers. So how can you grab an influencer's attention? The first step is to communicate with influencers via phone calls and emails. Of course, the most effective method is meeting face-to-face. When you meet with an influencer, it's near impossible to *not* begin an empathetic relationship. Meeting face-to-face is scary but it has many benefits that can lead to more opportunities.

For instance, when Grahl decided to shift his company's focus to work exclusively with authors, he only had a handful of clients that were authors and no contacts inside the industry. He did have one powerful thing, however, and that was a registration for the next South by Southwest (SXSW) Interactive conference in Austin, Texas. SXSW has some of the best and brightest minds in attendance, even more, every speaker has written a book. In other words, this was the perfect opportunity for Grahl to grow his contact list and network of authors.

Before Grahl even went to the conference, he called each speaker and scheduled a meeting. When he landed in Austin, he had a schedule packed with meeting people in the industry, many with potential clients and key influencers. While his experience was exhausting, Grahl succeeded in solidifying two new clients and over a dozen new contacts. In the end,

conferences offer a great opportunity to meet new people; whether it's fans, influencers, or contacts, all of these people are influential in helping you grow your following and your sales.

For example, Daniel Ariely, the bestselling author of *Predictably Irrational* and *The Honest Truth About Dishonesty*, includes his entire travel schedule on his website. When asked why, he responded, "That way if my readers see that I'm coming to their city, I can meet them for coffee or something." Daniel understands that building a connection with fans and influencers is most effective when done in person and live events are the most efficient ways to do that.

Another way you can build a relationship with influencers is to write for them. For instance, Scott Dinsmore had a platform with just 100 subscribers which stayed the same for four years. After years of frustration, he decided he needed to make a change. So Scott began submitting guest articles to blogs and websites about entrepreneurship, happiness, and living your passion. He reached out to authors, magazines, and bloggers. This tactic helped him in two ways: 1) he created long-lasting connections with a large group of influencers by adding value and providing great content and 2) his email list grew by 600% in the first six months, and then 1600% in the following 12 months. Two years later, he has over 30,000 subscribers on his email list.

Ask Your Followers For a Sale

Now that you've built a following and written your book, it's time to sell it! So what's the first step? First, be your own fan. Many authors make the mistake of downplaying the launch of their book, they fear they will seem "too salesy." This mindset, however, is a tragic one. You see, when you have taken the time to build an authentic Connection System based on value, trust, empathy, and respect, then you need to spend the time to build enthusiasm and excitement surrounding your launch. If you don't, then why should readers excite themselves?

Once you build some excitement and enthusiasm surrounding your book, it's time to do just one simple thing: ask them to buy. It's that simple! It's simple economics, you are trading something of value for money. If it's a fair trade, then everyone benefits. There aren't many rules for selling but there are some best practices that can help you sell more. "The first best practice is perhaps the most important: People should not be on your email list long before inviting them to buy something, even just one book." So tell them about your book, provide a sample, explain the plot, and share how your book will add value to their life.

Next, whet their appetite. You can follow the lead of Amazon who makes the first 10% of their Kindle books available as a free sample. Think of a free sample as a "taste test" for readers who get so hooked on the sample, they must pay for the whole book. If you read the first 10% of a book and enjoy it, the likelihood of buying the full version goes up dramatically. Remember when we talked about Chris Guillebeau's free manifesto? That's exactly what offering a taste test looks like. You can do the same by creating a PDF that has the full cover image, table of contents, and introduction or first chapter. And since you have complete control of when the sample ends, make sure it leaves the reader dying to read more. Perhaps you can even make this freebie available as a bonus for subscribing to your email list!

When it comes to asking people to buy your book, asking just once rarely works. In fact, as humans, our brains need to experience a stimulus a few times before we feel compelled to take action. This feature of our brain helps us when making buying decisions. So the next selling best practice is repetition. Whether it's sending an email every day, week, or every month, make sure each email either mentions your book or includes an ad for your book. There are many ways you can do this. Some authors put an ad in the sidebar of their emails, others put them in the footer. Some include the book cover, others use a recent book review. The repetition, however, is up to you as long as you are consistent.

Examine Your Analytics

The last and final part of marketing your book is determining whether or not your marketing strategy is working. Of course, book sales are the best way to know if you are doing something right; however, many other indicators show if you are reaching people. Analytics plays an important part in your Connection System and the best way to know if it's working is through analytical software.

There are many tools available to track your website analytics, many of which track the number of visitors coming to your website, the number of total pages visited, the pages on your website that are the most visited, and which websites are linking to your site. These four statistics will allow you to know how your site is growing and where the majority of your traffic is coming from. Additionally, you can use analytics in your email list to track how engaged people are with your content and overall message. Here are the key statistics that you should focus on:

1. **Open rates.** This is how many people are opening your emails. What is the percentage? You should aim for an open rate of at least 25% per email. While this may seem low, as you grow your following, the open rate will drop. As long as it doesn't drop to an unhealthy level, 25% should still create engagement and help you sell.
2. **Click rates.** In each email, you should aim to link at least one online resource where readers can continue engaging with you or learning about a subject. So if you're including links, you should also know how much attention those links are getting. As a general rule, about half of the people that open the email click on the link.
3. **Subscriber rate.** This is how many people are signing up for your list on a daily or monthly basis. Simply keep an eye on how many people are joining your list and make sure the numbers are growing in the right direction: up.

Analytical software can help you determine whether your numbers are growing or declining. If they are declining, it's important to take a look at which areas are generating the most clicks and then building a strategy around what's working. By checking your analytics, you'll be able to keep the attention of your readers and ensure that the content you are sharing is interesting and valuable. In the end, you'll begin building a following that trusts you and values your writing. In turn, they will share your posts and recommend you to their friends, thus creating a tribe of followers who not only value what you're sharing but will, more importantly, buy your books!

Final Summary

When you're trying to sell a book, the traditional pattern of creating PR buzz, going on press tours, and hiring publicists no longer works. While you may sell books in the beginning, people will then forget about your book in the long-term and your sales will steadily drop over time. With Tim Grahl's strategy, however, you can create long-lasting connections with readers who will not only buy your books but will also anticipate your next one. They will help you publicize by sharing your posts, telling their friends, and even writing reviews to help you sell more. So the best way to begin garnering this attention is by creating an email list that provides readers with consistent content that readers find interesting and valuable. By building an email list, you can continue to reach more fans and influencers who will promote your content. When it's time to actually sell your book, you'll have created a following you feel confident asking to buy it, knowing that you are providing them with valuable information that they trust and may even change their lives.



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