



JAMES SCHRAMKO

Stop Wasting Ad Money: Which Ad Strategy is Right for Your Business?

Ad campaigns can be a financial sinkhole if not done correctly. James and ValherMedia's Charley Valher discuss effective ad strategy selection.



Charley Valher

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to my podcast. This is episode 1032. Today, we're talking about ad marketing strategies. Of course, I've brought along [Charley Valher](https://valhermedia.com) from valhermedia.com. Hello, Charley.

Charley: Hey, James, thanks for having me on again. And before we get started, I just want to say a massive thank you to all the people that reached out after our [previous episodes we've done on ads](#). I've had so many lovely messages and questions. It's been a fun sharing on this topic, it really has been.

James: You know what would be interesting is to find out what people asked you, and then talk about that in a future episode. Would you be down for that?

Charley: I'm so into that.

James: Okay, there you go. Well, Charley's putting out the welcome mat. If you've got a question for Charley, ask him, and we'll probably cover it in a future episode. And of course, he'll probably cover it with you directly. But I think it could help other people.

Strategy. [sigh] I had someone actually ask me yesterday. Actually, they didn't ask me, they asked on LinkedIn.

They said, I want to learn about strategy. Where can I learn this? Someone tagged me, they said, I learn my business strategy stuff from James. And then this guy said, I love James's stuff. James, where do you learn it from? This is so funny, because everyone always wants to do that, they want to vertically integrate the mentor to the mentor's mentor.

But I'll tell you what, if someone asked me about paid traffic strategies for their business, depending on the type of business, and if they were looking for an agency to help them do that, then Charley, you'd be the person I would actually say, Well, this is the person you should ask. So I'm just going to ask you directly on this podcast.

Let's start with a bad question first. Charley, what's the right strategy for an online business?

Charley: One that works. [laughs]

James: [laughs] Let's start with a better one. How are people currently going about their ad strategies in general, because you're doing a lot of audits. On a scale of one to 10, where would you rate them?

Charley: So that is a much better question. That was a really high-quality question, James. And we have absolutely been doing a ton of audits in recent times, and some of them by your members and people you've referred across, which thank you for, I will say, it's good fun. And strategy is often the piece that is missing.

Why you shouldn't just model the big names

I would say the most common thing I come across when I'm reviewing an account is I'll go into an account and just commonly see people, I'm just going to say copying, I'm not even going to say modeling, what the big names in the industry do.

So we even joked a little bit before this episode about certain ads that Frank Kern's done, which I'm a big fan of Frank, and I love the style of marketing he does. But what often gets forgotten is Frank's been doing it a really long time and has built up so much trust and rapport with his market, that he can kind of get away with things that other people can't.

James: Well specifically, he can say, Buy my sh*t, and people will. And you know, this is a problem for me, because I have a more advanced business, in terms of time that I've been in it. Some of the things that worked for me won't necessarily work for someone who asks me for help. So that's why I need to have a catchment of experts, right?

I've partnered with you, Charley, because you're really good at helping people who need something I don't provide. I don't have a paid traffic agency. The last time I had that was almost a decade ago. And I'm definitely out of touch with what you would be doing as a paid traffic agency.

So problem number one is that they are just seeing what someone else is doing, and then they're copying it. And from what I can tell, there's all sorts of tools you can actually use to see other people's campaigns, like that sort of information is freely available now, right, even on the platforms?

Charley: Yeah, completely. And I must say they do a great job with that as well. So I mean, Meta has the ads library. TikTok has some, and then there's even tools out there that acts like an aggregator, like you can, forgive me, I don't know the name of it off the top of my head. It's like ad research or something. But essentially,

James: MarketBeat or something.

Charley: Things like that.

James: And so you can see what other ads people are running. The old advertising wisdom was, well, if they've been running an ad for a long time, it must be working. So therefore, it should work for you. But by that logic, I should be able to just run a billboard for my business just like Coca-Cola, because they've been doing it for as long as I can remember.

In fact, my first kid who's also called Jack, because you've got a kid called Jack, right?

Charley: I'd say that's a strong name for firstborns.

James: It's a strong name in general, right? One of his first words was Coke. We got this red and white beach ball, you know, it was a Coca-Cola branded beach ball. And he just pointed at it, he goes Coke. And I just looked at my wife, I'm like, Oh, my God, you know, like, how pervasive is this marketing?

His second word was Beamer, BMW, because that's where I worked when he was born, for the first two years of his life. But anyway, by that logic, I could just put up a billboard and promote JamesSchramko.com. But I don't think that would pan out so well.

Charley: This is where the nuance is, right? So in this idea, for a lot of people, they will model - I will use that word this time - what certain people in the industry are doing. And the common ones I see are Grant Cardone, Frank Kern, or Tony Robbins, right? They'll see one of these names do a certain type of campaign, and then they'll model it into their business, and then very likely not experience the results they were hoping for. And the big reason for that is they don't have the brand power.

The type of business is important

Now, conversely, these tools that are out there to do research on what he's running can be fantastic if you're looking into things for businesses that are similar to yours in nature. So I know we used this example on another show, but I'll use it again here, is let's say you're a mortgage broker. And I'll just use that one because it's very common and easy to understand.

If you're having a look at what similar mortgage brokers of the type of business you are, and even location are doing, now that can be really powerful for you to get educated on what they're running, so you can come up with a great strategy. But as for just, like, swipe and deploy, I think that that is a recipe for disaster.

And unfortunately, I think there's many agencies out there even running that as their main strategy, is just replicating what similar businesses are doing and kind of hope for the best, where I think good strategy requires much more than that. So that's kind of the nuance of those tools. But then the second degree is that someone will, again, potentially use one of these tools or just kind of see it...

So I'll use a different example for this one here, James, is where they'll model what other people are doing, or come up with a strategy that, let's say works if you're a high-ticket coach, but then try to apply if they're a trade business, or if they're in e-commerce, where they'll then run that type of campaign, and to the point, won't go very well, runs very differently.

And I'd love to use an example on this one as well. If your sink is exploding in your living room, and you need a plumber right now, right? You're probably going to open up Google, or you know, maybe some other search engine, you're going to search into that, and you're like, plumber, plumber, but you already instantly buy because you've got a problem that needs immediate solving.

But if you're an ad agency, if you're a mortgage broker, or if you're in, let's say, a high-ticket course model, running that type of ad in your account isn't going to work very well. Like, it's very, very much designed that the pathway someone takes really needs to match the type of business you're in as well.

So you can see this gets confusing really quickly, right? You could be modeling a Tony Robbins strategy in a different type of business at the wrong time and get very sideways results, and then come to the conclusion that ads don't work, when it's just the right strategy for your business hasn't been applied here. And again, we see this very, very commonly, this isn't unusual to see in an account.

When the targeting is off...

James: Did a whole episode on this a couple of episodes ago, just about [how wrong agencies can get it](#). I suspect some of them, probably some of them don't care, probably some of them don't know, like they might care, but they just don't know. And possibly, they're operating on more of a one-size-fits-all operating system that may not really cater for the nuances. I think that's a good term.

I've seen where it can go wrong as a consumer. I clicked on some social media the other day, gasp, and I got an ad that was like, Hey, for your plumbing business or something like, some pest control business, like they really had targeted me as if I've got a trade business. And I'm not sure exactly. If I were to guess, it's because I'm looking at four-wheel drives. Because I'd say well, especially around here, up in the Sunshine Coast, every single tradesperson has a four-wheel drive ute.

It is the number one selling type of vehicle, and I have a couple of that type of vehicle. And as you know, Charley, we've had many discussions, I'm looking at these things. Possibly I got targeted because of that, but I really felt it was completely irrelevant to me. So whoever's running that ad, does that mean their targeting is not quite right, or they're just having a pot shot?

Charley: I'll say potentially, and the reason for that is I've actually run some campaigns that would have some more broad targeting like that. So for example, you might say, if you drive a four-wheel drive, the likelihood of you being a tradesperson is higher. Yes, there would absolutely be some miss hits in that targeting, like yourself.

But the returns on the ones they do hit might be so good that we're willing to wear that. Now, what I would love to see in a campaign like that, so if someone's got a campaign where they're doing broad targeting, and there's going to be a lot of miss hits, what they want to make sure they do is that the ad creative themselves filters people out.

So if the author in this case was really focused on trades, and you knew it was for trades, well, even if you saw that ad, James, you're probably not going to click on it. Because that's where you lose a lot of the result, is if it's broad, and then broad, but really, you just want a small segment of people.

James: I think it was a video ad. And, you know, the guy was talking about... like, I was ready just to skip that. And I thought, why are they targeting me? But I can sort of figure out how they might have done that now. Do you deal with trades?

Charley: This is one of the ones I tend to stay away from, in all honesty.

James: You used to be a tradie, right?

Charley: Yes, I did, once upon a time, plumber back in the day.

James: A plumber, right. So no exploding sinks around your living room.

The types of categories Charley deals with

So alright, who do you deal with it? Let's get a feel for the type of categories that you have experienced with so that if you're talking about these, we know that you know what you're talking about.

Charley: Well, I'll express even why I don't deal with trades, specifically here. The ad industry has changed a lot since I started. And I've been playing in ads for nearly 10 years now. And I shouldn't say playing, I've been doing it pretty well and hard, I would say. And as I've gone further into this, these kinds of segments that have formed where it's become very specialized. And I look at that now, and I would say that if you're a type of business, you would want to work with the person who specializes in getting results for that type of business.

Now, I've seen some of the providers out there. And when I say providers, the ad agencies that just work with trades, and the way they've set up their businesses to be the best solutions for trades is amazing. And when I see that, that's not something I want to compete against, because I know they're going to have the ability to get better results than I do in that segment.

James: Wow, that's very honest of you to say that, because I don't think a lot of agencies would be able to say that. Pride reasons.

Charley: I think I figured out one of the tricks to running a good agency is like, if you only take on clients where you have a high degree of certainty that you can get them a great result and you have an edge, well, chances are they're going to stay with you much longer, and you're not going to experience churn, or just really bad experiences.



It's horrible if you were to take on a client and not get them a result. It's not what you aim for when you're in this business. I know it does happen for agencies and things, you know, variety of reasons can lead to why a campaign may or may not work. But if you're an ad agency owner or you're someone who runs an agency, and you're broadly taking on other campaign categories, that there are people who specialize in, of course, you're not going to compete well in them.

James: So the trades are hyper specialized, and you don't generally go for that. And apologies to all our tradies who had it in their heart to get in touch with Charley. What kind of businesses is your sweet spot? Where are you hyper specialized?

Charley: Yeah, so I like to have an edge, I think having an edge in business is very important. So if you go back a year now, I made the call that I think video ads specifically, are going to be a really significant edge. And luckily, that has paid off. A big reason why we see significantly improved results in the last 12 months especially, has been because we've developed that edge.

And then there's two main categories of businesses that I work for where I apply for it. So one is the finance sector. So mortgage brokers, financial planners, buyer's agents, if it's to do with investments, or the finance industry, because of my comprehensive knowledge and interest in the space, we speak the language and understand it, but then we're also quite understanding of what goes into the trust in that space. So just a little point here is like, the amount of trust you need to hire a plumber to fix your sink, probably not as high as if you're going to, you know, bet your life savings on it and your retirement.

James: I hope not, because when my house got hit by lightning in December last year, it blew out part of my solar panel. And I'm recording this in the middle of August the following year. And the guy's got the part but he hasn't come out to install it yet. Like I wouldn't want that to be the same level of seriousness as, you know, missing getting the right mortgage rate on my property or something. The ramifications will be significant.

Charley: Well, for the agency that specializes in trades - and I've a lot of love for the tradies, like I was one of them - but the point being is he might have little nuances on like, when to run ads in the day, or particular areas that are better for trades, right? Which I don't have that specialized knowledge.

But if you look to, let's say, the finance sector, particularly, I know how to apply different things of proven trust, so that you may be the more trusted provider in that situation, or how to nurture a lead better when it's a longer-term sales process, which will be very different to trades. So finance sector is a really big one.

And then the other one, I would say, is what I would call like, the expert, B2B education space. So all the course creators out there and high-ticket people or high-ticket niche, that's where we spend a lot of our time also. And again, there's a bit of a similarity there, where it's like a bit of a high-trust thing.

So again, if you're someone that sells a high-ticket course, or let's say something over \$1,000, the thinking and nurturing and things that go into selling that well, very different than what would happen with our trades here in this example. So, again, just a little hint for those out there looking to work with ad agencies, I would be hunting for those that have a bit of specialization. I wouldn't necessarily go after ones that are broadly offering it, because there has become such nuance in these spaces.

James: Well, just what you said there presupposes one aspect, which I think is missing in most cases. You said when you go out looking for an ad agency, I would say the vast majority of people who take on an ad agency are responding to being advertised to, they're being pursued by the ad agency in the first place.

And then they didn't necessarily go out looking for an agency, the agency tapped on their shoulder and sort of got them interested in through a seduction process of a lead magnet or remarketing campaign, etc. Like, the tradie ad agency was targeting me. So that's one thing. Intentionally going out looking for the right supplier is good.

You've said finance providers. So that's probably related, professional service providers. You've said, people who do courses, high-ticket courses, especially consulting, B2B education. So that's your sweet spot.

Can you be a supplier to competing clients?

I do have an interesting question that comes up. And that is, let's say, I'm a mortgage broker. Right? And I know that Charley's running ads for mortgage brokers.

How do you deal with the potential of a client saying, Well, you already run ads for someone else in my market. This conflict or conflict of interest perception, is it real? Is it imagined? Do you have a policy around this? How does that work?

Charley: Absolutely. And again, I think it would be dangerous for an agency to work their own conflict of interest into their business. So again, there's kind of ways to think about this, let's say you have several mortgage brokers, you might do it by territory, might be a way to do it. So if you have a mortgage broker, like I've got one now that just operates in Queensland.

So for him, it's not a conflict if someone wants to generate some leads in another state or another location. I'm actually doing a lot of mortgage leads in the US as well. So it's not just an Australia thing, we've got like, country thing could be a massive thing. And then the second one is size of market.

So in one of my spaces, which I just want to mention this one for privacy, because I think everyone will work out who it is too easily, but they are the gorilla in that niche. And they're spending hundreds of thousands of dollars a month going after that niche, right? Now, for me, I can't work with anyone else in that niche, because I would actually be cannibalizing the results that they get.

Now, for me personally, I wouldn't sleep at night, knowing that's happening. I don't feel good about that. So I always like to - and I think this has been one of the things that's helped me a lot, is like, if you act in the best interest of your clients, generally things go better - where if you're taking on multiple people in the same niche or trying to resell leads, just from my perspective, I just feel that's dangerous because you continually, like one of your clients will be at a disservice, the secret sauce you're putting into one then causes the other not to be at its best. And I just don't like that way of operating. So we do put limits on who we work for. We check with conflicts and if there was a potential, I always check with the client anyway.

James: Yeah, so full disclosure, transparent conversations. I like to think of it as like a multi-lane, or multi-modality freeway. And it might have a bike lane on a separate part, but it's the right road heading in the right direction that you want to be on. But the cars are separated from the bicycles. There's a barrier between them, but they're all heading the right direction with the same freeway provider. But they have their clear lanes.

You often hear me talking about staying in the lane or not veering into someone else's lane. It does come up for me too, occasionally. Rarely, but it is something to be aware of. I think that that's important. So I think what I'm getting at is, if someone gets in touch with you to do a service, you're going to tell them if you're a good fit or not. And you're also going to tell them if their arch evil nemesis has already engaged with you or not, before they decide if they're coming on board, is that right?

Charley: Maybe we wouldn't call them their arch evil nemesis, but pretty close.

James: Yeah, but you know, like sometimes - this is the thing I've discovered, this is the nuance - sometimes, you may or may not know how emotionally invested or how much competitive nature they have in the marketplace. I've got a couple of clients that I've had at various stages through different programs of mine, who are basically just out to get each other.

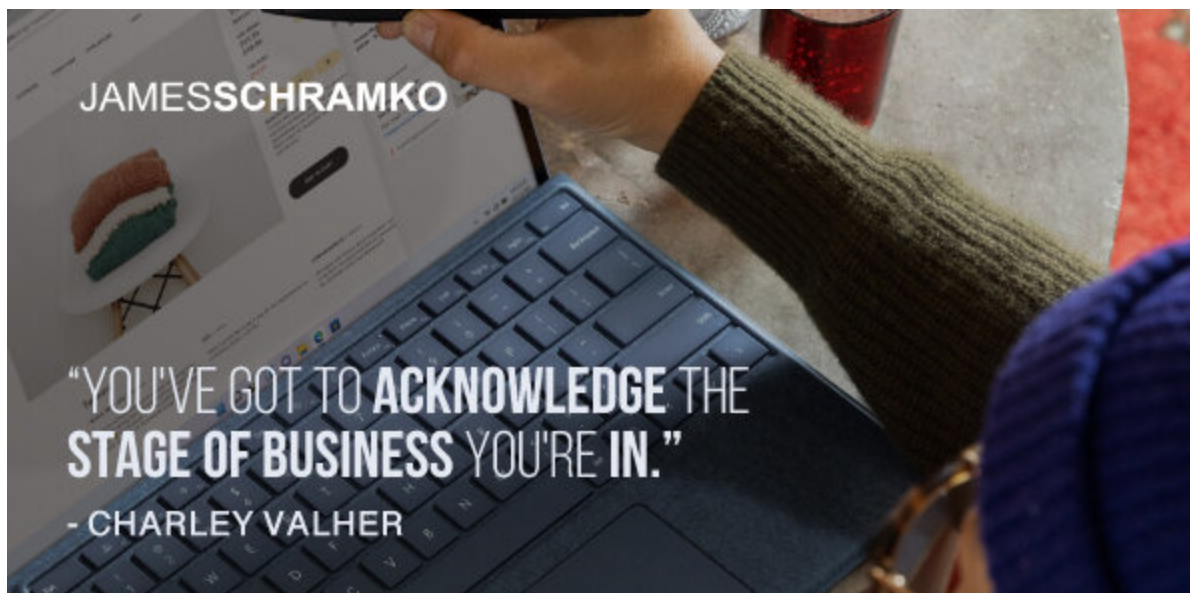
It's like, I have to keep them very separated. And I generally would only work with one at a time, because I know they have strong feelings. And it's just easier not to go there. I've seen cases where I had no concern or no issue of conflict and raised it with the person or in the program, but the person coming in discovers that there's someone there and they have a sort of a set against them for whatever reason, maybe some ancient history you're not aware of. So I think the disclosure thing or the transparency thing is a good idea.

So just to recap, if we want to have the right strategy, then that means we need our own strategy, we can't just take someone else's, because whatever situation they're in may not be the same as ours. This is like when they give out medical advice, you know, this is just for information purposes, consult your doctor, etc.

So how they're doing it, they might be doing it, they might see successful campaigns, but the wrong type of category, or it's not going to work for them.

What stage of business are you at?

What other problems have you seen that you've been fixing?



Charley: Alright, so we've kind of covered the first one here, it's like you've got to match the type of business you're in. So if you're in e-commerce, your strategy is going to be different than if you're in a more lead gen orientated market, or if you're a trade, for example there. I think the second one is you've got to acknowledge the stage of business you're in.

So if you're a startup and a newer business, and let's just for the sake of this, pretend you have a smaller budget, the strategy that's going to make sense for you on a smaller budget is going to be very, very different than Coca-Cola, to bring back our recent example, where they're spending hyper amounts. So I would really get people to acknowledge there's a type, but then also a stage that I think is imperatively important to applying it well.

And the one that comes up more commonly for me, and this is understanding, because we're in the terms of small business, if you're in an industry where you're not the biggest one in there spending the most, you've got to be really selective with the strategy you run, because you can't afford to have too much waste compared to a more developed business that might be able to make it up on the back end, or might have things in place to re-nurture that you don't necessarily have at this point. So I think that's the second part of strategy that often gets missed is, you know, stage of business there.

James: I think some people are really doing the whole crapshoot, like they've pulled up at the casino, they've got whatever's in their pocket. And they're going to roll the dice and hope that this ad campaign is going to knock it out of the park. And if they lose, it's like, sometimes they get upset with the casino, as if it's their fault.

Do these "helpful" people really help?

Should some people not engage in ad agency at all? And perhaps wait till they're at a different stage or take a different path?

Charley: Yeah, now that is a great question in itself. So many marketers will call what you just described as the casino, James, as split testing. They just put a lot of stuff up against the wall and hope something works.

James: Well, you know the house is usually going to win that game and that the house in this case is the platform. They will take their money. I even get - are these real or not, Charley, but every single week or so, I get someone from a Meta or Facebook advertising agency internally trying to help us spend more money with them.

But I suspect they're kind of engaged to just - they're like those people in the casino, who give you a nicer room or indulge you with free meals and drinks and stuff. And by the way, all this casino talk, I don't go to casinos, I'm not a gambler. It's just something that I think people could relate to, because we've all seen it in movies.

Charley: It's not a bad analogy in this case here. So one of the interesting things is that I think we have to recognize that Facebook is a business that is there to make money, how they make money is through advertising. The staff they put in place to support you in your campaigns, which is the Meta staff from here, are there to get you to spend more money, let's be real.

Now, of course, for them, if you're getting a result from that, that's great. But my finding has been at times that those calls, if you know nothing, they can be really helpful for you technically, like which button to press and things like that. But the part they miss in a big way is what happens after the click.

So like, they're not experts in conversion. They're not copywriters, they don't understand how email marketing works or how an ad might tie into something else. And I've had a call with someone where they've been giving me like, really good suggestions on how to lower lead cost, not recognizing which campaign actually makes the most sales, because they don't have that data.

So in the cases where I've sat there, and I've gone, Yes, you might be able to lower my lead cost on a campaign that makes no sales. But we want to spend money here because this is where we're winning. So you've got to be really careful and sometimes people will perceive these Meta experts as like, business experts, or strategy experts, when they're just like platform technicians in a big way, much to your idea of what's happening here.

James: So they're tactically focused, but they just may not see the whole strategy picture.

Charley: Yeah. So let's pretend you and I go to the casino, James, and I want to make you look good. So I intentionally lose hands of poker to you. Right? So it's like, you know, really, I'm trying to maybe get a business deal done, or like, I'm intentionally losing for the bigger game of our lives, in this example.

Well, quite easily the casino could come over, they'd be like, Oh, we'll help you get better at poker, you know, then you can win. It's like, I don't really want to win your game. I'm trying to win my game. And I think that can be a very dangerous thing that can be misinterpreted. Often, the Facebook reps are really nice people, and they do have some skills and knowledge. But you've got to be very careful in how you interpret what they say.

James: Well, I don't answer them, I just refer them to people helping me with my campaigns. You know, that's why I'm asking you. So all right. You've got to pay attention to what stage you're at in business and be very careful that the people that you're getting help from are qualified to help you with that.

What other strategy issues have you seen? That was a good one, by the way, that people can't see the whole strategy. And it's kind of funny, because it reminds me of the business owner, in a lot of cases, their team can't even see the vision of the strategy of the actual business owner because they aren't able to communicate it properly. I've had podcasts around that episode, too. So a lot of this comes around to communication.

How much trust does it take to buy?



Charley: It's a big part of it. So I'll throw in the next one here that I think is imperative. For a lot of people, what I would love them to think more about when they're designing the marketing campaigns they do in general, but specifically ads here, is how much trust does it take for someone to make a purchase with you?

And we touched on this a little bit before with like if you're, you know, Tony Robbins or Frank Kern, you can be very direct in offers. And you might be someone with an established brand at a market where you can be more direct. But if you don't have that brand premise, in a marketplace, I think it's really important to think about how much trust and proof it requires for someone to make a purchase with you.

So again, if you're someone who's in high-ticket coaching, or has a mastermind, or in the finance niche, I think you often forget, because your surroundings have normalized it, just how big a deal it can be for someone to spend money with you. Like for the person out there where, you know, maybe their business is at a stage where investing in your program is a really big deal for them. And you may go well, it's just another person buying my course. So you don't necessarily see their perspective, where that can cause a massive miss hit in campaign strategy.

So for this, I'll use another example here. Let's say you're a high-ticket coach, or you've got a course or program you're selling, it's \$5,000. Now to you, you've got all these customers you see around, you know it works, you know these things, you see the results, it's not a big deal, it's just another \$5,000 purchase to you. But to the person making that purchase, it's a really big deal.

Now, if you were to think about what you could do to structure a strategy better for them, well, I would want to see more testimonials, I would want to see more proof of this working for other people, so that they can trust you a bit more. I would want to see people that I respect you with, you getting results for them.

Like I would really want to increase the trust on my campaigns. So that there'll be less friction in someone making a purchase, or taking more time to develop nurturing, so someone can feel that you're the real deal. Rather than being more treated like the plumber example I shared earlier.

James: Gotcha. You really need to dial into that empathy of your target market and do all that potentially difficult, hard work stuff. And then you want to, I guess this is when you're tapping into people who have already experienced this market and are good at it. They have all the devices ready to elicit that.

Preparation versus implementation

What does your preparation versus implementation split look like when you're working on these sort of campaigns?

Charley: That's a really good question. And even in the example I already shared, I would say I have a bit of the curse of experience with this, because I know what a lot of these things just generally look like. So when someone comes to work with me, they may have an expectation that look, we're just going to put up a buy-my-stuff campaign, and it's going to work.

Where what's happening for me in these more high-trust areas, is I'm thinking about, well, I need to make sure this market trusts you in a bigger way so that we can run some of that direct-to-buy stuff. When I look at it, and I've developed, and again, we spoke about the trade example where they're specialized in their market, in my market right now and the niches I'm strong, I'm quite specialized in the type of campaigns I want to run, because I think they have a much more high degree of success.

So using the mortgage broker as an example, here, if I was working in the finance niche, is I'm going to lean into more like testimonials and stories, because I think that's going to be a much more powerful way to continually market towards this niche. So I think this is an interesting idea that a lot goes into the preparation, but I also have experience with it. So knowing what type of campaign strategies will do well in certain niches comes with the experience we have, where for someone who isn't necessarily in it, they may spend more time working that out.

James: So someone who's coming on board as a client is basically tapping into your extensive R&D budget, they're tapping into the millions of already spent-on ads, to get to a quicker starting point, to reduce the risk of failure.



Charley: Or if you hire the right agency, that should be one of the biggest advantages, is you're getting to leverage all the experience they have with past clients, past split tests, past strategies where they can be more intuitive, and also, knowing what is going to do better in a space. Right? It's, they can take their previous experience and bring it here. Just like for you, James. I'm sure, like, I can only imagine how many agency owners and coaches you've worked with in the last 10 years.

James: Even longer than that, if you were to, say 15 years, a lot. A lot of them who went on to be very successful, at the top level of their fields, really, you know, so many people, I could rattle off a lot of names, but some of them have achieved past \$10 million for their agency in terms of revenue, some of them have sold. Some of them ran ads for the White House, some of them have created their own category.

A common agency pattern

So, so many, and I do see some patterns. This is the pattern that I see. Small operator doing something pretty cool, often as an affiliate or to the side, or doing something else, but realize they have a talent for ads. Start doing it for other people, way too cheap. People find out about it, they get referrals, it starts getting really busy, they need to increase their rates a bit to slow down the growth a bit because they're now getting strapped, generally a bit slow to get off the blocks with a team.

They finally get a team, and they've got clients, and they're charging more. And usually, something breaks. They dislike the agency for any number of the top 10 reasons, right? This isn't as fun as it used to be when it was just me, I'm not a leader, I don't know how to manage a team, or the Facebook's banned all of my clients, what do I do now?

Like, I've seen it all. And often, they'll burn it to the ground, or they'll partner with someone else who's got the skills or experiences that they're lacking, or they go through a sort of a crash and burn, rebuild cycle three, four, five times, and occasionally, some build a big thing and then sell it out and get the end goal and buy themselves an electric guitar and retire. I've seen the gamut.

Charley: Do you know, the guitar thing is really common?

James: Very common.

Charley: Fascinating.

James: Well, guitars are common in - well, they're working from home, a lot of them. They are quite often, I think to run good ads, it's maths and psychology. So you have people who are quite creative. You need creativity for campaigns, for angles, for strategies. A lot of these creatives, especially copywriters, who sometimes drift into the advertising lane, a lot of them play guitars. And so, it's a common thread. I've seen so many guitar players. And Frank Kern plays a guitar, of course, Ralph Burns plays the guitar, [Kevin Rogers](#), like, all these people in this field, it's a commonality.

What Charley brings to the table

So anyway, I think what I see in you, Charley, is someone who's very strong at systems and people, but also creative and has a competitive edge and youthful exuberance. But contained in a very mature way as a father, parent and investor. You do have a - this is the saying I used to get, right? You've got an old head on young shoulders. I think that would categorize you. But also, you've got the ability to know what not to go into. Right? And that's probably part of where we have conversations is, where should you go? And what are the potential outputs? And what are the potential downsides?

And sometimes it doesn't work, but often it does. But when you find something that works, and this is what my grandfather used to say, Make hay while the sun shines. You picked video well, you used to run a recruitment business, you used to have an ad agency, you've had experience running memberships, it's no wonder that you're building a thriving agency around this direction. But knowing who your best clients are is good.

So what I'm hearing is you've got the right strategy for these finance or service providers, the professionals, the B2B, educators, courses, etc.

What I think would be interesting is, could you describe a couple of strategies, just give us a broad brushstroke of what that looks like? What's someone arriving on your doorstep likely to get told is a good strategy for them?

Charley: That's a great question. Can I add one more mistake before we go there?

James: Go for it.

Is your business built for that strategy?

Charley: Just one little one. I would say one of the ones that I've seen in more recent times is the wrong strategy for the business infrastructure. So what I mean by that is that they'll - let's say someone signs up with an agency who specializes in video, but then they won't make video, or they don't want to make video. Or maybe they start doing a certain campaign type that requires a sales team. But then they don't want to hire a sales team or they don't have one.

James: That was me, I don't want a sales team or [setters or closers](#), so I'm not going to get the benefit of scaling a big campaign to sell mentoring spots. Right? I'm going to have to do it a different way.

Charley: Exactly. So that's a really huge one I've come across in more recent times, is just mismatch, right? You might even have what I would consider a good strategy, but just wrong business or wrong business infrastructure in that one there.

James: It's not like fault or bad. Again, look, I'm super aware of this with lifestyle design, it's about freedom and choice. And the choices that I make result in the outcomes from those choices. And it takes a lot of discipline to say, I don't want a sales team. I don't want sub coaches. Because I know I'm leaving millions of dollars on the table.

But Charley, I surf every day, so I'm okay with it. It's like, that was my choice. But it just means some options that would be on the table for someone else are not suitable for me. So if I go to some mastermind, or business event, or a dinner with a peer, and they - look, I did actually, I had a coffee last week with a gentleman who has a lot of affiliates, and he does summits, and he's doing all these paid traffic things. But I don't want to do the things that he does. So therefore, I need to negate that out of my options checklist.

Charley: Well said, James, and I think it's really powerful that you do get to surf every day. And it's like, you might look at the millions and think, oh, you know, there's that financial gain there. But the lifestyle loss may not be a good trade for a lot of people.

James: It's such a sh*t trade. Like imagine in 10 years from now, and I've got an extra \$10 million in the bank. But I didn't surf for 10 years. What's the point? That's a sh*t deal. It's like the other deal I've seen the influencers do, I'll give you \$10 million, but here's the catch, you're 75 years old. Like, for most people, if you're not 75, or close to it, it'd be a really bad deal.

The foundation's laid - what's next?

So that's such an important thing with strategy is, as you pointed out, Charley, you need to find the right strategy for you, for where your business is up to, for what type of business you have, and how you want to do business. And once you dial those things, and you get a good provider that's able to actually cater for all that, what's Charley recommending for someone to do?

Charley: Alright, so I'll come back and answer this in a really powerful way, because I think it's important here. So let's say someone comes to Valher Media, and they check in with Charley, and it's like, hey, what makes good strategy here? Essentially, it starts with all the stuff we've spoken about here, is we need to make sure you're the right type of business, the right stage of business, have the right infrastructure, how much trust is required.

And then the strategy needs to match up not only with that, but your goals, right? It needs to be back on the idea of what the goal of the actual business is. Because you could build a really successful newsletter but if it doesn't lead to actually converting into the type of clients you want, then that's probably not the right strategy either. Or if you need massive amounts of volume, right, you need hundreds of leads a week, but the strategy you pick is only going to filter in a couple, again, bad strategy.

So I really like the idea when someone comes to work with us, like what develops a good campaign strategy is identifying all the things we've spoken about in this episode, marrying up that with goals, and then we align that to go well, in that setup, where have we done well, and what matches here? And then when you're going to match that strategy to the result, and then execute that well for the clients, that's where you actually stand on having a good long-term relationship together.

I've kind of become more selective in even the idea of who I'll work with, because if something doesn't fit that cater, I just know that the likelihood of it going well or lasting long term isn't there. And I would much rather tell someone that upfront, so they can find someone that is the right match for them, or give them some hints on what would make them the right match for us if they do want to go that way. So that they can experience a much better result when it comes to running ads.

The strategies Charley advocates

James: So assuming that they're a good fit, what's a playbook? What's in your agency playbook?

Charley: Can you give me an example of what you mean by that, James? Because I want to make sure I execute this well, because I feel like there's something you're hunting for in that question.

James: A hundred percent. Like, we've talked a lot about strategy, but we haven't shared an actual strategy. We've only talked about choosing the right strategy. So I want something. Let's say that I have \$1,000 per month program, let's say it's \$12,000 a year. What would be a strategy, if I was to fit your perfect client type, if I had a sales team or whatever else, that would be a requirement that I'm in your lane, I'm the right sort of client. What would you recommend that I'm doing? What would you be doing for me as an agency?

Charley: Oh, fantastic. Let's go there. I'll go deeper into some of these. So I'll go into some finance ones. And then we'll do some high-ticket ones or some more education ones, we're jumping into the two.

My favorite types of strategies at the moment, if you're in the finance space, is to get a lead to come into a business with the intent of being reviewed. I think the review strategy, overall, is a great way to do it right now.

So if you're, let's say you're a buyer's agent, if you want someone to review your portfolio and make recommendations, I think that's a fantastic way to do it. So the strategy I'm building out is going to be, I'm going to use video ads, and I'm likely going to use a VSL to go through and help someone understand why they need to get a review done. And I think a really powerful framing at the moment is doubt.

So much has changed in the world. Right? In the last few years, that I think it's left a lot of people feeling uncertain if they actually got the right investments for them, or potentially the right things to lead to the outcomes. So if someone doubts that they've got the right thing, then they're much more likely to come in and have a review. And I think that applies to the finance sector in a really, really big way.

So if you're in finance as a whole, I'm loving video because it enhances trust. I'm loving VSLs because it gives you a chance to explain yourself in a really powerful way and also help people understand why you're different or how you can help. And then I'm loving the review type thing. So I think that's a massive one for the finance space.

I also quite love, if you're in the finance space, is the newsletter strategy, where you're building a list and you're nurturing that list and then eventually bringing them in. And I've just found, particularly in finance, that there's this interesting thing with like, the duration of a lead in the system, and the quality of that lead. Like, people who stalk you for a little bit, tend to, when they do come up and want to review or to get engaged with your business end up being better clients. That is something I've found.

James: So if you're slower to bring them on, they're sort of maturing like a fine wine.

Charley: That is the tendency I'm finding right now. I think that's a really, really powerful one.

James: It's definitely descriptive of my marketing. When people come on board, they seem quite familiar with my podcasts and me and [my book](#), etc. And they're ready. Something I've said or something in life has triggered them to say, Today is the day that I'm going to get help from James to solve all my problems. I'm sick of trying to do it all by myself. Who knows? Maybe it could work, because it seems to be working for all the other people he's had on the podcast, etc. So it would be good to orchestrate that and to have some definition on it.

I imagine you're looking at all sorts of analytics and remarketing audiences and all these things to move people into that catchment.

Charley: Yeah, so I mean we can go deeper into this. I know this episode may be running a touch long but I will say here, one of my favorite things to do in finance is just remarketing people, like, the target audience getting the result. The more proof you can provide in that experience, the more likelihood people that will believe you. I think that's huge.

The only caveat I make in the finance space that kind of separates it from some of the other spaces, which we'll talk about here is that, the tendency is that when someone has a problem with their mortgage, or with their superannuation, or something like that, they want it solved and then they don't really want to follow along with it again.

So when they have the problem, and they have the review, but then it's solved, they don't really want to know about it after that. So I think the tendency is that things like podcasts can be a less effective strategy if you're a mortgage broker. Because once someone has their mortgage, they're not going to hang around to, you know, oh, what's the next mortgage strategy? Like, it's not a hobby niche in the same way.

James: It's more of an emergency thing.

Charley: Yeah. So when we flip that into, now, I'll talk about like, B2B. So I think in a lot of cases in B2B, and I think of people like yourself that fit into that, is you've got a really powerful advantage where people will subscribe to a podcast or a YouTube channel, and actually follow it.

So I think what's really powerful there is the promotion of content can be very, very different versus the finance sector in this example, or I'll use the trade example, like, unless you need the plumber, like, you don't really want to know that.

James: No. You go looking for it.

Charley: Yeah. So what I love in the expert space at the moment, is when you would look at like, you can be more selective in sharing like, tips, or you can be more selective in sharing the things and bringing them on that journey with you, which I think is fantastic. Really, really powerful. Differently in strategy, though, I would say, because I love much more content and brand promotion in this space, I think it's a stronger strategy.

And then I like to convert from the email list, or actually from a sales team. We're finding in the people we work with in this space that the sales team of going to [setters and salespeople](#), which we've spoken about in another episode, very effective right now. The clients we see doing the best are absolutely incorporating some of that.

James: So email's a heavy lifter for that type of campaign.

Charley: Do you know how many times I've thought email is dead, only for it to find that it just keeps hanging in there as the high performer, isn't it?

Wrapping it up

James: I know it is. Absolutely critical. So yeah, no doubt about it. Well, Charley, thank you. I think, just to recap, you have to have your own strategy, you have to make sure it's for the right stage of where you're at in business, the resources that you're prepared to put, that the person you're getting help from actually knows this market and has got some experience with it and feels confident with it. And that you probably have to set pretty clear indicators as to what it is that you're trying to do. And then other people are trying to interject, like the platform people, they may not see the whole strategy, so you need to just factor that into when they're coming to give you advice.

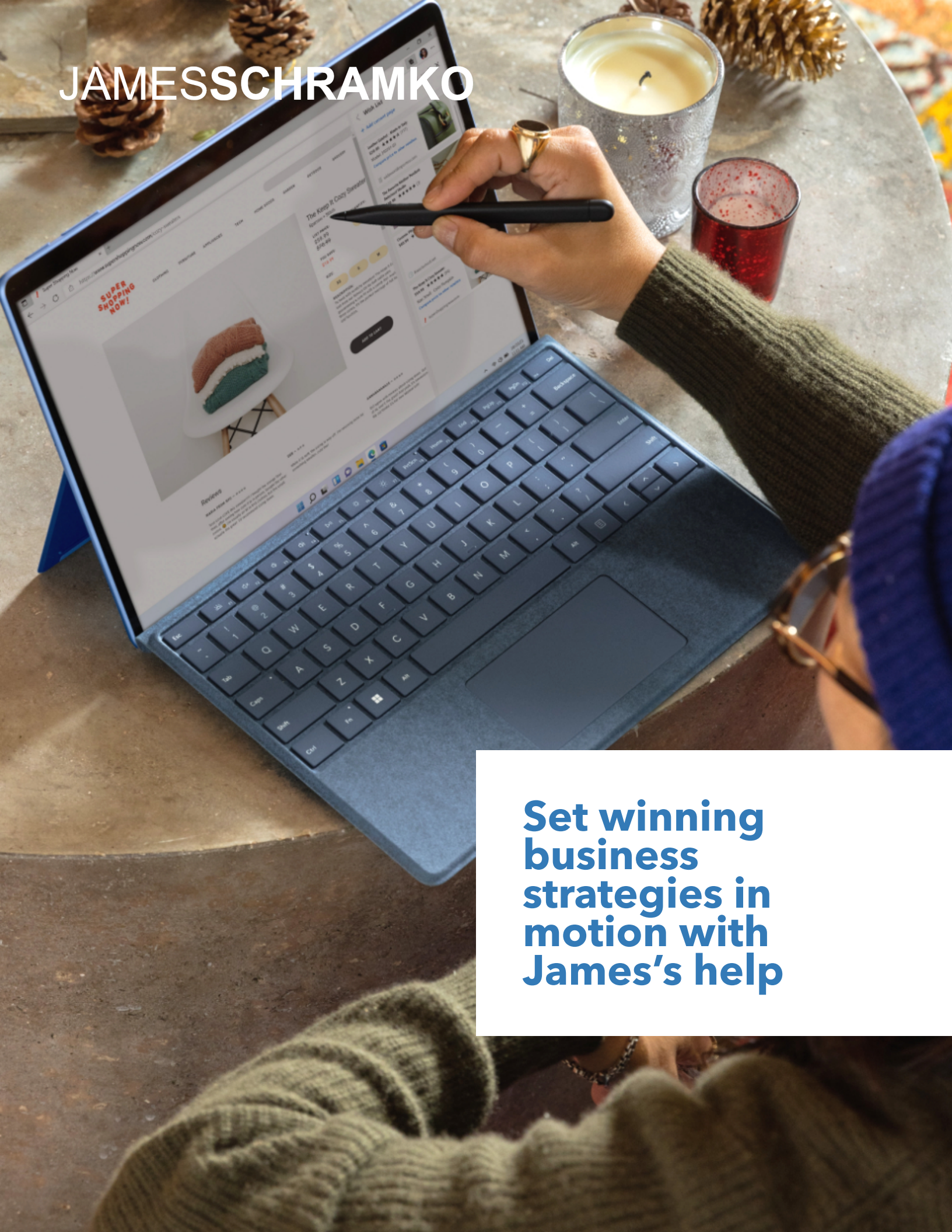
Charley: Absolutely, James.

James: We'll put up the show notes at Episode 1032. I've been chatting with Charley from valhermedia.com. And always a pleasure. I think we'll talk next time about what sort of things you're seeing when you review or audit. We'll of course anonymize it, or what sort of questions you're getting that might be typical of someone in the same situation as where you're helping them.

Charley: Yeah, that'd be awesome, James.

James: Thank you.

JAMES SCHRAMKO



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business
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