

Mind ur Business

Jay Baer: "Make Your Customers Tell Your Story"

By Yitzchok Saftlas



Every Sunday evening since July 2015, Yitzchok Saftlas, CEO of Bottom Line Marketing Group, hosts 77WABC's "Mind Your Business" show on America's leading talk radio station. The show features Fortune 500 CEOs, CMOs, and top business leaders, where they share their business knowledge and strategic insights on how to get ahead in today's corporate world. Since Q2 2017, the 77WABC "Mind Your Business" show has remained in the coveted Nielsen "Top 10" in New York's highly competitive AM Talk Radio market. Guests have included John Sculley, former CEO of Apple and Pepsi; Dick Schulze, founder and Chairman Emeritus of Best Buy; Beth Comstock, former Vice Chair of GE; and Captain Sully Sullenberger, among nearly 200 senior-level executives and business celebrities.

Every other week, TJH will feature leading questions and takeaways from Yitzchok's popular radio show.

On a recent 77WABC "Mind Your Business" broadcast, Yitzchok Saftlas sat down to speak to Jay Baer about the secrets behind his remarkable success.

Baer is an award-winning marketing pioneer, with twenty-six years of experience in helping the world's most iconic brands improve their digital marketing and customer experience. A *New York Times* best-selling author of six books, Jay is a hall of fame keynote speaker and emcee. His most recent book, *Talk Triggers: The Complete Guide to Creating Customers with Word of Mouth*, is taking the marketing world by a storm.

Yitzchok: *What was the moment that made you decide to write Talk Triggers? What's the backstory?*

Jay: I wrote this book for the same reason that I've written all six of my books. When I heard the same questions from my clients and customers multiple times, I realized that there is a knowledge gap that needs to be filled.

A lot of our clients felt that although they've gotten a better handle on the mechanics of content marketing, they still weren't sure what they should be saying.

That made me think – if our customers, who are some of the most iconic brands in the world, don't know the answer to that question, then a lot of people must not know the answer.

I realized that these big brands, and most brands, don't have a story. They don't really know what their own story is. I thought, here we are, 2017 at that point, and brands don't actually know what story they're trying to tell. We have to fix that problem first and worry about social media second. A lot of businesses think social media is word of mouth. Social media is a delivery mechanism for a word of mouth, but it's not word of mouth. Word of mouth is about the story.

Even now, we still have a lot of trouble understanding how to leverage word of mouth on purpose. Everybody engages in word of mouth accidentally, but nobody really does it on purpose.

And so, we set out to fix that with this book.

There are many great books about word of mouth on the market. But you don't need a book to tell you that word of mouth is important! What *Talk Triggers* has done – which no other book has – is outline a process, a formula, a system, that any business can use to get their customers talking. And that's really the difference. *Talk Triggers* is not just telling you word of mouth is important and why it's important, it's giving you a concrete plan to leverage the power of word of mouth for your business.

YS: *There's an amazing line in your book – "Word of mouth is independent, as the talker has no financial interest in the sale of service." That is key. It's one of the best lines in the whole book.*

JB: Yes, it is. New research from Edelman Public Relations has shown that while we trust each other more than ever, we trust businesses and organizations less and less. It doesn't

matter what business you're in – you can't change that. So the more you can get your customers to talk about you, the more persuasive it is and the more effective it is. Fundamentally, the best way to grow any business is for your customers to do the growing for you. That's what we're trying to convey here.

YS: *"The best way to grow any business is for your customers to do the growing for you." Can you elaborate on that?*

JB: Well, your customers are telling your story, and you don't have to pay for that. Advertising can be really effective, but advertising can also be pretty expensive. Today, all the social algorithms have said that we're going to over-prioritize content that is published by real people and we're going to under-prioritize content published by businesses. Well, to me that sounds like a recipe for word of mouth! If you can get real people talking, it sort of gets around those algorithmic penalties that are being applied to content

published by businesses. Research shows that between fifty and ninety-one percent of all purchases are influenced by word of mouth. It's tremendous!

But no one has a strategy for word of mouth. We just take it for granted. We just assume that our customers will talk about us, and we assume that they will say consistent things about us. Is that really what happens in the real world? It's not. So what we're trying to do with *Talk Triggers* is help businesses do word of mouth on purpose instead of what's happening today, where everybody's doing word of mouth by accident and hoping for the best.

YS: *So, is there any hope for marketing firms?*

JB: Oh, absolutely. You see, what's interesting about word of mouth is that even with a book like this, that breaks down how to create a word of mouth strategy, a lot of business owners struggle with it because they can't find the story in their own operations. It's really hard for business owners to find their narrative, because they're too close to it. They don't see the gold in the river, so to speak. Marketing agencies are really good at that because they look at everything with a new perspective and can find the inherent value that the owners and CEOs can't see.

YS: *In section three of the book, you talk about the five talk triggers. Can you please explain what those triggers are?*

JB: Let me let me define a talk trigger first. A talk trigger is a strategic operational choice that you make that compels conversation. It's something that you choose to do differently in the operations of your business that customers notice and talk about. What's funny about that is that a talk trigger isn't really marketing, at least not in the classic sense. It's something that you *do* that's different rather than something that you *say* that's different. I'll give you a quick example before we get to the five types.

There's a restaurant in Sacramento, California, called Skip's Kitchen. It's a regular counter-service restaurant. There would be nothing extraordinary about it, except that before each customer leaves, they get to choose a card from a deck. If they pick a joker,

they don't have to pay for their meal. Skip's Kitchen has been in business for ten years, and they've spent a grand total of zero dollars on advertising. But there's a line to get in almost every day.

That isn't really marketing. That is an operational choice that creates and produces a huge marketing advantage. But it's not marketing in the way that we typically think of marketing. It's a customer experience decision, and all good talk triggers are that. So, as you as you prefaced in the question, there are five different types of talk triggers that you can use.

The first one is talkable generosity. You have to be more generous than your customers expect. Skip's Kitchen is a great example.

There's also talkable responsiveness, when you are faster and more on top of things than your customers expect.

“Have the courage to do one thing different in your business, one thing that's different enough that your customers will talk about it.”

The next trigger is talkable usefulness, which is when you're more useful than your customers expect you to be.

The fourth one is talkable empathy, when you are kinder than expected.

And the last one is talkable attitude, which is when you are a little bit different than your customers expect. Each one is explained in detail in the book.

YS: *Can a business rely solely on word of mouth?*

JB: Yes, you can. There are businesses that rely completely on word of mouth like Skip's Kitchen and the Cheesecake Factory. But would I recommend it? No, I would not. I think that's dangerous. There are certainly companies that that can exist and prosper and thrive, even without doing much more than word of mouth.

But that is the exception that proves the rule. Word of mouth by definition tends to happen more slowly — it's a trickle over time. We have a lot of research in the book that suggests that only about forty-seven percent, or essentially one out of every two of your customers, will ever tell your story, regardless of how good this story is. And that has nothing to do with you, has nothing to do with the quality of your talk trigger. It's just how people are wired. So the best case scenario is that you've got forty-seven percent of your audience talking about you, and that's not enough to build a business.

YS: *Section four of the book is called, “Create Talk Triggers in Six Steps.” Can you elaborate on that?*

JB: The worst way to create a talk trigger is to have everybody sit in a

to twenty percent talkable, expand it to the whole company. It takes about ninety days to do this right. Do the research, be thoughtful about it. This is an operational choice that you have to commit to. The process is very specific for a reason.

YS: *You talk about influencer marketing in the book. What's your take on it? Would you encourage a company to develop a relationship with an influencer that would make sense for their brand?*

JB: Influencer marketing is not a word of mouth strategy. It's not the same thing. Influencer marketing is essentially halfway between word of mouth and an ad. To find some sort of celebrity who has disproportionate audience and convince that person, typically with cash, that they should promote your business...I'm not suggesting that doesn't work. It can work. But once that person stops talking about you, you aren't left with anything. So it really is a short term advertising-esque approach to acquire attention. Again, I'm not suggesting it's a bad idea. But it's not the same as what we're talking about here.

YS: *Do you think there are there certain industries that can rely on or benefit from word of mouth more than others?*

JB: That's an interesting question. Let me let me answer it this way. I believe with every fiber of my being that every company can benefit from it. It doesn't matter what type of business you have, whether it's business-to-business or business-to-consumer. It doesn't matter, because every company has customers, and those customers talk. Word of mouth is universally applicable.

YS: *Do you have any final take-aways for our listeners?*

JB: Competency does not create conversation. Same is lame. The more you try to fit in, the more your customers will tune out. Have the courage to do one thing different in your business, one thing that's different enough that your customers will talk about it and they will tell your story. When your customers tell your story, that's the best way to grow your business. ▲