

# *Client Love*

HOW TO LOVE THE FANS  
YOU ALREADY HAVE SO YOU  
ATTRACT EVEN MORE



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# Playbook 2:

## Curating Connections

### A Cabin in the Woods

Ever heard of *The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*? How about *The Pumpkin Plan* or *Profit First*? These amazing books are by talented marketing consultant, author and speaker [Mike Michalowicz](#). He's successfully started and grown several small businesses and, with goofy humor and a generous personality, helps other entrepreneurs succeed. If you've not seen any of his hilarious videos, you should definitely check them out.

When I interviewed Mike for [Branding Basics for Small Business](#), he kindly shared sage advice about how to better engage your current customers or clients: **Bring them together.**

"You've got to see them in their own environment, otherwise they won't trust you," he advises. "Help them be comfortable so they will speak from the heart. You've got to see the makeup of people. You've got to live with your customer."

Mike went beyond just networking or sending surveys to his email list. He literally moved in with his clients! "I've rented a cabin in Denver and invited my top consulting clients for retreats," says Mike. "For four days, we cook, play cards, talk shop. This helps me understand my customers as family and get inside their minds."

While Mike did this more as an "information-gathering" exercise to pinpoint their needs and learn their language so that his own marketing would be successful, bringing your audience together serves another vital purpose: **it makes them feel special and more committed to your community.**

### The Psychology of Fandom

There are tangible business benefits to forming a strong, engaged community. We see it with hit TV shows, sold-out sports games and even strong brand loyalty. But why? What makes people feel they need to be part of such a "branded" community?

**People want to feel good. They want to be part of a winning team. They want to belong.**

Columnist Larry Stone wrote a [great article](#) on the psychology of being a sports fan for *The Seattle Times*, in which he writes:

*Virtually every study shows precisely that: The sense of goodwill, bonding and shared purpose that comes with being a fan has a ripple effect that can benefit all aspects of living.*

*“If they’re doing well, it reflects on us, in terms of bragging rights, status, prestige and identity,” said Joe Weis, a sociology professor at the University of Washington. “It gives you good feelings. I’ve been feeling really good because of the Super Bowl win.”*

Brand fandom is similar. You’ll wear your Apple earbuds in public or let Louis Vuitton emblazon its logo all over your luggage because of how well the brand is viewed by others. We want to be part of a community that validates our own sense of self and says something to the world about who we are and what we stand for.

**The more you can create a sense of community and belonging, the more loyal fans will be and more likely to buy your offerings.**

[But they have to believe in your mission and your “Why?”](#) They have to understand what YOUR brand stands for before they can decide that they want to align themselves with that community.

This is why your [mission statement](#) and [manifesto](#) are so important! If any of it is unclear, people won’t sign up to be part of the community.

## Name Your Tribe

Die-hard Star Trek fans self-identify as Trekkies. The classic sci-fi series Dr. Who defines their fan base as Whovians.

Lady Gaga has her own fan community called Little Monsters. And don’t forget Taylor Swift’s Swifties.

And even sports team fans, who you would think would simply adopt the team name, have their own unique identities: The Seattle Seahawks’ 12th Man. The Green Bay Packers’ Cheeseheads. And the Oakland (soon to be Las Vegas?) Raiders’ Raider Nation.

Point being: **People like to belong to a group.**

Naming your community instantly gives it identity, cache and adds a bit of fun and humor. I like to call my fan base Red Slice Nation, because it describes a certain mindset about marketing and entrepreneurship. If folks don’t embrace promoting their business with passion, heart, hustle and honesty, they probably shouldn’t be citizens of “The Nation!”

If you can give your community a sense of identity, they will be more engaged and even more proud to wear that allegiance as a badge of honor, leading to word of mouth and referrals.

A great way to better engage your audience so they want to identify as fans is to name your tribe. Can you come up with a natural, organic name for your community that doesn't feel forced or fake? Better yet, does your community want to help name the tribe?! Find out.

## Gather Them Together and Watch Sparks Fly

Simply throwing one-way communication at your audience is not the way to build community. Again, Marie Forleo's active community is a great example. There are hundreds of comments on her blog posts where the audience is interacting with her team and each other. They see each other, help each other, have "skin in the game," so to speak. This further increases their interest and brings them back for more.

**Your role is to curate and connect people within your community so they remain loyal, engaged and committed.**

Like a matchmaker, you want to ignite love connections between members and give them ample opportunities to build bonds with each other.

You have many options for gathering your tribe together:

- Consistently blog or post on social media and encourage participation and comments.
- Run a contest that requires tribe members to contribute, whether through comments, video or photo submissions or posting ideas/answering questions. Let the community vote on a winner!
- Go low-tech and run a simple "telejam" to have people discuss goals, request connections, etc. You can use [FreeConferenceCall.com](https://FreeConferenceCall.com) or [Instant Teleseminar](https://InstantTeleseminar.com).
- Host a live event: a wine and cheese social, tea party, dinner party, book club, or workshop. This could be in-person or even virtual if you want to get creative!
- Record a Facebook Live video and encourage folks to ask questions and join in.
- Run a weekly Tweet chat at the same time every week.
- Hold a VIP yearly retreat. You can use this to reward your most active community participants, thus creating more incentive for people to engage...plus they get bragging rights!
- Use [Zoom](https://Zoom.us) to conduct free trainings or discussion groups where everyone can see each other or interact via chat.
- Do a "Weekly Highlight" on your Facebook page to let community members share certain skills or talents with each other. For example, "Who in the community sings at weddings" Post your name and a sample track in the Comments!" or "This week, we're highlighting graphic designers! Post your name and website below and tell us a little about the work you like to do."
- Create "swag" that people can wear or display proudly. Everything from cool hoodies to laptop stickers. More than just "promotional pieces," this can help tribe members find each other and engage in the wild!

No matter how you bring them together, ensure you:

- thank them and tell them how much you value their support.
- reiterate the value you provide and the benefits they get from the community.
- foster connections and networking. Be a matchmaker!
- encourage them to share their own talents and knowledge with *each other*. A community that serves itself and fuels its own support is much more valuable to you and the members are more loyal to each other.

## Always Be Listening

While you are bringing people together to promote more engagement and loyalty, don't waste these precious market research opportunities. Always be listening to their goals, needs, and language so you can capture that valuable information. You not only create community connections, you gather marketing intelligence!

## Your Assignment: Create More Community

**What are three ways you could gather your community together, online or offline? Which one will you execute this quarter?**

**Got a clever name for your tribe?** Jot down some ideas. Could you turn this into a naming contest to further engage your audience? Fun!

**Is there a fun and relevant contest you could run?** Of course, you'd want to make this related to your offerings, but it could be completely wacky and silly, if that fits your brand. For example, a "Name the Film" famous movie line contest or "Name my new puppy!" Jot down some ideas here. If you want some fresh ideas, just post to the Red Slice [Facebook group](#) and ask for our help!

# One Last Thing...

Start where you are. No matter how big or small your audience is at present, now is the time to start engaging those you have and curating connections within the group.

**If you can build a strong foundation of community engagement, support and fun, even with a small number, you will plant the seeds for growth.** You'll establish a culture and a norm for that community that will attract even more people.

Engaging your community does not take a lot of money, just thoughtful and creative ideas. Really! Community building, as I've described it, may not be in your cards right now. But when I say "community," I refer to current or past customers and perhaps even just fans or supporters of your work. That's still a community, even if you don't have a super active Facebook fan page or a large email list.

**Remember. Start where you are.** You may not have thought of these people as a "community" but they are indeed just that. Treat them as such. Curate connections and opportunities for them to interact, support each other and stay involved.

Cheers,

*Maria*

# Goodies and Inspiration

If you want to find a venue to host a get-together for your community, find cool spaces through [Breather](#), [Bizly](#), [Peerspace](#) or another local on-demand venue/meeting room app in your own area. For intimate gatherings, book a great local hotel room on [Hotwire](#), [Priceline](#), [Trivago](#) or [Hotels.com](#). And of course, there's always [AirBnB](#) where you can find a cool loft!

[\*Fan CULTure: Essays on Participatory Fandom in the 21st Century\*](#). This book explores popular fan culture related to TV shows, movies and other cult fan phenomena. It can be a bit dry and academic at times but utterly fascinating!

[Tribes](#). Because...Seth Godin.

Enjoy [this inspirational list](#) of 60 ways to build community, save your sanity and change the world.

[This classic Beatles' song](#) can be your rallying cry!