

SuperFastBusiness Presents

Building A Strong Business [Six Figures Per Month Within Twelve Months]



Clint Maher reveals how SilverCircle helped him build a six-figure business from scratch.

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Transcription:

James: I'm James Schramko, and today, I've got an inspiring guest who is a member of my coaching community, I've known for, I guess, probably a little over a year. My guest today is from Australia also, Clint Maher. Welcome Clint.

Clint: Hey James! How are you man?

James: Good. You're on the other side of the country, just for our overseas listeners. Our country is about the same size as the United States, and it's like we're in New York and Los Angeles here. So we came together because you arrived into our community, our Super Fast Results community. And when you came to our community, you had already been doing some Internet marketing and been quite successful in a few areas of it. But what I've seen over the last year is a massive transformation in your business, and probably more importantly, your approach to your internet marketing business.

So what I'd like to do for our listeners today is sort of deconstruct some of the things that have happened along the way and some of the realizations, I guess, that you've learned through, I think we did about a year's worth of SilverCircle masterminding together. So we've been in contact almost every week for a year and it's amazing to see where you've taken this business. Perhaps you can just give us a little insight as to what sort of business you're working in now and I guess,

some of the transformation, just to put some perspective on this.

A little background on Clint

Clint: Let's go back a bit to where I started. I came into the forum, probably December '09, and I had quite a successful affiliate business but it was running on a one-legged horse and pretty much as soon as I got into the forum, Google in all its wisdom decided to cut off my only leg of that horse, so I was back to square one again, and that's when I would have entered the SilverCircle.

From SilverCircle, I think pretty much my first week there, I would've discussed how I was going to try a new business model and that business model was with the offline consulting, and selling SEO services and Web development services to local businesses. So that's where you would've first heard about me from was in there.

It was a whole evolution for me because I had the skills, I knew everything that I had to do. So it was easy for me to go out and sell these skills to an online business.

James: You're talking about internet marketing knowledge there, right?

Clint: Yeah. It's internet marketing knowledge.

James: So you knew what a blog was, and you knew about articles, and backlinks, and traffic and conversions. And from memory, we're talking about approximately 1 year ago. That was when you decided, I'll take these skills and I'll apply them to the traditional business market and help them with their internet marketing stuff.

Clint: Yeah, that's right. So I had all the skills. I knew how I could sell products around the globe. So coming back on a local market especially in Perth, it was just going to be very, very simple for me and to be able to give these skills to these local businesses, and to get them ranking up in Google, which is very easy for me to be able to do that, to get them to rank, page one number one, whatever. So I did that. But the reason I did it was I was trying to do my Internet marketing all by myself back at the time as a one-man army. You can't really do that anymore.

So when I started to go and help local businesses, that's when I started to grow a team of people. Firstly outsourcing and then creating my own team to be able to go and do these things for other people.

James: So how was that transformation going from one-man band to building an actual business? You must have had some challenges there in that transition period. I know I certainly did. I actually went from running a business to being a

stand-alone person back to growing my own business. So I had that little dip in the middle where I was doing everything. I understand why you said that that's not the way you were able to do it anymore. I agree with you on that.

What sort of things will people encounter as they go from stand-alone to building out their own business?

Transitioning from one-man band to actual business

Clint: Well first, let me say trying to do everything for yourself, if you're that sort of person, then it's rare that you'll be a success, because I tried to do every single thing myself; making the graphics, building backlinks, writing the articles, posting the articles, syndicating the articles. You know you've only got 24 hours in a day and you're going to cap yourself, which I found out later on, but building the team, my biggest obstacle was finding the right team members with the right culture.

So after about 3 or 4 months of trying various different places on the Internet, like Odesk and there was a couple of other places, Freelancer and that, I was getting people that were only there just to make some quick money. They were only interested in coming to join a growing company and to help me in my endeavors.

As I said, a few months of not very much productivity, but what those 3 months taught me was what not to do. So once I knew what not to do, then I knew I had to try something different and that's what I then did. That's when I went and sat down, wrote down exactly the sort of people that I need and a bit of a structure on how I wanted to build a team over there, and the most important part of it was the actual first person that we employed. Because that person, they were going to be our manager, if you will, in the Philippines because that's where my team is based. They were going to be the manager and the recruitment agency for my company. And that's exactly what's happened.

James: And do you offer recruitment services to other companies or just your own?

Clint: I went down the path of starting to offer it to other people and then it was actually you who talked me out of it. So it's like, why offer recruitment to other people when you can put your great team to work for yourself and get a much more massive ROI? You're exactly right. So I was going to recruit people out but that was just going to bring enormous pain for me for a little reward. So no, I do not offer people to other companies.

James: Yeah. I'm with you on that one as well. I also had the same thing. It's amazing the parallels here, but my first person in the Philippines was very very

talented and a great team leader and was able to help build the team. I guess really one of the key points so far is if you're going to build a proper business and get the help you need to build it, eventually you want to look at building your own team and usually you want to make sure that first person you find is good.

I know people will be thinking Clint, where did you find that first person?

Clint: The first person who grew my company?

James: Yup.

Clint: I actually found her on Odesk, and I didn't want to go to Odesk but I went to Odesk but with a very large set of filters and the way that I filtered it, I actually picked up most of these tips in the Super Fast Results forum, from people like Kyle and a few other guys who have done it. I've built it so well in the people that I interviewed that the person that we ended up going with, we just knew before we took her on that she would do well. She's gone above and beyond expectations a hundred fold. She's been that invaluable to our company.

James: And it seems that it's gone quite well from that point. So we're now talking about nine months ago probably that you've brought this person on and developed your business. I know just recently, you had a new milestone, a successful month. Do you want to just sort of talk us through where the business is at now in terms of how your business is going? And really, this is for a point. I want to see where you can go in just one year from having a vision and deciding on a model to one year down the track. What sort of things are happening now?

New milestone

Clint: Alright, sure. So last month, I had my first six-figure month, which was good because before that, we were capped at a lot less than six figures, but that was because we were trying to do everything ourselves. We actually lost track of where we were heading with the business. When we started the business, we had goals, and those goals were to go and get clients, really good clients, look after them and let the money that those clients as it was coming to the door to go and feed our "make money while we sleep" projects.

Now as you know James, I got sidetracked and went into complete service provider mode. When you go into the service provider mode and don't look after yourself, you sort of cap your salary because there's only so many hours of the day that you can look after clients and there's only so many clients, premium clients, that you can have in the door.

So about four months ago, I guess, and I've made no secret of this, we had a bit of a mini-crisis within our company because we realized that if we kept doing what we were doing, we were always going to be capped at where we were. So we had to go and have a think about what things we could be doing differently and how we could do that with what we were existently doing or what we already doing I should say.

So instead of dropping everything and starting again, because I've been down that path before and it's ugly, all we did was say, "OK, with what we have now, what can we do differently to maximize our returns and to get to where we actually want to go?" And that's what we did. Very quickly, dividends paid off first, and they're paying off even more and more now every day.

James: Yeah, it's such a crucial point, and it's a great teaching from Eli Goldratt in the Theory of Constraints. One of the key points is identify resources and assets that are just sitting around idle and utilize those. So what you've done is reconfigure the assets and resources that you already had to take a different approach.

Now tell me, I know at one point you made an investment in time and energy and then money to sort of start getting some platforms in the business to help you manage the workflow and the capacity, things like billing, software and staff/CRM management tools, how important would you say that was in the change in growth?

Investing in platforms

Clint: Critical. Absolutely critical. Firstly, while we were using BaseCamp, which you and most listeners are well familiar with, that was good to a point on managing projects or managing tasks within a team environment. Something that was hurting us was clients paying us because we were doing the manual invoicing and then when we haven't been paid then we're on the phone trying to extract money out of them, and that's a very painful situation to be in. If you need money and your clients aren't paying, it hurts, it gets emotionally involved.

So what we did, we brought in FreshBooks, which most of you have probably heard of. So that just made everything autopilot. And as soon as we started using FreshBooks, all the invoices were paid on time because the system took care of it.

Another system we've started using a few months ago was another platform. It's called WORKetc. I don't know if you are familiar with it. It's a little bit more

advanced than BaseCamp. Just because it offers different tools for different reasons.

Since we got our head around that, I don't even actually use WORKetc. I don't have a login for it but my team use it. That was crucial for me to not be working in my systems. I wanted to set the systems up to run smoothly like a well-oiled machine but it was important that I did not want to have anything to do with operating the system once it was up and running, unless there was a problem and then I could be brought in.

The reason I say that is not because I'm lazy. Well I am quite lazy but it's not because of that. It's because it leaves me free to go and look for other ideas and new opportunities. So if you want to grow, you need to be looking for new ideas and opportunity and not work in your business like a lot of people I know do in online and offline I got to say.

James: Yeah. I think it's pretty common. Now, a couple of questions that that sort of raises for our listeners. When you have a platform that your team are using and you're not necessarily hands-on, how do you determine what sort of control they have over the business and what sort of things you control? Are there delineation points? Is there software you're using to track your employees or is it a trust system? Do you have mechanisms in place? I think these are good questions to ask because I get asked these a lot too.

Determining control

Clint: Sure. There's mechanisms in place. The team members, they'll never be able to access the money side of things. So they'll never have log ins to shopping carts. Or if they do have a login to a shopping cart that will only be for customer details. They'll never be able to access the financials or the merchant facilities, anything like that.

Domains – I keep my staff out of domains, and that's purely just in case something was to go wrong, then there's no way that blame could be allocated anywhere except from myself or the integrity of my main register.

What was the other part of the question you asked there?

James: How do you monitor activity? Do you have activity monitoring things or checkpoints so that you know that your team are doing the right things because you're not actually hands-on logged in every day? So how do you actually know what's happening in the business? You got a reporting system?

Clint: Quite simple. Those things or those features are in the software that we use. But all I work on personally is for results. I put work in, and work is spat out very quickly. That's probably not the answer you wanted to hear.

James: No, well you know, it's not about me. It's about you and your system today, which is great, because everyone has a different approach. But the reason I wanted to talk to you today is because there's so many people in the internet marketing space who are talking to customers, and we get a lot of questions around this in our coaching community, and on my blogs, and my podcasts, is really this mental leap between sitting there by yourself with a handful of customers to growing a business where you have a six-figure monthly sales volume.

Clint: Well I'll tell why it works so well for me, and you won't hear this often from other people, it's because of the culture that I instill in amongst my team. When I say the culture, I treat these people like I treat myself. I look after them so well. I don't yell at them. I don't scream at them. I treat these people with utmost respect. Pay them really good wages, give them holidays, give them presents, send them out on team nights, because in the Philippines, they want to belong. People want to belong to something. When you make people belong to something, and you've got a really fun culture within your company, then people will be lining up to come and work with you, and that's exactly what we have found.

We are getting inquiries all the time from Filipinos in certain cities because word has got out exactly how fun it is to work with our company. The results speak for themselves. Where I got that idea is Richard Branson. He does that. Mind you, he pays his people less than norm, but he makes his workplace extremely fun. So I've done that, and the results that we get speak for themselves.

James: Great. I also agree on culture. It's absolutely critical. Tell me something that I think will interest people is when you are building out your team, what's the mental process behind this expense, because obviously it costs money to hire people, it costs money to get these tools and platforms. How do you justify that and do that mental reconciliation? Because I think a lot of these small entrepreneurs are always thinking, oh that's going to be expensive, that's going to cost money. I think that stops people growing. How did you overcome that?

Managing expenses

Clint: The first six months, no probably the first four months, we got about eight staff members on board, I did at the expense of my own pay. So I was pretty much on a shoestring for my own personal living expenses, because I wanted to build this team up, and that's what I did. So I built the team up, so there was that short-term

pain there of not having much myself but building them up. But then once I had the team, and they were all working with each other, and they were all working well, and there was a chain of commands and hierarchy over there, then I could put them to good use. That's exactly what I did. Yes, there was initial pain, but then the pleasure to come out of that has been a thousand fold.

James: You reinvested early profits back into the business and bootlegged it without external investment from anyone else.

Clint: Yes, absolutely.

James: Also, I wonder if you could talk just briefly on partnerships. That's interesting to me and I'm sure to others. Have you found it a good idea to go out and partner, or would you suggest people consider certain things if they're going to do that? Because I believe, at one stage, you sort of brought the business together with other people. How does that work out?

On partnership

Clint: For me, it has worked out exceptionally well. But there were a couple of times early in the case where it could have gone either way. But we worked it around things. So I've got no problems having partnerships as long as you know the person on a business level. So money has exchanged hands before you go into business. So you know what they're like in that way. There are certain things you could do by yourself. But for me, I can work with someone whose skill set complements mine. So where my strengths are, they might have a weakness. And where their strengths are, I might have a weakness. Did I just say that twice?

James: No, I think that's fine.

Clint: You know what I meant to say.

James: I do. I think the key point here that I want people to get across is that if you can concentrate on your strengths, you might build your business faster than if you're trying to compensate for your weaknesses trying to do them yourself.

Clint: And James, that's why for years, I can only ever get so far because I was trying to do everything. I was trying to build a website, I was trying to be the copywriter, I was trying to get a client, I was trying to find new affiliate offers, etc., etc. And you know what, you just can't.

James: You can't do it all.

Clint: No, you can't do it all.

James: The other thing I've observed about your growth Clint is that you don't hesitate to go out and find experts to fill in the gaps quickly for you. If you can invest a little bit to speed up results, you go and do that. What led you to that conclusion?

Getting help from experts

Clint: Years of trying to do everything yourself and trying to find free ways online. You can go and spend a week trying to sift through crap online, or you can go and spend X amount of dollars and find out in five minutes of someone who's been there, done that, and been successful. So these days, I spend a ton of money on getting expert opinion, whether that's for people like yourself James, through accountants, through lawyers. In any facet of my business, I now invest money because it saves time and I get expert information immediately. There's a little saying in WA, when the boom times are here, even taxi drivers will give you opinions on which stocks to buy in the stock market. That's the time to get out of the stock market when that happens. So I only take advice of people who are wealthy or experts in their field and who practice what they preach. I will not go for someone who teaches themselves theory because I've spent and lost thousands upon tens of thousands of dollars doing that in the past.

James: Have you got some sort of tips for listeners, what things could they look out for when they're seeking out experts? I mean it is a crowded marketplace in the internet marketing space. I do get a lot of questions on our podcast about how do you know what things are good to buy. Have you got like a quick checkpoint?

Getting resources

Clint: Referral or always ask. You don't ask your friends. You ask people in your industries. So if I'm looking for a new accountant, I would go to business owners who I trust and business owners who are successful, and I would ask them about their accountant. If it was for internet marketing, I would ask internet marketers who actually make money, not ones who want to make money, and I would ask them where they learnt from, and who they trust in the marketplace, and why they trust these persons in the marketplace. It's the biggest tip I think I could ever get because I've taken on some bad advice from people in the past. I could've got a lot quicker to where I wanted to go a few years earlier if I actually asked for proper advice.

James: Well I think it probably helped you recognize good advice better now in that contrast.

Clint: Yeah.

James: I'm just thrilled for your success, and to have been able to watch it up close for the last years has been a real treat. What we're talking about here really is you've created from an idea and some existing resources a business that is obviously going to be worth at least in the seven-figure range if it isn't already, certainly in the not too distant future. So it's just a fantastic achievement. Well done. I would also like to just sort of ask your thoughts on where do you think the market is going and what should people be focusing on right now if they're interested in sharing their internet marketing knowledge with businesses. What things are topical, what would be some final tips from Clint before we close up?

Final tips

Clint: You mean for people who are looking to take on local clients?

James: Yeah. People I guess who are inspired by this, if they think, well, I've got internet marketing knowledge, I now know I need to get good advisers, I need to get the right system, I need to build a team with amazing culture, and I'm ready to go out into my local town, wherever that is, and I imagine probably the majority of my listeners are not in Perth. So what sort of things do you think they should be focusing on if they want to implement some of this stuff?

Clint: Build a real business. Don't try and do it just to make a quick buck. Care about your clients. We've only ever lost one client. To this day, we still don't know why we lost him. He just disappeared off the face of the earth. Every other client we've had since day one are still with us now. Well out of their contracts, they just keep paying us month after month, and that's because we care. We look for ways in the business to make them more money. We find them different revenue models and they really love that personal attention, which is something like... Those other companies out there, they don't do it. They try and charge X amount of dollars for six months and they don't do anything, whereas we do, and I know a lot of your people in the Super Fast Results forum James, they have the same, they have the value add, and that's what you have to do. You have to value add to your clients' lives, and they will just keep spending money with you. If they keep spending money with you, then that's a good thing.

Now, could I also throw in here about clients, painful as some of them may be,

once you get over that pain barrier with them and start working with them a lot more closely, and this is something that's brought about a lot of our success in the last few months, and that is beginning to go into certain partnerships with your clients because they have a ready-made market and usually a ready-made product or service and you have the skills or the skill set, which is probably the hottest skill set on the earth right now, internet marketing skills, if you know what you're on about. So if you can leverage what you know with your clients, then there's a million ways which you can succeed that you've never ever thought possible before because now you've just got this army of people who you can go into business with. So that's what I'll say on that matter.

James: That's a huge tip. I also want to offer a tip too. You mentioned the magic word there – contracts, and like you, I still have my original offline customers and we're going to our fourth year now, which is pretty cool. I just want to point out something crucial, which I think so many people miss. When I started those clients off, I put them on a nine-month minimum contract with the option to renew on a 30-day rotating notice; either party could give notice within 30 days' notice. Today, none of them have ever exercised that nor me. Now this is something so many people miss. A lot of people are trying that – sign someone up for a month or for a very short period on a suck it and see basis. My experience has been that those clients who are finicky, who don't trust you enough to give you a longer term are probably not your ideal client. Do you have a minimum contract period or any sort of filter like that as well?

Clint: Yeah. We always do six months contracts. But what we do straight up, we manage our clients' expectations from before we take any money off them. We explain the evolution of SEO. So that may be the first two months, they might see very, very little changes in their traffic rankings and then it'll all start to happen. So as long as we manage clients' expectations carefully from the start, they're pretty much a pain-free client. And after those two or three months, when all the traffic starts to come, then they're very happy clients and that's when they will start to go and spruik about you. In my business here, we don't do any marketing whatsoever. And we only take people now by referral, which is really good. We're in a pretty happy place with this side of the business, with the clients in our business. So yeah, we're pretty stoked right now.

James: Yeah, that is a huge fact. It's the same. We've recently changed our minimum contract from 30 days to three months for one of our wholesale supply services. And it immediately got rid of the time-waster clients, and it actually increased sales from our committed style of clients because we know that when

people start seeing the results at that two to three month mark, they'll stay for a long time.

You've given away some amazing tips there Clint. Where can people go and check you out if you want people to visit you?

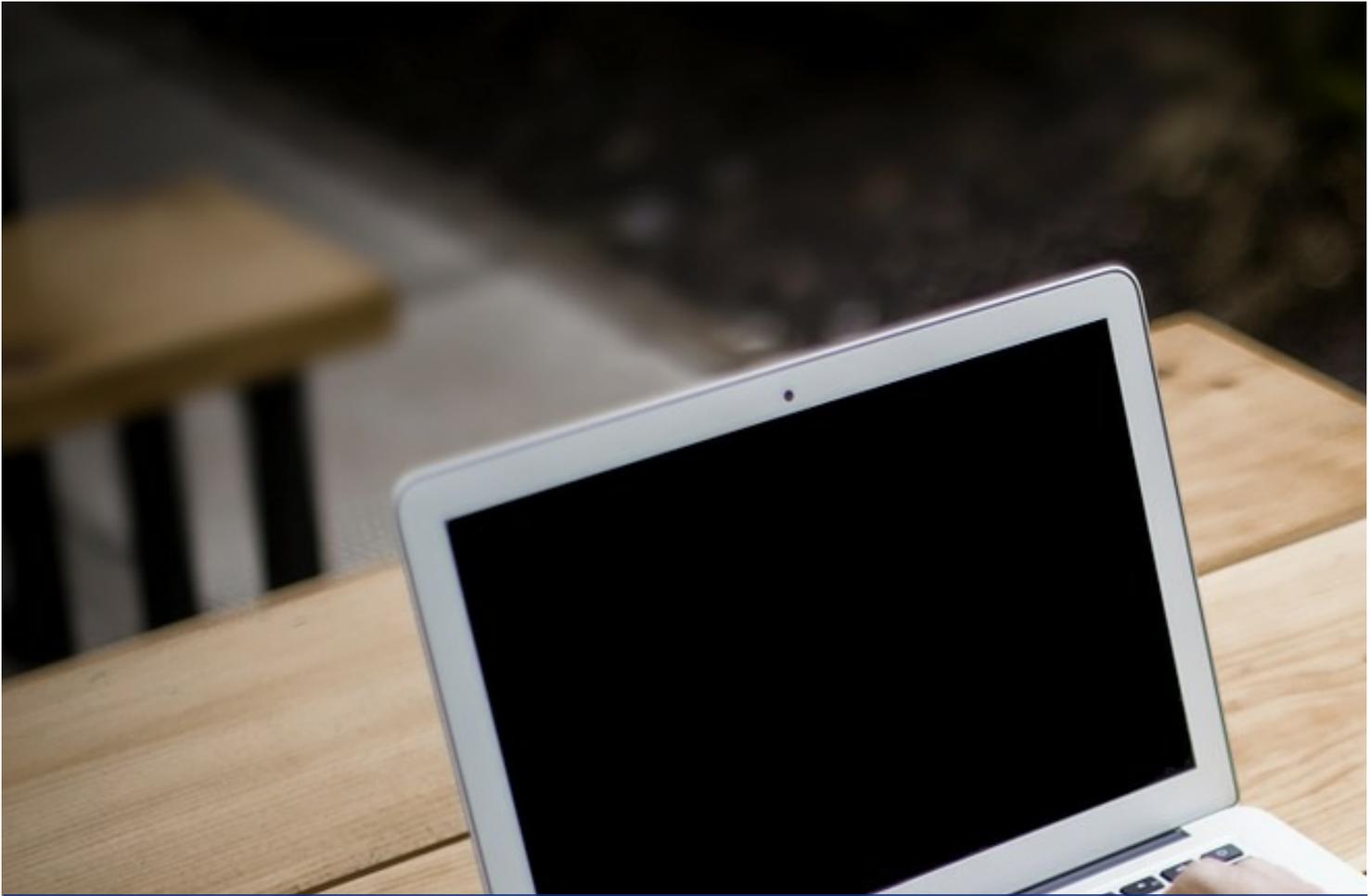
Clint: If they want to check us out, they can go to OracleDigital.com.au. That's just what we do over here. That's just one of our businesses. But yeah, if people want to contact me, they can get me through there.

James: Great. Clint, you're an awesome guy. Thank you so much for putting aside the time and continue that amazing success.

Clint: Let me give a shout out to [SilverCircle](#), mate, while I'm here. Because without it, I don't know where I would have ended up. You know, I'm going this way, I'm going that way. So once I started to focus and brought myself into realignment, that's some pretty big mindset, change has happened. And yeah, I came out on the better side of things. So big shout out to SilverCircle.

James: Well thank you very much. Alrighty. Well, see you online, and thank you again for sharing with us.

Clint: Thanks mate!



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