

Neuroscience Geek Reveals How To Build A Big, Responsive List Of Leads Who Already Want To Buy What You're Selling

Interview with Ryan Levesque
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Ben Settle: Ryan, tell us your background.

Ryan Levesque: The quick 30-second version is this. In college I studied neuroscience and Chinese, and decided to do absolutely nothing with either of those degrees after graduating. After graduating I worked on Wall Street for a few years and then really wanted to find a way to get over to Asia and live the fat cat expat lifestyle for a few years with my wife.

I did that, working a corporate gig where I was running a massive sales office expansion project in China, basically flying around the country, living out of hotels and tethered to the Blackberry. It was a cool job, very exciting, sort of wild, wild west, and I got very much burned out.

In the meantime I'd heard about some friends of mine who were making a lot of money doing stuff on "the internet," so I turned on to a few internet marketers and kind of learned the game. Long story short, I started moonlighting as an entrepreneur nights and weekends, and launched a niche info product business that I was able to take from nothing to \$20,000 a month in 18 months. At that point I said, "Okay, this stuff works."

I quit my job and my wife and I traveled around Asia for awhile. Then we moved back to the United States and we're in Texas now. This was back in 2008 and I really haven't looked back since. I've had a few other businesses since then, and this is what I do all day every day.

Ben Settle: You grew a business from nothing to \$20K per month in less than two years, is that right?

Ryan Levesque: Yeah, in 18 months. People hear that and they're like, "Wow, that's pretty cool," but the real story is there were six months of struggle and heartache and pain that led up to that, where I was really spinning my wheels and not making a lot of progress and doing everything wrong, just part of the growing pains.

I think it's an interesting story because it actually ties into some of the psychological conversion-boosting tactics that we'll be talking about on the call, so I'm happy to go into that in a little more detail.

Ben Settle: We can, but first let's talk about this whole idea of neuroscience. How has that helped you with marketing, and specifically with getting higher-quality people on your list and converting more of them into buyers?

Ryan Levesque: That's a great question. It's one that we could answer in one sentence, and it's one that we could spend the next hour talking about. In a nutshell I think the extent to which you can understand how the human brain works and how your prospect's mind works, and not only understand that but leverage that knowledge through persuasion and through using language to influence in an ethical and positive way your prospects, your success – especially as a copywriter, and specifically as an email copywriter – I think largely hinges on that ability.

Whether you have an academic background in a discipline like psychology or neuroscience or cognitive neuroscience, that's really less important I think than having an insane curiosity to learn more about how the human mind works.

As someone who has an academic background in neuroscience, I'll tell you the academic piece isn't super-useful. I'm looking at my bookshelf right now and I've got 7 or 8 neuroscience textbooks. Those books collect dust on my shelf, but books like Robert Cialdini's *Influence* and books like *Persuasion* and books that bridge the gap between the academic science of neuroscience and the practical application of it in marketing – I think that's where if you're someone who's a student of marketing, a student of persuasion, a student of copywriting, that's time well spent.

Ben Settle: Before we get into these five themes, which I'm very interested in hearing, let's go back to what you were saying before about that business you grew and how it ties into all this.

Ryan Levesque: Sure. I think with a lot of people that maybe are just starting out, the way I approached growing my first business is I had looked towards setting some really high-reach goals. For example, I said I wanted to be making \$100,000 in six months out of this part-time business - \$100,000 a year net within six months.

I would state that affirmation every day and read the little piece of paper in my wallet and think I was doing all these really cool things, and I thought that was the key to making big progress – to kind of sear that in your brain, so you’re basically like this automaton zombie that in your sleep you could recite that affirmation. Everything hinged on that – setting the big goal, searing it into your brain, thinking about that big goal 24/7, and doing nothing but taking action towards reaching that big goal.

When I had that mindset for six months I was spinning my wheels, but when I turned back to my understanding of human psychology, I realized that the reason why we spin our wheels when we do that sort of thing is because of our brain’s natural fear response toward change – whether it’s positive change or negative change – and it ultimately comes down to our fight or flight response.

When I took a step back and said, “Instead of trying to focus on generating \$100,000 a year, why don’t I focus on generating one sale in the next 24 hours” – a tiny little goal that I could really break it down and say, “I can do this.” It’s a small enough goal that your brain says, “This is doable.”

\$100,000 in six months isn’t something that you can really wrap your arms around. There’s a lot to making that happen, but getting one sale in 24 hours – you could send an email to all your friends, you could go on forums and go crazy responding to people, offering to answer their questions and upselling them on your product as an info product, you could pick up the phone and call people who are in your niche. There are so many things you could do to generate that one sale.

That’s the back-story, but when I started shifting my mindset from thinking big to thinking small, that’s when all the progress started happening. Ultimately what I did was started thinking in \$500 chunks. I said, “What can I do this month that’s going to add \$500 to my bottom line? Then what can I do next month that’s going to add an additional \$500?”

That \$500 for me was a big enough number that it was interesting, but it was small enough that I could actually map it back to specific actions that were doable. It could be sending out an extra email. It could be adding an additional product. It could be reaching out to a few potential JV partners, but it was doable.

That’s the back-story, and what I want to talk about is the neuroscience behind all that. Why is that approach so effective? Why is it so effective not only in your own life as an entrepreneur or business person, but also why is it effective when you treat your prospects the same way?

Ben Settle: That reminds me of this thing from Robert Kiyosaki. I read in one of his books and he was like, “Just make goals that are so small that it’s boring, like your goal is

to just get up. Just open your computer and turn it on. That's your only goal. You get so bored with it that you keep going further and further."

Ryan Levesque: Right. It's like if you map it back to writing an email, if you're thinking you have to write one of your monthly newsletters. If you were to just sit down and say, "I've got to write this newsletter," it becomes this monkey on your back. You're like, "Shit, what the hell am I going to write about?" and you start getting nervous and all this anxiety builds up. If instead you say, "I'm going to sit down at my computer and I'm going to have the goal of just writing one sentence," you'll say, "I can do that. I can write one sentence."

If a sentence is too big, you can shrink that goal even further. You can say, "I can type one word." That's a goal that if you said it to yourself you would say, "Well duh, of course I can do that."

It all has to do with this concept that is actually a term in Japanese business called kaizen. It's the idea that big changes occur not through big actions but through the accumulation of hundreds and thousands of tiny little actions.

This idea of kaizen really appealed to me. It was this idea that change doesn't occur all at once, but if you can shrink your goals down to the smallest possible next step that's so small that it's literally impossible for you to fail, that's when I started making all this progress.

This is interesting and theoretically this is cool, but there's actually something that's going on in your brain, which is the reason why it's so powerful, and this is the neuroscience angle behind it.

You're familiar with the reptilian brain, what we call the higher-thinking brain or the neo-cortex, our ancestors largely operated on our fight or flight response. Any change that occurred would set the warning bells off in our brain, specifically in an area in our brain that's called the amygdala. You don't need to worry about the names, but I'm just giving you the background, so if you're a science junkie you kind of understand that there is something to this. This isn't just hocus pocus.

Our fight or flight response actually resides in this structure in our mid-brain known as the amygdala, and what happens is anytime that your brain perceives any sort of change – whether that's a positive change or a negative change – what happens is your neo-cortex or higher-thinking brain shuts down and your primitive reptilian brain all the sudden takes over.

You get into this mode where you get nervous, you get sweaty, you're not sure if it's the right thing to do, you get the butterflies in your stomach, and you basically close off your

ability to do any sort of creative problem-solving or do any sort of rational analysis. You're just operating on a very primitive reptilian level.

The key to 'hacking your brain' so to speak is to short-circuit that process. The way that you do it is you have to trick your brain into thinking that you're not making any change, or that the change is so small and so imperceptible to your brain that those warning bells never fire off.

Coming back to the business example, the idea of making \$100,000 in six months – most people starting from scratch would say, "That's a hell of a great accomplishment," but it's also scary to your brain because it's this idea of change, even though it's positive. But if you can map it back to say finding a dollar bill on the side of the road, that's nothing. That doesn't really change your life in any way, shape, or form, but it's small enough that you could work towards that goal without having that sort of fear response paralyze you.

That's sort of the neuroscience behind it so you understand that you can apply it to your own life in terms of the goals that you set for yourself, but more importantly for this conversation you can actually apply it to how you influence your prospects. That's really what I think is going to be most interesting to people listening to this call.

Ben Settle: Those are micro-commitments. Is that the layman's term?

Ryan Levesque: Exactly. That's the idea of micro-commitments. We set the stage that making any change is scary. If you think about that in terms of your prospects, their brains don't operate that much differently from your own brain. Any change to them is also scary, so opting in and giving you their email address and their name in exchange for the ability to market to them, or maybe give you their physical address and money in exchange for a product, that's a big change and that's scary.

If you can boil that down to a tiny little step that they might take that leads to that big change, all the sudden you're able to bypass that fear response in their brain and you're able to get them into action-taking mode. It's almost like getting someone to dip their toe in water rather than jumping in and doing a cannonball.

The idea of micro-commitments is if you can get people to take tiny little steps before the optin process, you can actually dramatically improve your conversion rates because the folks who are either on the fence or maybe aren't quite sure if they're prepared to optin, you can get them to at least dip their toe. By getting them to dip their toe, they're that much more likely to actually opt in when you present them with an optin form. Does that make sense?

Ben Settle: Yeah, and it's very interesting. It's just making it easier and more comfortable for them. People get kind of scared. They think they're going to get charged for something if they put their email address in.

Ryan Levesque: Maybe you've done this, and I know I've done it – sometimes when I opt into a list I'm like, "You know what, I don't feel comfortable even entering my real name in this list. I'm going to be Bill. I'm not going to be Ryan, I'm going to be Bill, because I don't know what this guy's going to do with this information," right?

Ben Settle: It's true. If I don't see a privacy policy I usually don't. I'll create an email address for a throwaway to sign up on a list, and that email address is getting spam, and yet it's only been used that one time.

Ryan Levesque: I know. People have been burned in the past, so it's a way for them to dip their toe.

This is all great, but it's all very theoretical, so what the hell is a micro-commitment and how can you get someone to take it before they opt in? A micro-commitment can be a number of things, but in the context of this conversation, rather than getting someone to opt in, you can get people to answer a multiple-choice question either framed in the form of a survey, questionnaire, a quiz, or a test of some sort. What it does is it allows them to get into action-taking mode before giving you that precious information.

You might say, "Discover 7 ways to boost your bottom line in the next month." Rather than saying, "All you need to do is enter your name and email and I'll give you the information," you might say, "Tell me, which of the following is most important to you right now?" and you have three multiple-choice questions.

They see that and that's it. That's all they see. They don't see an optin form. They see that and they think, "I'm curious to kind of know where this is going, so I'm going to answer this question." Maybe it's, "Growing my email list, improving my online conversion rates, or finding a way to market to my list offline."

Maybe in this fictitious example they click the first answer. They say, "I want to grow my list," and they click on that. Then another question pops up and says, "Tell me specifically, how are you driving traffic to your site to grow your list? Primarily through SEO? Paid traffic? Or JV traffic?" and they click SEO.

Then say, "I have a personalized solution for you specifically geared towards folks who are looking to build their list through SEO traffic. If you'd like to get your hands on it, all you need to do is enter your name and email and I'll give you this personalized solution right now."

You see what we've done here? We've asked a few questions to get them into this action-taking momentum. You can do this two-step version that we just went through or you could do this through a 5-step version, but the idea is that once they get into that mode you sort of get the momentum going, they're taking these micro-commitments, and they become that much more likely to optin.

In Cialdini's framework you can call it consistency and commitment, because they've already expressed that they're interested enough in your solution to go through three or four questions. They've already gone 9/10 of the way, and they're going to go that final 10% and actually get at it, if that makes sense.

Ben Settle: Do you find that the quality of the optin is higher this way as well, I would imagine?

Ryan Levesque: It is, so there's all sorts of side benefits to this as well. We were just talking about the fact that this can improve conversion rates. What is also does is allows you to segment your audience. As you know, the more you can segment your audience, the more specifically you can market to them.

All the sudden you have somebody who's raised their hand and they've told you two things. They've said, "I'm interested in building my list, and I drive traffic to my site through SEO." So all the sudden you can start putting offers in front of them that are geared specifically to that type of prospect.

You can ignore the PPC stuff. You can ignore the JV stuff. You can ignore the conversion stuff because they're still in list building mode. You can focus on two things: driving traffic to their site through SEO and building their list.

So not only is it a higher-quality prospect because they've gone through a few hurdles and they've said, "I'm interested enough in this, even after jumping through these hurdles," so yes, you're right. You're going to have less CAN-SPAM flak, because people have raised their hand and said that they're really interested, and you're going to be able to market to them so much more specifically that you're going to be able to better fine-tune your offers or messages to what it is that they want.

Ben Settle: That's beyond useful. [laughing] We're going to be testing your plugin probably in the next two or three weeks in a business I partner in. I'm really excited about it because it's been a huge problem. We've been sending everyone to one optin, and you don't know what they're interested in, so we're rotating offers and we're probably boring the hell out of half of them at any given time.

Ryan Levesque: Right. This is perfect for that. I don't want to lose the momentum of the conversation, but I will mention this. Jack and I just released a new version of the

plugin. It gives you the ability to create these survey funnels not only using that little tab on the left-hand side like in the demo video, but you can also create them directly in pages and posts and in sidebar widgets as well.

For example, maybe you have an ad on your site, or what appears to be an ad. Instead of sending someone to one offer when they click on that ad, you could elicit a simple pop-up survey thing which sends them into the best affiliate offer based on how they answer that question, and you could do the same thing in a page or post as well. We've added a few additional features that I think will give you some more mileage as you're testing this out on your site.

Ben Settle: I didn't even really think about the applications for affiliate marketers with this. This is going to make their lives very easy, I would imagine.

Ryan Levesque: Yeah, because a lot of times if you've got a general page it's like, "I've got five different types of people who visit this page. I can't put five different offers. It doesn't really make sense to randomize them on rotation, because it's not so much that one offer converts better than the other, it's the fact that one offer converts better to a certain type of prospect." This bridges that gap.

I don't know if you know Howie Jacobsen.

Ben Settle: I don't know him personally, but I know who he is.

Ryan Levesque: I was talking to him and I said, "This is sort of like the next evolution in marketing online." If you go back 10 years, maybe six years, people would send all their traffic to their home page. No matter where the traffic was coming from, everything went back to their home page. Then people realized, "Hey, this isn't specific enough, because you've got so many different audiences, so the home page isn't the best place to send people."

Then people started creating landing pages. Landing pages were a little bit better tailored. Maybe they'd be keyword-specific, but still there's certain keywords out there, like *lose weight* for example, that tell you almost nothing about who the prospect is. Are they a man? Are they a woman? Are they 65? Are they 25? Are they morbidly obese? Are they 5 pounds overweight? Are they trying to get in shape for an event? Are they trying to lose 50 pounds? It tells you nothing, so people started putting in squeeze pages.

This takes the squeeze page to the next level, because it allows you to insert almost this intermediary step between your end-offer and your landing page that allows you to almost differentiate yourself in any marketplace, because in every marketplace you've got people who are saying, "My solution is the best. We're all things to all people. No matter what your situation may be, we're the ones you should call."

This allows you to say, “Time out a second. Before I can tell you whether or not we’re the best solution, I need to get to know you a little bit better.” In the same way as if you were having a one-on-one conversation with your prospect, you’d ask a few thoughtful questions before you recommended a product to them or recommended a solution.

This tool fills that gap. It makes it possible for anybody using WordPress to implement it in just a few mouse clicks, with no programming knowledge needed.

Ben Settle: Nice. The next thing I wanted to ask you about was using open loops.

Ryan Levesque: An open loop is just a way to describe it. For example, if you watch a television show and the television show ends on a cliffhanger and they say, “Stay tuned for scenes from next week’s episode of The Walking Dead” or Mad Men or whatever it may be, they insert this open loop. The show has planted the seed in your mind and there’s no closure in your mind because you want to know what happens next. Television shows do this beautifully. Serial novels do this beautifully.

When you create an open loop, basically what happens is you simultaneously create tension and desire in your prospect’s brain, and that is like a lethal combination of neurotransmitters that is like the optimal situation that you want to create in your prospect’s brain.

I’ll give you an example in a second so this makes sense, but when you plant a seed where you say in your copy, “In today’s email we’re going to cover the most powerful techniques and most powerful ways to build your list. Oh, before I forget, remind me to tell you that at the end of this email I’m also going to show you how to boost your conversion by 10%, but we’ll talk about that later. Okay, moving on...”

When you’ve done that little kind of sidebar note that I just inserted, all the sudden people want to know what that tip or that little technique is. You’ve introduced that open loop, so that allows you to maintain attention throughout the email because they’re waiting for that big payoff at the end of your copy.

You can create open loops within open loops and nest them within one another. You constantly want to create this sense that you’re never giving 100% closure when you’re talking to your prospects.

Mapping that back to the conversation now, sort of the idea of the survey funnel, when you ask people a few questions like the example that we just went through, and you say something like, “To find out the customized solution for folks who are looking to build their list through SEO traffic, all you need to do is enter your name and email,” you’ve created this open loop because they want to know what that semi-customized solution is.

They've taken a few steps to describe their situation, and now they want to know, "Now that I've done that, what is this customized solution like?" and you've created this open loop.

When you create an open loop like that, it's uncomfortable in your prospect's brain. They have this flood of two neurotransmitters in their brain. One is epinephrine, which is more commonly known as adrenaline, which creates this tension, and the other is dopamine, which is the reward neurotransmitter.

People have this flood and they want to get the reward, they want to get the big payoff that you've teased them with but haven't given to them, and at the same time you've created this tension in their mind. They're saying, "I want to know what this is! I want to know what this is!" When you do that, your prospect's brain is on high alert and they want what you are promising them.

What happens at a deep cellular level is you get this release of those two neurotransmitters and it only lasts for a finite period of time. It's like you almost create this chemical reaction in your prospect's brain. It's the coolest thing ever.

If you study MRI scans that institutions have done when people are in the middle of a buying decision, you actually can see the neurotransmitters floating around in people's brains. It creates this temporary euphoria where they want to have what you're promising.

That's again a very long answer to a short question about how open loops operate from a neuro-scientific angle.

Ben Settle: It's fascinating that we're mixing and matching the chemicals in their brain with words. I had no idea.

Ryan Levesque: It's pretty freaking cool. Here's the corollary to this, and this is like theme #3 on our list. You can use open loops to cause the release of dopamine and adrenaline. The catch is that flood of neurotransmitters only lasts for a finite period of time. You get a big spike and it roughly corresponds to about a 20-minute spike. You've got all these chemicals floating around in your prospect's mind and you've got about a 20-minute window to take advantage of it. You elicited that response and it's not going to be there forever.

What that means is that in your marketing, whether you're writing a sales letter, an email, or in my case we do a lot of video sales letters, I try whenever possible to keep the sales pitch to a 20-minute length for that reason. That's basically the length of time that you have to keep, maintain, and leverage the attention that you've garnered from your prospect.

I don't know if you saw the survey funnel video sales letter. The demo video is under 20 minutes. I think it's between 15-16 minutes, and there's a reason for that, because when people get excited about something you want to strike when the iron's hot. For folks who might be looking at writing sales letters or emails, that's the window that you have.

I know webinars are all the rage now, but you don't want something that's going to take an hour and a half to get your message across to your prospect. You want to give them the opportunity to take action while they've got that chemical cocktail in their brain.

Ben Settle: That's fascinating. That 20-minute thing makes a lot of sense, too. One of my business partners – I don't know if he understands the dopamine adrenaline neurotransmitter cocktail angle, but he has the same type of rule. He never goes over 18-20 minutes.

Ryan Levesque: That's funny, and there's a reason for that. It's almost like vodka Red Bull. It's a lethal concoction. You've got the Red Bull, which is the stimulant. You've got the vodka, which kind of makes you loose. It's the same thing that's going on in your brain, in a very different way of course, but it's that combination of dopamine and adrenaline which gets them all hot and bothered and wanting what you've got. Strike while the iron's hot in that 20-minute window.

Ben Settle: Let's go onto the contrarian optin angle. I've been wanting to hear this all week.

Ryan Levesque: One of the things that I use a lot is almost like what many people in laymen's terms would call reverse psychology, but let's take a step back. In most marketplaces, everyone is raising their hand saying, "7 powerful ways to lose weight. It's the ultimate weight loss solution. Get access to this solution. All you need to do is enter your name and email." It's like this hard sell to get people to opt into your list.

But you can take a step back, and instead of trying to sell people on your solution, you almost take a laid back approach. You say, "Listen, I've got the best solution out there, but here's the deal. I don't work with everybody. In fact, I only work with a select few number of people. To prove to me that you qualify or you're a good fit for my solution, you need to answer a few questions first. To find out if you qualify, answer the three simple questions that pop up, enter your name and email, and when you've done that I'll let you know if you're a good fit for this solution."

When you do that it almost exudes confidence in your copy that your solution is "the shit," so you're not trying to over-sell yourself and it flips the whole selling angle on its head. It's like putting someone in a job interview. When someone's in a job interview, they're in desperation and they're trying to sell themselves for everything that they've got, and that's basically what you're doing. You're flipping it on its head.

All the sudden the prospect's saying, "I need to prove that I'm worthy of this solution." They're no longer wondering if your ethical bribe that they're going to get in exchange for entering their name and email is worth their time. They're thinking, "What's it going to take for me to qualify?" It creates this intellectual problem in their mind once you start asking the questions.

In the fitness market you might say, "For the right person, our supplement is the most powerful on the market. The thing is, this does not work for everybody. In fact, it only works for a select number of people. Answer these three simple questions and I'll be able to tell you right now if you're a good fit." People become curious and they want to know if they're a good fit.

You might ask things like, "How would you describe your body type? Are you lean, muscular, flabby? What's your age? What's your gender?" and a few questions like that. You flip the optin thing on its head. You say, "Find out if you qualify for this solution" instead of "Get access now."

It's counterintuitive, but in every single test that I've done across markets in the make money space and not make money space, the "Find out if you qualify" angle almost always out-performs.

Ben Settle: It's a nice take-away, too. Like you said, people are used to being pitched constantly, and it's a reverse pitch. It's almost like they have to sell themselves on you, mentally.

Ryan Levesque: Right, it does a couple things. You can save people time and save yourself time. If someone genuinely isn't a good fit, you can tell them right off the bat. You can say, "Listen, to be perfectly honest, based on the way you answered those questions I don't think I'm going to be able to help you. However, my buddy Ben down the street has this product that I think is going to be perfect for you."

All the sudden it's like, "Holy shit." People believe what you say because you've almost made this damaging admission. You say, "Listen, my product isn't right for you, but I want to be your trusted advisor and I'm going to at least point you in the right direction, so let me tell you about this other thing that may be a better fit for you."

What happens is they've kind of bonded to you because you haven't tried to pitch them. Whether or not they're a good fit, you've taken a step back and you've done more of a consultative assisted sale, so they look at you in a very different way.

If someone's not a good fit and you can tell them up front, you don't need to waste time and energy marketing to that person. In the best-case scenario you can funnel them to

something that may be a better fit. Worst-case scenario, you've taken someone out of your marketing system and you might not even want them opting into your list.

That way you have a much lower risk of getting spam complaints and wasting your customer service resources on customers that are just going to refund anyway because they're not a good fit for your product. So there are all sorts of side benefits to taking that angle, in addition to improving your conversion rate.

Ben Settle: It seems to me the obvious thing to do if they don't qualify for your product is to send them to an affiliate offer.

Ryan Levesque: Exactly. I know you're in different markets, and I'm sure you think in your markets your solution is good, and maybe it's the best one in the market, but there are other solutions out there.

If you have a course for right-handed golfers and someone says they're left-handed, maybe yours isn't the right thing, so you send them to the left-handed golfer's course. They're going to thank you because of that, and everyone is going to end up being better off because you're right. The affiliate offer might be a better-converting offer than your own offer for that segment of your market, and you've kind of nipped the bud up front.

Ben Settle: I'm thinking especially for people who use paid traffic, this sort of thing is a no-brainer. This makes it so that you're far more likely to at least break even on whatever you spend.

Ryan Levesque: Yeah, there's so many benefits to this. It's almost like taking a step back. Like many strategies, it's one of these things that if everybody in the marketplace started taking this angle maybe it would lose its effect, but I don't see that happening anytime soon, because people become so enamored and in love with their own solution that they're afraid to do this sort of thing.

Really, instead of focusing on their product they should be focusing on their customer, and trying to give the best possible solution to their customer instead of trying to find a way to sell their product. When you shift your mindset like that, all the sudden this contrarian angle no longer feels contrarian. It sort of feels like the right thing to do, or the only thing to do.

Ben Settle: You're reminding me of this guy called the greatest negotiator in the world. That's his thing – the most feared negotiator in the world. His name is Jim Camp and that's exactly what he says. He's all about principles versus tactics. It's all about that.

You're not trying to tactically just get everybody to do something. They may not even be a good prospect for you, so why would you waste your time? Everybody benefits if you do the right thing. That's good. That's really good.

What is this Forer effect?

Ryan Levesque: In some ways this ties together everything we've talked about so far, and in some ways it's sort of an advanced concept, and I want to make sure that we do a good job of explaining how it works. It's one of these things that's extremely powerful, but like anything in marketing it can be misused.

I look at persuasion not so much as persuasion per se, but it's the ability to inspire someone to take a positive action. For me, just that change in language helps me understand that what I'm doing is actually designed to give people a positive benefit. It's not designed to trick people into giving me their money.

It's almost like if you could persuade someone to eat healthier and get in shape, that person's going to be better off. If you frame it in terms of inspiring them to take action in a positive way, it allows you to market to them a little bit more aggressively than you might otherwise, because you don't have this nagging feeling in the back of your mind that what you're doing is unethical or underhanded.

What I just said has absolutely nothing to do with the Forer effect. I just want to give that lead-in. The reason I said that is because the Forer effect is one of these things that in the wrong hands you can do great evil with it, so I'm prefacing the conversation with that.

Basically, in a nutshell the Forer effect is this. As human beings, whenever we take anything from a personality test to a survey to opening up a fortune cookie to reading our daily horoscope, our brain has this tendency to want to ascribe the results of that survey, fortune cookie, or horoscope and map it back to our own life. In other words, we find ways when we read our horoscope to justify why it's true.

When someone has their fortune told, even if they don't believe in it, we have this kind of nagging thing that goes on in our brain where we want to say, "Well, maybe there's something to that." Even with our daily horoscope we know.

I don't know how many billions of people are on the planet today, but we can safely say there are over a million other people on the planet that share your birthday. There's no way in hell that everybody on March 23, if that's your birthday, is going to come into money at the same time. We rationally know that that's not possible, yet there's a small part of our brain that says, "Maybe there's something to it."

The same thing happens when we take personality tests. Have you ever taken the Strengths Finder test, by chance?

Ben Settle: No. I've taken the Myers-Briggs test. That's the only one I've ever taken.

Ryan Levesque: I'm a big fan of the Strengths Finder. You buy this book that's like \$10 on Amazon, and basically you take this 50- or 200-question test – I can't remember how many questions it is – and the answers to those questions help you identify what your strengths are. These are the things that you're good at irrespective of whatever occupation you might fall under.

Whether you're a doctor or copywriter, you might have the ability to be a divergent thinker, for example, somebody's who really great at coming up with 50 novel ideas off the top of your head. Or you might be somebody who's really good at focus, with the ability to hunker down on a task, no matter what it may be, and just put everything aside, put blinders on, and really focus in. That's what the Strengths Finder test is. It's a good example to illustrate the Forer effect.

The Forer effect is just a term in psychology, named after a psychologist named Dr. Forer, that says that when you take one of these tests you have this tendency to interpret the results and believe them as being true to you. That's all back story to how can you apply that to marketing.

If we go back to this survey funnel thing and you ask people a series of multiple-choice questions, and at the end of those multiple-choice questions you say, "Thank you very much for your answers. Based on your responses I actually have a customized solution that is designed for people in your exact situation. To find out what that customized solution is just enter your name and email and I'll tell you all about it," what you've done is you've capitalized on the Forer effect.

After people optin, no matter what you put in front of them, even if it's a generic offer and the placebo effect is at play, they're going to believe that the offer they see is customized to their situation. That means they're going to read your offer, they're going to read your sales letter, or they're going to read your copy through the lens that it's specifically designed for them.

In the same way that if someone wrote you a hand-written letter and said in actual handwriting, "Dear Ben, it's so great to catch up with you. I have this really great thing that I want to tell you about," you're going to be reading that letter through the lens that someone took the time to write to you personally and give you their recommendation on something. In reality there could just be this sweatshop of grannies in Wisconsin that are handwriting these things to thousands of prospects, but you believe that it's specifically to you.

When we go back to the whole personality test and survey thing, that's the Forer effect. The net benefit to you as a marketer when you understand that and can use that ethically is it dramatically improves your conversion rates, because when people think a solution is geared to them personally, it's customized to them, they're much more likely to convert.

If I put together a customized package for you versus saying, "I've got three products that I sell: A, B, and C" or I create something that's 100% customized to you, Ben, which one do you think is going to have a higher conversion rate? The one that's geared toward you.

You can create that perception in your marketing that what you've done is packaged together a customized solution, and the prospect is going to be much more likely to convert. You can use that Forer effect by building a simple three- to four-question survey in your marketing and integrating it before people optin.

Ben Settle: That's interesting. How does all this relate to the survey funnel plugin that you've created?

Ryan Levesque: That's a great question. Everything we've talked about is sort of like the psychology behind a number of different things. You can apply this psychology in a number of different ways in your marketing, but what we've done is we've created this simple little tool. It's a WordPress plugin that allows you to capitalize on all these psychological effects that we talked about.

- Use micro-commitments and getting people to take baby steps before they make the commitment to optin
- Using open loops by planting a seed in your prospect's mind and teasing them with a big benefit before you actually give it to them
- Holding attention by creating this cocktail of neurotransmitters in your prospect's brain
- Using a contrarian optin angle and positioning your offer as a "Find out if you qualify" offer or "Find out if you're a good fit" versus "This is the best offer for you."
- Using the Forer effect

We've created a simple little tool that allows you to capitalize on all those psychological effects at once by building these simple one-click surveys that automatically funnel people into the most appropriate autoresponder sequence, the most appropriate affiliate offer, the

most appropriate CPA offer, the most appropriate sales letter, whatever they need, based specifically on the way in which they answer a few simple survey questions.

The cool thing about this plugin is that it's something that you can set up in just five or six minutes, all within your WordPress backend, with zero programming required and no coding. All you need to do is literally drag and drop, click a few things, and decide which questions you want to ask your prospects.

It's also the type of thing that it helps to see in action. It's one thing to hear us talk about it or read about it in a transcript, but it's something that when you see the demo and see how it works at play, you'll know in just a few minutes if it's something that you can apply in your business.

For anyone listening to this or reading this who might be wondering, "I'd like to learn more," I think the most helpful thing we can do is point them to a demo of it in action, so they can see how it's being used on a real live website right now.

It's the type of thing that when you see it being used in someone else's business, all the sudden the wheels start turning and you start thinking, "How can I apply this in my business?" In the course of a few minutes, if you're like most people and if it's a good fit for you, you'll probably be writing 10-20 ideas on the back of a napkin.

**To check out Ryan's "Survey Funnel"
and get it at a special 50% discount until April 15th,
use the unique affiliate link below:**

<http://vantagenet.surveyf.hop.clickbank.net?tid=47special>