



THE ART OF INCLUSION

**Why Service Beats Selfies
When it Comes to Business**
Cara Alwill Leyba

There are many reasons why some businesses succeed and others don't.

There are things other business owners have that you (and me) may not: more talent, more money, more connections, more charisma, more customers, more education, the list goes on. But here is one no-excuse, surefire way to set your business apart from the others: you need to be *obsessed* with your customers and clients. Completely, and utterly, obsessed.

Building a brand and growing a business online can be tricky, especially in today's social media age. There are countless books, articles and "experts" that will urge you to be the face of your brand and share every aspect of your life on the Internet. And while I firmly believe transparency and honesty is one of the keys to business success, there's a fine line between using your online presence to showcase a highlight reel of your best moments, and using it to truly connect with your tribe.

We've all seen the main offenders. Business owners who post and boast nothing but business wins, selfies on yachts, and pictures of their fancy homes. Those who constantly talk about their six and seven figure launches. Those who forget one very important thing: why does this matter to anyone else?

Here's the thing about business. It's not about you. Or me. People create businesses to solve problems. To help their clients get from Point A to Point B. Whether that's helping save them from a toxic relationship, assisting them in designing their dream kitchen, or motivating them to lose fifty pounds, businesses exist to serve. And while many entrepreneurs are the face of their business, there's a thin veil between injecting some personality into your work, and completely overriding your services by being *self-serving*.

Now don't get me wrong—storytelling is a huge part of business. You've got to share yourself, and be vulnerable, if you want to create staying power. I am all about weaving your personal story into whatever it is that you are selling, clearly. I make a living off telling my story. But what makes your story special is how it relates to your end user. What makes your story important is *how it makes others feel*.

At the end of the day, are you creating a sense of hope for your customer? Are you empowering them with the tools to live their best life (or design that dream kitchen)? Or are you making them feel isolated and inferior? **Are you making them feel included, or excluded?**

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If you feel like you may be missing something in your business, or you're just not creating the "splash" you want, especially online, consider this: how can you make it less about you, and more about your people? Even if you've got ten people, how can you make them feel like the most special ten people in the world? Whether they live within your email list, or come in to your brick and mortar store, or follow you on Instagram, your people are visiting your world for a very specific reason, and if you don't recognize that reason (and over-deliver on it consistently), you can lose them in a heartbeat.

My people live online. They interact with me on Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter. A few months ago I was having cocktails with a group of female entrepreneurs, and I explained how much time per day I spend on those platforms creating valuable content and engaging with my audience. Between the audible gasps and the look of complete and utter shock on their faces, I swear Manhattan froze completely for a second or three. "But how do you get any work done?" "How do you keep up?" They were baffled.

Engaging with my audience and building my tribe is my work. That's how I create relationships and build trust with my people. I wake up at 6 am and answer Snapchats. I comb through old Instagram posts every week to make sure I didn't miss a question in the comments. I respond to almost every single email I receive (even if it's a month later). I create for my people, because without my people, I have no business. I interact with my people, because without my people, I have no business.

Let's look at social media growth as an example of community building. The million-dollar question always seems to be, "how do I get more followers?" The first problem with that question is, why do you want more followers? Is it to boast a large following so that when people see your page, they think you're famous, which leads to more opportunity? Or because you really and truly want to reach a massive audience with your message or your product?

I've built my Instagram page up over the past few years, organically, by creating valuable content that people look forward to reading. That page started at 0 followers and now has over close to 75,000. Is that a huge number? Not particularly. But I've never bought a follower or done anything unethical to build that following. It's been me from the start—all heart and a genuine passion to engage with the people who show up there every day *looking to be served*. Every single time I post something, I ask myself the following three questions: Is this inspiring? Is this empowering? Is this entertaining? I work hard every day to create a blended mix of all three, with a focus on the first two. I understand why my people come to me, and I make it my mission to give them exactly what they are looking for.

Lots of opportunities have come my way since amassing a large online platform. And I appreciate the success that has come along with reaching a larger audience. But what matters to me is that I get to reach more women every single day, and create a space for them that makes them

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feel strong, excited, and hopeful. What matters to me is that I get to create things every single day that others actually want to consume. And that is a gift beyond measure.

So, in the spirit of inclusion, I'm going to give you a cheat sheet to help you build your tribe and ultimately, grow your business. Grab a pen and answer the following:

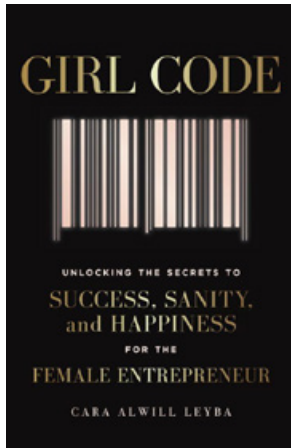
- What do I do?
- *Why* do I do it?
- What is my brand's mission statement?
- How am I currently nurturing my tribe?
- How can I be even better at it?
- Am I adding value when I share things online?
- What are three things I can do over the next week to make my customers feel more included?

Bonus: Ask your audience what they want! One of the best ways to deliver killer content is to simply check in with your people and communicate. They will tell you, trust me. And they will love the fact that you truly cared enough to ask.

Inclusion is the key. It's the missing link; the secret sauce, if you will. If you're not welcoming people into your world with open arms, and bonding with them on a personal level, you are making a major mistake. At the end of the day, people want to relate. They want to connect. They want to feel like things are possible for them. And if you are lucky enough to lead a pack that comes to you for that feeling, please don't take it for granted. My personal business mantra that I share with my clients and readers is "Service over selfies." **Because this world needs you to show up in a deeper, more meaningful way than you may realize.** 📌



Info



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About the author

Cara Alwill Leyba is an author, speaker, and master life coach who encourages women to celebrate themselves and make their happiness a priority. Her popular blog, The Champagne Diet, has been featured in Glamour, Marie Claire, Shape, Cosmopolitan, and others. Cara's chic and stylish approach to self-help has attracted women all around the world to attend her workshops, read her books, tune into her podcast, Style Your Mind, and follow her on social media. She lives in Brooklyn, NY.



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