Build Your Online Platform Using Two “Secret” Words

By Mike Michalowicz

What are the two words that will always, *always* generate a prospect’s interest? No, they’re not “free delivery,” or “limited time,” or “satisfaction guaranteed.” The “secret” words do not convey a promise, or a deal, or a benefit. The words are not specific to any industry, or niche, or type of business. I hesitate to call these words a “secret” because they are so obvious: two words that will grab a prospect’s attention every time is their own first and last name.

When you hear your own name, you stop and listen. When you see your name in print, say in a local newspaper, you buy copies to share with your friends and family. When you see your name online, you pay attention, and if it shows you in a positive light, you share it with your friends through social media. When we hear or see our own name, it plays into our hardwired ego, and we can’t help but take notice; using this “secret” properly can draw a lot of interest to your business.

I have built my own business by using the names of prospects and customers to great success. I do it through a simple crowdsourcing process. First, I post a request for stories or tips on my Twitter feed and Facebook page. For example, I might ask my followers, “I’m working on a post about giving stellar customer service. Send me your best advice. Be sure to share your name and a link to your website, because if I use your tip I’ll feature you on my blog.”

Usually I get dozens, sometimes more than a hundred, responses—from followers, and from others who hear about it and want to get in on it. I compile the best responses into one blog post and include the name, company name and website address (and sometimes their photo) next to each piece of sage advice. I send each contributor a link to the blog when I post it, and that’s when this method kicks into second gear. Because they love seeing their name featured on my blog, they send all of their followers, customers, friends and family over to my blog to check it out.

Besides driving traffic to my blog and my website, I gain new followers, new subscribers—and new customers. Now, I use Twitter and Facebook to invite people to participate. Alternatively, you can also use HelpAReporterOut.com (HARO) to get sources for your posts, but you will need a high Alexa ranking in order to repost it. I use BlogStampede.com to crowdsource my blog posts, which has landed me on the front page of Google many, many times. (Full disclosure: I am an investor in BlogStampede.com.)

When you feature a prospect’s story along with their name they will be even more excited to share it with everyone they know. I helped a business in the National Chimney Sweep Guild (NCSG) use this exact crowdsourcing method on their own website, this time requesting personal stories. They reached out to past customers and asked them to share their most memorable fireplace experiences. When they posted the more than fifty stories they collected on their site, along with the customer’s names, people came in droves to read the stories. Contributors came to the website to see their own names, and because they had shared something so personal, they sent everyone they knew to read the story.

You can use this method offline as well. Ask your customers to share their favorite memories about using products or services similar to yours and tell them you will print them in your newsletter, or post them in your store, office, etc. You may have been influenced by this technique yourself at your favorite restaurant, throwing back a few extra beers so you can get your picture (and name) on the wall.

Two words: a prospect’s first and last name. Feature these two words in a positive light and that’s all you need to generate genuine interest in your company. Best of all, when you use the crowdsourcing method, it’s free—free user-driven content, free publicity for your business, free “good will” for your brand.