



How to Constantly Beat Industry Averages



How do you consistently get marketing results that are better than what's par for your industry? Growth Labz's Will Wang shares what he knows to work.





James Schramko and Will Wang

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 788, which in some cultures is probably a reasonably lucky number. I've brought along my special guest, [Will Wang](#) who's a bit of a wizard and a genius with copywriting, offer creation, database generation, [cold marketing](#), warm marketing, marketing for startups; basically too much talent for just one person. And today, we're going to be talking about how to constantly beat industry averages. So welcome to the call, Will.

Will: Thanks, James. And thank you so much for the kind words. It's making me blush.

James: Well, I mean it. Everyone I send your way comes back saying, "Wow, he's so smart. He's very savvy. And I love chatting with you, because I always learn stuff. But what I have noticed as a coach, I'm often sending people back to our [podcasts](#). So this one will be no different. I want to create a linkable podcast that I can send someone in the future back to this podcast to say, "Look, you want to make sure you check these things, if your offer isn't working, if your emails aren't getting opened, you know, this is going to be an instructional podcast episode.

So with that in mind, when we're talking about how to constantly beat industry averages, what industry averages did you have in mind when you came up with this topic?

More clickthroughs, more opens, more conversions

Will: Yeah, so because I'm a direct marketer, what I look at when I craft campaigns for clients are things like, how do we get more people clicking on our ads? How do we get more people signing up after they've clicked on our ads, whether it's for a lead magnet or something else? How do we get more people taking action, and ultimately becoming a customer? So it's more the clickthroughs, the email open rates, the conversions that we're looking at.

James: Right, so this training today is going to give us some useful information that we can then apply to various parts of our funnel, wherever our blockage is, whichever seems the weakest, wherever the offer gets stuck. And I know we've talked in previous episodes about [different marketing channels](#). We've talked about [different types of conversion things you can do](#).

The place you want to start

In this particular episode, do you want to just sort of give us a general overview, like where do we start when we want to beat the industry average? Like, I imagine, you sort of got a go-to playbook, and I want you to spill your guts on it.

Will: Sure. I guess the best place to start would be looking, for example, if I was sitting with a client, who said, "We need more leads, we need more people coming through and buying from us. Where do we go?" And I'm going to use the Facebook ads platform, because it's a platform that so many people are familiar with, and there's so many people playing. So I think maybe if we use that as an example, looking at Facebook ads, driving them through to, for example, a landing page with a lead magnet, and then getting the emails open, read, clicked, and actioned. So that might be the best way to look at it.

James: Right. So this is someone who's already got an offer that converts.

Will: Yup, so we've got an offer that converts, might not have done any advertising, or just started in the journey of advertising, or the ads have done okay, but they're looking at, how do we improve and get better results?

James: And so how do we do that?

Will: So what we typically do, I'm going to go into some very specific tactics that we're looking at, and things that they can actually implement and take away and do a sanity check on their own campaigns with. But one of the top things and, you know, I was sitting with about 1,700, 1,800 small business owners a couple of weeks ago on an online event. And one of the things that kept coming up was that what worked for one person didn't work for another.

So before we dive into tactics, I wanted to speak about the strategic thinking that's going to allow someone to look at a market and go, how do I position myself so I can beat everyone else or stand out and just get people coming into me knowing that I can help them where my competitors can't. So that's probably the first place to start.

James: So hang on, just to recap that, you're saying a lot of marketers are just being generic and there's nothing in particular special about them and the customers are kind of going, meh!

Will: I'm saying a lot of marketers are doing that and they're obviously teaching that. So it's a lot of people looking at stuff everywhere. Going, so what? It doesn't apply to me. Don't care.

A lot of people doing cold outreach wrong

James: It reminds me of when we were talking about [cold outreach](#). You've shared information in my events, you've shared information on the podcast. There's very few cold outreach emails that will get my attention and have me do a favorable response. And when they come through, they really stand out compared to the average. Someone out there is teaching a very bad commoditized technique that is just so ineffective, and so insincere, and so templated.

So really, wherever you're at in business, you know, whatever stage your business is at, if you're listening to this, and if you are doing something that the mass market teaches, and everybody's doing it, that should be a massive warning sign for you.

Will: Exactly. And, you know, I'm going to use the example of a long-form Facebook ad, because I think we've all seen plenty of those where they go into a whole sob story and then make up all these false scarcity. And a lot of people out there are teaching the template and saying, "Use this because it worked," without thinking, 'Well, actually, what's the thinking, and the strategy, and the philosophy behind it, and what action makes it work?'

Putting some real thinking behind the template

So if you can even just step backwards and go, 'Well, hang on, would this be relevant for my market? Would they understand or would they resonate with what I'm saying?' That's better than what 90 percent of people out there are doing. Everyone else is taking the template and taking a shortcut, whereas the real work is in the thinking behind it.

James: Nice. Okay, so how do we learn how to think behind it?

Will: So, if we take a step back and look at a market in general, and I'm going to use the "make money online" market, because I think that's one that we're both familiar with. And it's a really, really messy market with a lot of bad operators, teaching the same kind of thing. So I think it's good to pick on this market.

James: I hope so. As long as it doesn't taint our website with a bad search engine brush, but it is definitely a market people get sucked into, both from the perspective of buying and selling. And, you know, when I came online, I was definitely thinking about things like The 4-Hour Workweek, but I've only managed to get it down to about a 10-Hour Workweek. So I'm not quite there yet. But I'll take that. I'm happy with that. And two of the best hours of the week are recording this podcast. So yeah, let's use that example, and I'm sure it's something we can all relate to.

Gauging the market sophistication

Will: Perfect. So when I look at this market, and if I was to enter this market, I will look at it and say, how sophisticated is this market? And by sophisticated, I don't mean the dressing up and top hats and monocles and things like that. It's more, you know, how much marketing have they been exposed to and at what level of marketing do they see day in, day out? So I look at a market before writing even a single piece of copy in a few different ways.

So if it's a market, which typically hasn't really been tapped into much, or they haven't been marketed too heavily, it's a pretty clean market. At that point, going in with a whole sob story, or with this whole long-form copy just isn't necessary. If it's a fairly fresh market, or fairly clean market, you can just go in and just make a claim. For example, I'm going to help you make money online. So that'll be the first level of sophistication where it's not sophisticated at all.

James: This reminds me of like the early days of the online marketing space where to get an opt in, you didn't have to do much, you could pretty much say join my newsletter, submit, and put a little box, and people would opt in, and then you had to start really selling the opt-in a lot harder. And I'm sure that will probably be covered in one of your other techniques. But the thing that just jumped down in my mind is this guy who emailed me the other day, asking if there's an upsell.

You're not going to get that in an unsophisticated market, are you? But you know you're in a competitive market when your buyers are so well trained on the process, they're actually in advance asking if there are upsells. Would that be a sign of a sophisticated market?

Will: 100 percent that would be. If they know what you're going to do before you do it, they've probably seen a couple of pitches, or they've probably seen some marketing.

As the audience gets more savvy...

James: That's fascinating. Cool. Okay, well, so that's the first one, if we're in an unsophisticated market, we can probably just make a claim. Simple as that.

Will: Exactly. And that was like very early days. So all markets go through cycles of sophistication. The next one is where, just making a simple claim doesn't do the job anymore. Everyone's saying make money online. So the next thing you've got to do is really amplify your claim. And an example of that is going from make money online to making it more specific with a timeline. So for example, make \$100,000 online in 30 days or less. That's when you're taking your claim and putting some more weight behind it; amplifying the claim.

James: Is there any real cost or extra effort involved in going to step two anyway, even if you're in an unsophisticated market?

Will: Not really, actually. Step two is typically where we start anyway, just because you do get some better results. So even if you've got an unsophisticated market, there's no harm in skipping step one and going straight to step two.

James: The metaphor I think of this is car design. There's some saying around that it doesn't cost that much to design a car that's not but ugly. So, you know, we wonder, why do those manufacturers in this sort of emerging countries choose such dog-ass ugly designs when they could just poache the designer from BMW or Mercedes-Benz or an Italian design firm? And I'll say someone who's done pretty well at that is Hyundai.

Some of those cars they're putting out, if you took the badges off and put them in a sort of workshop tests, people would probably suspect some of those cars are European. So this seems to be a case, well, it's not that much extra effort to put some more weight into your claim and have a decent claim out of the gate. And I'm laboring this because the bulk of problems I see as I'm coaching people is their offer sucks.

It's like, when I look at their page sometimes, apart from it being dog-ugly, slow to load, not being very easy to figure out what's going on, I say to them, like, would you seriously buy from your own site? And they're like, no, not really. Don't expect anyone else to. So if you want to get a better end result quicker, what you're saying is that, if you can, just amplify your claim, like put the claim, by all means, but just go to that next level of amplification as soon as possible.

Will: Yep, that's right. It's not that much more effort, but the results will be worth it.

James: By the way, it is on my mind, we're talking about an advanced market here, a sophisticated market. Can you think of an example of an unsophisticated market?

Will: Well, most markets are unsophisticated. But for example, in some ecommerce spaces, or some, you know, online spaces where there's not that many courses, the emerging industries, for example, when we went into, you know, worldwide change, and more people started homeschooling; homeschooling market wasn't sophisticated. You could go in and say, "I'm going to give you a resource that's going to help make homeschooling easier."

And now as more and more people run to it, and more companies jump on, now you've got to say, here's our three-step process to help you create your homeschool plans in two days or less.

The example of the surfing market

James: You know, I'm seeing this happen in the surfing market. It's a very unsophisticated market in many areas of the market from manufacturer right through. For example, it's pretty much a miracle if whoever you order a board from will actually let you know when it's ready. Like you have to hound them. Even if they haven't got your money, even if they've got a deposit or they're doing it on a verbal, they generally won't let you know when it's ready.

But now I'm seeing, you know, surf coaching and surf training programs pop up that definitely have some more sophistication. They're not only just making a claim, like surf better. It'll be like surf better in 30 days guaranteed or your money back; you know, increase your paddle power, catch better waves, you know, and they really went well with the copy, and the one I saw recently was like, 'Hey, are you sick of going on boat trips and missing the waves or getting frustrated?' and stuff. It's like they were speaking to me, Will.

When I looked, the copy was very interesting because it said, you can discover how to become a better surfer in 30 days, all for less than the cost of a surfboard. Now I don't know how many courses they're selling at 500 and something dollars but that is like a king's ransom for the average surfer. The average surfer is buying a used surfboard for \$200 or \$300. \$500 is a fortune. So you know, they need good sales offer to make this one work. But I'm seeing some more sophisticated marketing coming to markets that I've observed in the past were, like, really basic.

Will: Definitely.

An updated strategy applied to the car industry

James: So what I'm saying is, I think there's an inflation happening. And this podcast is probably going to, you know, level up a few people if you're in the woodworking market, or the jigsaw puzzle market, or the card trading market, or something that, you know, some other people haven't seen everything we've seen in the online space. Probably the greatest example I remember was when I ran a product launch formula in the Mercedes-Benz dealership, and we sold millions of dollars' worth of stock in just a couple of days, broke a lot of records.

And no one had ever seen anything like it with a multi-channel marketing campaign with direct response, SMS, Google AdWords, newspaper, and then we had coupons for redemption when people purchase to claim their prize, and we had a drawer, and we collected over 1,000 email addresses, etc. It was a big deal, because it was just unheard of. Most people are sticking up a barbecue out the front with some blow-up balloons, and a bit of bunting. That's what most of us think over the car sale. And this took it to a whole new level.

Will: Yeah, and I bet you that someone saw that and copied it. Now a lot of car dealerships are probably running a very similar model.

James: You know, you'd think so, except I'm going to say that the car industry is the most interesting industry, from my perspective, in terms of it being a dinosaur industry. They're pretty much doing exactly what they did before I fixed everything up. It's unbelievable. It's over 100 years old, that industry, and it's going to take companies like Tesla, etc., with their different marketing approach. They're just decimating traditional dealers with the way they're sold.

Nobody likes going to a car dealer anymore. And then the last vehicle I purchased, as much as it sort of went against my grain, having been mucked around yet again, by the dealers, which is, you know, unbelievable; I ended up just finding a broker who I put in the details of what I want, I hit submit, and then I had dealers as bidding for my purchase. And I found the exact stock that I wanted for the lowest possible price for the fastest delivery, and I wouldn't have to set foot in a showroom to do that.

So it's just like, you guys deserve this. That's really what it comes down to, because they just won't get sophisticated. So I see whole industries changing. My message is this, get sophisticated before everyone else does in your market or you're toast. So we've just learned what step two is - amplify your claim. If we want to get really sophisticated, what's the next level of sophistication, Will?

Making advances in targeting

Will: Yup. At a certain point, if you're in your market every single day, which you should be, like you're in the surf market every single day, so you can see this coming. Oh, and by the way, they've got such great targeting, if they're at that cost of the price point and talking about the product, they know exactly who they're targeting.

James: They are. They do know. You know, interesting, on Twitter, when I logged in today, it asked me if I wanted targeted ads or just general untargeted ads. And I thought that was very interesting. That to me, that's a big deal. Because when I was online in sort of the mid to late 2000s, 2005, 2008, 2009, when Twitter was sort of new, no one knew what Twitter was. But then if you go back, like, I don't know, four or five years, you know, mom and dad know what Twitter is. They see it on the news, they might even read things on it.

But now that Twitter is saying this, it's like, hey, Joe public has just realized that ads are actually being targeted. You know, maybe some people have watched the Social Dilemma on Netflix. But it's, you know, it's only in 2020 with election and everything else that people have realized that everyone is seeing a different message. I don't think people knew that. Like when I say people, I mean normal people, not us aliens in the internet world. I don't think their general population actually realized how targeted it is, which is why we always said be very careful with your remarketing, not to give the game away and not to be creepy.

You don't want to be the stalkery market. Hey, you know, that offer page you looked at two days ago with the blue shoes? Hey, how did you know that? I think the public are leveling up on their awareness, which means whatever was working in 2019 will be such ancient history by 2021.

Will: Yeah, definitely. And I think the whole market is actually becoming more sophisticated. So even the markets, which are traditionally a little bit far behind, because technology has become such a talking point, everyone is becoming more sophisticated. So in a sense, you almost have to start at number two, which is amplifying the claim.

Other people are amplifying – what's your move?

James: You know, the whole point of this episode is to beat industry averages. So if the industry average is to make a claim, then we want to beat that by amplifying it. And if we want to beat amplifying your claim, that's what's next, right?

Will: Yeah. And if you want beat amplification, you want to have what's called a unique mechanism or a USP. So this is the thing that makes your product or your service completely different to everyone else's. So the perfect example of that, you know, we started it from make money online, which is the claim, amplification is, make 100K online in 30 days or less. The unique mechanism is about, for example, this unique way of writing copy is going to help you make 100K in 30 days or less. So you've got the same claim but now you're attaching some form of difference to how you make that claim happen.

James: Right. So, Will, you run an agency and slash consulting business. You coach people and also supply services for people in this sort of online space. [GrowthLabz.com](https://www.growthlabz.com), that's GrowthLabz with a Z or a Zed, depending on where you're listening to this.

What would you say your unique mechanism is? I just thought I'd throw the spotlight on you for a second. Because I'm sure there's a lot of marketing agencies who can run a Facebook campaign or help someone tweak their conversions a bit. When I describe you, I have a feeling I know what the unique mechanism is, from my perspective, but I'm wondering if, you know, is it hard to come up with your own unique mechanism without external help?

Will: I think a unique mechanism doesn't really exist without external inputs. So for example, our unique mechanism for the agency is that we're a data-driven, copy-focused, direct marketing agency. And so that's come from many, many iterations, it's come from people approaching me or clients that have worked with me turning around saying, "Oh, my God, I didn't know you were so data-focused." Or, "Oh, my God, I didn't know your copy was so tied back to data." So that is kind of our unique mechanism.

And it's a mixture of internal, my past experiences and how I build agency, and also the external, whether it's leads or clients, having conversations with me go, 'Wow, that's so different. I've never heard of that before.' And if someone says that, to me, I know that's something I have to incorporate into what we say about ourselves.

James: Good. And I'd say the same for me, too, I learn the most about how I'm unique, according to how people describe me, especially when they're making a referral, or now, the first question I ask someone when they join [SuperFastBusiness](https://www.superfastbusiness.com) is, why did you join? Like, where did you find out about me? Why are you here? And I usually get the funnel. You know, I read your [book](#), a friend of mine has been getting coached here for the last year, and he raves about it. And so I like to get that context.

And sometimes, they say, "Look, I just want to work less and make more, and I know you surf, and you're actually doing what other people talk about. And I want that as well." So it's like, you know which part of the marketing is coming through, which part of the message is landing. And that helps you shape it. The other thing I hear a lot is that I'm very direct, I'm no BS, I cut to the chase, basically going to save people time, and I think other people know that I coach a lot of famous people who are doing really well.

So I've got access to really good data, like I just know exactly what works. Because I've seen it manifest in multimillion-dollar businesses. So when I get a brand new customer, even if they join today, and they ask a question, then I've already seen the answer, I just take them straight to the answer. And the only risk with that strategy that I've discovered so far is sometimes people think it's too simple, and it hasn't been a huge amount of effort or work or labor involved in getting the answer. So they might easily dismiss it.

But it's amazing how the ones who just open to it and accept it and then do it get an instant result. And it just blows their mind, which is great. So how else can we come up with our unique mechanism if we're feeling a little bit homogenized, and just like everybody else?

Will: Yep. So one of the best ways is to look at case studies or examples of times when you've done really, really good work. And look at what you did, specifically, that you haven't heard of elsewhere in the market that allows you to get the results for your clients or your customers. So that's always a really good point.

Another option is to look at your background. So similar to what I've done, I've got a background in data. I used to work as a corporate data analyst. So I kind of talk about my background in understanding numbers and apply that to understanding psychology.

The huge importance of data

James: That's so funny that you and [Ilana](#), who's one of our other guests is, you know, obsessed with traffic, a former data analyst. It seems to be we're attracting them into our life. And I can tell you that's one area that a lot of people are not good at naturally. Have you ever logged into or started up with a new client and they don't have a full data picture available for you out of the gates?

Will: Yeah, I would say 80 to 90 percent.

James: Hopefully, if they've been paying attention to the themes on SuperFastBusiness, they'll get that. And of course, you know, just relating to that, as a former general manager of a multimillion-dollar, like decamillions, Mercedes-Benz dealership, I got exposed to a lot of data. We had lots of fancy accountants who charge big money to pull out data, and pivot tables, and spreadsheets, and pie charts, and graphs, and KPIs, and benchmarking, and gave us ratios, and formulas, and, you know, it was a lot of discussion about numbers.

And every single meeting with the manufacturer was like, comparing each brand by model, you know, even when I was a salesperson, we had to make up a certain mix of models within our sales quota, etc, etc. And then we got paid on commission on percentages, like you had to track the numbers, or you'd miss out on certain points or the commission, you know, which was vital because they often had an accelerator component.

So I'd say this, if you're listening to this podcast, and you don't know the numbers in your business, if you don't know what a customer is worth to you, if you don't know how many visits you get, or how many of those convert, if you're not sure where your customers come from, or why they buy, or why they don't buy, you'll definitely want to get into these qualitative and quantitative surveys and data points so that when you do hire someone like Will to help you, he's got something to actually work with, and you can accelerate your results.

So it wouldn't be a waste of time to gather that information. Besides that, you might make some fascinating discoveries like the guy I have with an ecommerce store who went after he looked at all these thousands and thousands of SKUs, he realized that almost all his money came from just one or two items. And I had a coaching question yesterday that said, "Six of our customers make us \$5,000 or less per year, and they're not profitable. What should we do?"

I said you should let them go or find a way to monetize them, which I'll tell you if it's possible or not, based on the answers from your diagnostic survey. I'm going to look for a hidden opportunity to see if those six customers could increase their lifetime customer value, or if they're just not the right type of customer, that's going to be profitable enough to actually spend time and energy on.

And often by letting go of even half your crappy customers or your crappy product or your crappy service lines that'll actually significantly increase your profit, because I saw some wild stat, but more than 100 percent of the profit comes from the top few products, and then they're losing profit on the losing products to balance it back down to your actual profit number.

When you're talking the last level of sophistication

So you've really got to [pay attention to the data](#). So we can look at our data and help us understand our unique mechanism. And then we apply it into our marketing. So that's like a stage three sophistication, but I'm sure there's more, Will. I think you're holding back from us. Okay, what if everyone in the market is already doing that?

They're already special, they've already given us a claim, they've amplified their claim, and they're all special. You could say that about, you know, some of the top brands of clothing, you know, like Nike or whatever, they're good with the basketball or the running, and different brands do different things, different markets, so what can we do to top that?

Will: Yep, so that's the very last level where it's so sophisticated that claims or USPs don't even work. So everyone has seen every variation of uniqueness...

James: That sounds like a weight-loss market.

Will: The weight-loss market is a perfect example of this, like everyone's seen the...

James: Like avocado diet, lose 50 pounds by next Tuesday, you know, like, seen it all. It just like, yep, it just moves to the point of wha, wha, wha, or unbelievability or it's just not that interesting, right?

Will: Yep. So in that kind of market, and you know, weight loss is a perfect example. Fashion is an example as well. So Nike and Adidas are really good examples of this. It's where you can make a claim about your shoes or your diet, but everyone's heard every variation. No one believes it anymore.

So when that happens, now you've got to go to the emotional side of things or, you know, the emotions, the stories, the branding. So for Nike and Adidas, I don't know how to pronounce it, they start sponsoring athletes. They tell the stories of the athletes because that's the brand, that's the face behind it and the recognition in motion.

James: It's literally the face behind you.

Will: It is.

James: As we're recording this podcast, you have a Michael Jordan poster right next to you. Are you doing a positive brand association, Will? You know, I always think of you as being the athletic type and a high achiever. I know you really enjoyed the series about, you know, the Chicago Bulls and Michael Jordan's career. So there's a lot of emotion in that, isn't there? It's so compelling, the viewing and the engagement of it.

Statistically, he probably wasn't even that good when you consider that he used to hog the ball a fair bit, you know, until he had to learn to be a team player and do the triangle system, or whatever they talked about. But isn't it interesting how strong that story is? I remember, they're saying they sold a lot more shoes than they expected. But then people embraced that story of Michael Jordan. And they're buying into that, not just a bit of synthetic rubber, or the other Nike one, the waffle iron, that's how that sort of got invented. They probably got them a certain way until it didn't, you know?

Will: Yeah. I think that the waffle iron, that was the unique mechanism. And even the early advertising, you probably would have seen them talking about gel air technology, etc, etc. And then later on, they just moved to sponsoring athletes, because everything was the same. Let's use athletes and get them to associate their brand. And I wish I was smart enough to subtly, you know, do the brand association you talked about James, but literally, I like a documentary about the post, and that's it, no more thinking behind it.

James: Well, now I've already done it for you, I've interwoven it. But see, I actually know you, I know you well beyond just the podcast. What I know about you, you know, it's why we have these podcasts, like I know that you're an expert at martial arts, I know that you take great care and attention to spend time with your kids, and you have a great relationship with your wife. And you know, we've gone out and had meals together. I know you're very generous, and I know that you are ambitious.

You really get hunger and satisfaction from tackling a challenging project and beating the market. That's something that comes out. I think it's from your sports. And also, I just know you're very proactive, because the way that we ended up doing business together was definitely your proactiveness. You targeted the market, you came up with a compelling offer, and you pursued and here we are, as business partners in it, in a sense, talking about things that we both love talking about. And occasionally, we even get to have a little surf.

So I think the story of us, if we can intertwine it with a brand, like the Michael Jordan is a classic, the classic thing; it basically beats all the logic stuff, it beats the homogenized stuff. And it's really interesting to me, because we just heard the story of [Dan Norris in Episode 784](#), about how he built an eight-figure brewery. And he shared his framework in that, as to, you know, he's made a lot of mistakes in business. He had a tough run. But the things he got right were building a fantastic brand and incorporating story, and then adding content and then community.

And I imagine this, you know, it's not a coincidence that we're layering the same concepts over and over again. And I put effort into making sure there's stories within the content we make here. Because I've been told it's actually interesting by the people listening. They send me an email. And they refer to them all the time. Honestly, I actually forget most of the stuff I say on these things. After I hang up recording, I'm on to the next surf or whatever. And people remind me of things I've said or whatever.

And I apologize if I share stories more than once. But it would also be unwise of me to assume that every listener listens to every episode. But I do know there's about five people who say they've listened to every single episode I've ever done, which is phenomenal. It really is phenomenal.

More dimension on the emotional aspect

So we're going to basically say, look USP is great, but we need emotions, we need stories. Give me some more dimensions on that. You referenced one thing there that I definitely recognize, I learned from a cult persuasion expert, which is paint a common enemy. If you want to give an example of that.

Will: Yeah, definitely. So I think the best market to take an example would be the weight-loss market. For me, you know, if you're talking about a market that's sophisticated, weight loss is it. When I think about painting a common enemy, it's about taking a little bit of the blame off them. Because if you think about it, at this point, if the market still send a message, and they're still not happy with how they look, how they feel, they're looking around saying, "I've tried everything, I bought every package, but it's not working. So is it me?"

So then if you go in and say, "Look, it's actually not you. It's because everyone's feeding you all of this other rubbish information that haven't really tackled the root cause of this. Let me show you what actually works." Now you're kind of spinning the market, you're going upside down, right? You're saying, it's not this unique mechanism, unique mechanisms are rubbish. It's because they don't understand this one thing, or this one thing about you.

And then you can relay your own personal story, your own personal journey, and kind of tell them that, 'Hey, we're similar. I've tried every package. I've tried every diet. And it didn't work for me until I did this one thing.' There are still unique mechanisms in there. But you're positioning it very differently. You're positioning with emotion first, and then you're kind of transitioning to why you.

James: Or some of the more successful health-related markets that I've seen are definitely centered around the people. It's the person's story of struggle through to redemption. You do make me laugh, though. It's like the classic copywriter's argument of, you know, it's not your fault. It's like, well, it kind of is. So the first eBook that I ever made when I was struggling to figure out how to turn a document into a PDF, and I think I only got as far as the title page, but I still remember what it was called, this was 2005.

I wrote the cover title page for an eBook called Are You Fat, Lazy or Stupid? And I was going to solve their problems. Because at the time I was reasonably fit, I was not lazy, I was the opposite, like the work ethic would class me as an A-grade workaholic. And the stupid part it's, you know, having already been a debt collector, having sold for a living and seen a lot of businesses and been exposed to just the strange things people do.

I think I had to get a copy of Adobe back then it was like, expensive and difficult. And it hardly even ran on my underpowered computer. And I abandoned that market, and I ended up going to the website software market, which I think is definitely a better fit for me. And in hindsight, that title poll, we wouldn't have worked out so great. But it does make me chuckle when I think of some of my misadventures.

So what you're saying is, the technique of letting a customer off the hook might help them feel more interested in listening to your solution, because it gives them that sense of relief that there is actually a way. That basically, up until now, it hasn't been their fault, because they've been getting a bad message. But from now on, that they've got the good message, it's up to them to take action and do something about it.

And I think someone actually says that in their copy, it's like, 'Up until now, it's not been your fault. But from today on, if you don't do this, it will be your fault.'

Will: Yeah, that's really strong. So if you tie that into emotion, if you bring your story into it and say, "I went through the same thing so I know what you're going through. I've been through every single diet, meal prep, exercise regime, and it didn't work for me. But going through it, now where I am, I know it's not your fault because this other thing happened to me and emotionally I'm so much better. But now if I'm going to show you this, we know it's going to work. So if it doesn't work for you, it's on you. It's not me."

James: Right. And then somewhere in there, you put the part where you're basically in the shower, breaking down and crying as a grown man because you've just eaten three roasted chickens, two pizzas, and seven chocolate mousse desserts, and two bottles of soft drink, and you just realize, how did my life get to this point?

Will: There has to be a crying-in-the-shower moment, if not, it's not even copy.

James: I call that the park bench moment, you know, the part where they're sleeping on the park bench. But those stories, you know, often when you get a big health transformation, someone's actually lived through at least a version of that. It might be, you know, put into full color, but it's funny like a lot of the rich people grew up in hardship.

And I was thinking about this, with a lot of the surfing world champions, they grew up in broken homes, whether it's Kelly Slater, Mick Fanning, many others, Andy Irons, even John John Florence, I think a lot of the world champions have grown up with broken homes and difficult circumstances. And because of that, it's the pressure that turns the coal into a diamond. So they've all got the perfect story that they could use to sell something if they wanted.

So what if we don't have a rags-to-riches story, what story can we use then?



Will: That's a really good question. You know, at this point, if the market is sophisticated enough that you have to use the story into it, if you don't have a rags-to-riches story, flip it on its head and call out the fact that you don't. So you can say things like, you might hear from everyone else in the market with some kind of trumped-up story about a boy really fat and now they're not, I don't have that story for you, because I want to tell you the truth. And so now you're flipping it on its head, and you're saying, "Here's my story without all of the fluff."

The worn-out story people insist on telling

James: That's it. You know how I get pitched for podcasts every day? Like, I mean dozens of times a day, someone wants to be on this podcast, like in the seat you're in right now.

Will: It's a good spot.

James: That's a great spot. You know, I love this podcast, and I really want to preserve integrity. And like, everyone who pitches me, it's amazing how many have some rags to riches. It's just like a little bit of vomit forms in my mouth when I start reading. Firstly, I ask them politely, please don't send me guests. I don't take guests. Then I said, "Look, I've asked you a few times and you keep sending it." Today, I got three from the same company, three different people in the same company. I was like, come on. This is like three times. Do it again, I'll have you on the podcast. But I'll be mentioning your company and how much of a spam you are. Now I just hit spam on that company.

But anyway, what I've sort of taken from that, there is a heck of a lot of ex-bankrupts who have come good in the financial advisory space. But here's my point, why on earth would you take advice from a bankrupt? Like, I just don't get it. I've done everything within my power to be self-sufficient and to avoid the ruins of that. To me, it just shows that they had massive feet of clay, and they got taken out and history would show that they're very, very likely to have it happen again. Because these people tend to not see risks, they take unnecessary steps, they push past a normal sort of limit.

Some of these people don't have kids or any other responsibilities, so they can just keep getting up and try again. You know, the old saying it's like, you get knocked down, just get up and go again. It's like they go, bankrupt, go well, bankrupt, go well, bankrupt. And some of them have that actual story and then they still want me to share their story with my audience. I'm like, no, it's actually boring AF. It's not even aspirational, from my perspective.

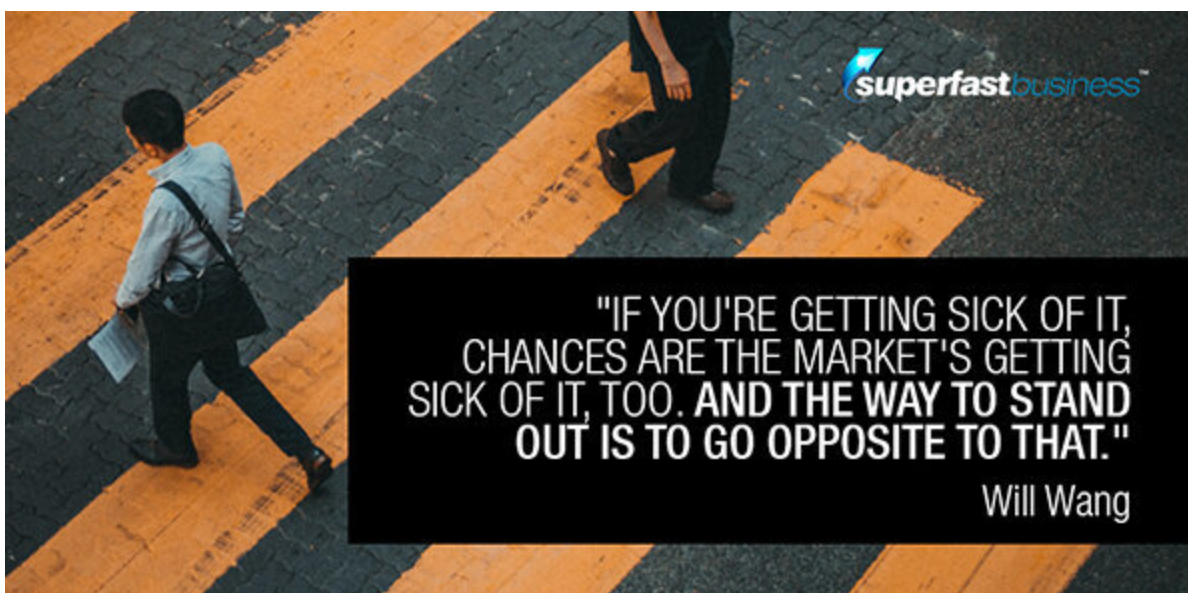
So if you're in that space, and that's your story, even if you have the story, should you use it? That's one thing that I think of sometimes. I've definitely got some stories that I just don't use because I don't want to revisit that part of my life. Or I don't want to be classified as yet another one of those people with a story. So I have different stories. It's like you have a story library. And I choose a story that I think is one that I prefer to sit with and that resonates with me and my value system.

In other words, I think I could actually sell more with deeper stories. But I'm not wanting to use them, because I think this actually fits, it's sort of going away from that USP because I think that's just too well worn a path.

Will: Yeah, I think there's definitely a lot of people out there who are marketing without integrity and who layer in a story a little bit too much. As a marketer, one of the things I love doing is going against the grain. So if everyone's got a story, I'm going to call it out and say, "Look, I don't have a BS backstory for you. Because you are more intelligent than that. I'm going to respect you. Here's what I do have."

James: What I mean is like the car crash story. There's guys out there who do the car crash story. There is a sh*t ton of marketers with the car crash story. And they even cry on stage. I'm like, far out man that was like 10 years ago, you should have gotten over the trauma of it by now. I know it's just milking the audience. For me that is massive lack of integrity.

I've been in heaps of car accidents. I've broken like eight ribs, everything from motorcycles, to sailing, to surfing, to mountain biking, to go-karting, like I've done all the broken bones. But I'm not crying about it on the stage, like, far out. And it's like the people who do the swearing thing to be cool and tough and much own and jump on the swearing bandwagon. I think, yeah, really the warning sign is if too many people are doing it, it's time to do something else.



Will: Exactly. Because if you're getting sick of it, chances are the market's getting sick of it, too. And the way to stand out is to go opposite to that.

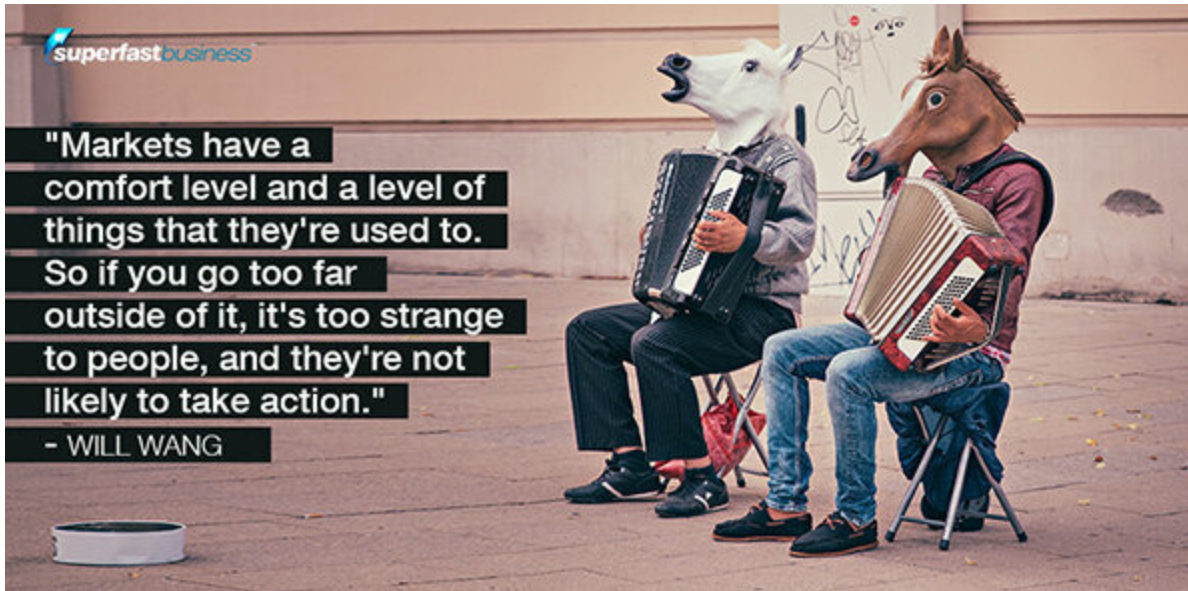
James: Yeah, well, I feel like we're probably a few years ahead of most markets. And I think there's like a five-year lag from what we're experiencing to what regular people experience. And I think this year, people are starting to get fed up with social media, mostly because of election. And it's just gotten out of control, especially with a lot of filtering of what content people are seeing, and the layer on the fact that they just got made aware of what's been happening through these Netflix documentaries, which, like, I've got to say, I was sick of social media five years ago.

I was already over then, which is why I don't use it as a big part of my business. So I don't have a Facebook group. It's why I'm not doing Facebook Live. It's why I'm not using social media for 12 hours a day, because it'll just make you a mental wreck, right? And it is your fault. If you spend too much time on it, it's like, absolutely is. It's like Gary Vee says, you can't blame the platform, it's going to do what the platform does. You can't blame the lion for eating the deer. But if you go in the lion's cage, and it eats you, well, hello!

So anyway, I know we're going a bit off topic. So I want to beat the industry average, you've given me four ways - I could make a claim, but most people are probably already doing that. I can amplify my claim, which gets me ahead of the most basic marketers. But if I really want to get ahead, I use a unique mechanism, which will be sort of a more powerful combo of all of that. But then when that wears out and becomes just too common, I gotta go into story and emotion.

Can you actually have too much story?

So it sort of begs the question. And I think [we're hearing story](#), probably an average of one in four episodes at the moment. Why don't we just start with story for every piece of marketing we do, whether it's a Facebook ad, an email, a webinar? You know, wouldn't that make sense?



"Markets have a comfort level and a level of things that they're used to. So if you go too far outside of it, it's too strange to people, and they're not likely to take action."

- WILL WANG

Will: Yeah, I think it's one of those things where sometimes if you do too much, it can have a detrimental effect. So markets have a comfort level and a level of things that they're used to. So if you go too far outside of it, it's too strange to people, and they're not likely to take action. So for example, if you went into the surfing market with a whole sob story, you know, over the background, people are going to look at it and go, you're completely up yourself, I was going to think of another word but...

James: I know. Definitely in the surf industry, you'll be called a sellout. And that fascinates me. In that industry, it's definitely not cool to sell anything at all. So you just got to be cool. Like I bought a surfboard the other day, which would be shocking news to most listeners, but I do. And when I went in there, my mate there, my local dealer, I went over to get it, he goes, 'You know, when this came in, and I took a picture of it, I thought of you.'

I said, "Well, why don't you just ping me and let me know it's here? Because when I saw it, I knew this was the one. Like I had to have this board." He goes, "Oh, do you want me to? Like I don't want to be that guy." I said, "What? You don't want to be that guy that gives me the inside run on something that he knows is absolutely perfect for me based on my history of what I have and what I'm likely to have?" I said, "You should be that guy. It would be good for me and good for you." And he goes, "Yeah. Okay, thanks, mate."

And I'm actually wearing his shirt now, which he gave me. This guy is a very nice guy. So yeah, I think sometimes we hold back, but this story doesn't have to be a sob story. I'm just thinking of an example. There's a couple of marketers that come to mind, who do story-based emails pretty much every day. They send out the story. And it's not a sob story. It's like a hilarious story about a toddler that's spilled an ice cream on them, or a fascinating insight or something they saw when they were out and about or whatever.

But I get about three or four days into that type of email, and I'm done. And I'm like, can you just skip the story, just like, if you could just send me two bullet points and just send me the link to whatever, like, get to the punch line, buddy. Like, I hear what you're saying. Probably the bestselling email I've done for a long time was the one about when the subject line was like, 'It was early in the morning, my pants were down my ankles.' And it was a long story about having to use the public toilet facility across the road, because my kid put paper towel in the toilet, because I ran out of toilet paper and it blocked it. And it was the only one we had.

But I used that to sell tickets to my live event. And because it was so standout, and so exceptional, and so deep, it really grabbed eyeballs, but I know if I send that every day, it's just going to wear out. So like, banter fatigue. So how do you, as an agency, know, where to dial the needle? I bet you're going to say some kind of data point. Do you look at open rates, or responses, or what?

Knowing how your approach is doing

Will: Exactly right. So we look at all the numbers, and we look at historically how the rates have been trending. You will typically find that as people come and see your email list, and they stay there for a period of time, some emails start working well, and some emails don't. And it's really about using open rates, clickthroughs, replies, to look at what people are doing against specific types of emails, and tracking that back to what we should send more of.

And the other side of it too is, a lot of people look at that data and go, 'Oh, awesome, this type of email works well. Let's send 50 of them.' But sometimes it's a combination of different types of emails that keep people engaged. You're going to have to move up and down the range as you go. Because that's one way of getting more aggressive, varying what you do, and also selling at the same time via email.

James: Such a valuable point. I remember for a while there, we were sort of into press releases, and we just sort of did them a lot. We had a PR web account for our SEO business. And we just did them a lot. And I think sometimes we hit a tactic too much, it just numbs our audience or it just wears them out. I do make an effort with the podcast to mix up the type of topics we have, like it's a lucky dip.

You're going to get anything from [SEO](#), to marketing, to fitness, to [Japanese business philosophy](#), to a case study, to a solo episode. You know, so like, I think variety, it seems to be more important now than it might have been a few years ago because it's like, we just got so much of a demand on our attention and so many available options. Then I can go to my phone and I could do anything from trade shares, through to watch Formula One, read a Kindle, check on emails, answer forum posts, watch Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney Plus, browse for a new surfboard on Instagram. There's so many things I could do.

We have to keep that stimulation and it's so true of our feed, right? We keep seeing the accounts where we give them the likes and then it just pushes the ones away we ignore. That's going to be our marketing if we're not careful.

Will: Yeah, and I think the best example for that, now that you've mentioned it, is actually Netflix. So for example, I love watching food shows on Netflix. I don't know why. I'm not a cook. I'm not even trying to, but I just love watching the person...

James: But you do eat, right?

Will: But I do eat, yeah. And I love watching the process.

James: Then it's sold. That's fair enough. Do you find you're ordering more or craving particular foods when you're watching on TV?

Will: I do, actually. So if I watch something like Mexican food, I order tacos.

James: Yeah, my kitchen bench has got like hemp seeds and cacao nibs and all these other strange things that I've been watching people make for keto-friendly, low-carb, gluten-free treats, you know. I'm making all this stuff that I wouldn't have ever dreamed of because you could just get that kind of content if you want.

Will: You know what's funny though, the thing is, if that's the only content they had, I would unsubscribe ages ago. The fact that they've got like a mindless, you know, cop-chasing and mindless action films on there; sometimes I like to mix it up. So I love the food shows. But if Netflix didn't have everything else, I wouldn't be on the platform. So that might be a really good analogy of thinking about how we market to our list, how we can write really good piece of content both in ads, emails, whatever it is, and just vary it up, depending on how sophisticated your market is, and how you're consistently pushing different messages out there.

James: Isn't it interesting, like when I visit my kid's place, and I open up YouTube on the TV, I won't recognize any of the content they're watching. It's all like a completely different culture. And even with the one Netflix account here, the different channels for the different users in the family, whether it's the baby's channel, my channel, my wife's channel, you're going to be served a different world, like a completely different recommendations based on what you've been watching, you know, you don't recognize it.

Like when I look over my wife's Instagram, she's looking through stuff, like, absolutely none of it interests me whatsoever. And mine, I imagine, it's not that interesting to her too. So like, we're all having a unique experience, and we have to work hard as marketers to consider who our segment is and exactly what we need to serve up.

Does segmentation make a difference?

I wanted to ask you, just on that, you're talking as if you do this step, but while you're doing this, are you segmenting out or having different tracks or paths or responses or things happen behaviorally, depending on where you're fishing, or you know, how they progress through the marketing? Is this a way we can beat industry averages by being more relevant, for example?

Will: Yeah, definitely. So one of the things we do, especially with emails, you know, retargeting on advertising, that's one way to do it. But I'll talk about emails because it can get more sophisticated, and it can get segmented really well, and it works so much better. So that's one way that we beat industry average in terms of emails, just referencing what the last action was. So for example, if someone comes through downloads and lead magnet, we've hit a trigger in there or a tag that says, 'Hey, this person has actually downloaded the lead magnet.'

So then they might be sent an email saying, "Hey, what did you think about the lead magnet?" Whereas, if they haven't downloaded that, we might send them an email saying, 'Hey, have you had a chance to download that yet? Here's why you want to.' So that spawns, you know, two different branches and within those branches, you can then have sub branches, depending on what actions they take.

If a reader feels like, 'Hey, you're referencing something based on my actions, like you're actually caring about what I do and what I see,' that's going to get you better open rates and better engagement.

James: Right. So you're basically doing a map of the customer's journey, and it's going to end up having a different journey, depending on who's there and what you're trying to achieve. Do you sit down and plan that with a prospective client there at [GrowthLabz.com](https://www.growthlabz.com)?

Will: Yeah, we do. Typically with the agency, we do a two to four-hour session, where we first start, it's a massive session, and we look at the business goals, versus their market, versus the assets they've got, and literally plan out, if you could go and get the perfect customer, what would be the process for you to do that?

James: How often do you use assets they've got versus having to start from scratch?

Will: Good question, about 50/50, I'd say. Most of the time we do...

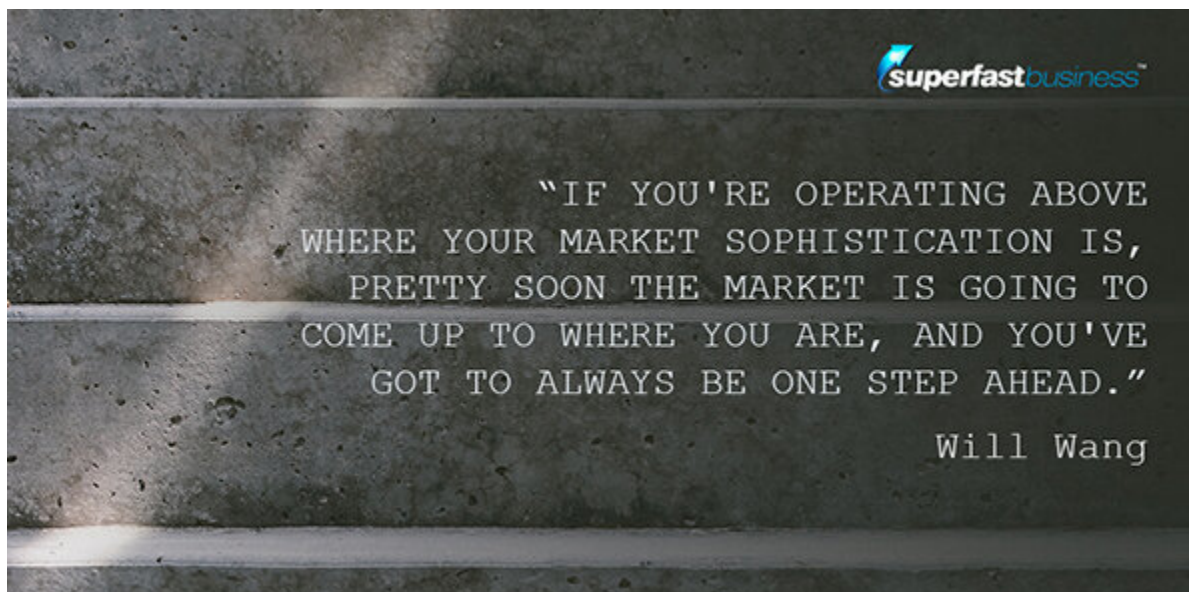
James: So half of the time, you say, "Look, you've got nothing there." Do those people, do they sort of say, "Look, hands up. I know I've got nothing here." Or do they sometimes think, 'Oh, you know, I've got everything I need. I've just got the wrong Facebook ad agent.'

Will: So most of the case, it's people saying, "Well, I don't think I've got the right assets." Although sometimes, it could be a case where they do have the wrong Facebook strategy or [LinkedIn strategy](#), and they do have good assets. Most of the case though, it's people who haven't got the right assets, haven't done the planning part or the strategic part properly. So no matter what they do going forward, they're not going to get the right result.

James: Like they built up a massive list of subscribers for a free giveaway to win an iPad. And it's got nothing to do with the solariums they sell.

Will: Exactly.

James: Will, I think we've had a great chat. So we really talked about five different phases of the market sophistication that we'd want to be aware of. And we want to pick our position. I guess it is obvious that we shouldn't try and do our marketing at a phase level lower than where the market is actually at because we'd just be wasting our time and money. And if possible, we might consider marketing at a phase level a little bit higher than where the markets at, and that would in turn help us consistently beat the industry averages. Is that pretty much the summary?



Will: Yeah, definitely. I guess one more point to that is, you're always got to be innovating, because if you're operating above where your market sophistication is, pretty soon the market is going to come up to where you are, and you've got to always be one step ahead. So it's about constant innovation, testing, using numbers to direct where your tests are going, but also understanding from a psychological perspective, what your people, what your audience wants, and also what they're experiencing.

James: Cool. Well, Will, thank you. I hope you'll come and join us again, maybe we can probe a little more into, like breaking down some of the elements that would be in a sales offer, because you can't escape the offer part. At some point, you're going to have to have an offer. I often said, if you don't have [your offer that converts](#), then you got nothing; like you got no money to reinvest in the business, you may not even have a business. So that's like, that's the hard part, I think.

So I'd love to just, maybe we can come up with a checklist or something or things that we might look at, elements of the offer that we could tune up, in a future episode. Are you up for that?

Will: Yeah, maybe what I can do as well is bring one of our best-performing sales letters and deconstruct how we put it together.

James: Oh, I'm all for sales letter break down. So thank you. And of course, your website is [GrowthLabz.com](#). [Will Wang](#), super duper, whiz kid, data-based, copy specialist, direct response marketer; I think your real skill is looking at someone's scenario, finding the opportunities, helping them either create it or tune what they've got, and get them result. And I appreciate you coming and sharing with us.

Will: Thanks so much for having me back on, James. It's always a pleasure and fun.

James: It is indeed. Thank you. We'll actually put this whole episode up at episode number 788 at [SuperFastBusiness.com](#). We'll break down the five phases of market sophistication into a handy little PDF. You can grab that at the site, and I look forward to catching you on a future episode.

And if you enjoyed this show, or you know someone who could get benefit from it, please either give us a review on your favorite podcasting platform. I do read the reviews of course, and also share it with someone who needs to hear this episode today. Thank you.



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