

The 'offline event map' for online treasure

People dream of running 'online programs.'

They want to move away from offline, so they can sit in their lair like yours truly, drink coffee, and do great work, on their terms.

It's like the new digitised version of the American (Australian?) dream.

And of course led to the modern explosion of coaches, gurus and experts that can help you do everything from copy-writing to optimising your tinder profile for more swipes.

Nonetheless, it ain't as easy as the Facebook crew tells you.

And when you see 'em screaming from in front of a whiteboard that it's as simple as *'turning on the tap for a flood of high-ticket leads and a booked out calendar...'* that's when you can safely move in the opposite direction.

Why is it so hard to build online programs?

The root of the whole problem lies in one thing:

Trust.

In the first business we opened, I was selling running shoes. I'd learned sales from my mentor and my whole job was selling as many shoes and socks as I could.

And I wouldn't say it was easy.

Especially at the start.

And I also saw some guys come in who could never sell shoes no matter how long they tried. They just couldn't play the game (eventually they would move on).

But within a few months, boxes were flying out of the door, customers stacking what they could in their hot little hands.

The point of all of this:

The modern marketing universe is pushing you to have as little contact as possible with your customers. They love terms like "lead flow", your "traffic" and your list. The idea is that you can somehow trick people into buying, if you just have the right reels, copywriting, or tools at your disposal.

But anyone who has worked in retail, or face to face sales will know that it is much easier to sell face to face, or offline.

In particular, in a one to one environment.

Because when we are face to face, it allows us to build trust, quickly.

This is still true for us today

The other day we did a check through the last ~60 or so businesses that we've worked with recently, to look at the origin story of each one.

Here's what we found.

Over 50% of these businesses have come to a workshop, live event, retreat, or event that either Ruby or myself spoke at.

And out of the other 50%?

Most of them have known one of the other business owners that we worked with. The old word of mouth referral.

In simple terms...

Even now - with the podcasts, emails, these articles, and any social media that we do, offline interaction is the single biggest driver of growth, whether that's the first introduction, or later on in the relationship.

What is actually happening?

A few years back when I owned the gym I was into physiology, and studied a lot around health, and the nervous system.

A true white paper nerd.

And I came across a guy named Dr. Stephen Porges. Porges coined a term called “neuroception”.

Basically what it is, is this ability that we have even as little babies, where we can subconsciously ‘assess’ people around us, to decide if we’re going to trust them. This is really important for little babies, because they need to know what’s safe. And whether they can trust adults around them.

I think my dog even has this. She can always tell a shady character from a mile away.

Anyway, we never lose this.

That face to face ‘assessment’ is almost an energy thing. We crave it. It’s effective, instantaneous, and it ‘allows’ us to move forward with the purchase.

Now, you can bridge this trust gap in other ways.

While offline events are the most powerful - to a lesser extent you can use live online events and even creating an audio experience (podcast, et cetera) for your people.

People will often sit on the sidelines, wanting your offer, but wait diligently until they meet you.

Or, you'll build a relationship offline, and then this can convert into an online sale, when they realise they can use what you've got.

It's all a matter of trust.

What if I don't have a thriving business?

"Easy for you John, you've already got trust, or an audience"

"It's easy if you're already going, you can just announce an event..."

Kind of. But hold on.

Sure in my case after years of showing up, a few people pay attention. But really, I'm more than happy to spend my time in my lair, punching out projects and working with the core group of business owners that we have in our world. I'm not surrounded by people, and it wasn't that long ago that I didn't even know anyone here because we had just moved up.

When we moved north here to Newcastle, I was starting from scratch.

But within two months, I had run three workshops, and it helped to build more relationships that have continued to help our business.

It takes some raw action, but here's how you can do it if you don't have a business or a lot of trust.

Show up where they are. Look, there's no way you're going to have the frame at the beginning. You're going to have to enter their world. But that's cool. Look around you and find like-minded businesses, practitioners, or industry experts. Get a lay of the land. See who has shared interests, and who you can connect with.

Reach out. But with zero neediness. It could be something like this: "Hey John, I see you do business coaching. Look, what I do might not have any relevance for you, or your people. And if it doesn't, that's totally cool. But I support people to grow their business by producing podcasts for them. I'd love to meet you anyway, find out more about what you do, and share some of the results we get for people. Would you be open to a 20 minute coffee next week?"

Bring specific value. Notice in the message above I was speaking to the value that the person could bring, specifically? Successful people that you want to work with are typically busy. And busy people don't really want to 'do a coffee', or just spend time networking for the sake of it. Can you help them see why it would be worth their time?

All you have to do at the start, is get your foot in the door. Create a relationship.

The relationship leads, and from there, you can present an idea for a small workshop or event.

But I need some more help. Examples please...?

Look, I can't think for you.

I can't tell you the right workshop to run, you've got to do some independent thinking.

Having said that, here are a few things we've done. Now the crazy thing here is *most of these aren't related to business coaching.*

And yet, we currently work with many people who have been to these events.

That's important to realise.

It's not always about the "what" you do, but rather about the "who" you are doing it with, and how you show up.

An offline event is purely one supreme way to build trust and connection, which leads to online success.

Trust and resonance leads money flow.

EXAMPLES:

- World building workshop for business owners, discussing the ideas of building out their characters, story, and world
- Meditation workshops at gyms
- Breath and recovery workshops at gyms in multiple states
- Workshops around training when I had the gym
- Mens workshops talking about health and training etc
- Content creation workshops teaching people how to create content

And many more.

Ruby has also done a ton of speaking gigs and workshops - self care, vision workshops, on and on.

You probably won't make a ton of money on the front end

Remember, the purpose of these offline events isn't usually to make money *at the actual event*.

I mean you might make a little, but they aren't usually highly profitable.

For example - I remember flying over to Perth, delivering a workshop, and flying home and only making \$50.

Some have even cost a little bit to run.

And that's OK. Because it's the longer term customer relationship that we are talking about.

And this is very much in line with World Building, in that we commit to the experience, not the transaction.

Knowing that this helps position us in the mind, and create lasting business relationships.

Now, a word of warning.

If you're brand new, you can't *risk* spending a lot of money to run these things.

But what you can do, is create break even opportunities.

- Run a simple event for free.
- Run an event for a low ticket price, but provide some food and the venue
- Pay to travel to speak at an event, and offer a low ticket product or service on the back end (these aren't about selling high ticket items to a cold audience on the stage).

And then make sure to use the event as a gateway to bring them into your world.

Conclusion

For a lot of people, the online business is the dream.

The tricky part is - there's a LOT of people thinking just like you.

So the result of that is people are spending more time on social media. More time in Facebook groups. More time on time-suck-tube... Trying to break free. Trying to get the answer to standing out.

But when everyone is doing one thing, it often pays to look at the alternative.

Offline events have been a powerful business building technique for decades, but they are really coming into their own today.

If you're already running an online business, the offline idea can help you build even more trust and resonance, and more sales.

If you're brand new, the offline connection can help you build audience, awareness, authority and yes, customers.

Something to think about.