



SuperFastBusiness Presents

E-commerce Changes for 2016 With Ezra Firestone

James Schramko and online commerce specialist Ezra Firestone talk about the important changes in the e-commerce industry since last year.

E-commerce Changes for 2016 With Ezra Firestone

by SuperFastBusiness



James: James Schramko here. Welcome to SuperFastBusiness. I've got a very special guest. Someone who I actually have an entire podcast with. Welcome, Ezra Firestone.

Ezra: Wooh! Yeah, man, I'm excited, man, I'm excited to record a lot of episodes too when I am hanging out in your building. People may not know this, I found out what building you lived in, and I found out a way to rent an apartment in that same building for 3 weeks, so I'm excited about that.

James: Well, it's definitely going to be fun. We'll be recording, we'll be surfing. You're coming for [SuperFastBusiness Live](#), and you'll be talking about what's happening in your business. We'll get to that in just a second. If listeners are interested in hearing us banter in a different mode, go over to [ThinkActGet.com](#)

and check that out because Ezra and I have a whole podcast show that's very popular.

But today, we're actually talking about business, pure business stuff in particular. Because you've been to my event before Ezra, and you do travel around the world and you speak to lots of people in the e-commerce industry, I really want to ask you, what has changed in the last year? What changed last year, in the end of last year? And as you're coming to this year, what sort of things are on your mind that you've observed has shifted that maybe the rest of the market hasn't sort of cottoned onto yet that we should share here?

What's happening in e-commerce

Ezra: Totally. You know, something interesting is happening in the e-commerce industry. I almost feel like history is repeating itself. When I got into the game, everyone was selling other people's products through drop shipping. Drop shipping is essentially wherever you find someone who's got a product, you list it on a website, you go ahead and get a sale for it and then you notify that person, "Hey, I got a sale, charge me for the product and send it to the customer." So it's like totally hands off, and they were using Google search engine optimization, and this is really how I got started.

And right now, what's happening is sort of the same thing, but people are sourcing products differently. Drop shipping is not really what people are doing, people are private labelling, where they're essentially slapping their logo on someone's product and calling it their own, buying it in bulk rather than not buying it until they sell it, and instead of using search engine optimization, they're using Amazon as their channel of visibility.

And what I see as a parallel is essentially, everyone has the same way they're getting a product, and they're all dependent on the same traffic source, which is back then search engine optimization and when Google Panda and Penguin and Hummingbird and all this stuff came in, knocked a bunch of people out, and now Amazon is starting to do the same thing, knocking people out for different reasons.

**“A *true asset*
can't just be *taken away*
from you at *any point*.”**

- Ezra Firestone

And so it's like we end up with thousands of physical product retailers who have million-dollar businesses but aren't really businesses, they're just cash flow. Because a true asset can't just be taken away from you at any point. And so the shift that I've seen happen is people are starting to wise up, to things like content marketing and buying traffic and having a diversified source of visibility for whatever the offer that you have in your business is. It's having some level of control over that visibility, and not just relying on a single platform.

OTR versus Amazon

James: Gosh! That's a lot to do with the reason why I created [OwnTheRacecourse](#) because in every aspect of business, people get caught out when they're overly dependent on just one thing. It often breaks down and they're stuck.

Ezra: And you know, I think that content marketing, and by the way, obviously, I'm a huge fan of Own The Racecourse, I've applied it to my e-commerce businesses, it's the very reason Smart Marketer is doing as well as it is, like I am, I love that model, and I think it's a genius model, I think everyone should do it. And I think people get a little, they don't stick with it because the results are not immediate.

Own The Racecourse is a planting, it's a farming strategy, right? We're like sowing seeds that then produce for us months down the line. And when you slap a product on Amazon and make a sale next month, there's more immediacy to it, and so I think that there's something to be said for being willing to put in the work now for results that will come in the short future.

James: Yeah, that's true. I mean Amazon, it's really like just staking out a little patch in someone else's orchard and selling the apples off the tree. Whereas OwnTheRacecourse, it's about controlling your own assets. I mean there's a lot more work involved in finding a farm, buying the land, getting equipment, tilling

the soil, planting it and keeping the pests away.

Ezra: But you end up with the whole grove!

James: It's great, you got the crops and you can control what happens on that, that's good.

More platforms to choose from

Ezra: Because you asked what has changed. And so what's changed, at least for e-commerce people, is it was just basically Facebook. That was kind of all you had, you know? You had Google, but it's hard to buy Google search, it's so expensive, you know?

The Google display network, it's sort of harder to make e-commerce products work on the Google display network, so you really had Facebook as your visibility source, and your own ability to do content marketing and all that kind of stuff. But now, platforms like Pinterest and Instagram and other comparison shopping engines like Jet.com, there's just a bunch of other, and obviously now, iTunes and all that other stuff, but there's like a bunch of other channels of visibility that are becoming easier and easier to leverage as they're opening up advertising platforms.

James: Gotcha. So basically, you've got a lot more options now. You don't have to be just committed down the same track as everyone else. But if you have your own platform and your own base, then I guess you can just interchange whatever traffic source is hot. If Pinterest is turning on or Instagram is working out better, plug them in. If Google is getting a bit expensive, dial it back a bit.

**"Not every *market* is
relevant for every
platform."**

- Ezra Firestone

Ezra: That's right. And the offer that you have is going to dictate the source of

visibility that you leverage, because not every market is relevant for every platform, but whatever your market happens to be, if you're a coach selling services, it doesn't matter what it is you've got as your offer, there are now platforms that you can easily leverage to generate leads and sales.

And it's just like the most exciting time ever in online commerce. Something happened in China, on Singles' Day which is their equivalent of Valentine's Day. I think it's \$14 billion in a single day, in 2015, it was in November. The world is catching on, it's never been a more exciting time to be a retailer online. They don't predict a plateau in sight. There is essentially no plateau predicted as far as online commerce's growth, it's just ridiculous.

James: OK. So if we're not drop shipping, we're now probably getting a little more control of our products and our own websites. What's in your tool bag? What's your like favorite platform to setup your own store with?

Why Ezra likes Shopify

Ezra: Sure. So my technology stock for e-commerce is Shopify. I'm a huge ambassador for Shopify, I go up there quite often and...

James: Is that just because they have a slippery dip?

Ezra: Yeah, they do have a slide. No. You know, what's interesting about them is they have done sort of something that you preach right? Like they are the best in the world at the commerce, processing transactions and making a really smooth and easy user interface for someone who wants to build a store. And then what they do, so they specialize in that. And then they layer on, you want the best shopping cart abandonment? You can pick between people and you can layer on the best shopping cart abandonment. You want the best theme or website design? You can pick between themes and website design and layer those on.

So whatever these little third party apps that you want to plug into your store, such as inventory management or shipping management or any of this stuff that all these other platforms that try to be an all-in-one don't do very well, Shopify just doesn't do. And they have other people do it. And that's why they're winning the race, because they've specialized and they've focused, and they have the largest third party developer network developing really cool awesome things for their platform that you can layer on.

So you end up with the best interface as a merchant to build your store, and then you end up with all these other, anything that you can think of that you

need is not actually developed by Shopify, it's developed by a specialist who only does that.

James: Yeah, that's the way to go. It's similar to the cart that I've used for my information product business, where it just talks to everything else. It's a solid strategy. I know Richard Koch talks about it in one of his 80/20 books, not the classic one, but the other one. He talks about there's a sweet spot in the market and you shouldn't always try and own every vertical layer of the market. So stick to the bits you're doing.

*"Focus on the
one thing
you do
really well."*

- James Schramko

Ezra: Well, you know, and this is advice that if we just sort of switch gears to Smart Marketer which is a brand that you've essentially coached me through building over the years, the advice you kept giving me, "Be a specialist. Be a specialist. Do this one thing really well." And that strategy has really paid off.

James: Yeah, you've trimmed back some other offerings and I'm in the exact same process. I'm stripping away business units to get back to the core so that I can really be good at it. That's where the power comes. So someone listening to this thinking, OK, the sweet spot is to be in control of my own product and get a Shopify store.

There's a few tools that I've heard you talking about on podcasts and webinars that you like. Which ones are those?

Some tools of the trade

Ezra: Sure. So I'm using Optimonk, and if you go to Optimonk.com/smartmarketer, which is my brand, you can get like 2 months free or something. It's exit intent software, and it's like the coolest thing I have found.

You can drive traffic to it. It's not exit popups, it doesn't pop up like a new window when someone tries to exit. It just pops up a box within the window that they're actually in, and it's totally legal and you can do it and you can drive Facebook ads and Google ads to it, and man, has it ever helped me generate extra leads. On Smart Marketer I think it's about 20 percent more leads we're getting, and on BOOM it's more like 17 percent. But that's like a fifth more leads we're getting from the visitors to our website. It's incredible.

So that tool's very cool, I'm very much enjoying a CRM, an email service provider called Klaviyo, which I think is more of an enterprise level one, so I probably wouldn't start there if you're a new merchant, but [ActiveCampaign](#) is the email service provider or CRM you might want to start with, \$9 a month, it does tagging, it does automations, it does all kinds of stuff.

What else have we been playing with? Those are the ones that come to mind.

James: Cool. So, you actually just put an affiliate link in my podcast. That's pretty spectacular.

Ezra: Yeah, sorry dude, I had to do it.

James: Well you see, that Smart Marketer name doesn't just get there by accident. This guy is outrageous.

Ezra: I also have a relationship with you where I know that it's sort of cool, so I wouldn't have done it.

James: I know. It's fine. I'm messing with you. You know what, the thing is, I recognize I'm not an e-commerce market specialist that's why I get you on the show, and that's why I want you to come to the event.

What to expect at SuperFastBusiness Live 11

Ezra: And speaking of the event, man, when you see what I am going to share at this event... I've spent, as you know, the last 10 years in this industry building online businesses, and I've really soared in the last three or four. Frankly, since meeting you, and other things have happened in my life, but I've really soared.

And I feel like my ability to make businesses work right now, everything from the infrastructure of the business to how I communicate and how I delegate and how I run my team to the specific sales funnels that I'm using to the actual ad campaigns, all the way down to what the interest groups are, what devices I'm

targeting, how much I'm bidding, every platform I'm using, what the ads look like, what the sales funnels look like, what the retargeting campaigns look like, the whole thing, nothing held back, and I would only do this for your event. I mean, I would do it for my own event, for my own mastermind people, but outside of that there's nowhere else I would do this other than for you and your folks, because of our relationship, and I think it's going to blow people away.

James: Hey, we're neighbors, right?

Ezra: We live next door to each other.

James: And since meeting you, my surfing started and continued. So I owe you a big thank you on the backside of that.

Ezra: And my surfing stopped.

James: You passed the baton. I'll keep that for you.

Ezra: I totally did.

James: So it's all good. I'm looking forward to the event. We always have fun. You're a dynamic presenter. I actually attended one of your webinars recently as your coach just to see what you're up to. The way that you're delivering information, I've seen a marked improvement over the years where you're making it easier to understand. Very, very information packed. Even on your free stuff, you're giving away things that you would expect in a paid course.

So I applaud what you're doing. It's lovely to see that continue. If you're listening to this and you're interested in e-commerce, then I suggest that you check out what Ezra Firestone is up to. If you would like to come to [SuperFastBusiness Live](#), you're listening to this before the event, get a ticket. It's a great event. It's the 11th one actually. I've booked surfing for the last day for the audience.

If you're listening to this after the event, then hop along inside [SuperFastBusiness membership](#), where you hopefully will be able to catch a recording of what went down. And one way or the other, I'd love to help you on your business.

So Ezra, are you in Hawaii at the moment?

Ezra: I am in Hawaii. We're right now on the north shore of Oahu. I just ordered some Thai food from the local Thai joint, so I'm going to go eat that. And I'm

going from here to Australia, so I'll be there soon.

James: Great! We'll get a few waves in, and looking forward to catching up.

Ezra: Thanks, man.

James: See you buddy!



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