

Welcome to The Boomer Business Owner. My guest today is Kim Walsh-Phillips. Kim is a speaker, author, strategist, and CEO of IO Creative Group, a results-driven marketing and PR agency. She is a techie marketing geek with great shoes, and an obsession for marketing with a sharp focus on ROI.

Welcome to the show, Kim.

Thanks for having me, it's such an honor.

I apologize, I think there was a mistake in the intro. The words: "PR", "public relations" and "ROI", "return on investment" were used in the same sentence.

Good one.

My vision of PR is I pay you ungodly amounts of money, you get me an interview with a local newspaper, and we're supposedly all good. Can you talk to that?

That's what I used to do, frankly. I started out in the corporate PR world and worked for a major drugstore chain in a corporate communications department, and then went to do some agency work.

I'm sure we'll get, at some point, about how I started, but in the beginning, that's what my company was based on. We were simply going out and making our clients feel really good that their name was showing up in the media, and they loved it. They loved those framed articles up on their wall, but when it came time to do the budget renewals and they had to look for the fluff, we were always the thing that got cut because we could show no ROI whatsoever.

It wasn't until years later that we actually started looking at measurement, ROI, tracking, and seeing the impacts that PR can

have on the bottom line, if done effectively. You actually set up funnels to bring in... When I say "a funnel" it's basically a path, so you want to take people along a path from knowing nothing about you to knowing, liking, and trusting you so that they'll make a purchase. If you start using PR as the first step but not the only step, it can be incredibly effective for real return on your investment.

Got it. If I were a rookie to online business and you were explaining to me in layman's terms what you do, how would you position what you do?

We rescue companies from being advertising and marketing victims, and monetize their marketing. What we do is we take away the fluff. We say: "Are you doing anything that is just awareness only, that makes you feel good, that gets your name out, but has no way to bring a customer in?" We get rid of all that.

What we put in place are strategic plans that would move somebody along a path from getting to know you, getting to like and trust you, and purchasing from you. All of it is systematic, and planned, and trackable so that when it's not working or when it is working, you can change your next step to match those results.

Let me see if I could summarize or restate what you said. There's awareness marketing which, again, maybe I put an ad in a newspaper, I put an ad in a magazine and it shows that Charlie Poznek has a great business, The Boomer Business Owner, but it's just for awareness so people know what's going on. I guess the kind of stuff that Coca-Cola or big corporations do, correct?

They also have other layers going in too, but yeah, that's all that you would see, that would be awareness.

I like to relate it back to dating. If somebody is in the unfortunate position now listening and they have to be out in that dating world – which I was out there not too long ago myself – it's incredibly painful. There is a process that I guess at least normal people follow which is: you meet someone you're attracted to, you have a conversation, you decide to have another conversation, you date, then you get married, then you might buy the house, then you might have the kids.

There's these stepped relationships, and yet, so many marketers try to create either they never ask you out or they try to ask you out at: "Hello." It's either the person who just says: "Hey, I'm here. Hey, I'm here. Hey, I'm here," but doesn't show any interest in you or it's the person who is way too pushy that they say: "Hey, here's our number," and we're going to send you right to a sales page.

Really great marketing is about relationship building, and relationship building that has a sales goal in mind. It may seem up in the frontend that it's just awareness, but when you're planning it out effectively, that you know when you're going to be making that ask – that's when you can see the real ROI.

By the way, I was always fond of the: "Hello, would you like to go out?" personally.

That is so creepy.

Agreed. I think what a lot of people don't understand is the whole monetization aspect and it is a process. Most people just set up a site and think: "People are going to come." But actually, it should be a really well thought out process. "This is what we want someone to do. We want them to sign up for our email list, we want them to buy something."

If I'm interpreting what you're saying correctly, you want to build a relationship with them somehow before you ask them to do that. Is that a fair assessment?

Exactly. If you've ever been in the uncomfortable position to be seated next to somebody at a dinner, at a dinner party or on a plane and they start pitching you right away like insurance or banking or something – it's really uncomfortable.

We've also all been in that situation where we start talking to somebody over the course of an evening, we get to know them, find out what they do, and maybe we actually need that thing. They're a realtor, and we're looking about buying a house; they're a travel agent, and we're going on a trip. We then feel comfortable moving forward with them as to purchase something. If they had started with that, we would feel really uncomfortable. When you're marketing your business, you want to do the same type of planned strategic approach to relationship building and sales.

Online marketers so often forget this – they try to go right for the sale because they think: "Okay, it's all about numbers. If I can only get a half of a percent, that's okay, I'll just get more people there." How about instead, spend a lot less money going after a lot less people, but qualifying them and then build the relationship before you can sell them? You're going to sell a lot more people and it's going to cost you a lot less money, so it's going to be much more profitable.

We want to get to the point where people are asking us if they could do business with us.

Exactly. I'll tell you, my firm has grown year after year after year. I'm in business for 13 years now, and last year we had 67% sales growth, the year before that 43% sales growth, and I have never made a cold call in my life.

Wow, that's impressive.

It's all based on relationships, giving first. I'm not saying giving free consulting because that's another trap. There are definitely people who are not comfortable ever asking for the sale, and so they'll just give the farm away forever. It's really about giving some away, consistently build value, and then ask for the sale. You then have people coming to you wanting to work with you, seeing you as the expert, wanting to purchase from you and not shopping around because you're the only one they're looking for.

When I come to you, me, Charlie, an online business owner, I say: "Kim, I'd like to engage you for your services." Is the initial part a consultation, we sit down, "Charlie, let's talk about your business. What are you trying to accomplish?" Then you set a plan, and then you help me implement it? Do you take care of all of those steps?

We do, but we actually have a lot of stuff in the frontend that we use to position ourselves so we're setting up value from the very beginning. One of the things I recommend folks do, if you're going to do any one-on-one consulting... Which those of you looking to start an online business, if you're ready to take that leap into owning your own gig or you're retired and you want to build that – consulting is a great way to bring revenue in while you're building your online business. This is a good tip for those who even want to go totally online.

If you want to start doing consulting or doing consulting, a way to establish your value is to tell people how expensive you are. In your blog, in your website, you make mention of why price is important and you share that you are not the least expensive option. In fact, you might be one of the most expensive options and you tell them why that's valuable and why that's important.

That makes you incredibly so and makes you more desirable – people want to work with someone that can get high fees because they think they're being very successful and it weeds out the people who don't want to spend any money. We put that in the frontend.

The second piece is when you contact us, there is no place to say: "Just hire us." We have it set up that our prospects need to request a prospective client interview. What we're doing is we're actually saying: "We're going to have a conversation with you and see if we want to work with you." That definitely changes the power structure of the sales conversation.

Then, prior to having that conversation, they receive a list of questions that I'm going to ask them during that interview. Things like: "Why did you come to us? What's your budget? What would make you really happy if you stayed with us? What would make you want to cancel our account right away?" Again, they know all these questions are going to be asked and it's a real serious conversation, so that also helps weed out any traffic that's not qualified.

Then once we've had a conversation, if we decide it does make sense to work together, we then move forward, and yes, we will handle all of their online and/or offline marketing, depending on what their sales goals and budget is.

You're obviously pretty effective because I'm sitting here being really indignant, thinking: "Gosh, Kim should be doing business with me, darn it. Why can't I do business with Kim? I'm a good guy." Good job, kudos to you.

Thanks.

You talked a little bit about how you got to where you are, you're starting PR. Aside from your business, if you were talking to a friend who was a Baby Boomer and they asked

you for some counsel of how to come up with an idea for a business or how to get into online business, what would you offer them?

I've learned so much in the, I would say actually... I say I've been in business for 13 years, but it's really like the past four that I consider myself an entrepreneur in that I took my future in my own hands. I could talk a little bit about that. Really seeking, it's not about working harder – that's number one – it's about working smarter. It's about finding the most effective ways to do things so that your time – which we all have the same 24 hours – can be as profitable as possible.

One of the things that I did was really get into education in that I'm constantly listening to podcasts, and reading books, and getting lots of great information. This tip does not come from me. This comes from one of the podcasts that I like to listen to that you may have heard of, Mixergy. It was from an interview they did with The Foundation which is a great group that helps people start businesses. I have no financial stake in either things I just mentioned, in fact, I don't know either one of them, but it is a model I have followed and that is: there is all the information at your fingertips before you embark on a business to see if it's going to be successful – take them. Do your research prior to creating the field and hoping that they'll come.

You can do research via Google, you could do research via Amazon, you could do research via YouTube. Find out where the needs are, where the queries are that aren't being met. The secret is: what's popular for queries, but not popular for results? And you can find where there are some needs.

When you identify the need, you then want to start having conversations with people in that niche that you'd want to serve and get their feedback. Don't jump in just creating this product, hoping then to sell it. Your product or service should be based in

the actual needs of the community that you're going to serve. It is the most effective way to set up any new program or process.

When we created our newest product – we have a training program for people how to turn their Facebook page into a lead generation machine – before we did that, we did a ton of research with our clients and with our members to see where their needs were being met, where they weren't, and our product was based on what they wanted. So when we launched, it was a really easy sell.

Notwithstanding the couple of podcasts you mentioned, are there any resources that you used, any courses that you took, books, things like that that helped educate you about the online space?

Yeah, I'm a big believer in – and I know your listeners are too, obviously with the fact that they're listening to you, they're seeking that information – I do listen to a lot of podcasts; I use my drive time for that and I also use my household chore time when I'm folding laundry or things like that. I do listen to a lot of audiobooks.

One of the great research books, it's not one of the sexiest things in the world, but it's by a writer named Duncan Watts, he's a researcher at Yahoo and his book is called, *Everything is Obvious Once You Know the Answer*. It's a great book on research and not assuming things. It's not the most exciting thing in the world, but basing your decisions on marketing is really how you're going to get that high ROI. You think about it in terms of going to Vegas, how you can place a bet with the most information possible.

Then my big marketing guru that I follow is Dan Kennedy with GKIC, GKIC Insider's Circle, it's a marketing organization. I'm privileged now to actually do their social media work for that

organization, but I started as an avid student and I still follow and read everything that he produces.

Got it. Kim, what is your reason for being in business? Do you have a greater purpose? What's your vision, what are you trying to accomplish by being in business, other than perhaps making some money?

Yeah, I have a few things. One is that I'm a woman of faith and believe that God gave me gifts to be able to market well and I should use that with purpose, and my purpose is to help small businesses not have their money set on fire. It actually physically pains me when I see billboards that I know are a complete waste of dollars because I know how hard small business owners are working for those dollars, and they just spent it on something that will do nothing for them. My goal is to help businesses be more successful with the great products and services that they have to share with the world. For not a good message, no one would know about them.

The second piece is, as an entrepreneur and for all of you listening, the joy of being an entrepreneur is really it's your thing, it's your gift. I happen to have two girls and I love the fact that I can run a worldwide company from the comfort of my home, and my staff is one place, I'm in another place. I'm home with them and that brings me great joy. There's a few different aspects to my life and my company.

Is there any such thing as a typical day for you?

No. No, as an entrepreneur... Those of you that are doing it, you know you work a lot. Those of you who want to do it, you need to be willing to work. I started this when I was working a full-time job and it couldn't just be my spare time; it had to be my part-time job, so I had set hours I created that I worked on it. That's my suggestion for those of you starting: create a real schedule to follow.

That's a great heads up. Instead of going to a Home Depot or something to work four hours a night after your job, if you set aside even two hours a night, over time, you will probably get where you want to go in the online space.

Exactly.

Now might be a great segue to talk about your great shoes.

Yeah, I do have a love for them. Part of it comes from the fact that I am a whole whopping 4'11, so I need the height wherever I go, but it also helps me expense them because it's part of my brand.

Yes, exactly. Let's talk just for a minute, Kim, about just online business in general. Are there any tools or resources that you would suggest that a person new to the online space would look at, any kind of email programs or website programs, things like that that would be beneficial to someone new to the online space?

Yeah. Of course, we do consulting in this field, so I'm definitely biased – but Facebook is incredible because it combines the social and the business world, it's free to set up a business fan page, and you can start building your network. In a three-step process, you could take somebody from being a fan, to getting their email address, to getting them on to your list. If you're just thinking about starting your business, I recommend you start with Facebook. There's no investment to start building your page up and start building your audience, unless you start running some ads, but you can do that for less than \$50 a month; a great way to start your business.

A wonderful landing page. Let's say you're ready, then you say: "Okay, I'm building my list, I want to create my first email list opt-in, or I want to sell my first product, or I want to promote my

first item.” An incredible resource is one called LeadPages, it’s 47 a month or 197 a year and it’s a landing page creator. Literally, in less than 60 seconds, you can have a really professional, beautiful landing page set up and it will give you different versions of it. They can just host it so you don’t even need to have a domain name, it will create a version that you can make a Facebook tab, it will give you a version you could put on your own WordPress website, but you don’t even need to have a WordPress site.

Literally, from not having any kind of business, in 30 days, you could have a fan page on Facebook, a landing page through LeadPages and have a business running. It’s a really quick and easy way to get started, and even if you’re out there, to help optimize your sales.

Do you do any piecemeal work? If I just called you up out of the blue and said: “Hey, Kim, I hear you guys are really good at Facebook,” will you help me with my Facebook or do you take a more holistic approach to working with a client?

Yeah, we have a lot of clients that are Facebook-only accounts. We actually have a lot of, like I mentioned GKIC, we have Ron LeGrand, Sandler Training. We have a lot of accounts that have comprehensive marketing programs and they just want us to help them optimize their Facebook part and they hire us to do that. Then we have other accounts that have us do everything. Then we also teach people how to do Facebook themselves for those that are the do-it-yourselfers that want to be able to do all that stuff on their own.

Are there any authors that you particularly like, for people who want to actually read a book or maybe listen to a book, any authors that you find beneficial? In the business world or not.

Yeah, I mentioned Dan Kennedy, I recommend every one of his books; has been really powerful. I'm currently reading a fantastic book by Perry Marshall that's *The 80/20 Principle* I think is the name, it's fantastic. He actually shows exact model of what to follow, so if you want to keep on the scope of working smarter not harder, how to really focus your energies on the top 20% of the things that you do that's profitable.

Of course, the Tim Ferriss, *4-Hour Workweek* is fantastic for launching entrepreneurs; that's very helpful. We do a lot of work on... We always look at: if people are paying me money, I want to give them the best experience possible, so we're huge Disney fans at our office. One of the best books that I've read by them is, *Be Our Guest*, it's the Disney Institute's Customer Service book. Fantastic, quick read, very powerful, and something I highly recommend.

Excellent, excellent. You gave us a lot of great advice, and I'd like to wrap up by asking you maybe just for a couple of actionable items. If you're leaving me with a couple of things that when I'm done listening to this podcast, when I'm next at home, what do I want to do to start my business or move my business forward? What would those tips be?

Sure. It's really exciting. If you're planning on setting your business up in this digital age, there's so many opportunities. I really believe in giving first and then asking for the sale. If you're not selling yet, start building your content so you can start giving. Start writing, start creating and producing content. It's an e-book, a report, writing, so you could start filling up a blog or website with great information.

Take that information, all those blogs, turn them into a book, make yourself the expert. I'm not saying write a book, get on the New York Time best-seller list. I'm saying write a weekly blog, once you've gotten up to 10,000 words, make it into an e-

book, have that book. Then you start having enough content that you can start getting people on to your list, building trust, so when you go to sell, they're ready to buy.

What is the best way for our listeners to connect with you, Kim?

Sure, I would love to connect with your listeners. We have an ongoing free training that is really based around what we were talking about here, how to get the highest ROI and profit. It's on a special page, if you go to IOCreativeGroup.com/ROI, you'll be able to access it and get a lot of really great free content that can help your listeners out.

That is super. All the fantastic resources that you mentioned in today's podcast will be available on the show notes page at TheBoomerBusinessOwner.com.

Kim, thanks so much, on behalf of our listeners, we really, really do appreciate your help.

It's my pleasure. Thanks for having me as a guest.