



## Episode 25: Business Growth Checklist for 2016 (Part 2 – Sales and Marketing)

[www.customapparelstartups.com/business-growth-checklist-2016-part-2-sales-marketing/](http://www.customapparelstartups.com/business-growth-checklist-2016-part-2-sales-marketing/)

**Mark S:** Hey everyone and welcome to Episode 25 of the Custom Apparel Startups Podcast, we are now a quarter century old if we had been born during Episode 1.

**Mark V:** You love comparing episodes to age.

**Mark S:** I do, I do, I don't know why. By the way this is Mark Stephenson from ColDesi.

**Mark V:** Marc Vila from Colman & Company, welcome here, we are continuing on from Episode 24 which was the business growth checklist for 2016. The last episode was more on the business side of things, we talked about finance and managing information and setting some plans for yourself, this one we are going to talk about the marketing and sales side of it, but how you can actually implement things to do better and achieve growth.

**Mark S:** Right, which is what we are honestly interested in, we just did the last one because we knew we had to, what we really want to do is the sales and marketing side, that's what we do every day.

**Mark V:** Yes, because the problem is if you do this stuff and you don't do the other stuff then you are going to topple down.

**Mark S:** You will, right.

**Mark V:** Or you are going to end up in the weeds, or you are going to hit this plateau where you can never make any more money.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Mark V:** For some reason, I just can't get any more orders.

**Mark S:** We get that all the time.

**Mark V:** And all businesses run into that, that is a real thing.

**Mark S:** And usually it is when the owner runs out of time.

**Mark V:** Yeah.

**Mark S:** If you are working 8-10-12 hours a day and you've got your 9 year old son doing slave labor helping with the embroidery machine and everyone is doing everything that they can, and then you are not going to grow unless you do something different.

**Mark V:** Yeah, Heath talked about that in the DTG T-shirt podcast.

**Mark S:** yeah that's true, right.

**Mark V:** He talked about how when you are the accountant, you are the sales person and you are the order person, you do everything then it is like you are working 60 hours and you just don't even have the time to make more money.

**Mark S:** What that means... basically what we are saying is: Don't start with this episode, if you are listening to this episode and you have not listened to the prior ones stop now and go back and listen to our 2016 business planning episode, start there and then come back.

**Mark V:** It is only about a 30 minute episode, so it is not a big long 90 minute episode, it is nice it is organized and it gives you a nice little checklist to build from, so continue on a second page or continue on the same page that you took some notes on and let's get going.

**Mark S:** Yeah, I agree. So the first thing that we want to talk about in sales and marketing plans for 2016 is kind of budgeting your time by season and this is a top down approach, because what you are going to do is you are going to look at last year and maybe even the year before or if you are brand new in the business, you can talk to people on the Customer Apparel Startups Facebook group, ask them when their busiest season is, when their slowest season is and take a top-down look at your calendar so that you can budget your time and what you want to accomplish by season.

**Mark V:** Yes, and for example if you are in youth sports apparel, if that is the niche that you are in, you are going to know that as the seasons begin for these sports, you are going to get ramp up and be really busy and then you are going to slow down.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Mark V:** An example of how you could budget your time and supplies and inventory for this is when youth sports starts white Vinyl shoots through the roof on sales.

**Mark S:** That's a good one.

**Mark V:** We sell a ton of White Vinyl, no matter what we bring in we will run out at some point because people literally buy it till it is out, companies run out white Vinyl.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Mark V:** So if you know that your sport season is coming up soon and you are going to say, probably next month I am going to start making stuff, just get some White Vinyl.

**Mark S:** Yeah you can stock up.

**Mark V:** Yeah, you can stock up, don't be the one that doesn't run out because you might have competition that runs out of these things.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Mark V:** And the other side of that is let's say you are in the bling business, you got ProSpangle or cams machine or a brush and bake and you deal with cheerleaders as your market or school sports as your market, you know that the summers are going to be pretty much dead.

**Mark S:** You know there is a local company here that makes a good portion of their money at the strawberry festival, which takes place here in Tampa Florida. So they know that this is going to be their busiest season, they need to make sure that they have their people, and supplies and they are ready to go, they also know that if they want to do any special projects or bring into equipment or work on new sales techniques to do that in those other months.

**Mark V:** Yes, if you are thinking about getting into direct to garment printing because this fall there is going to be events where you can go to and sell bunch of T-shirts and the Spring time is particularly slow for you because whatever niche market you are in then now is the time to invest and learn something new and get into it, this way you are ready to go to the fall rather than during your busy season, say I am going to buy DTG right now.

**Mark S:** Oh my god I got an order for 200 shirts let me get my printer.

**Mark V:** So, budget your time by season if you are going to revamp or start a new website, you are probably better off to budget that, people run into it and say, I don't have money in the summers now I can't build a new website but it is a sync conglomerative money over 12 months.

**Mark S:** Yes.

**Mark V:** It is one chunk of money.

**Mark S:** Hopefully in the last episode you have learned a little bit more of how to organize and manage that money, so you can take advantage of the seasonal nature of the business to make your investments.

**Mark V:** Yeah, so if you are going to invest in a new website and June is your slowest month that is a perfect time because you will get to sit and focus and make it what you wanted to be.

**Mark S:** Yeah.

**Mark V:** Rather than try to do it during when you got a bunch of events and things going on.

**Mark S:** Yeah, 10pm after you have printed shirts all day.

**Mark V:** You will get apathetic.

**Mark S:** So now you've got the legal pad with all of these bullet points on it from the last episode and for this episode and you've also got a calendar that you are going to map out what your seasons are and what you expect to be slow or busy and maybe you can even take what we are talking about in the rest of this podcast and try to boost things up in those slow times, so if March is a particularly slow month for you or if September, October is slow for you because you don't do school business then you can look at what you can accomplish sales wise in those months.

**Mark V:** Yeah, yeah that's great and when we are looking at the time and the season it is also important to look at events.

**Mark S:** Yeah, absolutely, scheduling your events is a big deal. Now, back when ColDesi and Colman & Company used to do trade shows we would have 4-5 big events a year and it took a lot of time to prepare for it and if we didn't prepare in advance then we will be scrambling at the last minute which by the way is what we always did.

**Mark V:** Laughs.

**Mark S:** We were scrambling it at the last minute and it costs extra time, extra money and just causes all kind of problems and this way you can be a little bit more strategic.

**Mark V:** Yeah it is going to be less stressful, you didn't open up your own business or you don't have a dream to open up your own business because you want more stress, nobody says that "I want to open up my business so that I can pull my hair out".

**Mark S:** Yes.

**Mark V:** You don't do that, you do it because of the freedom. So now that you are free what you want to do with your own time -look at events that you might want to attend so that you can plan for them and that might be... what might they be?

**Mark S:** So... for example if you are in the horse market, we actually have a lot of embroiders that do horse blankets and bridals and all kinds of customization, we have people with bling machines that go to horse events and sell that, so maybe you want to take a look at are you going to do horse events in your state?

**Mark V:** Is it equestrian? Is that the word?

**Mark S:** Equestrian that's it! It is not horsey events is it?

**Mark V:** Well, it depends on your age.

**Mark S:** So equestrian events or just mister fancy, or dog or k9 exercise events whatever your work market is or your niche market is maybe look at what events are going on in the year and which ones you want to attend and you find out how much they cost and you put them on the calendar and work backwards from there.

**Mark V:** Yes and maybe you don't have this ultra niche cool market that you do dog stuff all the time.

**Mark S:** What would you do then?

**Mark V:** Then I would find some things that I find interesting or cool and then I would find groups and organizations in my area or in surrounding areas that do that and then those are the events I would go to and it doesn't mean that going to event mean that you have to be a vendor at an event to.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Mark V:** That doesn't always mean that, but if you like boats even if you don't own boats, maybe in your city there is not even water.

**Mark S:** I've heard there are cities like that.

**Mark V:** But for example where I live it is maybe an hour to get to the ocean, where anybody would go to the ocean, so maybe an hour away or 45 minutes away. And if I liked boats, maybe I don't own one and bla-bla-bla but I still like them, there is a bunch of boating events that are going to happen, I could just go to these things and I can network and meet people and just attend events and it will give you opportunity to make more money.

**Mark S:** Yeah and maybe wear one of your creations that has to do with boats.

**Mark V:** Absolutely.

**Mark S:** Introduce yourself to the organizer of the event say "man I love this event, I'd would love to participate in some way, can we make some shirts and participate in the event that way?"

**Mark V:** Yeah and there is a million creative things we can talk about in how you could do this, you could wear a hat that's got the name of somebody's boat on it or a fictitious boat.

**Mark S:** Yeah. Or maybe you hate boats but there is chamber of commerce in your area has events every 90 days that you can participate and remember this is the sales and marketing part so this is you putting yourself and putting your company out there in order to try and find more business in 2016 that you had in 2015.

**Mark V:** Yeah.

**Mark S:** So take a look at the calendar, if you are in a niche market, find events that pertain to that niche market, but if you are not in a niche market but you have a personal affinity for one, if it is a church group or some kind of sport or some kind of hobby, I don't know how many T-shirts you sell at the chess club events but you never know, you could do a bobby fisher rock shirt, maybe you could sell those but whether you are a vendor or whether you just participate, get that calendar out in particular if have marked off your busy season and your slow season, for your slow season pile up on events so that you can make more money on.

**Mark V:** Yeah, absolutely and another thing what happens is – is that not everybody who starts in apparel business is a sales person, and I can think of what I've thought in my head, some of us might think, "yeah I would go to a car show but I don't really want to walk around passing out cards and I feel very awkward doing that"

**Mark S:** Right.

**Mark V:** How about this then? Go because you like it,

**Mark S:** Yeah.

**Mark V:** Let conversations happen naturally and then when you talk to somebody ask them what they do (this is very easy)" what do you do?"

**Mark S:** I think we've got a podcast episode on networking.

**Mark V:** Yeah, just say what do you do and then they'll come back and say this is what I do and maybe it will work out but worst case scenario, you like cars and you went to a car show.

**Mark S:** One thing that you might do is just make an amazing shirt or an amazing cap, especially if it is a car show, find the best photo of a car the most beautiful, do DTG in particular and just do an incredible

design that will make people ask you "man! Where did you get that shirt?" and you could even say "this is my car, someday"

**Mark V:** Yeah.

**Mark S:** Do something that might start a conversation.

**Mark V:** Yeah absolutely and if you are great at art then go for it, if you are not then pay somebody to do make something.

**Mark S:** Yeah that would be cool. And bring your cards anyway, just say if there is somebody that looks nice and you might want to work with, let's say they... maybe it is a custom car parts or they do custom boat canopies, maybe you would want to hand them your card and say "maybe if you ever need T-shirts done to go with these, let me know".

**Mark V:** Yeah it doesn't need to be a pitch, it could just be you are letting them know.

**Mark S:** So you got those kind of participation events and then you've got events that you are actually going to exhibit at and either one I want you to backtrack the time because you are looking at your whole calendar and you are finding your slower parts of the year to do these events if you can. You are going to say "Okay, I am actually going to participate in this family reunion -reunion event of organizers and that's going to be in August" so backtrack from that, I've got to be ready for that by August 15th, what do I need to do? I am going to need to pre-produce some shirts, I am going to need to get in some more inventory, I am going to do all the things in that business side of the podcast that we already did to make sure that you are ready and now you are actually building up a marketing calendar, so you've got the event, you are prepared to the event, maybe you want to send out some E-mails which we will talk about later to invite your customers to the event and you want to make sure that you collect E-mail addresses at the event and plan out sending an E-mail afterwards.

**Mark V:** That sounds like a bunch of work.

**Mark S:** That's a lot, but it is not hard to do.

**Mark V:** No it is not and I think that... maybe set a goal for yourself to say I want to go to or participate in one event a month, whatever the number is right for you, set a nice goal for yourself and then some of them are going to be easy, so you are going to say these three months are going to be these three Equestrian.

**Mark S:** Equestrian.

**Mark V:** Events and...

**Mark S:** Or K9.

**Mark V:** And you know that you are going to participate and you know you are going to be a vendor, so those are big ones and then maybe in April and in November there is nothing going on in your niche market and say "Okay, these are the months that I am going to go to chamber of commerce meetings or whatever else it might be".

**Mark S:** Yeah, I like that, at the end you will actually have a marketing calendar which I am excited about.

**Mark V:** Yeah its particularly motivating to say "Alright I did this I was a vendor at this farmers market that happens in the spring every other week so I am a vendor at this thing for six weeks" whatever it is. And then that is done and then you say okay, the next thing that I got to do is in June -I am doing this, in August I am doing this.

**Mark S:** You know what's not fun is to look in the paper or see an article online of an event that you should have been at last weekend, that's today you know what I mean? Or to not be prepared for an event that you are going to do, so do the calendar and schedule your events, backtrack from those events and make sure that you participate.

**Mark V:** Now how might we find out about events?

**Mark S:** You could look on social a media platform.

**Mark V:** Nice Saguay.

**Mark S:** Thank-you very much, nice tea up there.

**Mark V:** That's the next thing I want to talk about is: we have written down 'pick a social media platform'.

**Mark S:** Right and by pick a social media platform I mean that all of you should do Facebook, that's not even a choice, you have to be on Facebook, so pick that one and something else I think.

**Mark V:** Yeah, sure and it could be Facebook and Twitter if you like Twitter, it could be Facebook and Instagram if you like taking pictures.

**Mark S:** If you are in the business market it could be Facebook and LinkedIn.

**Mark V:** Yeah, absolutely if you do a lot of B2B stuff LinkedIn is great, you are going to connect with people there.

**Mark S:** Yeah.

**Mark V:** So pick a platform and spend some time there so that not only means making your own page or possibly a business page.

**Mark S:** Business page, yes.

**Mark V:** Which can be important but that's not... that might not necessarily be the way that you are really going to grow your business, that is a cool page where you can share your work and your customers can give testimonials and you can ask people say "hey! Will you put a testimonial on my page?" It is a resource necessarily more than just because you get every single one of your friends to like your embroidery page.

**Mark S:** That's not success.

**Mark V:** Yeah that is not success. I have a business page that you can say "hey! I did a good job, I posted a picture of the work that I did, would you mind going on there and tell me that you loved it?"

**Mark S:** Even if it is a self defense move because it hasn't happen already I would be surprised. Someone will ask you do you have a Facebook page and when you say "NO" that is a conversation stopper or "YES" but you can't have it because I don't want to be your friend.

**Mark V:** Yeah.

**Mark S:** On a personal page but, a Facebook page it is free and it is easy to setup you put a picture of your business in the big part, you put a picture of yourself or your logo or your work in the small part and you just make sure that you participate in it.

**Mark V:** Yeah, you could do testimonials on there, you could do pictures of your work, and we've talked about making videos.

**Mark S:** Yeah, I love that.

**Mark V:** So it's just one of those things that you don't have to put a ridiculous amount of time into it but you should have one, but then also you should participate in groups Facebook groups.

**Mark S:** I think that's the money part right there.

**Mark V:** So participate and or start (if you've got a great idea) a group and that's where you can find out about events and be on a group and then participate in those, so if you like cars or boats or dogs or horses or golf or anything.

**Mark S:** People like Golf?

**Mark V:** I think so, I am pretty sure it is one of the big sports in the world.

**Mark S:** Is it? And it's a sport? Okay.

**Mark V:** I'm pretty positive, yeah.

**Mark S:** Gotcha!

**Mark V:** So if you like that then participate in those groups, participate in some conversations for one it will be interesting because you like it, but then also you are going to run into opportunities and then you are going to have the opportunity to share your Facebook page so if somebody writes about an event and then you can comment "do you have vendors there?"

**Mark S:** Yeah.

**Mark V:** And make sure it is by the way. And that will give you the opportunity to find out when events are and which ones you want to go to and participate in them and connect, so you might be participating in a bunch of conversations on a Facebook group and the person who is the admin sees your name a bunch and then you find out that they are the ones that are putting on this car show and you can directly message this person you basically know.

**Mark S:** Absolutely there is a couple of other advantages, first of all you could join the custom apparel startups Facebook group which has almost 1900 people that are kind of just like you, that are getting into the business or they are in the business and they are just there to help and exchange information but what they also do is say "Hey I am an embroiderer if you are looking for someone to do wholesale embroidery that you cannot handle, look me up" and that's another perfectly valid use of a Facebook group and we also mentioned events and you know you can actually schedule events in Facebook?

**Mark V:** Really?

**Mark S:** So if you are going to be at an event that is published on Facebook you can post that or if you want to host an event, hey your event is, I am going to be at the dog show or I am going to be at the equestrian event or something like that and you can put that as an event and invite people.

**Mark V:** Yeah and you invite people that would come to the event and hopefully will buy something from you.

**Mark S:** Hope so, I think that's in the end that's the idea.

**Mark V:** Yeah. So on Facebook particularly you can, you should have a page and participate in other pages and use that as a networking tool.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Mark V:** And use that as a way to find events and plan events and plan your year and just participate in sales without actually having to go out there and make cold calls.

**Mark S:** So maybe that's a good thing for 2016 or for the first two thirds of 2016 that you are going to pick a social media platform -Facebook or Instagram or twitter or two and you are going to dive into it head first, you really going to do it, you are going to participate in it and you are going to learn about it, so the end of the year or the next year you can do things like take advantage of advertising or work up a great marketing strategy or even put a Buy button on Facebook for your website products.

**Mark V:** Sure.

**Mark S:** Which you can do. So it all starts somewhere, if you are already there, if you already have a Facebook page and you are active then maybe you want to take one of those next steps this year.

**Mark V:** Yeah and think about – Is there something that I can advertise on here or can I start my own group within this niche market where I can be the administrator and I can gather people together.

**Mark S:** Yeah.

**Mark V:** And then you become this field expert or this industry expert in this little group and you are going to make a lot of great connections, it is going to be good for business.

**Mark S:** I love that idea. So we've talked about budgeting your time by season, we've done schedule out your events and then we've talked about social media and how that kind of relates to events and to other things that might do later in the year.

**Mark V:** So now that you are doing things to get more customers, you are getting people on the door if you listen to the last podcast maybe you got maybe some new ways that you process orders and invoices and create sales orders but then the next thing is the customer experience.

**Mark S:** Yeah, because maybe in that list of your biggest mistakes from last year maybe that was one.

**Mark V:** Yeah.

**Mark S:** Is you had an employee that was rude to a customer or maybe you didn't handle or return so well or maybe there is just something glaring that somebody said to you like "You know I love your stuff but the box looks like crap" or "i didn't recognize the shirts with the caps came in because it was stacked up in a shoe box"

**Mark V:** Yeah.

**Mark S:** Maybe it is something like that.

**Mark V:** Or they thought that they were missing 10 shirts because it was, you didn't organize the smalls and the larges and they went through all the larges and they thought they were done until they were at the bottom of the box. It was just uncomfortable for them.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Mark V:** Analyze your process and there is a Customer Experience episode that we have (which I love).

**Mark S:** Yeah.

**Mark V:** I think that stuff is really cool to analyze and go through but pretend that you are your customer for a moment and say "okay if I were to call me, what would I say?", "How would I get a quote?", "How would I place the order?", "How would I get the order?", "What if there was a mistake, how would I handle it?", How would I have handled that for my customer what is their experience is going to be like and then figure out what can be better.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Mark V:** So customer experience just to kind of break it down a little bit is everything that involves facing your customer, everything your customer or potential customer sees hears feels, receives and does and at the end of that it creates an emotion or an opinion about your business and the better that is the more likely they are to order from you again to talk to their friends about it, it is all part of that "Know your numbers episode as well" if you've got somebody that you treat right and they are happy with the experience in doing business with you, they are more likely to recommend you to other people.

**Mark S:** Yeah absolutely and I thought about the customer experience thing and improving it. I mentioned I got a new phone I think in the last podcast, so I got a new phone and I went to the store and getting a new phone and dealing with the contract part of it and what plan you are going to get is not too fun for most people, getting a new phone part is cool, getting a new gadget is cool, but the process of dealing with that is annoying and knowing what your bill is going to be and having to look at that "oh my gosh what have I spend on this" is not always fun. But I noticed that since the last time I did it to this time the company I went with they obviously looked at what their customer experience is and they have altered it.

So when I went in there was a guy standing by the front door who opened the door for me and let me in and said "hey".

**Mark S:** Right.

**Mark V:** That was cool because the last time I went in I had to walk in and sign into a kiosk and then I talked to nobody and then I waited for about 20 minutes and finally I talked to somebody, I was uncomfortable the whole time. This time I walked in I was greeted with a friendly greeting, the guy said what are you looking for, I said "this is what i want to do", he said "Great! let me show you" and then

when it came for the plan and all of that he had an I-Pad and it showed the different options, he said you could do this or this one, and I said "I like that" and he said great, type your name right here and I typed it in click-click-click and we were done, we were done in a quarter of the time that it was.

So you can consider that stuff for your customers.

**Mark S:** And I like that you went with the best part of customer experience the one that they are going to remember really to the most is the personal interaction, it drives me crazy if I go into a retail store or an restaurant and I am standing in a line or I am walking around and there is nobody there to say hello.

**Mark V:** Yeah.

**Mark S:** Or they are working with their heads down. So maybe your customer experience is you have a single head embroidery machine in your shop and you are running the embroidery machine and people are coming in behind you all the time and they are looking around and they have to ask you for help or tap you on the shoulder or one of your employees and maybe changing the customer experience starts with just looking every customer in the eye and saying "Hey, good morning welcome to the shop".

**Mark V:** I'll be right with you.

**Mark S:** Or doing the telephone version of that.

**Mark V:** Yes. The telephone version is frustrating, In Colman & Company -we call companies all the time, we follow up with orders, we check on issues, we find out if people need to resupply up for our customers that want that and all the time we call their business phone numbers and get things just 'hello' or they answer and they are yelling at somebody else.

**Mark S:** This is Bob!

**Mark V:** or like: Hey! Yeah? And I am like just answer your phone with a business name and smile and say how can I help you.

**Mark S:** I think we are really pounding that in. You answer the phone "Hi this is Bob's embroidery, my name is Steve, how can I help you?"

**Mark V:** I learned some from my father and he never told me to do this, I noticed this throughout my whole life was that his cell phone was often for a business phone call coming in and especially when he was older he wouldn't always had his glasses on so he couldn't see who was calling but he just always answered his phone: Good afternoon or Good Evening or Good Morning and he was like Good Afternoon Marc Vila and he wouldn't know who was calling, it would be me a bunch of the times but it was always a pleasant way to answer the phone and that's an easy thing to do.

**Mark S:** So let's run through a couple of things that you might want to look at for your customer experience is how you answer the phone and how you can improve that and how you answer your E-mails so maybe an auto responder is appropriate and I really encourage you to listen to that Podcast on Customer Experience because there is a lot more to it than this.

**Mark V:** Sure.

**Mark S:** So how you answer the phone? How you answer your E-mails? What your invoicing and packaging looks like?

**Mark V:** Yeah.

**Mark S:** And if you do anything at all after the sale like call and say thank-you, send a thank-you card, call and make sure that the order is right and anything like that and maybe pick a couple of places to improve.

**Mark V:** Yeah its is good to set up, this is something that is an easy goal to set where you say I am just going to say two things, what do I like better, I can very-very easily I can answer the phone differently (that's an easy change) and then also I am going to instead of repackaging the boxes that I get from the shirt companies, they are all fold up or beaten up and were shipped via UPS, I am going to go online and I am going to find some inexpensive ways to deliver these things. Maybe you get crates that you reuse, maybe that costs you deliver it that way and then you say, when you are done let me know I am going to pick it up, now this is a new twist to the customer experience where you delivered them a crate where you got your sticker or logo on it and then you come back and get it, when you come back and get it, you get to see them again and thank them and ask them how they did.

**Mark S:** Maybe just put a tissue paper between each shirt, whatever that is but really you need to write down, actually write down all the ways that a customer can approach you and kind of the process and how you respond and pick two ways whether or not they walk up to you at an event.

**Mark V:** Ive got a great one, this is a free one.

**Mark S:** Okay free!

**Mark V:** Free of charge!

**Mark S:** Normally we charge for these things.

**Mark V:** If you have an auto responder that has a big long list of old. (Marc laughing)

**Mark S:** Its pet peeve time!

**Mark V:** I see it every day, just go to your auto responder thing and turn it off, you don't even have to edit it.

**Mark S:** Do not make your auto responder, hey we don't accept these kinds of graphic files, we don't want this kind of art work, we don't do polyester, really we don't like you so please don't E-mail us back.

**Mark V:** Turn that off, I am debatable on auto responders, period. But if you are going to have one make it pleasant. We got your E-mail we will answer it within 24 hours.

**Mark S:** Love that, that is very simple.

**Mark V:** Done.

**Mark S:** Yeah.

**Mark V:** And if you are on vacation, just make it say "I'm on vacation"

**Mark S:** I am not going to call you back.

**Mark V:** I will be answering E-mails within whatever many days.

**Mark S:** Yeah I like all that, but whatever it is, whatever it is you know it is phones emails packaging invoicing, delivery, how you handle people approaching you at trade shows and at events, whatever it is, that's your customer experience and if you can make two parts of that process better I think you will retain more customers and get more customers and you make more money.

**Mark V:** You will, you will and one of those things might be your website.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Mark V:** So if you do have a website then it is important to do a website check as one of your goals.

**Mark S:** Okay, what do you mean by that?

**Mark V:** So, go to your website and read everything and click on everything.

**Mark S:** Okay.

**Mark V:** Every single link that you have click on it, every single thing you have read it. If a link doesn't work, make a note so that you can get it fixed and if something doesn't read right you definitely want to change that.

**Mark S:** Absolutely and I will tell you that I am notorious for spelling mistakes because I do everything fast and I type fast and I am a terrible proof reader so if you were like me and some of our customers have gone to our websites and say "Hey, Mark you spelled Print wrong".

**Mark V:** Yeah.

**Mark S:** What is a DTG pinter? So if you are like that then for your website check have someone else read it and try all the links, if you've got a teenager that you can give \$20 bucks to go through your whole website and tear it apart then that's a good move.

**Mark V:** Yeah and that's just an important thing to consider not all too often companies don't revisit their website and I try to do it, we've got a big website, we've got thousands of products so it is hard for us to do that but we make an effort to do it and make sure that we listen to our customers when we make that adjustment, but if your website might be simpler, it could be something that you could literally do in a morning.

**Mark S:** Yes.

**Mark V:** But you just actually have to do it and there is so many times where people don't do it and we see it from our customers and you just see it all over the place in business where people don't go through and they don't check their website, you said to me the other day when we were talking about this that write something new on every page, add a new story, add a new testimonial, change your product description.

**Mark S:** Just add to it because Google loves that and Bing loves that for Search engine optimization purposes, for getting found online it is a great idea to refresh your product descriptions and text on the pages.

**Mark V:** Yeah, make sure that the phone numbers you have or the address or contact information or hours of operation or policies are all up to date.

**Mark S:** And honestly I am working with a company now who hasn't changed their website in probably 4-5 years and they've got a lot of information on there about products that they haven't sold for several years. So you need to do that website check every year, I recommend that you change the text and that you have somebody else take a look at it.

**Mark V:** And if you can get some new pictures on there as well.

**Mark S:** Yeah.

**Mark V:** Surprisingly so you know your mobile device if you got a newer one can take surprisingly great pictures that are perfect resolution for the website. Having a photographer and a Photoshop is all great and wonderful and yeah it can make an impact but if it's just taking a nice picture of your shop on your

phone and getting it on your website just a little 2by2 inch image or whatever it is and just update that add some new ones, people like that and it makes them feel comfortable and it is an easy thing to do.

**Mark S:** I can tell you that I am the brutal one of the two Marks, I'll tell you if you did your website yourself and didn't have a professional involved or if you had your friend that knows a little bit about WordPress or something do a website for you then it is probably not good. And there is probably 10 or 15 places that you could make an improvement and maybe you are emotionally attached to it so you are not going to see that. So have somebody take a look, have someone that you don't know very well look at your website and review it or you can even send a link to Marc Vila and I at host@caspodcast.com and we will take a quick look and let you know what we think.

**Mark V:** Yeah, I agree I love that kind of stuff and that's the fun stuff for me. The first podcast we did on this all the business side is not fun, this is the fun stuff and it is fun for me to go through it and look at that stuff, we're happy to do it.

**Mark S:** I will tell you though that I never hear it from half the people again after they do that because we will tell you the truth, we will.

**Mark V:** (laughs) So what next? I think there is one other thing.

**Mark S:** Honestly I keep feeling that I want to say "this is the most important thing that we are going to talk about" before each of these points. This one I think is one of the most important things that we are going to talk about and that is develop an E-mail list.

**Mark V:** Yeah.

**Mark S:** If you don't have an E-mail list, it's a mistake because online companies, big website companies Amazon, Woot, heck Walmart – any big company that you name, their online marketing strategy is geared towards getting your E-mail address so that they can send promotions to you. And they do that because that's where they make their money.

**Mark V:** And the thing is-is that inboxes are full and they are cluttered and you get a bunch of junk E-mail but it works, it works and the thing is-is that you can unsubscribe from E-mails but you can't tell somebody to stop mailing you something like a postcard, we can unsubscribe from E-mails and you can allow your customers to do that if you want or not. But what is great about it is that if at any time you have an opportunity to share a message with your customers or you let them know you are at an event, it is a very easy way to do it and that's essentially free!

**Mark S:** And it is a way for you to stay in touch. I know a lot of our customers they don't want to do E-mails because they feel like they are inundated, like you said "I don't want to send anybody E-mails coz I hate it when that happens". Okay so you hate it when that happens but how many of those have you opened? All these companies they make a lot of money from Email and we are not suggesting that you send somebody an E-mail every day or spam somebody but to capture all the E-mail addresses for your

customers and to setup a free E-mail account with the mail chimp or constant contact is a solid and mandatory business practice.

**Mark V:** Yeah, you just should and even if you are not necessarily sending out a bunch of stuff now because that is two different things, getting some sort of sign-up and the ability to store and put E-mail addresses in a place is the first step of it, what you do with that overtime.

**Mark S:** Is second.

**Mark V:** Is adapting, but if you start that now and there is a lot of great ways you could do it, so it's just a matter of that everybody who is a customer of yours you put in a list.

**Mark S:** Yeah, it could be you or utilizing the CRM that we talked about in the last episode, it could be that you have a forum that they fill out or you just capture it from E-mails that people send you. Because this is what is going to happen and this really often sets successful and very successful businesses apart is a customer calls you about a family reunion job or about an event that they are going to have coming up shortly and they call you and they get the E-mail address and you Email them a price, you never hear from them again, or you hear from them again and they went into a different direction or it got postponed or they have that event every year, if you were sending them an E-mail something once every 30 days or 60 days or 90 days or even twice a year, your name is now in front of them again because they may not find you to call you next year or they may not remember your name and E-mail address the next time that they need a custom shirt or a cap. So E-mails are there to remind people that you want to do business with them.

**Mark V:** Yeah and there is a lot of E-mails that you can send out that are just nice, you can send out happy new year E-mails and happy Valentine's day E-mails, it doesn't always have to be a pitch but if it is all of your customers that you've got independence day comes "then you could say -"Proud to be an American, happy Independence day, thanks for being a customer, I just want to thank you and call me if you need anything" and these are things that you can do, you can execute while you are drinking your coffee, because you don't have to have a ton of artwork and a bunch of fancy things and if you've got an E-mail list and simple software to use, you can log-in grab a template that is already pre-made, type in a nice little thank you message and click send and it is done and you may have hundreds or thousands of people that will have your name and phone-number and business name put in front of their face even if it is for a second, even if they delete it, they will still remember you.

**Mark S:** Right.

**Mark V:** And if they don't delete it then you are now in their inbox for them to say what talked about earlier "Oh yeah there was that embroidery lady"

**Mark S:** "She sent me a new year's thing"

**Mark V:** "Yeah let me look for that".

**Mark S:** You know who is really great at that? I bought my house that I live in-in Tampa I think six years ago now and I still get E-mails from the real estate agent, so I am not in the market for another house, I probably won't be for a long time but I hear from this couple every month or two and sometimes it is about the real estate market, sometimes it is just general stuff – Happy new year or Marry Christmas kind of a message but when I am ready to get a new house or if somebody asks me if I know a real estate agent? Guess what I do! I do because I just got an E-mail from them last month, let me type it in and I'll forward it to you.

**Mark V:** Yeah, so do you know a T-shirt guy? Do you know an embroiderer? All of that, you got the opportunity to E-mail them but you got to build the list, so I think the purpose of this is to develop an E-mail list so the actual action that you have to take is find a service that you feel comfortable using and a lot of them are free for...

**Mark S:** 2000 customers or...

**Mark V:** So there is mail chimp and benchmark and constant contact and... You got any others to throw in there ?

**Mark S:** No I mean there is just a lot, honestly I am a mail chimp fan because I think it is seriously easy to use so you can start with that or you can type in Google or Bing or whatever you use and just say "free E-mail services" and see what comes up.

**Mark V:** E-mail marketing and I do the same thing that we talked about with the CRM, click through the website, look around it, look what their pricing is, watch videos on how it works and find one that you think is cool.

**Mark S:** For this strategy what you actually need to do is two things is workout number 1: how are you going to get your customer's E-mail address and that can be from now on you're going to have a sign-up sheet at your front counter say "please give me your name and E-mail address, so that I can send you promotional stuff" you're going to have a sign-up at a trade show that you go to for people's E-mail addresses and maybe you are going to go back through your E-mail that you use now and just attach a name and an E-mail to a customer file.

**Mark V:** Yeah if you have a website, you should have a little newsletter or a E-mail sign-up forum or a promo sign-up form and people will fill it out. People will fill it out. Believe or not if you don't love E-mails there are plenty of people who do.

I don't hate it honestly, I get a lot but if something annoys me I unsubscribe from it.

**Mark S:** Yes, no big deal.

**Mark V:** No big deal, I delete the stuff that I don't care about, but every once in a while I get something from the pet store that is interesting to me and I say "oh my dog would like that" "oh I am going to look

at it next time". So give everyone a place to sign up in your store and on your website or in the E-mails you send, you can do even a little footer message that says "hey I send out promotions and thankyou(s) and cool pictures sometimes, if you want to be a part of that I would love it, click here and you could fill out a forum it'll take a second." and you can ask people to opt in that way and that's a very official, clean way and E-mail services would love it if you do it that way.

**Mark S:** Remember, you're going to ask people to give you their E-mail address because you want to send them E-mails, if you go to Ann Taylor or a shoe store -you walk in and as you are checking out the first thing that they will ask you is what's your E-mail address and you give it to them knowing that they are going to send you stuff by E-mail.

**Mark V:** Yeah.

**Mark S:** So your customers are doing the same thing, don't feel bad, just do like everyone else and ask them for their E-mail address and build a list.

**Mark V:** Yeah, exactly and you know the folks that really don't like it will say it and you say "cool"

**Mark S:** or they will give you a fake E-mail address.

**Mark V:** Yeah that's fine then you are done.

**Mark S:** Yeah.

**Mark V:** But the folks that clicked on the think but filled it out on your website or whatever they did, those are the people that are your fans, they want to hear from you, what they literally said was "I'm going to take 10-15 seconds to type out my E-mail address and hit send me something"

**Mark S:** Yes.

**Mark V:** And now they asked you to do it, so those are your best fans.

**Mark S:** Do you know what we should do while we make this on tape is we should an episode -a podcast on just the content for customer E-mails -all the different things that you could send to them so that people would know.

So make sure you are subscribed to the podcast on I-tunes or on the page where you make sure that we have your E-mail address and we will let you know when that podcast is ready.

**Mark V:** Great, so I think we put together a nice little list of some things that you can do for your marketing and sales and making your business better.

**Mark S:** Yeah it's a deceptively small list because you are going to budget your time by season. You are going to look at that and then you are going to schedule out the events according to your interests, your business and your season and when you are going to be busy and then you are going to back track those events to develop a plan for what you need to do for prepare for them, if you need to prepare for anything and you are going to participate in a bunch of different events and then you are going to pick a social media platform like Facebook and you are going to dive into that a little bit.

**Mark V:** Because you are going to participate in events in real life and you are going to participate in events in a virtual world online.

**Mark S:** Right and that includes -groups for your city, for your niche market for your business including the customer apparel startups Facebook group and then you are going to take a look at how customers view and experience your business.

**Mark V:** So how people will interact with you. How you can make that better to say that every single time that somebody buy something from me I want them to be really happy with a good positive excited emotion so they want to come back or tell somebody or just remember me so they don't forget who I am.

**Mark S:** And for god's sake answer the phone properly would you? I mean come on just smile -you should be happy somebody is calling you, so analyze your customer's experience by writing down what your process is and take a look at at-least two places where you can improve.

**Mark V:** Yeah and one of those places to improve is if you do have a website or a Facebook page -both of them really just take a look at what it is and make sure that it is nice and neat and clean and it works update it if you can even just a little bit coz that's part of the customer experience.

**Mark S:** Agreed, make sure all the links work, update your tags if there are any pictures that you can replace -do that.

**Mark V:** For the folks that want to keep in touch with you a thing that you can start is to have a way to E-mail them and organize those E-mails in a place or you can access it, part of that experience is communicating back to your customer in the future, thanking them or letting them know about events, it all ties in.

**Mark S:** Agreed and you can do that through CRM, through a sign up list through a mail-chimp list and there is a variety of ways to capture and keep track of your customer's E-mails.

**Mark V:** Yes and if you do both episode 24 and 25, if you do both of these things there is a 100% chance you will get a customer that you wouldn't have gotten before. There is a 100% chance of that.

**Mark S:** You are going to do better, that's really what we want because the more successful you are the more successful we are as a business and honestly the happiest we will be if you'll share our podcast with your friends and family which is what we really want.

**Mark V:** So part of these goals that we talked about briefly before that there are kind of two ways to make goals for the hair, so the part of this is to say that the reason that you are doing these is because you have a specific financial goal "I want to buy a forehead, I want to get a car, I want to get a boat, a horse."

**Mark S:** I want to leave my job and do this full time.

**Mark V:** I want to go full time, so you might have certain financial goals and you have to write those numbers down, so if it's like I want to go full time -it means I need to make this much money.

**Mark S:** Yeah.

**Mark V:** And that's your goal.

**Mark S:** And back track to everything that we talked about. Okay so if I did all these things that I talked about, if I did the events and improved my customer experience and kept track of E-mails and things like that, is that enough to get me to the goal?

**Mark V:** Yeah and if it is not add something.

**Mark S:** Yeah you got to do more.

**Mark V:** You got to do more. So and then the other way to approach it is what I call it the – if you build it they will come approach, so maybe your goal is not – I need to write down and have a specific number that I need to hit, but the goal is I am going to improve my business because I like the way things are going and I want to keep on that track and get better. So you build it better and you do a better job and then...

**Mark S:** The money will come.

**Mark S:** So both of those approaches are great, pick which one that is right for you and do it.

**Mark S:** Look back and when you are doing your 2016 review like we did in the last episode for 2015 - maybe look back at your year in advance and see how you think you did, do that same thing where are my mistakes going to be, how much more money am I going to make and what's it going to take for me to feel like I had a killer 2016.

**Mark V:** Yeah.

**Mark S:** And that's what you want to become.

**Mark V:** And revisit this stuff and this list every couple of months -whatever it is at my own pace, am I doing it? Did I plan all this stuff out and did not follow through on any of it.

**Mark S:** Right. And then punish yourself in some obvious way.

**Mark V:** That's interesting.

**Mark S:** You know maybe you have to wear a really ugly outfit or wear your clothes inside out for a day or something like that.

**Mark V:** Okay, I didn't think about that approach,

**Mark S:** I don't know how I came up with it, it just struck me.

**Mark V:** I am on board, you have to wear one of those folding signs down the street.

**Mark S:** I like that.

**Mark V:** You could do any of these things.

**Mark S:** That's terrible, I think we run out of things to talk about is what's happened. Alright so anything else Marc? I think we wrapped that up.

**Mark V:** I think that's good, I think that the biggest thing of all of this is -do these things.

**Mark S:** Yeah.

**Mark V:** Do them, that's everyone wants to eat healthier and work out and see their friends more. You talk to your friend you haven't seen in a while and you're like "we should hang out more"

**Mark S:** And you never do it.

**Mark V:** And you don't. So all these things to your business, you should be able to do all these coz that's what you said it's not a huge list, but definitely just get in and say, pick something "I am going to do this right now!" do it and that's my big thing, just do it.

**Mark S:** I agree, this has been kind of our way to help you be successful in 2016 which is one of our goals.

**Mark V:** Yeah, so thank-you.

**Mark S:** This has been Mark Stephenson from ColDesi.

**Mark V:** And Marc Vila from Colman & Company, thanks for listening.

**Mark S:** Yeah, have a good business.