

Ep #228: Shaun Buck - Standing Out from Market Commoditization Part 1



Full Episode Transcript

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Dr. David Phelps

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

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David Phelps: Today's podcast begins my two part interview series with Mr. Shaun Buck, the newsletter pro. Today, learn more about how Shaun helps his clients create stories that impact his potential clients and customers. Enjoy it.

Good day, everyone. This is Dr. David Phelps with the Freedom Founders Mastermind community and the Dentist Freedom Blueprint podcast. Today I'm really pleased to be hosting a really great guy, someone who I've known in the entrepreneurial space, the marketing space for, gosh, a number of years now. And that gentleman is Mr. Shaun Buck. Shaun, how are you doing sir?

Shaun Buck: Excellent, David. How are you?

David Phelps: I'm doing great. You know Shaun, truly, I'm not just saying this to patronize you, but when, when I think about your name, when I see you at other mastermind meetings, you know that we're a part of and we kind of run in the same circles, but I see you and your name. It's just like marketing. It's just marketing is all over it. That's who you are and you know, just to give people a little bit of a background. I know you kind of came, your DNA I would say is built on marketing because you started in early life

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and you know, in your teens, probably about the time or, maybe before you even just started driving a car, I don't know, probably close to it with your first business. Right? And that was something, something that some people probably won't even relate to, but it was like pagers, right? Tell me about that.

Shaun Buck: That's right. Yeah. Yeah. So yeah, in high school, I would sell pagers to my friends and then sell them the reoccurring subscription service on it. So every now and again I had to go hold them up for their lunch money in a little more of an ethical way than normal. And get my bill paid, you know? But yeah, so we found, we bought some software. I bought pagers wholesale, and then I was able to buy the service wholesale too. And so I paid, you know, two bucks a month for something. They would pay eight bucks a month for whatever. We'd sell it to them quarterly. So they, I think it was 25 bucks a quarter or 29 bucks a quarter or something like that and it costs me six bucks and I had a whole CRM system for it. And then it was literally just selling and converting my friends in high school to buy pagers from me and to buy service from me. And yeah, that was kind of like one of my first real entrepreneurial businesses other than mowing lawns or raking.

David Phelps: Right.

Shaun Buck: Stuff like that. Yeah.

David Phelps: Yeah, yeah. Well yeah. Back in the day when you, if you had a pager, you were somebody you had status.

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Shaun Buck: Status, right? That's right. Every kid wanted one. I mean we had different cases, different styles. Yeah. So it was a fun little, fun little adventure.

David Phelps: So over the years, you know, you continued to be an entrepreneur, obviously. In multiple businesses, you really landed on The Newsletter Pro and I want people to understand that that's real. That's your hub today. The Newsletter Pro, which you started back in 2011 and it's been really, really fast growing because, again, you've got the chops, you got the skills you found. I tell you know you found a void in the market place. We're going to talk about that. You know, finding voids in the marketplace, solving problems, you know from your vantage point that a lot of small business owners, entrepreneurs have, and you fill that void and you build a team, a culture that fulfills on a very high level basis. We'll get into some of the details on that.

You're based out of Boise, Idaho. You're an entrepreneur. You're a speaker. You're an author. In fact, one of the books, so I'll link people to today. They can get it on Amazon. The No BS Guide to Maximum Referrals that you co-wrote with a good friend and mentor of ours, Dan Kennedy, so you can find that book on Amazon. It's a great book if you want to get into the subject. You made the Inc 500 list twice. The Inc 5,000 list once. You've been Newsletter Pro. And Boise has been named one of the best places to work in Idaho for the past four years. Congratulations.

That speaks to your leadership, that speaks to your culture, the culture of your company. And that's the kind of people I like to do business with. Where I know the

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culture is there not just some guy who sounds brilliant, but you know, is the backdrop there, right? Is, you know, are they really delivering at that high level? You were named the Man of the Year by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. You're a successful business coach to owners of million dollar businesses.

So Shaun, there's a lot of disruption in the marketplace today for small business owners who, you know, in, in decades past, years past, it was all about, you know, are you, you know, you work hard, are you ethical, you provide a good service, a good product, you know, you stand behind it. Today it's like, that's almost assumed if you're going to be anybody. That's assume you can't just rely on your good name and reputation. While that's important, there's so much more because, well, the attention deficit disorder that we have today because everybody's connected. They got smartphones, there's texting, there's, you know, people got ear buds in their ears.

I mean, you know, how do you stand out? And I, and I'll lead you into, you know, my tribe and I know you know my tribe well. The professional practice owners, even tighter, you know, dentists, orthodontists, but know my tribe is such that particularly their being commoditized today because of technology, because of corporate clinics are coming in, and insurance is cramming down their profits and they're getting beat down because their patients or consumers are now coming to them, a lot of them, not everybody, but a lot of them come and say, you know, you're just a commodity. You know, just fill my tooth, put a crown on it, do my, straighten my teeth and I want it for cheapo, cheapo, cheapo. In fact, if you can't do

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it for cheap, I'm just going to walk down to the street or I'll just actually call it a SmileDirect and get the aligner sent right to my door. That's what they're dealing with. And so what do we do, as small business owners, to help offset that? I'll just give you the floor for a little bit and then we'll, we'll dive in.

Shaun Buck: Oh yeah, yeah. Dentistry, Ortho, like that is our largest niche we work in. So I do, I do know this niche really well. In fact, who happened to just right before this call, sit in my office, was a dentist and his office manager, they were my very first client ever. They're still clients today. And we were actually going over some strategy stuff for them. And I still do that personally for them obviously because they were client number one and I've been doing it for eight years with them. Right. You know, and so, so, you know, I hear this all the time and what's happened is that dentistry is a phenomenal business and it still is today. Don't let anyone kid you and tell you, it's not. Like if you can dial it in and get it right, it's an amazing business.

And I know you know that. Like I'm preaching to the choir on that one, but it really is a great business. But there's so many people who have now gotten into it because people started to realize, "Man, I can live a really good life. I can make good income. I can be successful and have this, this American dream if I become a dentist." And now, right, right now, believe it or not, there is a dentist on basically every corner. See there's, so the way I like to think about it is I like to think about it in terms of Starbucks, because Starbucks, you can find a Starbucks anywhere, right? In America, there are 16 dental offices for every Starbucks in America.

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David Phelps: Wow.

Shaun Buck: When I tell you they're on every corner, I'm like, I'm not joking. You know, I have one dentist who I'm very loyal to. Actually the dentist I was just talking about. And I've moved across town now and I counted one time and I, no joke, drive past 14 dental offices to get to. That's a lot of offices to drive by. And it's not like he's far away. He's four and a half miles. Okay. So I mean, we're not talking, I'm going crazy distances here. Okay. Maybe it's five. But it's very, very close. And so we have, we've gotten into this thing of being a commodity and the minimum level of service that you mentioned at the start of this, that is the requirement just to stay in business and not, not to go out and go under.

So how do you not become a commodity? Okay. And it's really difficult because everyone can do a crown. Anyone can fill a cavity. Now, not necessarily all at the same skill level. And I fully understand that. But the patients don't. They assume that you, that you are dentist and everyone's kind of the same. Okay. And you can't say you're the best because everybody says they're the best. Well, no, we have the best doctors in town. Who's like, hey, you know, my guy was actually a c minus doctor. He's pretty damn good. But I think, you know, if you come in, he's a nice guy, so you'll be happy. No one that's no one's messaging. They're always like, he's the greatest dentist in Boise. That was very hard for everyone to be the greatest.

So what has to happen is you actually have to work the fundamentals. It's you don't need some secret gadget and weapon and the newest, latest, greatest shiny object. It

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literally comes back down to doing the fundamentals. So the fundamentals are what is your patient experience, right? What happens when they walk in the door? What happens when they call in? And I would say the number one, number one issue I see from a lost patient standpoint, in the sense of just marketing not working in dental offices, is the phones. They just don't answer them or they answer them and the person can't convert because no investment has been made into phone training.

The reality of that, just to just to say one little side note on that is that if your phones don't work, like if your receptionist is not capable of answering the phones and doing a great job at converting, or they kind of hit or miss it, it's actually not their fault. It's your fault as the dentist. It is your job to train them. It's your job to check in on them. That's, that's your responsibility, right? So never ever get mad if you ever secret shop and the front desk isn't doing well unless you've been giving them training on an ongoing regular basis. It's your responsibility as the owner. Okay.

So the patient experience is off, right? And now, now you get a new patient or you have an existing patient who comes in and nothing happens. There's no, there's nothing. They just come in and they sit in a waiting room. It's just like everything else. They go into the chair, there's very little thought that goes into the fact that they're a new patient. It is assumed that because they came in once, they will come back a second time and that is a, that is a very, very poor assumption. And you are going to be disappointed if you actually check the numbers on that.

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You're losing a lot of money over there. And so that experience really hurts.

But then we then compound it, okay, right? So we give them a poor experience over the phone and let's say they get through that hurdle and actually schedule an appointment. Then we give them about an average at best experience in office. Now remember, they're comparing you against, not just other dentists, but what's the experience when they go to, when they go on Amazon, what's the experience at Costco, right? They're comparing you across what has become the new norm for everybody is a better customer experience, right? So they're not just looking at you to how other dentists operate, they're looking at you and comparing you to all experiences that they get from a customer service standpoint, right? And if you don't reach a minimum level of par, they don't come back or they don't refer or they don't stay for very long, or the next coupon comes in and that's when they bounce, right? You know, whatever it happens to be.

So, so then what happens is they're, now it's after, it's after the appointments, right? And then we proceed to become the world's worst friend. Okay? And this is what I want you to think about. David, I know for a fact you have had this person in your life and, and you might even think of a name when I mention this, okay. And I almost, every dentist probably have this person. Think about it. Every time you pick up the phone and see this person's name on your caller id, you know you're either being hit up for some money or you're being hit up for a favor.

David Phelps: That's right.

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Shaun Buck: Probably a relative of yours.

David Phelps: That's right.

Shaun Buck: Right? And we all have had this person. We either currently have them in our life or we have had them at some point, right? It's really a problem when it's your spouse, that's when you know you're in big trouble, right? No, I'm just teasing. But we become the world's worst friend. So we only communicate with our patients when we want them to buy more products and services or we want them to pay a bill.

David Phelps: Yeah.

Shaun Buck: So, hey, it's time for you to come back. Hey, we gave you recommended treatment. You didn't take it. Can you come back in for that? Hey, by the way, you owe us 175 bucks for that last visit. And that's our communication level.

Well, think about this. If you're going to act like a commodity where you treat everyone as just a commoditized, you know, patients come and go, who cares, and you're not going put any care or concern into them, then they are in turn going to treat you the same way. They're going to treat you like the gas station and they're going to say, well, it's \$3.09 on this side of the street and it's \$3.06 over here. I'll go across the street. For a nothing savings.

I mean when you really think about it, I don't know if you guys have ever done this, but at one point I was so, so poor, like I was broke. Like I would literally drive across the street to say 4 cents a gallon on gas. I'm like, I'm

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putting in 20 gallons, this is 80 cents I'm going to save it. Right? I actually caught myself almost making a u-turn a couple of weeks ago and going to the cheaper gas station across the street and I'm like, because it was like, oh no, I'm sorry that wasn't it. I did almost do that too, but it was a different reason. But I was, I was going to drive to Costco. It was like, you know what? Later today, I've got to go to Costco. I'm here at the gas pump. Maybe I shouldn't go into Chevron, which is the most expensive gas, right? And I'm like, "You know what? I bet it's 10 or 20 cents cheaper. You know, I'll just stop at Costco and get it." I'm sitting there thinking to myself, this is insanity. Like there is no possible way. I mean, I put it in my, you know, 19 gallons tops. There's no possible way that savings of a \$1.90 is worth it. But we're so programmed that way that when it's a commodity, we just go to the cheapest price. Right. We are, I mean, we're, no matter what success level you hit, right. You know, you're, I mean, I guess I shouldn't say no matter what, maybe it changes at some point, but, but a \$1.90, like does not move the needle for me. And, but I was gonna, I was gonna wait, I was gonna put a little gas in and out a little more later because that's what I would have done 10 years ago. Right.

The thing about it is, is that you cannot act like a commodity if you don't want to be treated like a commodity, which means you have to up your communication level. So this is where, for example, we strongly, strongly recommend that you communicate with your patients on non-relevant stuff at a minimum once a month and that's where we think the newsletter is the best vehicle for it. There's a lot of vehicles out there, but we think the newsletter works the best because you've got

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time where you can get something that you can spend around 10 to 15 minutes, that's about how long the read is on a newsletter, a four patient newsletter, right? Where you can spend these 10 to 15 minutes with your patients and really build that relationship. You can talk to them not just about dentistry. That's a huge mistake. Don't do that. That's dumb marketing. Okay. They don't care about dentistry. Just like you would not like it if I sent you a newsletter about newsletters every, every month, you'd be like, no, Shaun, please dear God, stop. Okay. Right.

So you can put a little bit in there about about dentistry. I'd say no more than 25%. The other 75% needs to be content about you, personal content, because that relationship that you build via your communication with them and opening up, giving them a little peek about what's going on behind the curtain in your life, that relationship is what will shift you out of being the commodity because they're doing business with people they know, like, and trust and that relationship and that trust level changes absolutely everything.

David Phelps: The other thing that you can do too, and this is I think where you can talk about, you know, strategic referral partners in town, but using that newsletter to feature both patients, like patient of the month or patient that did something cool. A patient went on a mission trip, a patient got an award, but how about also referral partners that are community leaders, have other businesses where you can strategically, you know, co-op your, your patients by, you know, people would love to read about the community. I mean people love to see what's going on the community. What's, what's happening here? Who's, who's

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cool, who's doing what and that hard copy newsletter, that's what we're talking about here.

No talks about digitally. "Well, I could just do a cheap, cheapo digital." And you say, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no." You're just noise again. You're noise. Your people's inboxes are flooded. They're not using the inbox anymore. People are texting today.

You've got to put something in their hands and the mailboxes are typically, today, not very full of stuff because postage has gone up and now you have a chance to just slide right in with your good copy piece which people actually will put it in the A pile and go, "This is cool stuff. No one's trying to sell me on something. No one's trying to solicit me. It's not garbage. It's good stuff. Because there's stuff in here I want to read about."

Shaun Buck: Yeah. And that local piece that you're talking about. See, here's what you want to do. Okay. So we have, we employ, I employee about 10 or 11 storytellers. Okay. So think of them, they're a writer, but it's more than that. Their job is to tell your story, right? To tell your brand story, to tell stories in the community and then to tell your patient's story, right? That's what the, that's what the newsletter is made up of. Okay. And if you do it from a storytelling standpoint, what you're going to find is amazing, amazing results, right?

But you have to go, it needs to be custom, right? You, you can't just put in generic information there. That's where like talking about what's going on at your local, the family friendly event that's happening in your community, right? That is a piece that gets you into the A pile mail where they actually read it and consume it. Right? Talking and

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even opening up and being personal where they start to feel like a connection with you. Okay. That is where it gets into A pile mail, right?

So you're telling your story if you're going to tell your patients' story. So there's ways to do testimonials and to tell stories to sell, but without it coming across as selling. So I, I teach this in a few different areas and let me do, if it's okay, let me give you like a quick way to sell, via storytelling, that is selling your patient, your patient's doing the selling for you. Is that okay? Can I do that?

David Phelps: Yeah. Yep. Go ahead.

Shaun Buck: So here's the normal testimonial. Right.

"Well I went and saw Dr. Phelps and he was amazing and I got Invisalign and I was really worried about my, my teeth, crooked teeth and I wanted to be straight for my wedding and I got this Invisalign and he was so great and so nice to me and it made it painless and I'm very happy everyone should get Invisalign."

Like that's like a normal testimony. Problem with that is, is that we're also becoming a little jaded even to those, because we see them all the time on reviews, but they don't really tell the story. Like it's just an endorsement and you need to have those, those, you need to have those, especially when they're googling you, because I don't care what marketing piece you're sending out, they're still googling you and checking out those reviews and looking at you before they make a final decision in probably 80 plus percent of the time. Right? So, so, but let's see if we could tell that, if we could tell the Invisalign story as an actual story, and this is a, this is a real story, right? And,

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and so here's, here's how it goes. It's about a woman. So I'll build it up. It's about a woman and her daughter and this woman has had issues with her teeth for a long time. In fact, she was teased as a kid. Okay. So that's kind of the backstory. And since I don't, I can't build the full story right here. I need to give you a little backstory.

So it starts off and says, "She says, you know, I was out, I'm getting ready to get married and I really wanted to do something about my smile. I had a big gap in my, the front of my teeth and I was, I was embarrassed about it. In fact, it was one of those things where I did my best to even, not to smile because it was so embarrassing. I just felt like the moment I smiled, everyone was looking at that gap in my teeth and judging me." And she goes, "It was one day I noticed that I'm out playing my daughter. And she would start to giggle and have fun, and then she, then she stops smiling immediately and she'd shut it down and I asked her, I said, you know, honey, what's going on? And why aren't you smiling and having fun?"

She goes, "Well, mom, I, I just want to be like you and you don't ever smile." And she goes, "That. It broke my heart and I, I was already thinking about doing this for my wedding, but I knew in that moment, I knew I needed to get in here and do this because the last thing I wanted my daughter to do was to hide that gorgeous smile of hers and to how some of those self confidence issues that I had. And so I went in and I found, I saw Dr. Phelps and he was amazing. His team was amazing and they got me on a schedule and they got me Invisalign and six months later my smile was, was just perfect for my wedding. And I had the most amazing wedding and I smiled the whole time. But what was even better than that is my daughter

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smiled. And my daughter came to me and told me how much she loves my beautiful smile now and how much she just loves that I'm happy now because she equated me not smiling with not being happy. And now, today, she knows I'm happy and my daughter's smiles and I had the most perfect wedding. Thank you, Dr. Phelps. Thank you for giving me my smile back. And more importantly, thank you for giving me my daughter's smile back."

David Phelps: Next week, Shaun and I will pick up right where we left off, talking more about how you can also grab these same kind of stories and use those in your own marketing. See you then.

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