Ben Settle – Clientless Copywriting

Mikhail: Hi everyone and welcome to Health Copywriting Profits, the online event that can take your copywriting skills and income to the next level. Today I'm really excited to be talking to Ben Settle. For over 15 years, Ben has been writing ads, writing email campaigns, and working with clients in some of the most competitive industries such as golf, weight loss, bizopp, self-defense, dating, prostate, you name it, he's been in it. For me, it's a real fun going moment to get to chat with him, because he's been the one that introduced me to this whole world of direct response and copywriting. So I'm personally very excited to have you on here Ben, welcome.

Ben: Well, thank you Mikhail. I appreciate it.

Mikhail: Yeah, thanks for taking the time. So you have a really interesting story about how you first discovered what copywriting was. Can you tell us a little about that?

Ben: Yeah. So back in the late '90s when I was getting ready to graduate college, and understand that I never really was very excited to graduate college because I didn't really want to have a job. It's not that I wanted to be lazy and just lay around or anything, but I just wanted to be, I don't know, I've always wanted to just do my own thing. I just don't like working with people and all that. So a couple of days before graduation, I'm sitting there watching TV and there was this infomercial ad and it was by this guy named Kevin Trudeau, who I believe is serving prison time right now. So I'm not necessarily hyping him up or anything, but it was a great infomercial ad. He was good at it until he started doing some weird stuff, but anyway. So I'm sitting there thinking, you know, I really don't have any job prospects.

I don't really care to go out and work in the corporate world. I wish I had my own thing. I'd been exposed like MLM for example, from my uncle and all that. And this infomercial called Financial Freedom came up. That was the... So of course I lean in because I'm like, "Ooh, what's this?" I liked Kevin Trudeau's infomercials at the time. I actually bought some stuff like Mega Memory and all that because I trusted him and all that. I didn't know what it was. It was just a typical bizopp type infomercial. I spent the 30 bucks or whatever, and I sent it away for the information, which was basically I paid him to send me a sales presentation. Before I knew it I was in MLM. Flash forward a few weeks, a few months, a couple of years, I proceeded to do absolutely nothing with it.

I ended up hating that more than I would hate any job I would have, because it... This was pre-… I mean, I don't want to say pre-internet, but it was definitely pre- anyone doing stuff on the internet like this. So they wanted you to go around and talk to everybody within three feet and say, "Hey dude, keep your options open for ways to make more money," and it was just wasn't me. It really wasn't. It was really just not the kind of selling I like to do even to this day. So I didn't really do much with it. I wasn't very good at it. I was terrible at it actually. I was probably like every sponsor's nightmare. I was just terrible. I'm just not an extroverted guy. I just like to work alone. So anyway, one thing they would do though is they would send you a book of the month, the company that was involved with, which is no longer around by the way.

They went out of business back in like 2002 I think. They would send you this book of the month, which was actually a pretty good feature. I didn't really think much of these books or whatever. I would just read them or whatever, but I didn't really think much of them. Well, eventually it got to the point where I was

spending so much money on needs and I was spending so much money on tools. You had to spend like a minimum just to stay in the company, the program, just to be qualified and all these things. I'm not going to go into all that stuff, it's kind of irrelevant. But just to say I got in a lot of debt. While at debt, I just was very frustrated and miserable to the point where I just couldn't even afford to live in a real apartment and had to live in an office.

Now, it was that or live with my mom, and I was married at the time to my ex-wife and it wouldn't have been good to do that. So long story short, we started getting kind of desperate and we started even passing out MLM cassette tapes to recruit people. This is back when there was a lot of cassette tapes. They weren't like MP3s floating around. Everybody had dial up back then. And you're getting yelled at, you're getting mocked, you're getting laughed at. You're just making everybody around you uncomfortable. Nobody wants to talk to the MLM guy, the guy slinging MLM and all that. It just, it got really bad, and it got to the point where one morning I'm just sitting there sleeping in this office, trying to sleep actually, on the floor. I didn't have any furniture or anything.

In fact I wasn't even supposed to be living there. Technically the landlord did not… that wasn't zoned for that sort of thing. So we'd have to get up early every morning and act like we're just coming in for the day after going to take a shower at the gym down the street and all that. That was really kind of a depressing time actually. I'm just like sitting there at 3:00 AM one day having to get up in an hour or so. I'm just like, "God, you obviously don't want me doing this. It's pretty obvious to me at this point." I'm like, "I just don't know what to do." So I got up and I went to my bookshelf in the office, and I just started looking around some of the books that I had been sent by the MLM company ironically enough. One of those books was called The Seven Lost Secrets of Success by Joe Vitale. Joe Vitale, he's a copywriter and all that, but it's not really about him.

He did all this research, this really good research on this guy named Bruce Barton. Most people have no clue who Bruce Barton unless they've probably heard me tell this story. But in the mid, in early 1900s, this guy was a household name. The joke at the time was, you couldn't go anywhere without hearing Bruce Barton in some way, shape or form. He was a Congressman for a while, he was an advisor on Wall Street, an open enemy of FDR. He just was very well known. He was the second B in the BBDO ad agency, which is still around today. So a guy Joe Vitale did all this research, and it was really good actually. It's a really good book, about this guy. I'm like, "Wow, this is intriguing." So I just flipped in through it. I had read it maybe a year or so earlier, but I didn't really think much of it. And I just turned to this one page, call it fate or call it divine intervention, I don't care what you call it.

Call it blind luck if you want, but I did turn to this page where there's the story of Bruce Barton, where this was during 1919, so it was right after World War I. The economy was in shambles and all that. I don't know if it was Chicago or New York it was, but I think he was a big ad agency guy at the time. This guy came to this salesman who's out of work, came to him and he said, "You know, Bruce, I need help. I can't find a job in this economy right now. People are hurting, I'm hurting, everybody's suffering. I don't know what to do." Bruce, I guess talked to him a little bit and found out that this salesman was an out of work sales manager who had a pension and was known for being able to write sales letters specifically. I didn't know what a sales letter was at the time, but I'm reading this thing, this is really interesting.

So Bruce Barton takes this sales manager to the window, and I guess he showed him the entire city, all the buildings. He goes, "Look, you're supposed to be this great sales letter writer. Why don't you write a

letter selling one of these companies out there and one of these buildings that are hiring you?" And I was like, wow, that's... well, hold on a second. You can... what is a sales letter and how the hell can I make money using that? That's the kind of selling I want to do because I like writing and all that. I like just being alone. After that night, it just was like a rabbit hole. I got in, I discovered what this world of copywriting was. I mean, I knew what it was before, but I'd never really thought, like looked into it. Before I knew it, I'm down this rabbit hole of Google, which was somewhat new back then compared to today, and I'm finding the Dan Kennedy's and the Gary Halbert's.

One of the first people I've found on there was a lady named Marcia Yudkin, and through her site I found I think Gary Halbert and all that, and I found the Yanik Silver. I mean, it was just fascinating to me. This whole idea was fascinating to me, and I've never emerged from that rabbit hole. I'm still in it to this day.

Mikhail: Yeah. That's kind of... I think anyone who first discovers copywriting and direct response, if it's new to them, there's just so many different avenues that you can explore that you just, if it's something you enjoy you just, you never get out of it.

Ben: Absolutely, and that's perfectly fine with me. I love direct response copywriting. Even though I'm more known as being an email guy, it's still my number one thing. It's still the thing I love talking about the most, so.

Mikhail: Yep. So you discovered copywriting and you got started there writing for clients and there was… was there like a moment or buildup of moments that made you think, "I don't really want to write for clients anymore?" What was that like?

Ben: You know, the reality is I didn't really want to write for clients even from the start, okay? Because to me it's just a glorified job, but you got to do what you got to do. Like I said, I ran into the Gary Halbert letter, which I think pretty much everyone who's in copywriting knows or should know, that is if they don't. I mean, it's awesome. It's like the best free education you can get. And just also coincidentally, or maybe not so oh coincidentally, when I was looking through the archives on that site, this is, we're talking 2000, late 2001 early 2000. I think it was actually February 2002 when this all happened, now that I think about it. I can't remember the exact date, but he had this newsletter he wrote on there called Why Multi-Level Marketing Sucks. So of course that headline caught my attention.

And then that issue was really good because he talks about how okay, so you got these copywriting skills, but you don't really want to lick client boots and all that. He gives you a guideline, like here's a way to do it. You can go out and make deals with people who have a product and offer to sell it and you do all the... you just sell it all on your own and for a commission. Now, it didn't really work the way that, you know, like that, the way he talked about it for me at least, but it did get me thinking and I did, I was part of this... I was not part of it, but I was a subscriber to this free auto responder service that I don't think it was around anymore, called Send Free. They'd give you a free auto responder email broadcast up to like 500 leads or something. But at the time, you got to remember this was early internet still, and you didn't have a lot of the spam problems and all like you have now.

So they had this thing, if you were a member of that, even if you were just a free member of it, you were part of, you automatically could be part of this thing they called The Send Free Round Table, which was just a digest they would send out every day or every week. Anyone who was a member who was using

this service could just pitch an offer to the whole list. It was great. So I said, okay, I'm going to pitch an offer to get some clients, because I need to learn how this client game works. I don't know how to deal with clients. I'd like to get some experience. I've been studying copywriting, now let me get some practical experience. So I put an, I pitched a little classified ad. Again, these were free and it was great. I've never seen anything like this anymore today. And I said I will write copy free for no upfront fees, but I want five percent of the sales, which is incredibly naïve.

I look back on this like geez, I might as well just give it away free. But whatever, it gave me like four, five or six clients and I did learn a lot about dealing with clients and I learned a lot about copywriting actually, because I was applying what I was learning. Most of my education at that time was Dan Kennedy's The Ultimate Sales Letter, which I still think is one of the best books you can get on the subject. So I just applied what I was learning and I started building a portfolio and that portfolio was enough to get me my first client on what was Elance at the time, which I don't think is around anymore. I think they changed into Upwork or whatever. That made me I think like $800 or something, that assignment, and then I just invested that money into other copywriting training, like from John Carlton and all that. But I didn't really jump into hard client work.

I tried to avoid that. I liked the idea of writing and copying and getting paid a commission on sales because that's more long-term. So it just so happens maybe a couple of years later, I ran into a guy named Michael Senoff. I was a big fan of one of his hit the swipe file cycle Hardtofindads.com, which is still around. I was a huge fan of it and I was contributing ads to it. I'm like, “Hey, if you want some ads to add to your swipe file...” and we got to talking. And then he said, he called me up one day, he goes, “You know Ben, I got this product. It's very unproven. It was how to buy million-dollar businesses using none of your own money probably. That’s what it was about. He basically would scour eBay and look for these out of print products people are selling that could be good, and this one was like sold in the ‘80s or something on infomercials.

He found the guy who created the program. His name was Art Hamel, he passed away just a few years ago actually. He got the rights to it and he goes, “I got the rights to this thing, I'd love to sell it.” He goes, “You're a copywriter, here's the deal. If you're interested I can pay you $2,000 sales after this, or we can do this as a partnership. You write it for free and we split it 50- 50, the sales.” Now, I got very, very you know, I had been pretty much burned by all those free ones like the five percent ones I had done before. Not a single one ever paid me anything. I don't even think they had lists even if they wanted it to. Which was fine, I went in knowing that. It wasn't that big of a deal. I just wanted the experience. But with Michael, I don't know, there's something about him, I just trusted him.

It turns out that he was one of the very few people I could make a deal like this work with. Very upstanding guy. I just busted my ass on that thing for months and months and it ended up doing pretty well actually. It helped me pay my car off and some of my debts off, like that's how much money I was making, which was a lot at the time for me. It was a huge deal. I really wanted to just keep doing deals like that. Again, it never really worked out after that with several people I tried it with. It just didn't work out. But eventually I did have to start taking clients a few years later, but I was getting paid just on the sales of working with Michael Senoff, because him and I did several other similar deals. So it was great. I was like, man, I wish I could get 10 clients like this, and just have money coming in on commission, write the sales copy once and be done.

Again, it didn't really work that way and eventually I had to take some more client work the traditional way, which was okay. It turned out to be a good thing. But I just say all that is because I still always had this mindset of wanting to be a business owner and not a freelance copywriter, and there's a huge difference between the two mindsets.

Mikhail: Yeah, I think maybe you can go into that a little bit. What would be the big difference between those two?

Ben: Well, it's probably more accurate to think more like a publisher than a writer. This leads me into what happened not too long after that, when I was on this guy's list. This was around 2004 actually. It's right around the time that I start working with Michael actually. Around 2004, I got on Matt Furey's email list. Now, Matt Furey to me is the king of email. The guy pioneered so many things that I just I'm like his biggest fan by far, no question. I remember he used to write into the fitness niche at the time. I mean, that's his thing is fitness and all that. I remember he'd write these daily emails. You get an email every day from him. This was very taboo back then, writing daily emails. In fact, all the copywriting so-called gurus and all that would advise against it.

They were like, even Gary Halbert, totally against daily emails. But Matt Furey being the rebel he is, he said, "Screw that, I'm doing daily emails." He had his own product line, he was a true publisher. True info publisher and marketer. His emails were so fascinating, you felt like you were being taught something, but really you were being sold every day. But you didn't feel it, they weren't like blatant sales, but you still got value from them, but he wasn't hard teaching you anything. You had to get his books if you wanted the full thing, and I bought many of his books. But he would say, I remember specifically one email he wrote where he goes, "I'm not even editing this email. I'm in China, I want to go do some fun stuff with my family, so I'm not even editing this. I'm just pushing 'send' here's where to buy my X, Y, Z book."

I thought, "Hold on, this is what I want to be. This is what I want." I'm learning these copywriting skills, but I don't want to be like... I mean, writing copy is hard. It's not easy. If you're doing it right, it's not easy. It's a lot of research, you got to constantly be on things. Then you have to battle with the client themselves, in a lot of cases even run what you send them. It's like two or three sales jobs in one, just getting them, and you got to sell them and ignoring their English major, brother-in-law and all that, trying to... All of that. It's several sells. It's hard. It's like, it's annoying. That's how it was for me, maybe other people have it different. But it seemed like I always had to sell the client on doing the right thing. That's just the way, that's just the game. Some people love it and that's fine, but I hated it.

I just want to build or write the damn thing and be done and get paid on it forever. I don't want to write a sales letter and get paid up fee and then be done. I want to write a sales letter and get paid on that thing forever. You know, long-term like with the ones I was doing with Michael Senoff. So I was like, "Wow, this is cool. This is what I want. I want to build an info publishing business." And then that's where, to me that was my end game the whole time. However, I didn't really know how to do it because I was thinking like a copywriter and not a marketer. This is a big thing. This is a huge thing that anyone in copywriting should realize, is that just because you're a great copywriter doesn't mean you're a great marketer, and just because someone's a great marketer does not make them a great copywriter.

Totally different things. In fact, a lot of copywriters, they know how to write copy, but they don't really know how to sell. So getting clients is kind of hard for them in a lot of cases because they think they can

just go pitch the benefits of copywriting and that's just not how it works. At the same time you can't treat a sales letter like it's a one-on-one sales pitch, despite what a lot of copywriting teachers say, that it's the same. It's totally not the same thing. It's completely different animal all together. But anyway, that's what I wanted to do after that. I'm like, I really love how this Matt Furey guy is doing this and I just wanted to learn everything about it. I just didn't have a lot of money at the time to do too much training and buy all this other stuff, but it got me thinking in these terms and I spent the next I don't know however many years it was after that trying to figure it out, which I eventually did, and how to just build my own sort of clientless copywriting business where I am my own client. I write a copy, but I only write it for my own projects. So that's always been the goal.

Mikhail: Yeah. So you mentioned that it took you so many years to really refine the system that you have. Maybe you can go through step by step, how someone that's new, a new copywriter who may be thinking, well, that they fully agree with you on that. They just want to write copy, they don't want to deal with clients, they don't want to deal with trying to find clients and get paid. They want to be their own business owner. What's the first step that they would have to go to do that?

Ben: Okay. Well, I mean, here's the first thing. When I say it took me several years to figure this out, and it did. I mean, if you go from when I started in copywriting to when I actually had something up and running the way I wanted, it took like nine years. Now, the reality is it took that long because I wasn't smart enough to understand the difference between being a copywriter and a marketer, or a copywriter and a business owner. They're just different things. So you can kind of boil it all... and there's nothing by way, I did not invent anything I'm about to say here. This is all direct marketing 101. That's the beauty of it. I did not invent anything I'm about to say. I just arranged it in a way that made sense for me, and that's apparently making sense for a lot of other people now.

That is it always boils down to this one thing. This one little three part, three step thing. This may change in the future I guess, if the internet completely changes in some way, but basically... In fact this is something I just kind of heard from Ken McCarthy, who's the founding father of internet marketing as we know it. He was doing these system summary. I remember this in 2008 he said this. He was on stage with this guy, Lloyd Irvin, who's in the martial arts niche and they both do pretty well. Somebody had asked them, because they were doing marketing for beginners like session. Someone was asking them about Facebook and Twitter and YouTube, do you need to do all of this? They're both like, "Look, you can do all that stuff and feel free to.

But the real money, the real money being made on the internet via direct response marketing, at least is opt-in page, i.e. get leads, add an email list. Send daily emails that send them to a sales letter selling them something. That's like the most simple way you'll build a list, and sending a daily email selling them an offer. Then I would say after that, those buyers, you sell them something else. Like that is really the whole framework of how it all works. Now, the devil's in the details of course, if you don't know how that stuff works, but it's not rocket science. It really is that simple. Draw the list, mail it every day an offer. When someone buys that offer, sell that customer something else, preferably something bigger ticket if you can. That's really where, I mean, that is how direct response marketing businesses have been built since the early 1900s.

Even the big ones like Boardroom and Agora and all that, that's how they all started. They all started with an offer and then you sell those buyers something else. Although those big mailers, they also sell the name

of that customer to other marketers. But I'm just saying at the end of the day, that's what you do. Build a list, mail it, sell those buyers, something else. There's a lot of different options as far as that goes, but that's really the... If people just do that, I mean, they have to at least get that far before they get any more advanced. This is what happens by the way, when I have these discussions with people, is they want to get more advanced than that, but you cannot get more advanced than that until you get that part down. Talking about funnels and all this other stuff, it's irrelevant. You have to get that part down first.

In fact, let me give you an example on this. Since I mentioned Kevin Trudeau earlier, who is in prison, so let's just take what I'm about to say with a grain of salt. One of the things he would sell in the '90s with infomercials was this guy Master Tsai. Master Tsai was like a martial arts teacher and all that, and I guess that was his teacher when he was in his teens. So, naturally he helped him build the product and sell it. Well, he taught him, I remember him telling a story about how when he was a teenager full of piss and vinegar. He goes to Master Tsai, I don't know if he was like 14 or 15 or whatever he was, like, "Teach me something advanced." Master Tsai says, "Advanced?" He goes, "Yeah, I want to learn something advanced. That's why I'm here. I want to learn advanced fighting."

Master Tsai takes him over to this like lit candle, and he just puts his hand near the flame and just punches really fast next to the flame. So fast that the wind from his punch puts the candle flame out. Master Tsai goes, "You mean advanced like that?" Kevin Trudeau goes, "Yes, advanced like that. That's what I want to learn." Master Tsai says, "Well, first I have to teach you how to punch." That is what I'm talking about with this. First get this done, build the list, mail an offer every day and sell that buyer something else. Once you've done that, then you can get into the complex stuff, the backend and funnels and all that, but you don't need all that stuff up front. Right away it's just about building that list and mailing it and building a relationship with it day by day by day, so that they're trusting you and liking you and know that you're there and you've got their back.

There's so much power in that that you'll never get from a spreadsheet or a Google Analytic or any of that stuff. It's all about relationships, and that's how you begin that relationship. So I hope that makes sense.

Mikhail: Yeah. So you said, I mean, like you said, simple three steps, right? For folks that would just be starting out they may come up and say, "Well, I don't have a product to sell or an offer to sell. What would you say to them?

Ben: Yeah, I would say to them, yeah, you definitely going to want to have offers that are yours. So now there's all options for that. You don't have to sell, you don't have to create an offer necessarily. You can find something to sell as an affiliate if you really had to. Ideally something you've used yourself and benefited from that can tell real life stories of you using it. Those are the best products to sell if you're not going to create your own. You can obviously create your own, it could be an audio, it could be a video, could be a book, could be health supplements or whatever. It could be anything. It just depends on the person. It depends on what turns them on. I will say this to give somebody a little bit of guidance here. This is something that, if you listened to Steve Jobs interviews and read books about him, which I highly recommend by the way, you'll see that there's a recurring theme that he likes to say, and that is finding a wrong that you want to right.

You just see something out there, there's a wrong out there. There's a flaw. There's something not being fulfilled in the marketplace to the best that it could be that you know could do better. If you're going to

create your own offers, this is where it starts. It just emotionally consumes you that you have to do better. You got to find some, you got to find that if you really want to sell your own stuff. Don't just go out there and say, “Well, people are buying How to Make Money Online, LOLOL, that's what I’ll sell.” No, don't do that. Find a wrong that you want to write. Something that really, this really bothers you, but that there's also a market for. That could be in health, I mean, it could be health, it could be anything. It doesn't really matter, but you do want to find something that you're just really, you would write about it even if you weren't getting paid.

That's how passionate you are about it. You find that. You find whatever that thing is. I'll give you an example. Just today, just this morning one of my email players subscribers, and I'm not going to name him or anything obviously, but he goes, “I know that...” because I let email players subscribers, they can ask me questions that I'm qualified to answer. They have email access to me. This guy is like, “Well, I know that you really can't answer this, but I got to ask you anyway.” He was telling me about how his wife doesn't love him anymore. His wife probably wants to leave. She might even be cheating on him. Like, he's really, he's lost his balls basically. He's like, “I don't know what to do.” You know, “She just sees me as this needy pathetic guy, and the more that that happens, the more I'm actually behaving that way.”

Like he's really worried. He's got two kids with her, and she's out running around probably cheating on him. She's the face of their business that they built together, and so really she's the celebrity and he’s like the behind the scenes guy, so he's probably got some insecurities with that. And he's just in this predicament. Now, the reason I tell this is because this guy, when he gets out of this, and he will eventually, he'll be fine. He's really the one that, he's the one with the skills and everything. She's just, she's an aging face who doesn't know how to sell anything. He's doing all the selling. So eventually he'll be fine. I tried to tell him that. I'm like, “Maybe she's doing you a favor dude, you should be okay with that.”

This guy might, he may look around one day and say, “I can help guys who were in my position, because this really bothers me that guys are going through this, mostly from their... because they lost their balls and it's their fault ultimately, but I can help guys like that. Maybe I'll get in that niche. Now, I don't know if he ever will or not, I didn't go that deep with him or anything. But my point is, he's been wronged. He feels like he's been wronged, so that's something he could write. You see this in weight loss all the time. How many people get into weight loss just because they were fat, and then they're just passionate about helping people get out of that situation, right? Steve Jobs, I brought him up, he saw how crappy IBM was and all that and how just terrible their machines were and he knew that and it bothered him.

So he knew he could do better, and so he did. So that drove him and that's the 18 hour days and all that. All this is a very real thing. So when it comes to finding an offer or creating an offer, you pick something that, it's two things. You want to pick something that drives you, like the topic drives you. Like you really want to help the world with this, whatever it is. But two, you also have to make sure there's a market for it. So if there's nothing else similar selling you may want... I mean, I'm not saying you can't do it. It's been done selling stuff that nobody's really said there's a market for it, but when you're just starting out, don't play games with that. Find a market that's full of people who have money. None of these markets who are struggling, don't do that.

I remember this, I had this one customer who was asking me questions. He wants to help people who are in lower economic classes, help them with resumes and all that. And I'm like, “I understand why you want

to help them, but the reality is you ain't gonna get paid anything. Like they don't have money. Direct marketing is based on selling to people who like Gary Halbert would say, players with money. Find market that has the money, that has a problem that you can help solve and that you're passionate about it, and either find or create a product about that, and you just, you won't have to motivate yourself, you won't have to... You'll do those steps I talked about just naturally and you'll want to, and you won't have to be told to do it.

You'll just naturally want to attack it every day. It's not something that's an imposition on your life, you're passionate about it. So I hope that helps anyone who's listening to this who wants to have a good way of approaching this. Please don't just say. “That’s for the money, that's what I'll do.” You won't last, and it's going to show in your emails, it's going to show in your copy, it's going to show in everything. I'll tell you what, Mikhail, one way to approach this, and you got to do client work sometimes just to pay the bills. I certainly did. I'm not saying that everyone has to. Maybe you have a job on the side, but it doesn't hurt to take some clients on, or try to get some clients in a niche you want to be in so that you one, get experience selling to that niche, and two, once you get your thing up and running, you have potential joint venture partners in those clients. You may be able to work deals with them where they sell your stuff to their list and you sell their stuff to your list. So there's a lot of opportunity out there, you just have to think through it.

Mikhail: Yeah. Those are some really good points. I think one I want to go back to is that idea of being passionate. You see a lot of people talk about for entrepreneurship, find something that you're passionate about. But the underlying thing there that's also equally important, is it needs to be something where a market exists for it, right? You can be as passionate or the most passionate person in the world about something, but if it's something that you're the only person in the world passionate about, you're not going to see any success with that.

Ben: Well, I'll give you a real life example of that. So we've talked about my Ten-Minute Workday program, that kind of goes over all this stuff. I had a customer in that program that asked me a question about it. I don't really... customer support is not what I do with that program, but for some reason I just took on, I answered his question because I wanted to create a video out of it, and so I did. His question was, he goes, “I want to sell a one dollar a month newsletter, email newsletter that he charged one dollar a month for to social justice warriors. I find, personally I think social justice warriors are like the scum of the earth. I can't stand any of them. Anyone who considers themselves one, please do not buy it for me because I just think so low of you, let me just say that. But that's okay though.

I don't have to like them for that to potentially be a good market. But I’m objectively telling them. I'm like, look, you are literally talking to people who don't have money. In fact, all they want to do is spend other people's money. Does that sound like a good market? Maybe they would spend the one dollar a month, okay? I doubt it, but let's say he did find enough people to spend one dollar a month to actually pay him an income. That’s just it. When you take out merchant accounts and all that, it's not even a dollar. But he knew his market I think enough to know that he could probably only get a dollar a month for what he was doing. I said, you got to think about this. This is not a foundation to build, unless you're George Soros, this isn't... Unless you're going to manipulate them or something into doing your bidding, which I think would be very funny if someone did, maybe.

But as a direct response marketer, no, it's a terrible market to go after. I don't know if he ever listened to the advice or not, but I meant that. I'm like, I don't know what to tell him. I'm like a dollar a month, right now you're already thinking very small. You're already thinking of a market that really doesn't have money. Most of them don't even have jobs for the most part. Right now, and this was two years ago, so just imagine now where everybody's out toppling statues and burning cities down. Is that really who you want to sell to. You have to ask that question. Maybe in some cases, but for direct response marketing, I don't know. So anyway, that's a real life example of that. Now, on the other hand, if you can find a market and there's so many out there, there really are.

All you have to do is turn the TV on quite frankly, look at... and this is one way of doing it, but just look at the ads being sold on TV. Well, there's probably a market for all of those ads, especially if the ads have been around for a while. So for example, you might watch certain TV like on cable stations and you might notice that there's an awful lot of ads being run by big pharmaceutical companies for people with prostate problems. That's a pretty good indication that that's a market and it is a good market because I've sold in that market. I used to have my own product and I was very passionate about it. I realized I can only really serve one master though, so I focus on what I do now. But I love selling in the prostate problem market. I felt good about it because I was helping men with a real problem that my family has experienced.

That I as a young man experienced, which you shouldn't be experiencing these problems as a young man, and same with other others. That's an example. For a while I had sold in the dating niche, like for guys who had trouble getting girlfriends and all that. I love doing that. I was very passionate about that. Just didn't stay with it very long because I just can't serve five different companies like that, so I just said, "Screw it." But those are examples I'm talking. I mentioned the guy from before, he could probably, one day he'll probably be great at a market if he wants. I mean, who knows. But you want to find some kind of wrong you can write. One story I like to tell is when I had my house broken into. I lived in this town called Roseburg, Oregon, which I called the Burgle. I called it the Burgle, which became prophetic because my place got robbed.

I got to tell you, that experience made me the greatest person I know at finding security loopholes in houses. Like I was the ADT salesman's best customer after that because I was finding stuff they didn't find. They didn't have to sell me anything, like, "Please come in, let's figure this out," and I'm finding problems in my own house that they wouldn't even think to deal with. So if I wanted to get in something, I could do that. Home security would be a great, I would love to be in that niche quite frankly. Maybe one day I will be. In fact, I was telling the person something like, if I wasn't selling what I sell now, or if I had to get a job, I'd go become an ADT salesman. I would love that. Every day I would love that. I would get up invigorated to go help people protect themselves from all these meth heads and all these other people breaking into people's houses around here. So, there is something to be said about passion, you know?

Mikhail: Yeah. So we've got, you've got to choose your market, you have your offer, whether it's an affiliate offer or just something you're planning on creating yourself. I guess the real thing that ties all of that together is your email list. Can you go into a little bit, you've mentioned daily emails. Where can we get ideas and what types of emails should they be sending out?

Ben: Well, you want to talk about things that are interesting inherently to your list. Where a lot of people are wrong is they do one of two things. They either give a lot of hard training in emails. I'm going to give lots of free stuff away and show how great of a guy I am, not just a sales person, which is idiotic on like

every possible level. I know that this is moving the free line horseshit that certain people... I understand that. When you have a list of 300,000 people and you can afford the churn and all that, that's fine, but most of us can't. Then you have the other extreme where people just send blatant sales pitches. Even worse, they'll just send it when they have something to sell. They treat their lists like a booty call basically. That's a very, both of those are web 1.0 problems. I call it web 1.0, which is like '90s and early 2000s.

One of the reasons I have so much reverence for Matt Furey, is because he went against all of that and made a very, very successful business out of it. I mean, I'm a big fan of that. Just talking, having a daily dialogue with your list. You know, so many people already do this on Facebook every day. They're already on Facebook out there just a stream of conscious just saying what's on their mind. A lot of those people actually writing good emails and they don't even realize it, because they just don't realize that some of them are just writing, they're just talking about things they can rant about and things that bother them and things that bother their market. They could be making money off this. In fact, I'm not on Facebook anymore. I haven't been on there in like some two years now, got off there.

But when I was on there, there was this lady I know, who I know of because I used to sell through her to a client in the MLM niche. She showed people how to build their MLM businesses using direct marketing and not doing the three foot rule and all that. Well anyway, so her and I are we're friends on Facebook and she was going through this... it was really bad. She was suffering from kidney stones, okay? Now, I hope to God I never have to deal with a kidney stone. I really do. I mean, that sounds like absolute horrifying agony to me. And every day for about three or four days as she was trying to pass the stone, she's on Facebook complaining about it, like in excruciating detail how she feels. So it's not like... and she's not giving any solutions. She wasn't even selling anything about this. Like she's in a totally different niche.

She just was suffering this health problem. So every day you're getting these daily... basically, it could have been an email, but she treated it like Facebook posts, just talking about how bad and how horrifying it is and how she's trying this and that and nothing's working. Everything she said was an email. She wasn't even selling anything about this, but she got me, she sold me without trying to. I'm looking up solutions for a problem I don't even have just so I can help prevent it hopefully, and I'm buying magnesium tablets and all this. I'm sure I wasn't the only one. So think of it that way. Just talk about the subject. Talk about the problem. There's this really old sales adage, which was 'don't tell me about your weed killer, tell me about my crab grass'. Meaning if you have someone, if you know someone has got a lot of weeds in their yard and it bothers them, like they want a beautiful yard, some people don't care, some people are like obsessive about it.

Well, you could go to that person with one dandelion in their yard and it bothers them, and they're scared to death that it's going to multiply into many more. You cannot talk to them enough about dandelions and the history of dandelions and the science behind dandelions and how they pollinate. You can never get too boring for that person because that's all they think about. Then when they're ready for a solution, and there should be a link in every email in my opinion, you say, "I have a solution to this, you can read about it here." Not a hard pitch. It's actually a very soft pitch, but yet it's a very direct pitch, and you're not trying to hide the fact that you have something to pitch. That's why they're on your list. If you build your list right, they're on there because they will have a problem and they hope you have a solution for it. So give it to them.

Mikhail: Yeah. I think that that's the mistake a lot of other email marketers tend to make, is they either make it all about themselves, which is fine. I mean, if you're sharing some personal details that you can kind of tie back to the problem that they would have come onto your list originally for, then that's fine. But they don't focus enough on the problem that the market is being faced with.

Ben: Yeah. It's very true. And then, there's something to be said about self-aggrandizement, where you're just kind of... I mean, there's something to be said about that, but it still has to be about them and interesting to them. That's just the... You get good, there's no checklist on how to do these things, you just have to do it every day. You just get a feel for your list. One of the things that I like to have been studying for about the last five years is Wing Chun Kung Fu. I only go once a month because I live like three and a half hours away now from them. But I stick with it because there's a lot of principles in that that translate to business. One of them is this idea of Chi Sao, which just means sticking hands. It's just, it's not really sparring, but it kind of is like sparring.

You have a partner and you're kind of just feeling and interpreting what the other person's doing so you can kind of know what they're going to do before they do it. It's an art. It's absolutely something you only get good at by doing it regularly. That's why some of these really old guys in Kung Fu, they seem like they're fast and strong and all that, but they're really not. They could be 95 years old, but they look fast because they're just feeling what you're going to do before you do it. So it looks fast, right? Well, this concept applies to email completely. I can tell you right now, nobody has asked for, outright asked me, and I've never done a survey and I've never done any type of research on what to sell on my list. Because I'm in daily contact with them, I know what they want to buy before they do, because I'm just so in touch with them.

Like for example, nobody ever asked me to write a book or create a product about branding. Branding is almost like something people make fun of in direct response marketing, right? But I got enough questions and feedback from people over the years where I know they're not verbalizing it as branding, but that's really the problem they have is branding. They just have a brand nobody cares about, and if they had a brand that people cared about, they'd get more sales even if their sales copy sucked. So I created a book on it. I just did it. Nobody asked me to do it, nobody said to do it. I just did it and it turned out to be the second highest selling book I ever sold on it's launch. Now, that's a function of Chi Sao in my list. That's not a function of market research or anything else. Your list is your market.

The research is just daily contact with them, and it's just a sensibility you get. But you start out by finding out what they're already buying. I'm not saying that this happens by magic, but I knew that they were into making money with their business, so I could start with that, right? But anyway, I hope that helps too.

Mikhail: No, yeah, that's a good point. I mean, I've been on your email list, an email player subscriber for about five years. I don't think I've ever seen you send out a survey asking what product you think you should be creating or anything. I guess that's the big advantage you have with email, with it being a two way communication avenue. You get feedback and can kind of see the trends in the markets and what they'll be interested in.

Ben: Absolutely. I mean, and it's just, and that's another reason to get started sooner rather than later building a list and emailing it. Even if it's the smallest, that's fine. Building a list doesn't have to be this hard thing that takes forever. Just people poo poo on article marketing, but I think it's a very viable way

of getting leads. You're not going to get a lot of leads, but you'll get some leads and there'll be good leads and there'll be qualified leads, and just doing some real simple stuff, making some joint ventures with people to build your list. It's work, it's not necessarily like fun work, but that list, it's really where it starts.

Mikhail: Yeah. So, I mean, that's a good segue into the other aspect of the system, which is building that list. Like you said, there're so many different ways and methods for list building. If you had to choose just one to recommend to new copywriters that will be starting out, which one would you recommend they focus their time on?

Ben: I would recommend doing as many summits like you're interviewing me for, and podcast interviews and that sort of thing as possible. It's time consuming, but you're gonna start learning how to articulate your positions on things. You're going to be asked questions that you didn't even know people were asking, you're going to have content in a lot of cases, especially with podcasts. I mean, not sorts of paid summit. You don't want to take that unless you get permission, but on podcasts and all that, I've never had a podcast that say, "No, you cannot distribute this podcast." If anything they want you to tell everybody about it. Then now you're building some content too, and you can take those podcasts and you can have them transcribed and you're creating content without even... that you could use as books or something else, articles, whatever.

But I would do as many, because you're getting really good leads. Somebody is listening, we've been doing this for 49 minutes right now. Anybody who's listening this whole time, unless... even if they're mad at me about making fun of social justice warriors and all, that's a good lead. That's a good lead, they've listened to me for 49 minutes. If that person happens to go to my site when we're done and opts in and happens to like being on my list for a while, that is a really good lead. You can't really pay for leads that qualify. That's good... now, are you going to get a lot? No, not necessarily. It depends on how big the show is and all that, but who cares? You're going to get better at doing interviews, you're going to get better at explaining things, you're going to get better at selling your ideas and just talking about them.

You'll just start riffing on things and you'll get solutions for things, you're going to meet joint venture partners, potentially people are going to find you. I can't even tell you how many people when they buy something from me and the shopping cart asks the question, "How did you find us?" "Oh, I heard so-and-so's podcasts." These things build up over time, it's free to do. You have to do some legwork to find podcasts to get on, but that's just market research, and if someone's going to be in business, they're going to have to learn to do that anyway. And yeah, that's the one. If I only had one that would be it.

Mikhail: That sounds good. So let me see, we've covered choosing your offer, finding your market. We've talked about the email system, building a list. Is there anything else that we missed out on that fits into the system?

Ben: Well, I would just say the most important thing is what we've talked about before. Build a list, mail it daily, an offer. When they buy that offer, sell them something else. That's very simple, it's very distilled down, it works. It's how every eight, nine figure direct response marketing business started out. There's a saying, I probably heard Trudeau say this when I think about it, Kevin Trudeau. I shouldn't be talking a lot about this felon, but yeah, he was actually a really good motivational speaker, I'll stick with that. But I remember him saying, do the... get to step number one, and when you get there you'll see farther. I live by the Pacific Ocean over here and I can only see so far if I look at the ocean. Apparently if I was just to start walking, I'd run into Japan eventually, but I can't see Japan from here.

So I could walk to the horizon where I can see now, and when I get there I'll see farther. Then when I get to that horizon line I'll see farther. That's how business works. You just, you got to get started somehow. When you get to a certain spot, you'll just see farther. When you get your first offer up and you start selling it, you'll see farther. It's just that's how it works. You don't have to have it all figured out. You just have to have a structured way of going about it. Luckily direct response marketing is a very easy way of doing it. Very predictable.

Mikhail: Yeah. So thanks Ben. Thanks for your time. For me personally, I really enjoyed chatting with you. Like I said, you were really the one that kind of set me off on this entire journey of discovering direct response and copywriting. So I really enjoyed the chat. For the folks that want to learn some more about you, learn some more about your 10 minute day system, your client list copywriting system, where can they go to learn some more about you?

Ben: Well, they can find more about me at Bensettle.com, and if they opt in, depending on when you're listening to this, my opt in process will have changed a little bit where you have to give me your phone number too. If you give me these things, I have to say depending when you're listening to this, but it's going to happen any day now, I will give you the first issue of my email players newsletter as a PDF. It's a physical newsletter, but I'll give you the PDF for the first issue, which has 24 different ways of making new sales with email, an absolute no brainer to go through that. If it works for you and you can make money with it, great. If not, and you think it's not for you, that's fine too. I also I'm going to be giving people access, who opt into my list, access to over 30 hours of content in my mobile app, which is a whole other thing.

So a lot of value for the bargain basement price of just giving me your email and phone number. Of course you can leave at any time, it's not a big deal. But that's at Bensettle.com. As far as Ten-Minute Workday, I now work a 10 hour workday. I kind of went beyond 10 minutes because you can only build a business so big like that. But every now and then I talk about it in my daily emails. So a couple times a month I usually talk about it and link to it and all that. But for now I would say just go to Bensetlle.com and start with that.

Mikhail: Okay. All right. Thanks again for the time Ben.

Ben: All right. Thank you.