

A close-up portrait of a man with short, dark hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark-colored shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

JAMES SCHRAMKO

How to Get Your Website Selling Without Needing a Sales Person

High-converting websites don't need a sales person. Studio1Design's Greg Merrilees shares the secret of sites that sell almost by themselves.



Greg Merrilees

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to my podcast. This is episode 968. I'm chatting with [Greg Merrilees](#) from [studio1design.com](#). Hello, Greg.

Greg: Hey, James. Good to see you again, buddy.

James: Yeah, always a pleasure. I mean, you're a big part of my life, every time I look at my website or any of my merch, I see you, because you're obviously the designer behind the logos, the name, everything. You came into my world in an unusual way. And perhaps we'll get to talk about that today.

I want to talk about how we can actually sell from our website without needing a salesperson, because that's where you specialized. You've been helping me and lots of my clients in improving our websites for conversions. Like, whenever we want to do something new, we chat, and then you come back with a design. And then either your team or my team can turn that design into a website. That depends on what sort of resources clients have available to them.

Greg: Yes.

James and Greg go back a ways

James: But if you're listening to this podcast, then you've seen Greg's hand in it there. That studio1design.com is the organization responsible for my podcast logos, my website mastheads, my T-shirts, pens, books, anything that I've done, I run it through Greg, Greg's the guy. But I didn't even ask you to do the first ones. Do you remember that?

Greg: I do indeed, yeah. But that's - I just said thanks for your awesome podcast with [Ezra](#). And yeah, so I decided to send a free logo.

James: So what were you doing before? I know, because I went and visited your office when you had one. It's quite an interesting story how you ended up in the online space.

Greg: Yeah, absolutely. And I mean, yeah, we moved to website design about eight years ago, but before that, we were designing T-shirts and packaging and consumer products. It was only really for a handful of clients. And then I remember, we were struggling to try and come into the online space. And that's when I met you and sent you a free T-shirt. And then you came to my office and said, You don't even need an office, I'll show you a better way.

And that's when I joined SilverCircle, and you've just taught me so much since then. It's incredible. So yeah, I think I've been in SilverCircle for what, is it eight years, seven years, something like that now?

James: Yeah, I could look it up. It sounds about right. And I certainly appreciate it. You know, you're one of those foundational members who is representative of what's possible. I know you've had a good transformation in your business. I know there's some key points on the way that I've seen huge personal growth from you.

You were kind of introverted, a little bit shy to get on stage, or to put yourself out there to the world. Not in a small environment. In a small environment, you're actually quite social, you're great at the meetups, you're good at a small dinner or whatever. You get chatty, especially if there's red wine involved.

Greg: [laughs] Absolutely.

James: What I did notice, you know, it was great for me to help you get onto the platform and to be doing presentations and to have a, I guess we re-engineered the way that you think about selling, am I right?

Greg: Yeah, totally. And it's a long game. It's one thing you taught me. I remember, you know, you helped me with the presentation at Ezra's event, which was in San Diego, I don't know, five years ago. And from that, we're now designing for Sylvester Stallone, through the son of a marketing guy that did the marketing for Sylvester Stallone. So these things, it's just a long game and it's just funny how these things happen. It's all about boosting your authority. And yeah, you helped me with that presentation that led to that. So it was pretty cool.



Controlling your presence in the industry

James: I think we're in the age where we can control our own presence, we can control our marketing distribution, we can control our look and feel. I want to tell you a story, Greg, you've never heard this before, because it only happened last week. I was placing an investment with a New York firm. And they specialize in lending money. So they're like, you put your money to work lending out to other people and getting interest on it, right? So that's just like the thing.

This is a pretty esteemed New York firm. And I was speaking to the founder, because I was making a reasonably sized investment and they'll speak to you face to face. And when we got on the call, he's like, Wow, you've got such a presence. You've got such a presence on, you know, because I'm totally understanding what you're talking about and the way you're thinking about things.

But it was immediate to me, like things like having a better microphone, a better camera, a better backdrop, design, that environment you design, can have a huge impact on a complete stranger. And I think this is important, and for so many years, and some would say still, a lot of the things I've produced weren't to the highest possible standard.

But then when I started getting help with design, when I started improving the look and feel of my branding in my website and putting some attention into the places where a lot of online marketers never even think about, it's lifted the quality of everything. It's lifted the quality of the clients I attract. It's lifted the profitability.

I'm more motivated to be involved in things that look good and feel good. I mean, my wife still wears a SilverCircle hoodie, a lot of people do, actually, I see plenty of them kicking around. You can feel proud when you go for the higher quality and you have a good look and feel. So I believe in an arms race, so this inflation we have online, this is more and more important, the look and feel, the branding.

I mean, if you look at people who are the benchmark today as of right now, it will be people like Alex Hormozi, for example. Despite his horrible fashion sense, right? Like wears Crocs, and Crocs have no place. Maybe in a triage ward in a hospital. And flannelette shirts and shorts, right, and Band Aid strips. That's not ideal, but that's his look.

But the quality of all the video production and that is good, good sound, good graphics, a good look and feel, and that is getting massive airplay. So it's translating through, you're not doing that. I think he said he spent \$70,000 a month on content creation.

Greg: Wow!

James: And he's getting millions and millions of views, right? And deservedly so because his content is just off the charts. It's amazing. It's just the Crocs. I have to mention the Crocs, because I can't endorse the Crocs. I sit here in bare feet, by the way, I'd rather bare feet than Crocs.

Why the look and feel is important

So there is an argument for investing in your brand, to make it look and feel more significant in the market and get those big returns. Is that what you're seeing on people's websites? Is that how they're selling without salespeople?

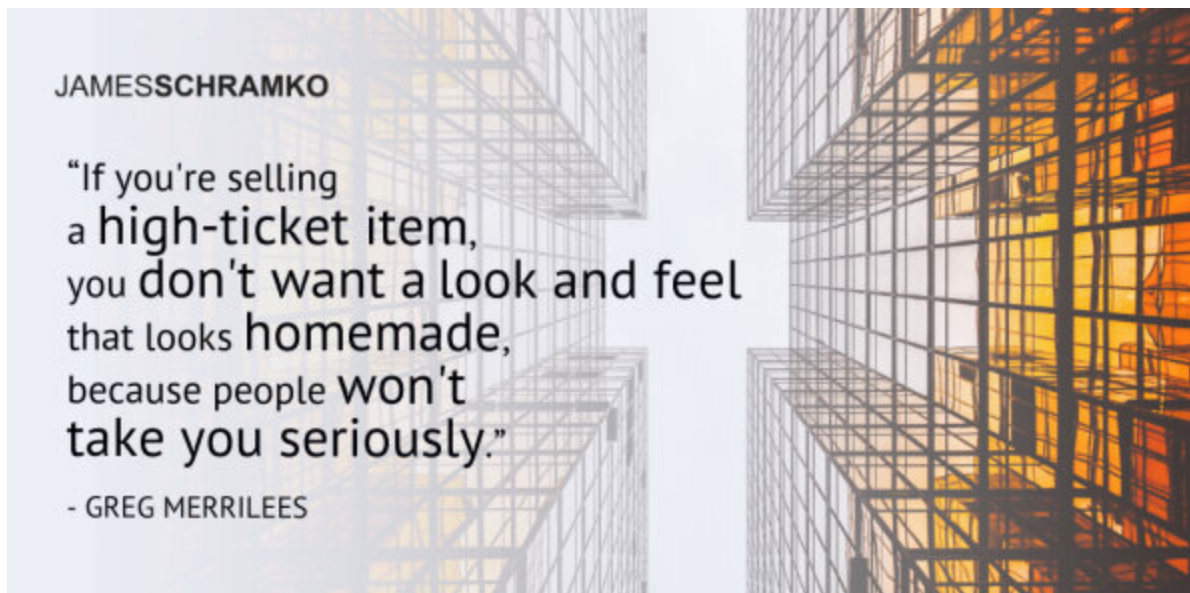
Greg: Yeah, exactly. It's part of it. There's also a strategy involved. But yeah, I have no doubt. I mean, you came from Mercedes background, right? And so that's all about just everything looking premium, because I have a premium product...

James: I've never seen so much fussiness around something that seems so small, like they would come out with a paint micrometer and measure the color of the poles out the front. There was this phase of Mercedes dealerships having blue poles. That was the look, the design theme, and it had to be a certain blue. And if it wasn't the right blue, they would dock your commission from your dealership commission pot. And you'd have to repaint them.

The star in relation to the words, the font, the placement, like they were very, very, very, very, very particular. That's where I learned about brand guidelines. And I actually became great friends with the guy who was responsible for putting on the global motor shows. And he had a brand and design background. And he ended up running Australia, a lovely guy. And he taught me lots of things.

But the thing that I learned that was so strong about the brand is when I would interview candidates, even for a sales role, I'd say, Now tell me, why have you applied for this role? And they'll say, Well, if it was Ford or Kia, I wouldn't have applied, I'm applying because it's Mercedes-Benz.

A lot of people used to try and sell us stuff thinking we were super, super wealthy. They didn't realize that dealerships make about one or two percent profit. Right. But because of the brand, the perception was that they were just, you know, just gold bars out the back, right? So it taught me a lot. The brand was strong, and it certainly didn't hurt my resume to have Mercedes-Benz on it and BMW on it.



Greg: Exactly. And so the look and feel, it is how people perceive your brand. So if you're selling a high-ticket item, you don't want a look and feel that looks homemade, because people won't take you seriously, you know?

The look is just part of it, but it's also the strategy as well. And like, we design about 10 or 20 websites per month for our clients, and we often have a look at their websites and they're kind of, they've built them over time, they're a bit of a Frankenstein, they've had multiple people working on them.

You know, they already have decent businesses, like seven figure on average per annum, and some of our clients are eight figure. But they have a lot of website content, they have a whole bunch of things at their site that are working, but then when you dive deeper and you just really look into it, you can see a lot of holes and yeah, that's kind of, you know, the things that we're going to dive into today, if that's cool.

The holes that Greg sees in websites

James: Let's talk about the holes. Like, when you're looking at a website, and I know somewhere you've got, like, a diagnostic audit for this, which I would have told you to do, no doubt, because it's a really good way to expose a gap, but what are the gaps? Like, as a designer, you go through the website, give me a couple of the key points you're looking at, and what you expect to see and you often find.

Greg: Yeah, absolutely. And if you think, you know, think about Gert trying to get more traffic to your website, right? If you look at the podcast page, or the blog page, or the video page, the content pages, essentially, they don't have a clear next step, you know? Some of them may have a lead magnet, but it kind of maybe disconnected from the content topic or the category. So you want to make sure there's a little bit of an alignment there.

But then also, you know, potentially have, like, if you do sell services, have an offer for, you know, booking a call, the next step to bring people closer to understanding your services, essentially. And really, I just see, in general, there's no real strategy, because things have been pieced together over time.

I feel like there's always, you know, the thank you pages, they either don't exist, or they just have a little message saying thanks. But that's a wasted opportunity to get people into that next step. So that's part of it, obviously, the look and feel. But I think the main thing is the strategy, and they don't invest in good copy. And there's a lot of little conversion leads throughout all of their pages as well, that, you know, we can go into as well, if needed.

James: What does that mean for them? Like, in real terms?

Greg: Yeah, well, I mean, realistically, they're leaving money on the table, you know? Like, I mean, let's say you sell a product or a service for \$10,000, to have it rounded out. And let's say your website traffic is 5000 visitors per month, you might have a two percent conversion of that lead magnet, you might have 25 percent for inquiries. And that means you would send out quotes or whatever, like just an estimate, for instance.

And then from that, ideally, you want to get, like, as many qualified people booked onto sales calls as possible, but they need to be qualified. And we'll talk about that shortly. And then from that, you could probably expect 80 percent or above if you've got all these other pieces in place to convert those into sales. So they're probably good metrics.

But if you don't have all those pieces in place, then those metrics are going to be terrible. You're going to have like, like some of our clients, they don't have that lead magnet. Their sales pages, for instance, have all the conversion elements that are missing, like social proof or proven that they can get a result and lead them with benefits and the SPIN Selling as well, which is all part of that Robert Cialdini. Sorry, SPIN Selling by...

James: Neil Rackham.

Greg: Neil Rackham. Thank you. I always get those two names wrong. Robert Cialdini is Influence.

James: I was just enjoying watching you drown there for a while.

Greg: Thank you, I appreciate that. [laughs]

James: [laughs] We definitely won't edit that out.

Are you forgetting what's in it for the client?

Greg: No, that's fine. Yeah. And so, you know, the whole forgetting about what's in it for the client, they just talk all about how good their product or service is, and they forget about what's in it for me, essentially, as the visitor. So when you have good professional copywriter on your site, and you have all these psychological drivers placed in a way to make the copy the hero and they enhance the copy, all these things will help boost conversions.

I mean, even if you look at your sales funnel pages, James, like, you segment people initially based on their problem, that leads to a sales page, and you've got all the elements that we just mentioned. But then you're also giving the option, if they're not ready to buy and they have questions, you know, Have a question? Ask James, like, that's just brilliant.

James: Well, thanks. I was sort of, of the thought that I should only make an offer to someone if they're the right person for that offer. So I don't want to make an offer to someone who's not a good fit for the offer. It's just going to annoy them, and it's going to clog up our system. So moving people to the right offer is important.

I think in the next iteration of my website, there'll be less options because I'm way, way clearer now on exactly which product or service I want to focus on. So I'm going to start going even more focused on that. And there may be less choices. But one of the choices or at least the copy will let people know who it is for and who it is not for.

And yes, I think by giving people the option to ask a question, it separates me from all of the people who are untouchable, you just cannot speak to a lot of people who are selling things directly, you're going to get fobbed off to a robot or their team. And that automatically differentiates me. I'm accessible.

The second thing is if your sales page is salesmanship in print, as the copywriters often refer to themselves, then we need to be able to have the ability to answer an unresolved concern or an objection or whatever is on someone's mind, maybe I haven't anticipated every possible scenario and someone has got their very special unique to them and nobody else scenario, which is almost never the case, but they often feel it is. And then they ask the question.

I can tell you, anyone who asked a question is more than likely going to end up buying. Or, and this is something I'm really proud of, I send them to the right place, where I may not be the best fit for what they're trying to do, but I almost certainly know who is. And I make a lot of referrals off to people. With or without commission, it doesn't really matter. It's about getting that customer in the right place.

And I remember the germ of that idea. The seed of that idea came from a Christmas movie I watched, where someone went in to buy something at the store, and they didn't have that thing, and the store clerk sent them to another store that did have it. I can't remember if they got in trouble for doing that. But I thought that's a very good policy, you know, I would want to go back to that store again because they're honest, and they care about the customer, which is two things that a lot of people selling aren't.

How sales copy and design are related

So you talk about the relationship between sales copy and design. Are you expected as a designer to be able to do the sales copy? Or is that a component that you're having a hand-in-glove relationship with? Because I know, when I did my website, I was dealing with your team for design, and I was dealing with [Brian for my copy](#). And then I had to have a merging of the two, the unification process.

Is it a case of is, you know, should one come first? Do they get done by the same person? Or is there a little bit of back and forth?

Greg: There's definitely back and forth. And so what we like to do is we like to get started on the look and feel of the pages because we understand that copy can take a lot of time because they have to do a lot of research and interview clients and things like that. So we get started on the look and feel.

We understand the structure that our copywriting partners use, we don't offer copy, it's definitely a separate business, because we want to be good at what we do, and they're really good at what they do. So we design the pages with the right structure or the psychological drivers, then when the copy comes in, we'll revise the design to suit the copy, essentially, and we just keep revising until it's all approved. So that's how that works.

James: Love it. So let me say, these are some of the things that you've found, from what you've told me so far that the lead magnet is either nonexistent or not easy to find, that there's no next step on the thank you page, it just says thank you, that the sales pages aren't that great, maybe there hasn't been a professional copywriter involved.

I can usually tell, there's a tell that a copywriter has been involved or not. If the page is all about the person's business or themselves, then generally the copywriter hasn't been involved. It's a lot of - I call them selfish copy. It's I, me, my, our, we, right? That's not meaningful to the end user versus you, you're, etc. There's a huge difference.

But it's incredible how many pages I see where, I decided to start this business so that we could offer this, and I, me, my, you know, it's all about the person. Like, we don't care about the person, we care about us and our problem and how we can have that solved.

Why you don't show your offer to just anyone

We're talking about qualifying people, because you mentioned my chooser, that you shouldn't show your offer to everybody, right?

Greg: Yes.

James: We shouldn't just let anyone just book a call in your scheduler. I do see that. Sometimes people say, Do you know this guy? So this person booked a call in my scheduler. I'm like, Well, how did they get to your scheduler? You don't educate on the sales calls is something that you haven't mentioned to me, but I know that's something you talk about. Your conversions can be very, very low by this point. So that's what we need to fix.

So we've talked about how much it could cost if you're skipping any of those steps at some point. People just aren't getting through either, the right customers aren't able to buy from you even if they want to. They don't know what you do or how to do it.



Greg: Yeah, exactly. And so all of what you've described to me, that's like the old way of selling where you talk about how good your offer is, and it's all me, me, me we, we, I, etc. And then you have to hire salespeople, but use all those closing tactics, and people don't like to be sold to. So the way I see it, the new way of selling is to educate people and to qualify people and then demonstrate how you can help them, basically. And that's all I do throughout this entire process.

So your website, especially selling high-ticket item, I think it should lead to booking that call, but then you don't want just anybody, you know, showing up for that call. So you need to qualify them, make sure they're a good fit. And so realistically, when you get to those book-a-call pages, yeah, I agree with you, James. Like, realistically, you don't want anybody booking it.

And therefore, if you have a pre-qualifying bunch of questions initially on that book-a-call page, and then you don't send them directly to the book a call at that point, you can vet them and make sure they're a good fit, then you can send them to that page. And on that page, you know, pro tip is really to make sure you're not always available in your calendar. Only show a certain amount of time slots that you're available.

So that immediately positions you as, you know, like, they're privileged to work with you, basically, if they can find a spot like, you know, we struggle to find a spot on your calendar, James, right? As a member.

James: Well, you will. Yeah, I've only got like, one spot in the week that's available. And if it's not available, you have to wait a few weeks.

Greg: Yeah, exactly.

James: And I remember, initially, when I encountered that with someone else, I thought it was negative at the time. I thought, Wow, this guy is a bit on himself. He's only available at a certain time. And what I realized was that he had committed that time to doing the work. But the other time, he was not working or not available to do.

It didn't mean that he was being rude or that he didn't want to talk to me. And it didn't mean that he was maxed out busy all the other time. Right? I knew he had time available, but he was just firm on the way the schedule has to work for him. So I respect that.

And certainly, it's worked better for me, because I can do my calls when I've got coverage for childcare, for example, instead of having to babysit, because it's, as you know, if you can recall, when your kids were younger, it's impossible to do anything with a kid, a young kid who needs constant supervision, right?

So it does make sense that there are certain times that are more suitable or not. And yes, it's absolutely special if you get on a call with me, because I do have filters in place. And whilst I'll answer any emails, my time is very guarded for one-to-one calls, because I have to suspend my life. Whatever I was doing before the call, I have to put on hold. And then I have to be on that call and present with whoever I'm on that call with.

Like right now, I am delegating for thousands of listeners of this podcast to get the best gold out of Greg, for them, so they can be better off with their websites. I have to do that. It doesn't matter what's going on in my life. I don't get to deal with that until after we hang up. So you've got to prize that time.

How to educate potential customers

So how do we educate people? Give us some tips.

Greg: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, it starts with the website with your blog content, or podcast, etc. And that helps build trust in your brand initially. And then you really want to like, in that content, don't just do things for an SEO play. Like, as in trying to research what keywords rank for, etc. You want to put your opinion and your methodology around how you solve problems for your customers, right? So I think that's a big point to start with.

And then if you do get people onto your booking-a-call page, then even that page, I would suggest that you have a face-to-camera video to help qualify. Talk about who you're a good fit for, who you're not a good fit for. And let them know exactly what they can expect from the call. And what I do, I don't do our free strategy calls, it's somebody else on my team.

So I'm protecting my time as well. And that's just like an initial 15-minute call. And then that person will make sure that they're a good fit before we send them - and that call, by the way, is all about just asking about their situation, it's all about them and just figuring out if your solution suits their needs to solve their problem, essentially. Alright?

So then after that, if they are a good fit, then what we would do is send them a ballpark estimate essentially, you know, just so we can make sure once again, it's a qualifying piece, Here's our rough price. If they weigh under then you don't waste your time before they jump on a long call with me. And so what we do, if they approve the ballpark estimate, then we send them a 40-question questionnaire, which is once again hard work, but it does the qualifying piece quite well.

And then they book an hour to you know, sometimes could be up to two-hour call with me. We don't charge for that call. But the reason we don't is because all that work that we've done before, by educating and qualifying, we get a really high conversion rate because they are super interested and they've invested a lot into themselves by filling out the questionnaire.

And the questions in the questionnaire help position us as the authority, as if to say, we know what we're talking about. This is why we need to know these questions. And so, you know, it can be a barrier for some people, but we find the ones that do the questionnaire and then jump on a call, we're talking 90 percent plus will convert into a sale. And that's from a cold lead, and we're talking a \$10,000 item roughly, for somebody that we've never met before. So this is without selling.

When you come across as pricey...

James: So a couple of points around that. Do you get a sense that the client is building an expectation of how much it might cost based on the experience they're having, and the look and feel and the process?

Greg: Yes, 100 percent, yeah. And they say that. Some of them say, Oh, we thought you'd be way more expensive.

James: It's kind of what I was getting at. One sales strategy is to help a customer feel like it's going to cost way more, and then they'll be delighted when it's less than what they thought.

What a questionnaire does

You mentioned this, the survey or the questionnaire, in relation to the copy, you said it takes time in the design phase. Do customers ever get bogged down at this point, when you're asking for information, like it stalls?

Greg: Yes.

James: Because it used to, sometimes people would buy SEO from us and not tell us the website that we're supposed to be ranking for them. Like, sometimes the administration got in the way. So we switched it where we did the form first before we let them buy the service. And that way, if they're stalling, it's on their own time. But you're right, the people who invest the time and energy into the form are far more likely to go ahead, because they're more motivated, they have intent.

Greg: Exactly, exactly. And so you know, that actually forms our entire brief for the design team. So we've got the questionnaire, we've got the call recording, we tell them the call is recorded. And then really on that call, it's about demonstrating how we're going to apply everything that they've learned through, you know, I might just take a step back. On the thank you page of when somebody does book a call, a really good pro tip there is to, you know, thank them for booking the call. And then you can finish the video by answering some frequently asked questions on that call about your process and how you work, etc. So then when they come to the call, they know exactly what to expect, basically.

So yeah, and then on the strategy session, you just demonstrate how you help them. And we just dive deep into the questionnaire, we make it all about them, there's nothing about me or our service, it's just literally a strategy call to show them. And what we do on that call is show them other websites that might be in a similar industry, etc. and how we've helped them get good results.

We show them before and afters, we show them our mood boards and everything that we've done to help elevate their brand, essentially. And so what that does is positions us as the authority, especially using those case studies, essentially. And then at the end of the call, we just let them know what's going to happen next, and we let the decision be completely theirs. We don't do any selling at all. And then we'll get to the next step about sending a proposal, because that can be quite powerful as well.

James: So in this scenario, you don't have to have a sales person as such in the team, you just need someone who's a competent designer and able to interpret data from a research diagnostic.

Greg: Yep, exactly. And in any type of service business, as long as you are 100 percent on top of your craft, then you just share your knowledge, essentially.

James: Right. I'm glad it was said, you have to be good if you're going to be doing this.

If you want to see Greg's stuff...

This is episode 968. I'm chatting with [Greg Merrilees](#) from [studio1design.com](#). I'm going to put you on the spot, Greg. If someone's listening to this, and they want to go and see what your page looks like, where are they looking?

Greg: I mean, like, generally speaking, here's things, you know what we could do, I've done this for other podcasters, we could create a page for instance, like a [studio1design.com/James](#), to keep it simple. And we can put a funnel in there, like it could be something, I don't know, we could do this quiz that we did for somebody else, right?

So your customers or your prospects or your listeners, I should say, can go to this quiz and answer some questions about what they should or shouldn't have on their website, basically, and that'll help them and then at the end of that, we've actually got a mini funnel that they can check out and it leads to this book-a-call sales funnel that we're talking about here. So they can see the whole thing. All I have to do is activate it by when, when does this go live? [laughs]

James: [laughs] You can count the episode numbers, Greg. If this is 968, I think we do at least one, usually two a week, so you can work it out. And the pressure is on.

Greg: Yeah, no I can do it.

James: They should be careful. They might end up getting a new website design. [laughs]

Greg: [laughs] Exactly. I mean, if they do, we could even like, Okay, here's the thing, I don't know how you feel about this, this might be too salesy, but we could give them a bonus if they say they've mentioned us on this podcast, for instance, you know?

James: There you go. Well, that's not too salesy. I think it falls within the bounds of not becoming irony, given the topic is how to sell without a salesperson.

Greg: Gotcha.

James: You've got to be careful because you've become a powerful salesperson, but in a non salesy way, because you're always just leaning into helping the customer, and showing lots of proof. I reckon those two things are the big takeaways. If you're genuinely good at what you do, and you just want to help the right people be better off, and you design all of your material around that, you will definitely be using proof, because you will have already generated results for other people.

And proof is one of the most powerful elements that would help someone trust you, trust that you could get a result, especially if it's relevant. If it's a similar scenario to them, then they can see the result you've got, then all they have to do is work out, is the investment worth this result? And if the answer is yes, then they'll move ahead.

The page that does the heavy lifting

Let's talk about the sales page, because that's effectively our silent salesperson. So in the absence of a high-ticket sales person on the phone, a lot of people talk about setters and closers these days, it kind of makes me cringe. A setter is someone who sets appointments, and the closer is someone who crunches the deal.

It's kind of - I don't know, I don't like that kind of talk so much. I believe you could still have people in your organization doing those functions, but you don't have to give them ghastly names. But let's say the salesperson is the one we want to do the heavy lifting. What should be on a sales page?

Greg: Yep, absolutely. So for a start, if it's a sales page, like, get rid of the top navigation that leads back to your main website, right? You've sent people here, you want to give them no distractions whatsoever. So then at the top, you want to let people know that they're in the right place. So for instance, if you have a certain niche, you might have attention, I don't know, coaches, consultants, course creators, or whatever, if that's who the target market is, and then have a big benefit-driven headline.

Don't say, here's our service, don't give the service name, just tell them what the benefit is. And then a little explainer description of how you help them with the service or product that you offer, essentially, right? So that would be - and then this is all above the fold. And then you want to have a call-to-action button above the fold as well.

Now, that call to action, they may not be ready for that call to action yet. But if they do press that, it will just anchor link down to the very bottom pricing section or whatever that call-to-action section is at the bottom of the page, right? And so then, what I like to do as well is just have a little bit of social proof in the form of what we call like an impact metrics bar. And so this will just help prove that you've got existing clients or customers or whatever, and it might be how many customers you've had, I don't know, just anything to do with...

James: Podcast downloads.

Greg: Yup, it could be any of that.

James: Newsletter database.

Greg: Exactly, because we have to assume that they haven't seen any other pages on your website. And we don't want them to go to any other pages on your website, we want them to do one thing on this page. And that's take that next step, that call to action, right? And so, yeah, anything we can do to show them above the fold that they're in the right place, and then for the people that aren't ready to convert yet, because we've got to remember, some people might be cold traffic, they might be warm or hot.

So the ones that are hot, give them that call to action straightaway, they know what they want to do. They don't want to scroll through heaps and heaps of stuff. But then the ones that aren't quite convinced yet, that's where you want to have more of the social proof case studies, SPIN Selling that we've talked about before, not by Cialdini but by Neil Rackham, and let people know who it's for, etc.

And then introduce your solution at the bottom. And if you think about SPIN Selling, it's right, letting people know that you understand their situation, their pain points, the implication if they don't address it, and the need, which is your solution comes at the bottom of the page, essentially. And then even having like a Why-Choose-Us section can be important because, or you know, who's behind the brand, etc. because, once again, they might forget, they might have this browser open and ton of other browsers open, just remind them, you know, this is the personal people behind the brand, etc. So that's just part of it.

And then the Call to Action section. If it is high-ticket, I would suggest having a strategy call rather than buy now because people aren't going to pay \$10,000 right there generally. And then, yeah, essentially, you might have some FAQs as well underneath that to really reinforce everything that you've said above and it just yeah, gives people a quick reference point for everything. And that's it.

And then really, you just want to have a footer with no leakage point navigation. If you do have video, don't put your sales page videos on YouTube, because people will click that YouTube logo and they'll never come back. So upload them to Wistia or Vimeo or something that doesn't leak off to other sites. But then the very footer, just have your terms and your privacy and a contact but don't have any other page links.

James: Got it. It's good tips. What about a free strategy page? And I know some people, this isn't going to be relevant for them, like a lot of coaches do strategy sessions. But that's probably not needed anymore. That's become over commoditized. But for a service, I imagine there really is quite a lot of scope that needs to be covered. And you need to know if you are able to help them or not properly.

Greg: Yeah, exactly. And yeah, on the strategy page, I mean, you know, it depends once again on how the traffic came there, if they're cold or warm, etc. So the warmer they are, the less informational detail you need on there. But if they are cold, and then I mean, there's a page you can probably go to, like just go to studio1design.com and click on the main call to action, which is speak with an expert, and that'll show you what we have on that page for the structure that we're going to run through now.

And so really, it's like a benefit-driven headline. I have a video of me just explaining how we're going to help. We just sort of have some bullets of how long this call duration is. We're going to identify what's holding your website back, for instance, in this case, and there's no pressure, it's just a friendly chat to see if we're right fit, right? And it's not disguised as a sales call.

Do people expect to deal with the founder?

James: Does this build an expectation that you're going to be the one on the call? Or do you mention that it's going to be a team member?

Greg: Great point, I do mention that in the video that it'll be me or somebody on our team, right.

James: Because you get to a point where like, everyone wants a piece of Greg.

Greg: Yeah, that can happen. Yeah. But all of our marketing, I'm always talking about the team. And yeah, I think now I'm getting better at that. And a lot of people don't expect to get me, they certainly don't expect me to design their website, because I just don't do that anymore. But yeah, so I think we've got 26 people on the team at the moment.

James: Yeah, I know you've got a great team. And you also dive in and keep an eye on their work, and you're always omnipresent in the background, which is where Greg needs to be spread instead of doing that front end stuff that a team can do in a great fashion, if you've got a good system, which is what we're talking about.

And really the point I wanted to make, if you're a small service business, set this up from the beginning to set an expectation of team so that as you build your team, that you're not breaking the expectation that someone might have had in the beginning. This is so common, where people just want to deal with the founder or the principal. You can't always do that. And it's not a realistic expectation for you or for them for that to continue forever. Unless you stay small, which is not what we do.

Greg: Exactly, exactly. And yeah, the purpose of the call is really just to see if you are a good fit, and that's why it should be framed. And I think it's good to frame it as a 15-minute call. So they won't feel like they're going to be sold, you know, because you can't sell on a 15-minute call. But anyway, I mean, you probably could, but I couldn't. But it's not about that. It's really just seeing if they're a good fit.

And so you want to let people know what they can get out of the call. And then when they do, like, submit some pre-qualifying questions, really study their answers and make sure when you come to the call that you add value, and if you can see a problem, point it out and just say, Here's what I recommend, just completely give them free content that's helpful to them, essentially.

But on the page as well, have some examples of the work that you do. Like if it is visual, put some visual designs on there, and then have social proof or case studies, etc., as much as possible, like videos, written, a full story, just really demonstrate that you get good results if they do want to go ahead. And then the pre-qualifying questions, which I think are essential for any type of business to make sure you do qualify properly before you can send them a quote or before you can get them on the call, essentially.

The role of proposals

James: I want to talk about something that does come up a lot, and it relates to beyond the strategy session, like they've done a lot of research, you've done a lot of work, you've put forward to them your tips, you've got a phase where you send a proposal. Now we covered this, I don't know, maybe, whoa, could have been seven or eight years ago, at my own live event, I got a presentation from an SEO client of mine who was using a proposal tool, professional proposal tool.

The thinking after that was I try not to have proposals as much as possible, if we can eliminate them, we can. At the very minimum, we renamed them action plan, because it goes from being something someone could say yes or no to just more or less saying that they are ready to proceed with the action plan. So it's just a slight renaming of a similar tool. But I'd love to hear your experience around what you've tried here, and what modalities and tools that you would recommend a service business try if they are doing proposals?

Greg: Yeah, the biggest problem I see, and we used to do this as well, was just send in an email, right? Unfortunately, it just doesn't feel professional. And yes, you can call it an action plan, proposal. I think action plan is really good. What we do inside our proposal is we have an action plan and a timeline. But we do use a software, this is Better Proposals, which we really love, and there's other ones out there. I just can't remember who they are, but they're all really good.

James: Quote Roller or something.

Greg: Yeah, I think so.

James: There's a few different ones.

Greg: Yeah, exactly, exactly. We had a massive boost in conversions just by going to this format. And then we've sent it to clients as well. And you know, they've accepted our proposals, but then they've had us design, with the same software, proposals for their businesses.

Presentations and visual branding

James: Oh, that's a good tip. I should mention that. So apart from just websites and logos and T-shirts and stuff, you're actually able to design proposals, presentations, lots of my clients use your studio1design.com presentations that you've built for them, because I remember seeing some presentations from some of them.

And I've said, Listen, I think you need to, like lift the quality of this. Anyway, next time they come back, it's like, Whoa! This looks amazing. And they're like, Yeah, Greg's team did it for me at studio1design.com, like, that makes sense.

Greg: I remember the events you used to run, presenters would bring 4x3 ratio for their slide deck.

James: Oh, they'd kill me. They would kill me. Like, you'd see me up the back of the room, like, rebuilding their slides, because I can't allow that. I can't allow 4x3 bullet-point-to-death slides. Like I basically said, No, we're not putting this on. I had to convert them into 16x9, make them a nice font, have one point per page at the most.

And then after that, I learnt my lesson and I got them to submit it weeks before the event. So there was always a minimum standard, again, back from the Mercedes-Benz brand design guidelines. Like, you can't allow these 1980s imposters to infiltrate in 2022. It's not acceptable.

Greg: Well, you would think, right? And you were talking about that five years ago, but I just went to TNC in San Diego. And even that Alex guy had the wrong format. Saw him on stage. He had a great presentation.

James: But he wears Crocs, so I'm not surprised.

Greg: Yeah, yeah, yeah. He's got big muscles, though. That's all that matters.

James: Definitely. I love the guy. I don't want to cop sh*t for this episode. But Crocs man, seriously. And maybe that's part of the brand, right? In all seriousness.

Greg: Yeah. Okay.

James: We're talking about it right now. Maybe it's by design, maybe it's to be contrarian, or he just doesn't care what people think to the extent that he doesn't mind wearing them. And that says a lot, right? It's really powerful. So everything we do comes across to people, and they make their own judgment.

I mean, a lot of people reference this guitar in the background of my shot, like when I'm setting up for a call or whatever, or Zoom, they're like, Oh, you play guitar. I'm like, Actually, I don't play guitar. My daughter tries. But it's my wife's guitar, right? So it's not my guitar. I don't play the guitar. It's just in the library here. But people make the leap that it must be mine and I play guitar just because it's in the shot.

So it keeps bothering me that your On Air sign is not lit up right now, Greg. So like, all these little things that our mind plays. So anyway, back to it, you can fix designs. And yes, there are some bandits out there with 4x3, even though it's funny, because a lot of the content we're creating now is on our phone this way, instead of that way.

So we have to continually keep up with what the trends are telling us to do. And so that's a whole other thing.

But back to proposals. So use the professional thing, use video in the proposal, like go high modality.

Greg: We do, yeah. And what we do, we put it on our website URL as well. So studio1design.com/, like that.

James: Very good. Yeah, always take that option when a tool lets you mask or use your own IP, do that.

Greg: Yeah. And so the whole thing is branded with our color palette, our logo, etc. And we have an introduction section, which talks about their situation and kind of talks about their challenges and the opportunity. And then at the bottom of every one of these pages, by the way, we have social proof, or we have a client case study or testimonial, etc. But on the very first page, we actually superimpose their website into like, a MacBook kind of photo. Just to show them what their website looks before.

James: Classy. I remember that was in my B2B proposal from 10 years ago, maybe 11 years ago now. You always put the client's logo in the first page of the quote, or the proposal, because that says, Hey, I see you. This is all about you.

Greg: Yes, spot on. Yeah. So that's that. And then we just talk about their website and the pages that we're going to redesign. It's just a sort of bullet point description of what we're going to include.

James: But it's a clear expectation of what's happening. It's scope outline.

Greg: Yep, exactly. And then we have the action plan, which is the timeline, the steps we're going to take and the timeline that they can expect, you know, and we give a clear description of what they can expect in week one to three, three to four, four to five, etc.

Defining what is and isn't covered

And then we have an out-of-scope section as well. And we're really clear. And we also make sure we talk about those type of things throughout the call as well.

James: Is that like what's not covered, or if we do this it's extra?

Greg: No well, yeah, it could be either, yeah, so copywriting, we don't offer that, for instance, you know? SEO, we don't offer that, for instance, you know, membership sites, we don't offer that, website hosting, we don't offer that, but website build, you know, we can do that. But we don't mind what platform they build on, whether it's Kleq or other, WordPress, etc., Shopify, it doesn't matter.

Yeah, we give the client the choice, they can either build it or we'll build it. But we just say that's out of scope of this proposal, but we can quote on that later if needed, but we will give them the quote, at that point, if they ask for it. Yeah.

James: Scope is such a killer of service businesses, isn't it? If there's a gray area on I thought this was included or not, it's very - it reminds me actually, I just got a letter from my medical insurance provider, you know, my medical fund or whatever, all the things they do cover and all the things they don't cover, they keep moving things across from one line to the other, which is funny, but it'll all be in black and white, and they'll tell me that they gave me a notice about it, or whatever. So very good to clear that up if you're in a service business.

Greg: Totally.

James: So where to from here? Basically, you've done this for numerous clients by this stage, like that process you've outlined, I'm already thinking \$10,000 sounds like a bargain, like the amount of detail and focus that you've put into it and the commitment that you have to deliver a high-level output by certain milestones, it sounds very professional.



Greg: Yeah, it is. And we do stick to that because at the end of the day, your reputation is everything. And in a service business, you do get a lot of referrals if you do a good job, so you just want to deliver a world class...

James: So actually you could say, Team costs relating to a better front end effort could actually be offsetting future marketing needs.

Greg: Yeah, that's a good way to put it. Absolutely. And then try and figure out how to get a repeat sale from the same client. It's a lot easier than starting fresh again, from a cold lead.

Items for review

James: I love it. You've really given some solid tips there, especially, I think as they listen to this, we can go and review our sales flow, like, what does it look like from the homepage? Are the right people finding the right offers? Is the offer clear? Is it removing distractions? Does it point to doing one thing? Does it have social proof? Does it have all the elements someone would need to make a decision?

Does it give them the option to contact you if there was something missing? When they do contact you or take the option that you want them to take, do you have a nice thank you page? Do you have a good diagnostic survey? Do you have all the right visual elements? Are you proposing in a way that's likely to increase your chance of getting an order? And then you know, is that running smoothly in terms of expectations set, who they're dealing with, what they're actually doing?

I think there's actually been a lot in this episode. We're going to put all the notes up on Episode 968 on JamesSchramko.com, which is a studio1design.com sort of hybrid page, there's a little bit of Greg, a little bit of my team moving things around, but always working together to find this harmonious balance.

What I can tell you is we don't have a salesperson in our business. And we've been doing just fine making sales even without proposals and strategy calls and stuff, because there's a real connection between the pre-marketing, podcasting and so forth, the pages people come to, and then what they're supposed to do. It's been flowing for many, many years, probably 10 years now, Greg, the time creeps up.

But I appreciate you. You're always looking out for me, you're always sending me - this is something you do that's super valuable, you're proactive. You send me things before I ask you, and I love that about you. That's how we met. You know, you were telling Ezra and I that our design was crap. And that it should be improved. And you sent us a new design, which we rejected.

And then you send us another one, and we accept it. And then so on and so forth. All those websites got rolled up. So thank you for your ongoing passion for design, your commitment to improvement. The good you see in other people and what they're capable to deliver and how you're able to unlock that for them with your team and your process, it's lovely. You're going to put up that page. Now we've got the pressure on studio1design.com/james, is that a lowercase or uppercase, or it wouldn't matter?

Greg: I don't think it matters.

James: [laughs] Yeah, well then, there we go. So that's [Greg Merrilees](#), studio1design.com. He's my designer, an all-around awesome guy, long term SilverCircle member, a part of our community, a stalwart, really, and an excellent designer, so if you do need help, I would recommend. And please, if you enjoyed this episode, or you know someone with a crappy design, send them this episode.

You don't have to tell them why you're sending it to them, just send them this episode, see if they can improve their sales page, or their thank you page, or their proposal technique. And if someone's scared of hiring a salesperson or doesn't need a setter and a closer, then this episode might be really powerful. Thank you so much.

Greg: You bet. Thanks, James.



**Take your
marketing to new
levels with
James's help**