

# How to Build a Brand from Nothing

**Author :** Hiten Shah

**Date :** July 18, 2016



In Leo Widrich's first few months as co-founder of Buffer, he wrote two to three guest blog posts every day. He joined the company in January 2011, and by April, he'd gotten their **brand** featured in over [100 blogs](#). Within nine months, they'd signed up over [100,000 users](#).

People call what Leo did "[content marketing](#)", "customer acquisition" and "[doing things that don't scale](#)", but that misses the bigger picture.

In nine short months, Leo built Buffer into a meaningful **brand**!

## The Importance of Brand

You build a brand when you've carved out a piece of peoples' brains.

Think about why **Amazon** is so addictive—they have a piece of our brain. Whenever we think about buying nearly any product, our first thought is to go on **Amazon** and get it for the lowest price. I know that I can open the app, tap twice, and have it at my house in two days.

In the early days building a brand means that you start getting direct, unattributed visitors coming to your site. These are people who are visiting your site for no reason, other than that you've carved out a little piece of their brains. They had a thought, and that triggered them to make a beeline to your site.

In the long term, this means that your brand spreads. Because you have space in peoples' heads, people are thinking about you, and that means they'll talk about you and tell your friends.

That's why building your **brand** is so important. It's what gets you off the treadmill of "doing things that don't scale" and gets you toward real growth.

To build your **brand** from nothing, you need two things: **novelty** and **repetition**.

## Novelty

*Novelty: the quality of being new, original or unusual.*

Since 1999, 37signals has been blogging about what they're doing, why they're doing it, and how they think about building their business. Back when they started, that was incredibly unusual. No one else was sharing how they balanced building products with consulting, or how they did A/B testing for their SaaS business.

They're the poster child in SaaS for creating novelty around **brand** by sharing, educating, and helping other people learn.

Here's how [we defined novelty for our brand](#) early at KISSmetrics:

We would share anyone and everyone's marketing analytics content, as long as it was high-quality and genuinely useful.

We defined our brand by being helpful, and that made our **Twitter** account the go-to place for marketers to learn more about analytics. Over time, we grew our Twitter following to 200,000+ people, all 100% organic, without spending a dime.

Here's how [Leo defined novelty for Buffer's brand](#):

How to do well on Twitter, with or without Buffer.

Over time, they injected more novelty into the **brand** with their scientific approach to happiness and productivity and their radical approach to company transparency. They were able to keep that novelty fresh and make it last, because it came from an authentic and genuine place.

In order to build a **brand**, you can't just talk about novelty. You have to actually put it into practice and create a novel experience for people.

## Repetition

To carve out space in someone's brain, you need to get in their head over and over until you're there to stay. You need repetition.

The "content" in "content marketing" is key here:

Content can be a tweet, a Facebook post, a blog post, or anything that can be repeatedly produced and distributed.

The power of content is that it can scale, both in terms of the infinite number of people who can

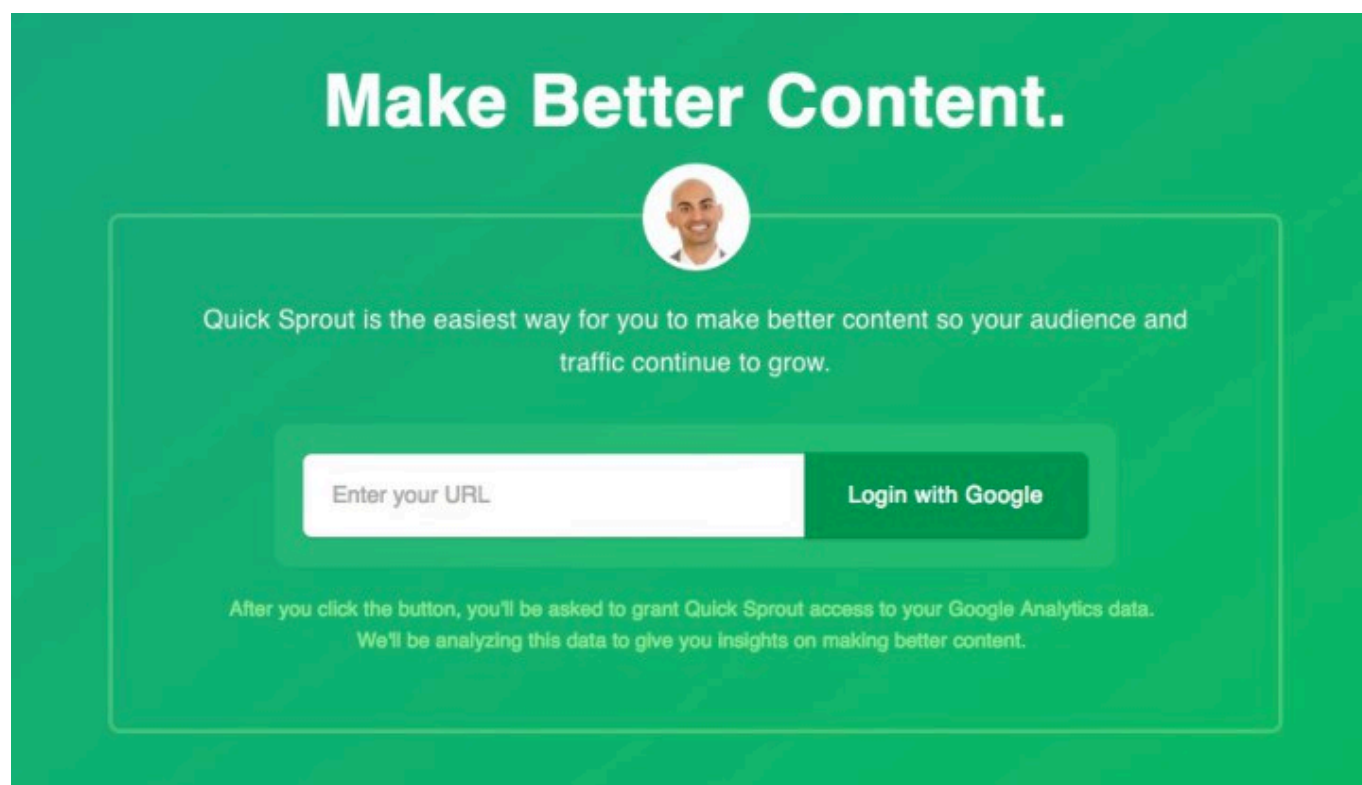
consume an individual piece of content and the innumerable ways content can be packaged and produced. That scale is what creates the repetition that makes the **brand**.

When Leo talks about his guest blogging strategy, he emphasizes the importance of “[pick\[ing\] quantity over quality](#).” Put differently:

People often overvalue brand substance and undervalue brand repetition.

Leo kept the substance narrow and centered entirely around how to do well on **Twitter**. He put his focus on repetition and cranked out over 150 guest posts, and that’s what made Buffer an authority on the best ways to use **Twitter**.

At [Quick Sprout](#), we built a brand through my co-founder **Neil Patel**. We put nearly identical shots of his face on the front page, on the sidebar of the blog, on his Twitter, on his personal site and more. All that repetition adds up into making a memorable impression and carving out space in peoples’ heads.



## Surprising Things You Need to Put in Place in Order to Save Thousands of Dollars on Digital Marketing

by NEIL PATEL on JULY 1, 2016



It wasn't that long ago when an entrepreneur's marketing options were limited to flyers, tacky magazine ads, or expensive TV commercials.

However, with the advent of the Internet, the number of marketing options available to both [budding and experienced entrepreneurs](#) has become staggering.

Sometimes, when I'm surfing the web—it's what I do a lot—I find myself thinking, "Wow! So many tactics! So many choices!"

If I were just getting started in digital marketing, I would be in a total freakout mode. *Where do I start? Which one should I pick? What do I need to do first?*

But it gets worse. Few businesses have the luxury of trying a lot of tactics. Marketing costs money—quite a bit of it, actually. And if you're just testing out a bunch of tactics, you'll run out of money before you run out of tactics.

Free Course: "Double Your Traffic in 30 Days" + Secret Bonus (Valued at \$300)



This amazing course will teach you, step by step, how to double if not triple your traffic over the next 30 days.

Fill out the form below to start your FREE Course

Email

Yes, Let's Start The FREE Course

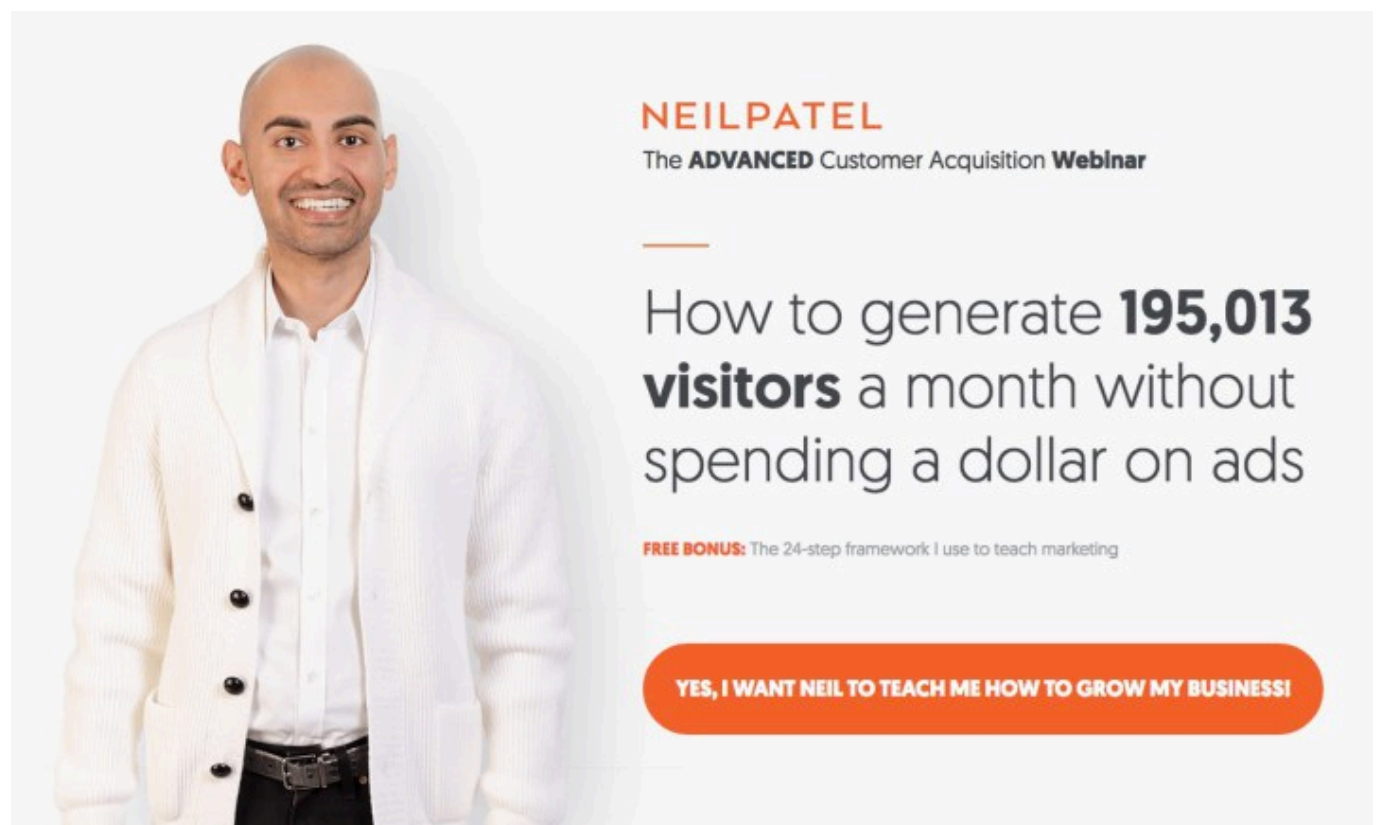
Yes, Let's Start The Free Course

100% Privacy. I will never spam you!

### About Neil Patel



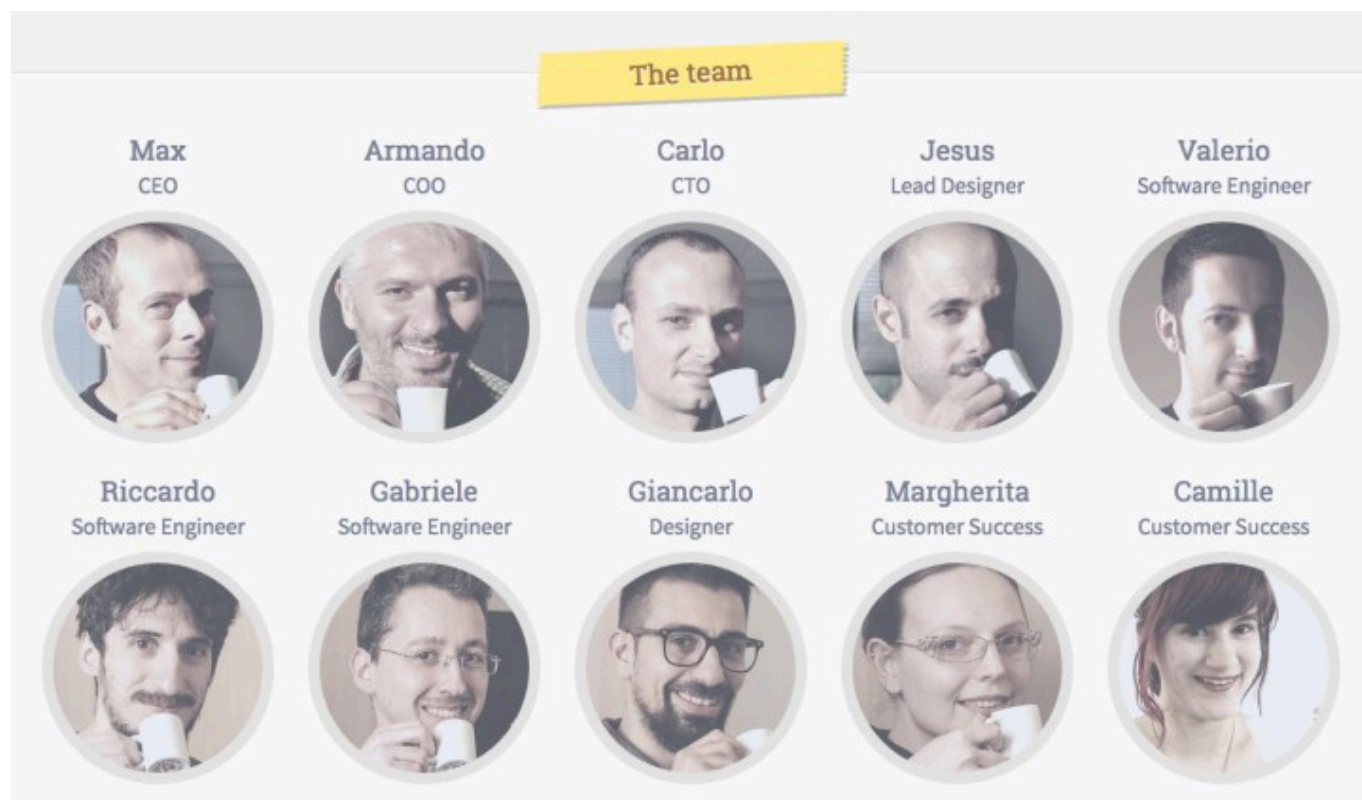




More examples of repetition that builds the brand

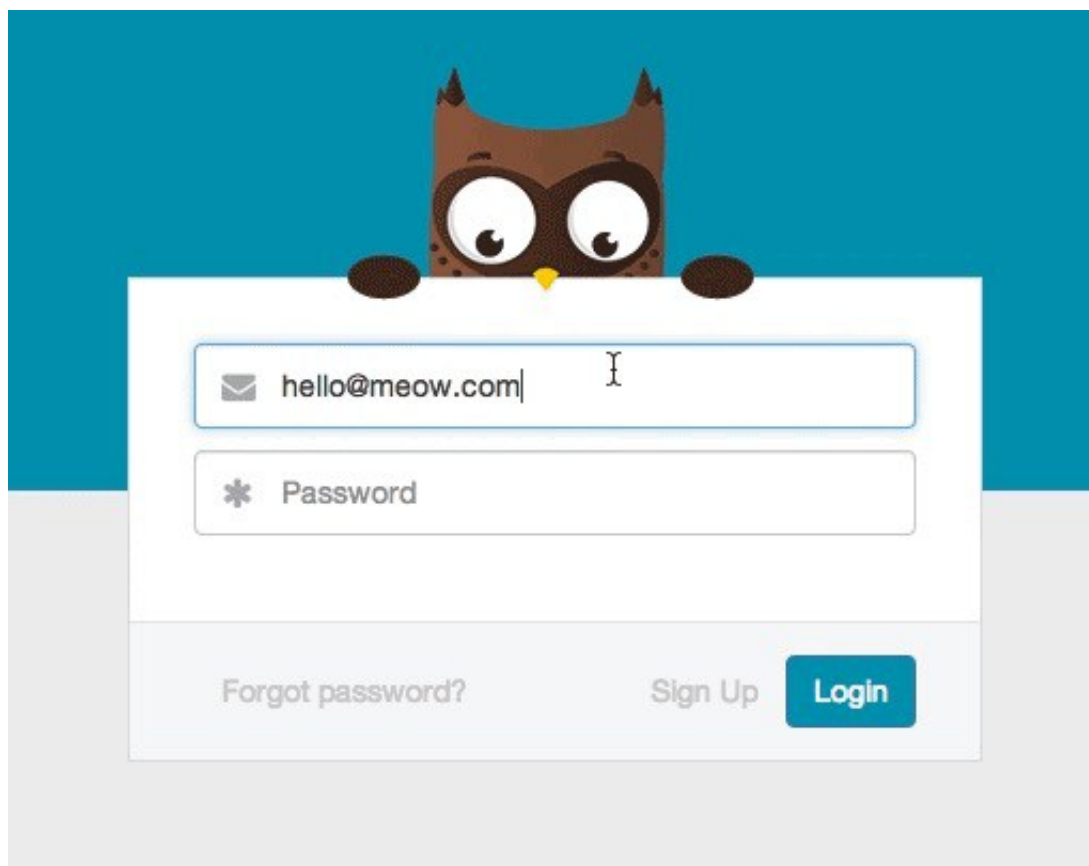
At [AdEspresso](#), every team member is drinking espresso in his or her team shot. They also use the same photos across their **Facebook** and **Twitter** profiles.

In co-founder **Armando Biondi's** words, it's the "[low-intensity frequency](#) that builds brand and confidence" and he credits it for getting them from 0 to \$1M+ in annual recurring revenue.



At [ReadMe](#), they put their [owl startup mascot](#) everywhere on their site, they use it in all of their social media and communications with customers and they have it all over their office. They also make it fun.

To founder **Greg Koberger**, the repetition means that “our customers know Owlbert now, but more importantly, they know that our company is a little different.”



## The Best Way to Build a Brand Starts with You

When you're starting from nothing, you're the best brand that you can build for your business. This is the playbook that's led people like **Jason Fried**, Neil Patel, and Leo Widrich to build both personal **brands** and their company brands from scratch.

- The **novelty** is based in what inspired you to start your business.
- Early on, **repetition** is easy because you can do it against you yourself and your story. People like stories and they always want to hear about why you started your business.

When you do that, you'll gather your collective tribe around you, and you'll start to sit in peoples' heads. Through repetition and maintaining novelty, you can carve out more and more space.

Before you know it, people are thinking behaviorally about you and your business. Because they're thinking about you, they're talking about you and sharing your product with their friends.

Building a brand is about more than giving out free swag with your logo on it. It's about creating stories. Your product and your company exist to do jobs for your customers and help them succeed.

There are more tools and products in SaaS today than ever before. For every job that needs doing, there are a multitude of tools that fill the space. Ultimately, your brand is what differentiates your company and your product in the minds of your customers. Brand is what you need to focus on in order to compete in today's crowded markets.

*This article first appeared in [www.hitenism.com](http://www.hitenism.com)*