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February 18, 2026,  
1:45 to 3:30 p.m. ET

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>> Give it a few minutes for everybody to get in.

(Pause)

>> KOHELL: All right, everybody, I'm giving it a few minutes to everybody to get in.

(Pause)

All right. We are going to start, my name's Kochell, and I'm one of the small business specialists with NDI. We're just going to take care of some housekeeping things as we start.

First of all, thank you for joining us today. So we have a presentation I think you'll enjoy. But kind of the disclaimer that we go forward with is this is the boring stuff, of course, we have to start out with.

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Couple other things for housekeeping.

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NDI Small Business Hub Programs. There are a few here that we offer. Inclusive ventures, 21st century strategies for entrepreneurs with disabilities.

This is a five-year grant-funded program that began October 21 -- I'm sorry, October 1, 2024, and will support the following: State vocational rehabilitation agencies updating policies on small business start-up and development.

State vocational rehabilitation counselors seeking training and confidence in supporting self-employment.

Disability employment services providers expanding their support of self-employment.

Entrepreneurial support organizations adopting more inclusive practices to support individuals with disabilities.

Entrepreneurs with disabilities at any stage of business development.

Verizon small business digital ready. Learning. On demand videos, tools, and courses on marketing, legal, financial, operations, and trending topics are available in English, Spanish, with Chinese subtitles.

Community and networking. Interactive sessions for goal-sharing and feedback with live expert workshops.

Funding. Small business funding marketplace, it's powered by Next Street. Access to \$10,000 grant opportunities by completing two classes/live sessions.

And there's a link to register now.

NDI Small Business Hub Programs last slide.

Are you a business owner or aspiring entrepreneur with a disability looking to start, build, or grow your business? Visit' [disabilitysmallbusiness.org](http://disabilitysmallbusiness.org) for events and resources.

You can stream informational and motivational video content for disability-owned small businesses at [disabilityowned.com](http://disabilityowned.com).

You want to stay in the know about NDI's Small Business Hub? You can join our mailing list.

Questions or concerns? Please email [info@disabilitysmallbusiness.org](mailto:info@disabilitysmallbusiness.org).

We do have some upcoming events. We have the small business taxes with the IRS. That's presented by Carol Xie and Daniel Weber from the IRS. And that's coming up March 4, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. eastern.

SSDI basics presented by Cornell University. That is on March 18, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. eastern.

And SSI basics, again presented by Cornell University, on April 15, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. eastern.

Okay. That is all the housekeeping. Now we're ready to join Coko in the art of great go-to-marketing strategy and how much to prepare your business for the big launch.

So Coko, I'm going to turn it over to you.

>> COKO EASON: Awesome. Thank you so much, Kochell. I will try to share my screen. Let's see here. Am I good on you guys' end? Everything there?

Good?

>> Yes, we can see it.

>> COKO EASON: Awesome. All right. My name is Coko. Currently I'm the senior program manager for Together International. If you're not familiar with Together International, we're the leading accelerator program in the world for disabled founders. So we have several different incubators and accelerator programs that we do throughout the year where we're giving coaching, resources financing, mentorship to early stage founders who are just getting started on their idea or maybe have just recently launched and need a boost growing from zero to 100 as fast as possible.

My background is actually in music and entertainment. I used to work for Sony Music for ten years doing live events, live experiences, activations, things of that nature.

After that ten-year mark, I transitioned into the tech industry myself as a founder. I had my own start-up company called Milk the Moment. And Milk the Moment was involved in

several large accelerators itself, one for Google, one for Comcast and one called Velocity.

And every time I entered into one of those accelerator programs, the program director would always say if Milk the Moment doesn't make it, you need to be leading accelerators yourself. It happened in every program I was in.

And sometimes people just see things in you that you don't see in yourself. So I listen to them. And I've been leading accelerators now for about seven years now. So I think I've counted almost 750 start-ups that I have had the pleasure of mentoring and guiding and training and trying to help them on their start-up journey.

And if you're not familiar with the start-up world, there's this horrible statistic, I think it's around 94% of start-ups fail in this kind of start-up world. And it's usually because of three things.

So one is the founder has made something that the market just doesn't want and doesn't need.

Number 2 is usually funding. They just don't have the cash flow or the funds to get started or to sustain. And then also the last is they go-to-market way too early and they try to scale way too fast.

And that's kind of where I feel like my expertise lies in that third reasoning of seeing founders kind of rush to launch their product and they're skipping over some really meticulous, small steps that they should be doing.

I think this is because of the culture of investors. A lot of investors want to see that you've made money quickly. And a lot of it.

And so founders tend to take a big leap into rushing to try to make money, and they're skipping over these steps that are really, really important to the success of their launch. And that's what we're going to talk about today.

So today's webinar is before you go to market, why most go-to-market strategies fail and how you can make your product launch insanely successful.

So I first want to start off by talking about the difference between a small business owner and a founder. So on the small business owner side, if that's you, you're usually working in a very well-known space. You have a well-known business model. You probably know your customer, you know what your customer likes to hear, what they don't want to hear.

You know what your customer is used to paying so you know how to charge a specific type of price.

You may have gotten started with a \$10,000 loan, and as soon as you launched and put out the announcement that you're open, you can start making money that very same day.

But on the start-up founder side of things it's much different. Founders are usually working in a very unknown space. So they do not know who their customer is. They do not know what price they're supposed to charge, their business modeling, the words they're supposed to use. Everything is unknown. That's why it's literally the word founder. They have to end too these answers to these questions.

And also they're in a very innovative space. Meaning, they're inventing something new. They're creating and developing something that may have never been heard of, right.

So on this -- in this spacing, they tend to have to go to investors to get millions of dollars because they're creating something from scratch that nobody has ever seen or engaged with before.

So because they're working in this really unknown space, unlike a small business owner, they can't just kind of open one day and launch and say give me your money, let's make this business thrive.

Nobody knows what they're talking about. Nobody has seen this thing. They don't know who they are. People don't know if the money is worth it. People don't even believe if this can work for them.

Some folks don't even know that they have a problem that needs to be solved.

So on the founders side, we can't just kind of put an ad out and think that it's going to land and money is just going to start flowing our way and people are going to just start buying our product.

We have to kind of approach the market much differently. So we do that with a go-to-market strategy.

So a go-to-market strategy is a step-by-step plan for launching a new product or expanding an existing product into a new market. And I want you guys to focus on that step by step. It is manual. It is slow. It is small. It's personal. Meaning, you may be the one that has to do the selling and the pitching to each customer until it's time to scale.

And this is the part where a lot of people want to skip this part. They want to operate like a small business owner and hope to just make an announcement. Kinda like the movie what is it? Field of Dreams, they want to build it and hope that people will come. That's not how it works.

And so what happens is they'll skip those important steps - - and we're going to talk about what those steps are -- but they'll step those steps. They'll rush to launching and putting out posters and billboards and emails until something happens. And two things happen, it's complete silence, no clicks, no

downloads, nobody pays. Or people are trying to figure out what this is.

So they may click, they may read, they may book a call or download a free trial. But still nothing really happens after that. This is a weird place for founders to be in because they can't figure out what's wrong.

A lot of founders think it must be my product. People must not like my product.

But what they should be asking is, what should I have gone to market? When should I have launched my product?

In most cases, the product didn't fail, it's the timing that was wrong. So when you're about to go to market, you don't want to do this until you have conviction and make people believe in what you do.

Remember what I said in the beginning, founders are working in this unknown space and people they're trying to present their product to have a ton of question marks floating around their head.

Any time anyone has a ton of questions, I don't know what this is, I don't know why it's a thousand dollars, I don't know if it's going to work for me, I don't know if I need it. Nobody's going to buy when they have that many questions rotating around their head.

So this is what I've seen with working with 750 founders over the years, this is where I've seen them make the mistake. They're skipping the steps which I call belief formation steps.

It's when you get people understanding it better and believing in the product that you have. And once you have that, maybe we can start going at scale and blasting this message to the masses.

But until you have that, you really need to be almost manually talking to each customer yourself. And this is the step that a lot of founders want to skip.

So this actually kind of came about from a guy named Paul Graham. He's the founder of one of the biggest accelerators in the world, Y Combinator. And Paul Graham has this saying do things that don't scale.

So what he's basically saying is the most unscalable thing founders have to do at the start is to recruit users manually. Nearly all start-ups have to do this.

You can't wait for users to come to you, you have to go to each one in the beginning, by yourself, manually. Again, this is a process that a lot of people want to skip. But I'm going to make sure that you understand by the end of this webinar why this is so important.

So let's talk about start-ups that didn't scale fast. They did this whole manual one-by-one customer in the beginning process and now they're multibillion dollar companies.

So we have Stripe. If you're not familiar with Stripe, Stripe is an online payment processing system. If you've ever probably used your credit card online, there's a big chance you were using your credit card through Stripe's software.

And when Stripe first launched, they launched by going to conferences and exhibits and they would stop at each booth and install Stripe on each person's laptop themselves, make it a custom profile, would give them a demo, and would stand right there as that person used Stripe to basically make them believe that Stripe was the best solution, the quickest solution, and the easiest solution.

And now we know Stripe is a multibillion dollar company. But that's how they started. They did this for one year. Airbnb started the same way. They went house by house. They had to try to convince every house that this is something you want to do and you'll make money. It's safe.

And what they did was they said, I'll offer you some interior design. We'll come in here and help you make this a more warm and welcoming space. We'll take the pictures for you and do a photo shoot. Anything they could do to make this customer believe in Airbnb, they did it manually, house to house.

Now we know that Airbnb is for sure a multibillion dollar company.

And bumble, the dating app, it used to go on college campuses.

It would manually in person match couples and take them out on dates and pay for the date. This was these kind of like experiences that they were creating to make sure that people not only understood the product, but believed in the results of the product.

So this is older than tech. We've all experienced this since we were kids, we just didn't know it was called belief formation. But this whole try before you buy thing has been out for decades. We can start with the grocery store sampling. We've all been in a grocery store. I don't know if they do it till this day, but we've all been in the grocery store and we smell something cooking. There's a little man behind the counter we are smoked sausages on the grill. Putting toothpicks in them, serving them around. He's got a good crowd. Telling us there's no preservatives, it's locally sourced, you can cook them in under three minutes and before you know it you're going to the grocery store to get cereal and milk and now you're walking out with three packages of smoked sausages but this old man at the

counter gave you an experience to make you believe that these were the best sausages around.

Another -- another example would be dealership test drives, right?

I don't know anybody in here who would just let a salesman call them on the phone and say hey, I got a car, you'll love it. Send me \$10,000. We wouldn't buy it, right? Because we don't believe it yet. We need to be convicted on this. We need to believe in this car, that this car belongs to us and would be a great choice.

So car dealerships allow us to come to the lot, do test drives. Back in the day they used to let you take the car home for two days so you can experience it like it was yours, right.

And this is what helps them sell cars like crazy.

Shoe store, when you go in a shoe store, you know, you're looking for something, maybe you have flat feet and looking for something that's going to be comfortable. We don't take the salesman's words by just face value, we try them on. They let us walk around the store. We jump around. We get in front of the mirror.

These are all experiences that make us believe. And once you have belief, it's so much easier to land the sale with someone.

And lastly, an example like a real estate tour, right. Kind of going back to the dealership example, we wouldn't let a real estate agent just call us and say I have a house for you you're going to love it, it's \$500,000. Just believe me and send me the deposit.

We want a tour, don't we? We want to walk around. We get an expert to come in and check the house and make sure it's good. Usually they have decorated the house in a way to make us feel like it's our home and we're at home, it's warm and cozy.

These are all belief formation experiences that people have to do to make us buy. We can't just announce, you got to let people experience the result of the product first.

And we've gotten away from this for some reason. I think it may be due to technology and technology making a lot of things easier and faster.

So we've tried to skip this step. But this is the one thing that kind of makes the difference between a unicorn company, which means a multibillion dollar company, versus the start-ups that I keep seeing that tend to fail.

So experiences create belief. The best way to create conviction and potential customers is through the power of an experience. This can be an event, activation, pop-up, social media campaign that somehow lets customers experience the result

of purchasing your product. That's the key phrase, the result of purchasing your product.

Remember that try before you buy.

Now I did this when I had my company Milk the Moment. So Milk the Moment was a mobile application that rewarded you whenever you did not use your phone in places or situations where we shouldn't be on our phone, right?

So on dates, at the dinner table, movie theater, school, while driving. So how it worked is you would activate the app, put your phone away, and every minute that the phone was in use, you would accrue these points. And then those points could be redeemed towards a reward, okay.

So how I launched Milk the Moment was through a happy hour experience. So I partnered with a local restaurant that wasn't used to getting a lot of traffic during the week. And I said, I can bring you traffic if you let me have this place for free.

And I want to have an experience where I'll get people to download the app, put the phone away, network and socialize with themselves and one another and then see if they can stay off the phone for at least an hour, all right.

So 67 people showed up to this belief formation experience, as I like to call it. And each person that was coming through the door I helped them put the app on their phone, gave them a quick demo, helped them put the phone away and activated it, and we saw people just have the greatest time.

And then once an hour went past, I rang this bell, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. And I told everybody, it's been an hour and none of you have touched your phones, you've been so engaged with one another, you've met new people, you've told stories, everybody go check your phone.

And so they go check their phone and they turn it on, there's a notification that says you've won a free appetizer. And so everybody goes to the counter to get their free appetizer. People are celebrating.

It was a really cool moment. Afterwards, another notification popped up and said now will you share this with at least three friends. Almost all of them did. Some of them shared it with more than three friends. By the time I got home I had 330 new customers. This is from a one-hour, free event. 330.

So imagine if I did something bigger than this or another happy hour. This could have just basically compounded into a huge user base for me, just off of free experiences.

Now belief works everywhere. I know I've been talking from a founder perspective and talking from maybe like a tech perspective and the tech industry.

But this really works anywhere for whatever you're selling. So let's say I was a founder of a new sports drink that hydrates

instantly and provides a cooling sensation for athletes who play outdoors. In five seconds it will cool your temperature off, right?

Now I could put a billboard up about this and a Facebook ad. But I'm going to run into what those problems that I told you a lot of founders usually run into where it just won't land. Because people have never heard of this.

They're not sure if it really works. They're not sure if they believed this.

So it's my job to not just blast this out to the masses, but to do that one-by-one, step-by-step approaching customers myself. All right.

So an experience that I may do is go to a football camp where there's tons of football players hot and sweaty and tired and maybe even sick. And I put up a little tent and a table and all I need is one person to come over and try this.

So let's say the quarterback comes over, he tries it and in five seconds his whole body temperature changes. He feels energized, he's blown away. He believes, he is now a believer. Once I have one believer, the next thing I want to do is get that believer to almost become my salesman now. I need you go tell your running back, your coaches, your linebackers about what you just experienced and how you're a believer.

And the next thing you know, I have the whole team coming over to the tent trying the drinks. And the coach has bought 25 cases from me.

But this is how belief can kind of compound once you get one, there's a strategy. And I know I'm not going into details of what that strategy is due to the webinar, but there's a strategy to turn one believer into your evangelist, if you will.

So let me give you another example. Let's say I have a digital dog leash or dog collar that detects your dog's stress levels and sends notifications to your phone. All right.

I could just blast this out in an email, put it on LinkedIn, hope somebody sees it and believes what I say. Or I can do the process which is step by step, and I can go to a dog park and I can find one dog owner that I convince to put this collar on their dog.

And they look at their phone and those notifications start coming in. Now they believe. They see their dog may be hot. Their dog may be under stress. Whatever it may be. But they see it for themselves. They get to experience the result of the product themselves.

And this person buys this dog collar right there at the park. Now it's my job to turn this one believer into 12 believers. And I'm going to use that one person that believes to go be my evangelist and get other people to believe as well.

Because belief spreads through other belief, right?

Belief spreads when another person has belief. So I want to use that person's belief to keep the belief compounded, all right.

So you may be wondering, if I wanted to an experience for myself, how would I even think of this? How would I conceptualize and experience?

So here's some questions to ask yourself. These are the ones to ask yourself. To do a simple, free belief formation experience. So you may want to say where does my customer already work, play, socialize or shop?

Or who's already selling to my customer and how I can partner with them?

Those are customer-related questions that you can ask yourself to get started on conceptualizing your own experience.

Now product-related questions can be can I create a way for my customer to experience the final results of my product? That's key. That's chef's kiss if you can create a way for them to instantly receive the result of your product. Kind of like what I did at the football camp. He instantly saw that he got cooler, that he got more energized. It wasn't something that I told him. And that he had an experience once he got home while I have them -- while I have that person right there, I want to make sure that this person is able to feel and experience and engage with the result of my product.

Now sometimes you can't always do that because you may have a product like let's say hair serum. We're not going to see a difference in five seconds with a hair growth serum.

So when it's kind of impossible for you to show the result to your customer or potential customer right then and there, then you want to more so concentrate on your value propositions.

So the things that make your product unique. For hair serum I may say there's no harsh chemicals. It's not sticky. It doesn't smell. There's no scent to it. It's not runny. And this will last three months. You get a bang for your buck. Whatever those value propositions are, I'll at least try to see if there's a way to have that potential customer experience the value propositions.

So these are some questions you want to start off asking yourself.

So proximity growth, I kind of touched on this earlier, but belief spreads by environment. So once proof exists, convince -- conviction will begin to compound, right?

Those examples that I gave you about the dog park and the football camp, belief started to spread because it was one person that believed who went and told somebody that they know.

And then those two people went and told somebody that they know. And that's why it started to grow so quickly.

So I don't want you to get discouraged about this kind of manual step-by-step process because if you do it correctly, you'll start seeing that the growth will just compound as quickly as possible.

But what you must do is you must capture that belief in some type of way, whether that's a case study, a review, some type of testimonial, social evidence, whatever it is, a video. You have to capture that first person believing in the product and witnessing the product for themselves.

Because like I said, one person's belief is going to help another person believe in what you're doing, all right.

So this will compound if you do it correctly. But there is a strategy to making sure that you do the right type of experience at the right place with the right type of people, that you're talking to them in the certain type of way, and that you're making sure that you almost coach them on how can they go to the people that they know and sell this for you on your behalf.

Belief compounds fast. This is something that Paul discovered I want to say with 10,000 start-ups in his career. He said we encourage every start-up to measure its progress biweekly growth rate. If you have 100 users, you need to get ten more next week to grow 10%.

And while 110 may not seem much better than 100, if you keep growing at 10% a week, you'll be surprised how big the numbers get. After a year, you'll have 14 how to users, and after two years, you could have up to 2 million users.

So belief compound will spread quickly. So I want to kind of teach you guys a little bit more on how do you build an entire belief strategy for your business.

Now I know there's some small writing on this screen. And so what I'll tell Laura or NDI to do is put the link to The Belief Formation Canvas in the chat and you guys can visit this and blow it up as big as you want and interact with this canvas and engage with it and answer these questions that you see on the screen to help you build your own belief formation canvas.

So basically what's on this screen is kind of two flywheels or pin wheels, if you will. So we got one on the left and we got one on the right.

The one on the left is you building out your experience. What is it going to look like? What are you going to have people do? What tools are you going to use? What announcements are you going to make? How are you going to make sure that they experience the result? And how are you going to capture it? Are

you going to have a videographer there? Are you going to get people to leave a review via writing?

Whatever it may be, you've got to capture the proof, right?

And as soon as that proof is captured, it's going to knock over and tip into the proximity growth wheel. And that's when it's going to start compounding. So that's when one person goes and tells two. Two people tells six. Six people tells 12. 12 tells 36, and it will start going and going and going.

And like I said, I know I'm kind of giving you some blanket details here. There's a big art form in science to how you talk to these people during your experience, how you sell, things you should say and you should not say, which I don't really have the time to break down in this webinar.

But I will have some tools for you to learn more about this at the end. And I hope this is making sense for everyone.

So to give you kind of an example of this, I think we've all been on Amazon shopping before to where let's say we're looking up some type of skincare. And instantly Amazon will say, top seller. Best pick. You know, overall best pick. They're highlighting it, pushing it, putting banners on top of this image, this product image.

And we'll look and it says 3,000 reviews, 5 stars, and 40,000 sales this month.

Psychologically, our brain is going to go to that product? And why is it going to go to that product? Because that product has so much belief.

Like I said, once people believe, others don't really need to be sold to. We just start believing other people's belief. Right?

So if 40,000 people have tried this and liked it, I don't need the CEO to call me and try to convince me and sell me on this. Other people have belief, now I will because other people bought it and have.

Now if there's another product to the right of it, it has five stars but only three sales, instantly we're going to think that product is not good. And what has happened is this product has probably gone to the market into the masses way too soon and it didn't take the time to build more belief and have that compounding effect going on.

However, if I click on that product on the left that only has three sales and three reviews, and I look at those reviews and those reviews happen to be my mom, my grandmother, and my sister, I may buy that because I know those people. Right?

They're in proximity to me. Like I explained before, if you spread through proximity, you'll do much better at growing and scaling your business because people love to buy from someone that they know.

So two things happen. Either customers are going to buy from someone that they know, or they're going to buy once they see that thousands have believed. But until one of those have happened, you don't want to jump to spending \$10,000 on ads and trying to make this big announcement to a million people. And you have one sale.

Imagine being on a stage trying to sell like a book or something like that to 10,000, 15,000 people. You get on the stage and say I've sold one book. People are not going to be impressed with that.

But if you were in a room with somebody you know, and you say I've only sold one, okay, well we may have a bigger chance of purchasing -- getting a purchase and a transaction.

When you announce to big crowds, big crowds want to see big proof. And that's why I try to tell founders all the time, slow down. You haven't made one sale. You haven't had any customer reviews or anything, and you're jumping to make these big announcements to big crowds who need to see big proof.

Instead, start with small crowds. Start with a happy hour of 60 people, right?

Start with a football field of 27 guys. Start with a dog park of 7 dog owners and go and personally and manually step by step try to convince these people to believe in your product, capture that belief, and then you can go and do the bigger announcements to the bigger crowds.

And ways to do that is several different ways. There's top 6 ways that people like to try to scale that I have here on this screen. The top 6 ways are founder led, product led, sales led, community led, partner led, and content led.

So this just means this is what's going to be at the forefront for me to scale my business. So if I was an expert in whatever I was selling, maybe I'm some type of famous doctor, I've got a huge following, I've got tons of patients, and I've come out with a product, it probably makes sense when I'm ready to go big for me to be the person that spreads that.

So that means I would be founder led. Maybe I'm going to get on podcasts and radio stations and TV shows and Ted talks. I need to be the one that makes the big announcements to the masses, because I'm the expert and I've got a lot of following and maybe I'm already kind of famous.

So it make sense for me to choose founder led. But maybe you have some type of product that looks really good content-wise. It looks good on video. It looks good on podcasts being presented on podcast and in blog articles and other social media posts.

Well then maybe that's the way that you should start going to the masses is through a lot of content and a big content strategy.

And the same thing can happen if you want to do community, if you want to do partners. Sometimes people will just partner with someone that's bigger than them and that's the way that they'll scale to the masses.

There's several different ways once you're ready, once you have that conviction and that belief, there's several different ways that you can now, boom, blow up to a whole bunch of people. But just remember, blowing up to a whole bunch of people, they want to see a whole bunch of proof or they want to hear about it from somebody they know.

And if you don't have either of those, usually it's not going to land. And when it doesn't land, the first thing you're going to think is I have a horrible product and I need to get rid of it and really nine times out of ten, you may not have a horrible product, it was just the timing and you skipping those steps and being in a little bit of a rush to want to go to market and present this to the masses.

So I have kind of worked on a book called before you go-to-market. It's how experiences build belief and lead to an insanely successful product launch.

And this book is basically talking about some of the things that I've talked about in this webinar. And it's basically showing you how to put the strategies in place in those small, meticulous steps, how to do them right, and how to know exactly at the point where, boom, you can now make your announcement and start scaling and growing.

It's going to teach you how to build that strategy out step by step and break down things you should say, things you shouldn't say. How should you sell to that one person that's never of heard before and how do you get that one person to sell for you. All the strategies are in there.

The book is still being finalized. So we're doing preorders today. Laura, if you don't mind putting the link to this book in the chat. I'm not sure if the -- the QR Code works right there, that could be an older one. If that doesn't work, please see the chat for the actual link that will send you to this preorder book.

I'm giving you guys a huge discount to are it today. 60% off. So it's like \$7, maybe \$8 with tax. But you'll put your preorder in, your preorder will be on file and then once this book is ready, it will be sent to your email in a PDF form.

All right. So I'm done, that was a little bit quicker than I thought it would be. But this leaves time for some questions,

some Q&A. So thank you guys for your time and attention on today.

I hope this was helpful.

>> NIKKI: That was amazing, Coko. I think we all learned a lot and I know I did. And no, your QR Code does not work, just so you do know that.

One of the things that maybe you can kind of expand on a little bit is somebody really wants to know about the belief information experience. If you have a service-based business rather than a product.

Can you give us a little bit about that?

>> COKO EASON: Yeah. I've coached some people who have had a service-based business. So maybe they were trying to do some type of consulting maybe with another business, Nikki. And they have literally hosted a breakfast, an informational breakfast where they went into the company, they brought donuts, they brought pastries, and they went ahead and just gave a presentation on what -- what their service does, what their service could bring.

It's kind of hard with services to share that result because I love for you to try to, in your experience, let the customer see the result of your services. And sometimes that's hard with a service-based business.

But sometimes with service based businesses, if you can find a way to do an in-person demonstration about what you do, it lands so much differently than doing a virtual one in the beginning.

So that would be my advice is to just try to find a way to get in front of your potential customer and show them what you're doing. If there's any type of way for them to experience the result right then and there, you usually have them sold.

But if anything, show them the value propositions, show them the features, show them how your services work in person, if possible. Because that just lands so much better than sending out emails and trying to get into people's direct messages and LinkedIn inboxes and hoping for their attention.

People will answer you when you say, I'd like to host a breakfast for your employees where I'll bring to this, that, and the third and passing out some things and giving you some guide books or whatever it may be. Some printouts.

That lands usually much stronger than the virtual kind of reach out and contact.

>> NIKKI: Yeah, I love the thing about the appetizers. I thought, you know, now that must have cost you money, though. So I guess my next question is, you know, your return on investment.

So if -- is there sort of in any -- I mean, I guess it depends on what kind of budget someone's got to work with. Is there any sort of magic around that?

Is there -- should I --

>> COKO EASON: Yeah, I think that's where it -- well, my happy hour was free. This guy needed more business, in his -- in his establishment. So I found somebody where it was dual for both of us. Where it was beneficial for both of us.

That's what I said, ask yourself, is there somebody already doing something with my potential customer to where if we combine this will be beneficial for the both.

So I sold it to him. I said you don't have anybody coming in here at 5:00 on a Tuesday. I'll bring you 60, 70 people. If you can give out little samples of your appetizers as a reward, this is a way for people to know about your restaurant, try your food.

In exchange, I get 67 customers who then refer out to 330 customers and it's a big win for the both of us.

All of my experiences have been free, Nikki. I've always been able to partner with somebody who needed help too. Or some of the ones that I told you about just going to the dog park and sitting there and seeing if you can talk to somebody, that's free.

Now I have seen some companies and founders where it doesn't make sense for them to just pop up and start talking to people. They got a complicated type of product to where they may have to do a little bit more. They may have to rent a venue.

They may have to pop-up some technology, get some help, get some people in. And it's a little bit more complex.

I talk about that in my book on how to do some of those more complex type of experiences just in case you do have a little unique type of business model.

And how can you possibly get those funded, sponsored and paid for just in case you don't have the money out of pocket to do that.

>> NIKKI: Right, wonderful tips. I love that. You talked about if you're going to talk to a large audience you need to bring a large number of proof with you.

Is there any kind of magic equation that sort of says you really need to have "X" number before people -- and I know that you said if my mom or grandma are buying it, then you know, I only need one or two people.

But if you're going to sort of do that mass market with that large group, that sort of number do we really need to be credible, I guess?

>> COKO EASON: I don't know if there's like a magic number, Nikki, but I will say people usually aren't moved until they

hear hundreds. I got 200 sales or 150 sales. And if the number is smaller, maybe giving more information on how quickly you got those, that can be impressive too.

So I made 67 sales in two minutes sounds big, just saying I got 67 sales doesn't. But if you to say I opened up my store, I launched my store on my website and within three minutes I made 67 sales, that may be a little bit more impressive to a large crowd as well.

Hundreds is usually kind of that sweet spot. But if you're not in the hundreds brag on something else. My first sale was with Serena Williams. Or I opened my store in five minutes and I made 67 something. But people want to hear that somebody else believed before they believed and they want to be impressed by that number.

So if the number's not big, find something else to brag on, to join that smaller number.

>> NIKKI: Right, right, okay, gotcha.

The other thing also is kind of like -- like if you mentioned, you know, don't go to market too early. Make sure you've done all this.

What if I've already done that? What if I went to market too early and you said there for your believe your product's the problem?

So what should I do in that case? How to I make sure I determine is it my product? Is it something else?

What can I do to kind of reverse the situation?

>> COKO EASON: So if it's a tech product, there's a lot of different tools that you can kind of drop into your tech software or whatever your tech code is that will kind of watch the behaviors of people interacting with each other if it's a website or store front or app or software, sometimes it will let you know, this person got to this page and left. Actually 30 people got to this page and left.

So that will start letting you know something about this page on this website is turning some people off.

So what you may do is go in there and change some words, change the picture out, try again. See if you're still getting that same type of results.

So there's tools that will study people's behavior for you if it's tech.

If it's not tech, you may have to do some of this manually yourself. If you don't have a tech product but more of a tangible product, it may be some way, okay, this Nikki Powis left her email address on my website but they never bought. I'm going to email Nikki and see if I can ask her is there a reason why you didn't make the purchase?

I saw it in your cart, you never went through it. And Nikki may come back and say yeah, I just don't know if I want to pay \$70 for this. I don't know if it will work.

So what she's basically telling you is I'm not sure about this, I don't know if I want to spend my money. But there's ways to look into what the reasoning may be.

If it seems like it's not the product, people weren't scared about the product, they were scared about price and if the results were going to work, then there's no shame in starting back over, Nikki, and going back to let me slow down before I go to market, let me try to build this belief with each and every person so I can have this reviews and testimonies and some videos that would now do the selling for me. Because people will believe that more than they will believe me.

I hope that's helpful.

>> NIKKI: Yeah, yeah. And so someone else has asked, content-led was listed. How do you know to use content-led in the belief formation?

>> COKO EASON: I will say content led is if there's a product that you have that is kind of fancy, it's kind of eye catching, it's something that would kind of blow people away when she see the inner workings of it.

If you see somebody selling a gadget and they break it open and show you the inner workings and bring it back together. If you can do those types of things with your product where the content would stop somebody from scrolling, I would say that's definitely a content-led strategy that you should probably pursue.

I've led with content, after I did some of the happy hours, Nikki, and experiences, after that I led with content. I started putting out videos of people using my app at home. Moms with their kids trying to get their kids to not use the phone during homework time or during dinner table time.

I would put that out because I knew so many other moms would resonate with that. I can't get my kids off the phone either. So I knew that was going to be something that just scrolling past instantly it would catch people's eye.

So if you had that type of product that you know would resonate with a lot of people, content led may be the way.

But if you're making some type of complex, data-driven, artificial intelligence that nobody really understands, then maybe you need to go a different route. Maybe you need to go possibly the product-led route.

Which means you let everybody jump on there for free for 30 days and there's videos and things kind of guiding them through how to work the software.

Or maybe you go the community route where let's say you got a product for doctors. How I can go find a hundred doctors that want to come into had community and talk. And after they talk and engage and network with one another, I kind of slide in that I've got the solution that can -- that can help them.

But try different ones. You don't have to stick to one of those product led, founder led, content led. There's some people who are doing three at a time.

Like I said, once you have that proof, you can go crazy with how much you want to try to promote, get the word out. Choose everything that works. If it's one, fine. But if it's six different ways that you could probably scale right now, try all six.

Yeah, there's kinda no boundaries once you have belief. Belief is the best way to advertise, I think. A lot of times when you go to market too early, you don't really have anything to say, Nikki, other than to say I've got a product that's \$99.99. But once you have product, you can say I changed this person's life in 60 days. Hear from Samantha and her story. That's so much more powerful than making an announcement that I have a product that exists. Listen to Samantha and how I changed her life in 30 days.

Those are the ads that I would rather see and that a lot of potential customers would probably rather see.

So wait until you have that evidence, and then go to market.

>> NIKKI: That's great, thank you. Someone else is asking for resources and support through NDI. You certainly can connect with us. I will have one of my team members put something in the chat so that you have contact information.

I think it's also the slides at the beginning if you have questions you can connect with us through our info thing.

But I was also thinking, Coko, I know that Together International has that great kind of meet-up thing where you don't have to be someone that's already involved with 2GI and it's a great space to ask other people and founders who have come before who have the experience, really that peer-to-peer help.

Can you tell us a little bit about that and make sure that we can get that link into the chat? I'm not sure if we've got it, you might need to -- we probably to, but anyway.

>> COKO EASON: If we don't have it I can share my email address and get some resources out to whoever's interested.

But at Together International, we have three different accelerator programs that we do. One is Venture Labs, and that's for people who are more so in the idea stage of their business. It's just kind of an idea in their head, they really haven't

done much with it, maybe they've made a landing page or some social media pages and told a couple friends about it. But that's about it.

Venture Labs would be great if you're in the beginning stages.

And then the intermediate stage, that's the MVP, that's for people that have something tangible and ready to test. That's where I'll be teaching this belief formation in that program.

And then we have our fall accelerator. That's more advanced.

That's for people who wept -- went through the belief, they got those couple hundred people who believe, and now they're ready to scale and take off for venture capital. That usually happens in October.

And in the in between time we have a meet-up called the disability meet-up we meet once a month. I don't have that link on me, but Laura, if you want to put my email address in there, I can supply that to whoever's interested.

But they're just 45-minute Zoom calls where our staff is available to answer any questions. But sometimes we also may have a founder who's worked with us in the past who will be there to give you guys some insight on their experience, how they came to us with just an idea and now they've raised \$5 million and have blown their business up.

And it's a great kind of fireside chat to hear from some of our alumni.

Yes, if you're interested in any of our programs or being invited in the disability start-up meet-ups, I'll put my information in the chat and send that information to whoever is interested.

>> NIKKI: Thank you, so much. We have the link in the chat for the community togetherinternational.org which is the community link and Coko's chat as well. Together is an amazing organization with the venture lab and the different types of accelerator programs that they have.

So definitely worth checking that out.

And your -- your sort of meet-up that's on Zoom, is it always on the third Thursday of the month at 2:00 or, you know, what is the cadence for that?

>> COKO EASON: It's pretty consistent. I believe it's on a Wednesday at around noon or 1:00. We try to get it to line up with people's lunch break just in case they got to breakaway.

So usually around noon or 1:00 p.m. But yeah, there's a cadence. It's once a month, probably, like you said, the third Thursday of every month.

If you sign and you're on our list, we send you reminders that it's coming up so you don't miss a chance to be involved and invited.

>> NIKKI: Okay, that's great. I think in past cohorts and things that we've had, one of the really most valuable thing is connecting with other founders, connecting with other people that have sort of tried.

And kind of back to your concept that this sort of whole go to market is about is talking to people who have been there, done that, know the information, who believe in what they've done.

>> COKO EASON: Yes.

>> NIKKI: So would definitely encourage folks to participate in that.

Reminder, you know, use that Q&A button if you have questions. I've kind of don't see anymore in the Q&A. I'm scanning through the chat as well to see what else -- so another question is around low-scale, hands-on activities that can be used early on to manually recruit and learn from customers.

So what -- can you give a few more examples about what those might be?

>> COKO EASON: So repeat the question again, Nikki, low scale what?

>> NIKKI: What low-scale, hands-on activities can I use early on to manually recruit and learn from customers?

>> COKO EASON: Again, it's going back to that slide about where are your customers already dwelling, talking, playing, socializing. That's the easiest, low-scale thing to do is show up at the places.

There's no art form to it because, you know, we've been -- we've all been in this type of experience where we're walking in the mall, Nikki, and somebody with a new flat iron is trying to flat iron our hair and we're just like --

>> NIKKI: Oh, my gosh, yes.

>> COKO EASON: -- I'm trying to shop whatever. There's definitely a strategy on how to approach people. I don't want you to stop everything you're doing and need you to come over and spend time with me. There's a way to approach them in a very natural way that I go -- I go over in the book.

But that would be the best low scale is finding where they're already at and approaching them there and just having your product on you or having the proof on you, a video or something that you can show people that costs you no money and it literally could take minutes to do.

And then if not, is there a way that you can partner with somebody else. Stripe may have paid to get into the conference, but other than that they would stop by each booth and do this

kind of demonstration that took five minutes and they would sell right there on the spot.

The best way to keep your costs down, low impact, not really feel like you got to do too much is just go where they already are.

But there is a strategy on how do you approach people where they're not like, oh, my gosh, you know, I'm just trying to walk my dog. Please leave me alone. There is definitely an art form to that that I discuss in the before you go-to-market eBook that I hope you guys will check out and preorder today.

>> NIKKI: I love that you say that, Coko. I can't tell you how irritating it is, it's not just flat iron, it's those face creams and all that. They're shoving some kind of sample in your face. Even if it was amazing, that experience is going to turn me off, I'm not going to buy your product.

>> COKO EASON: And the reason is, Nikki, they're interrupting what you're there for. The key is making sure that that person feels like I'm about to approach you on something you're already here for, you're already involved in, and it's going to feel like it's a conversation about what's going on.

Instead of, hey, I know you're headed to H&M, but I want to talk to you about a curling iron. We're not going to connect here. But if you is a product that connects with H&M and fashion and style, things of that nature, you'll be blown away how people turn to you and say yes, let's talk. I was coming to H&M to shop for that anyway or look for that anyway.

So someone approaching you about a topic that's in your head already, you'll see how people will give you the time of day. But I was not coming to the mall to talk about a flat iron or sunglasses. So usually you don't get a good response .

But I talk with that in the book more in-depth for sure.

>> NIKKI: So if you're going to the dog park --

>> COKO EASON: You've got to look like who you're approaching.

>> NIKKI: Someone says if you're uncomfortable with social media, what do you recommend to help spread the business? You've given a ton of examples, I think we've kind of answered that, but I didn't want to ignore that it was already there.

>> COKO EASON: The great thing about AI that is, I mean, I have my differences with AI. But for those who have AI tools, it will create and build up the stuff to do it for you. If you don't want to be on camera, don't like your voice, whatever it may be. There are AI tools where you can say build me a young Black woman with an energetic energy, she has hair like this, whatever, whatever, and let her say these words. And it will build that up.

Now you have AI kind of selling this stuff for you. Or if there's just somebody else on your team, somebody else in your friend circle or your network where you're just like, I don't do too well pitching and selling and approaching people, but my brother is amazing at this. Get your brother to do it.

There's resources and ways to kind of get around feeling awkward and not feeling the best on camera.

I've done that for a lot of people, Nikki, speaking and being on stage is my thing. There's so many people who have come to me and said can you sell for me because I'm too scared to get on stage. Tell me what to say, I'll do it, and I help that person make a hundred sales.

If you're kind of the shy -- on the more shy side, this is not really your style of talking to people, there are people I know that you're connected to that wouldn't mind helping you out and kind of collaborating with you and doing this for you if it's kind of not your forte.

>> NIKKI: I agree with that. I don't post things or Facebook and all that, but I do know people who do. Yes.

I'm not sure I completely understand this question, maybe you will. But it says with a finance-based service, is it better to deal with the deal or with owners and managers? Do we need clarification on that? Because I'm not quite sure what they're asking. Maybe you understand it.

>> COKO EASON: I'm not sure with deal with the deal. But from my own understanding, if it's people involved that you would want to purchase this finance product or service from you, then yes, we're always trying to connect with the real person.

And like I said, if there's some way that you can do it in person, great. If not, maybe through a social media experience like a webinar or something where you can see them and interact with them.

But the reason why you want to do this stuff in person is this step by step that I've been talking about is also a learning experience.

So you want to be in person to say things to see, oh, she didn't like what I used that word. So maybe the next time I sell to somebody just like her, I don't use that word.

But a lot of stuff like that, words and tones and the way you approach things, you don't know how to get that perfect if you're just sending out an email and trying to get somebody to buy through an email or trying to get somebody to buy through a social media post.

You may be saying everything wrong and you'll never know what to fix if everything is always digital.

So it's like I'm trying to get people back to the old school way of connecting with people in a real way, because you

learn so much. And if you kind of -- kind of drop the ball on that first one, you'll know exactly what you need to change to make it better on your second pitch.

But you never know that when you just keep pushing out the same social media posts, the same email trying to get people to buy. You kind of never learn what am I doing wrong?

You always learn what you're doing wrong if you can take the time try to talk to somebody in person.

>> NIKKI: That actually leads us into another question. That sort of manual stage of talking to customers really getting involved like that sounds brilliant. But this person's asking, doesn't that, though, take too much time?

>> COKO EASON: Uh-huh, it does. This is the reason why it gets skipped. This is something that people don't want to do.

And I also think this is because, like I said, the venture capital kind of world is rushing everyone.

So there's literally investors saying, I'm not going to invest if it takes you that long to make money. And I say to that, okay, well somebody's going to wait. Somebody's going to invest once I come back and I say I have hundreds of people buying and buying and referring back to others.

It's kind of like if you don't want to invest right now, that's fine. I appreciate the fact that somebody appreciates that I went by this in a manual way. I learned everything about my customer that I should learn, and now I'm ready to scale. Instead of investing in a business that kind of rushed to scale, maybe got a few sales, but can't really retain their customers and are starting to fall apart maybe a year or two down the line.

It's like wouldn't you want to invest more in someone who took it slow, took it manual, learned things. I have one mentor that calls it gorilla marketing.

But he says all the time, I wish people would go back to a gorilla marketing approach. Boots on the ground, talking to people, putting something in somebody's hand, hearing what their rebuttals are. Things of that nature.

But he said, nobody wants to take the time to do that. So yes, it is long, Nikki, it's a meticulous process. It's an awkward process sometimes.

But it is the big difference between the companies that have blown up into billion dollar companies and the ones who kind of fell off the face of the earth in a year or two.

And you ask them what's the mistake you made, they all say I didn't talk to customers. I just wanted to rush, get this thing out and become rich. I didn't talk to anybody and I wasn't able to present this in a way that they could kind of engage and connect with.

And that's always kind of been people's feedback.

You'll hear a lot of that in those meet-ups when we're letting you ask some questions to some alumni members or some people who gave this a shot in the past. That's really the top reason and top, you know, answer they'll give to why they think they may have failed and didn't do as well.

They'll say, I tried to skip the, you know, the mundane, long part. I tried to skip that and I ended up, you know, paying for it in the end.

>> NIKKI: Yeah, it goes back to the Amazon example. I myself when I'm going to look for something, I look at the reviews. How many people have bought this? What do they say about it? Where does it fail? What's it good? That's what I go by. I think a lot of people do.

So someone has mentioned that they would love to do all of that and be in person if they could drive. And so, you know, when we talk about people with disabilities, we do have the transportation challenge or mobility challenges or whatever it might be.

So do you have an idea of how sort of virtually or another way that somebody could connect in with a customer base without actually doing some of the things you've said in person?

>> COKO EASON: Yeah, like I said, through Zoom or other online platforms. If you can't drive or have the access to some transportation, there may be a way for you to have a virtual webinar where you say I'm going to show you how this works. I'm going to send you something in the mail for you to test out or whatever the case may be.

So there's definitely different types of social media platforms that you can use. I've had some founders who have just gone live that just turn on the live button on Instagram and they just started talking and exhibiting what they do live on Instagram and whoever came by, you know, were able to kind of see it in person.

But you know, we've seen this for years. Like the -- what is it called, Nikki? Is the home shopping Network.

>> NIKKI: I'm thinking Tiktok. I have a daughter who is young and on Tiktok all the time. And the amount of things that she's bought through Tiktok just because it's, you know, I'm like, what? I didn't know Tiktok sold anything. I didn't know there was a Tiktok shop.

>> COKO EASON: That's a longstanding joke that Tiktok gets me every time. People say that. Tick -- Tiktok is nothing but people saying I tried this, you should. I'm so glad you said that, because Tiktok is nothing but a belief system. You're scrolling over and over, you have somebody saying it worked for me, you should do it.

But if it's somebody with a black screen saying hey, it's this eye cream, you should get it. We would scroll right past. But the lady shows us her eyes, puts the it, it grabs us just like that.

This is something that founders don't do anymore. I don't know why. They skip this step. But they would learn a lot from Tiktok and how it operates. That's a really good example, Nikki.

>> NIKKI: Of course you have to be tech savvy. Again, back to the person with the social media, you have to find a teenager or somebody, get your nephew or niece or friend's kid or something and they can probably do it for you.

>> COKO EASON: Exactly. Exactly.

>> NIKKI: All right, let me check Q&A again. I think I do not have any other questions. I don't know if any of my team members are seeing something in chat that I've missed.

But we're kind of winding down anyway, getting close to the end. What wonderful questions. Thank you all so much for being engaged.

We have something else. Oh, no, if you meet clients in person and have a disability flare-up during the presentation, is this a missed opportunity or do you try to turn it around?

>> COKO EASON: I wouldn't think it's a missed opportunity. And sometimes you may just want to -- if you're comfortable with it, you may state that to someone privately in the beginning so they kind of understand.

You know, I have a disability where I can't stand for too long. Just because of a reconstructive surgery on my left foot. So if I'm doing a presentation and this is about to be a two-hour thing where I'm standing up, I'm not going to make it.

So I say that as soon as I get there. I tell them hey, I deal with this so there may be a period where I need to take a break. I may need to sit down. I hope everybody's okay with that. Everybody kind of understands.

So I think if you're comfortable, possibly -- possibly announcing that or telling someone before your presentation starts. But if you're not comfortable, then maybe the online webinars in Zoom and doing something more virtually could be a better result for you.

>> NIKKI: Yeah, absolutely. Okay. And with that, we have a survey coming up. We absolutely love that you will take the time to answer it for us.

We do webinars every single month. We bring them to you. The topics we bring are because you are -- you are our customer. You are telling us just like Coko has said, what you need, what you want, whether you like it, you don't like it, how well we're doing. So we want to hear all of that.

So the satisfaction survey will also appear automatically after the presentation is closed. But you can go into the QR Code that is currently on the screen as well and we really do appreciate that feedback.

Coko, thank you so much. I think this has been amazing. We've had some wonderful positive things in the chat for you as well.

Thank you so the NDI team for all the behind the scenes, because there's a lot that goes into all of this. And everybody for being here and being engaged and asking your questions and hopefully this was a valuable use of your time.

So thank you, everybody, and we will see you next month on the next webinar. So if this is your first trip to the NDI webinars, be sure to join us next time.

>> COKO EASON: Thank you, NDI. Thanks for the opportunity and thanks for everyone listening and tuning in. I appreciate your time.

(Session ended at 3:17 p.m. ET)

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