Praise for
THE MILLIONAIRE MESSENGER

“We all have a life story and a message that can inspire others to live a better life or run a better business. Brendon Burchard’s book proves it and shows how you can share your message to make a difference and also make an income. This book will help you change a lot of lives.”

—Marci Shimoff, New York Times best-selling author of Happy for No Reason and Chicken Soup for the Woman’s Soul

“The expert industry has been shrouded in myth and mystery for far too long. Now Brendon Burchard, one of our most innovative and powerful leaders, reveals exactly how we—authors, speakers, coaches, consultants, seminar leaders and online information marketers—make a difference and earn an income with our advice and expertise. This is an industry defined by how much value we add to others’ lives, and this book delivers and shows exactly why Brendon is one of the best.”

—Jack Canfield, New York Times best-selling author of The Success Principles and originator of the Chicken Soup for the Soul® series

“I love making a difference in the lives of millions of people worldwide. It gives my life a deep sense of meaning and purpose. I wish I had read Brendon Burchard’s new book, The Millionaire Messenger, twenty years ago, because it has many of the lessons that would have dramatically boosted my career, both in terms of impact and finances. Lessons I had to learn the hard way. No matter what your age, now is the time to make the biggest difference in the world. Brendon will show you how.”

“This is a must-read for any author, speaker, coach, seminar leader, consultant, or online information marketer. Brendon Burchard shows you how to get your message to the public in a bigger way (and get paid for it, too).”


“You were born to make a difference, to contribute and to share your gifts with the world. Brendon Burchard shows you how to make a living (maybe a fortune!) by making a positive difference in people’s lives.”

—Darren Hardy, Publisher of *SUCCESS* magazine and best-selling author of *The Compound Effect*

“If you’ve ever dreamed of building a career and business around your advice, expertise and knowledge, then you’ll love this book.”

—David Bach, #1 *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Automatic Millionaire*
THE MILLIONAIRE MESSENGER

Make a Difference and a Fortune
Sharing Your Advice

BRENDON BURCHARD
THE MILLIONAIRE MESSENGER
Make a Difference and a Fortune
Sharing Your Advice

by BRENDON BURCHARD
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DEDICATED to my dad, Mel Burchard, whose message to us kids throughout his life said everything you needed to know about the man and explains everything you need to know about me:

CONTENTS

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
Chapter One: A Crash Course in Sharing My Message ....................... 5
Chapter Two: Behind The Guru Curtain ................................................................. 11
Chapter Three: The Expert Calling and Lifestyle ........................................ 19
Chapter Four: YOU: Advice Guru ................................................................. 39
Chapter Five: 10 Steps to an Expert Empire ........................................... 51
Chapter Six: The Millionaire Messenger’s Money Map .................. 75
Chapter Seven: The Messenger Mind-set ...................................................... 91
Chapter Eight: The Millionaire Mandates ............................................. 103
Chapter Nine: The Messenger Manifesto ............................................... 131
Chapter Ten: Trusting Your Voice ............................................................. 155
Acknowledgments ............................................................................................... 163
About the Author ......................................................................................... 167
Chapter Nine

THE MESSENGER MANIFESTO
(Or The Great Industry Reset)

The expert industry is undergoing a sea change. New technologies and marketing strategies are allowing both legends and up-and-coming gurus to amplify their message more quickly and broadly than any of us could ever have imagined.

Customers are demanding greater value, more free content, and higher levels of access to, and interaction with, experts through social media. The old ways of making money in the industry, from relying solely on book sales or holding “pitchathon” seminars, are either dead or dying. In a world of instant celebrity and worldwide broadcasting at the push of a button, there is more competition for eyeballs and business. Creating a fan base is at once easier because of social media and harder because everyone now has fans. The big names that led the expert community for decades are making way for a new generation of gurus.

All this has both positive and negative implications. But one thing is resoundingly positive: Content is king, and the new kings of the economy will be the content creators. The world is looking to us for new ideas and how-to information that can improve lives and grow businesses. It is an incredibly exciting, lucrative, and meaningful time to be an author, speaker, seminar leader, coach, consultant, and online marketer. I’ve felt this energy in a very palpable way at my live Experts Academy events.

But underneath all the opportunity and energy, there is also a great industry “reset” taking place. Part of this is because of technology, and part of it is because the old guard is quickly aging and retiring. The main reason for the great shift, though, is coming from the fact that a few leaders of the expert community are finally thinking of it as an industry. For the
first time ever, people who give advice and how-to information out to the world and profit from it are actually thinking of what they do as a career in a real industry.

It seems lately that I’m taking both praise and jeers for leading this shift. Perhaps I deserve both. Some have said I’m doing a great job championing the charge; others have questioned my “right” to do so. Some have cheered my transparency about how the industry works; others say I talk too candidly about specific gurus’ business practices. Some say I was too brash and audacious in creating the new Experts Industry Association; others say it’s about time.

For the record, I believe they all are right. To give the backstory and share some perspective on the industry reset and my role in it, let’s look specifically at six ways the industry is shifting and why. The first three changes have to do with how our community interacts internally. The last three ways have to do with how the industry faces outward to our customers.

An Internal Revolution

The shift inside our community has been, to many newbies, subtle. But the results are gathering like a tidal wave and are forever changing the nature of how we do business and help our customers. Three shifts are driving this change.

Reset #1: From Silos to Sharing

When I was a human performance and organizational development consultant at Accenture, the world’s largest consulting company, I learned an invaluable lesson that’s helping me and others both explain and lead the shift in the expert community. During my time there, I witnessed massive organizational change efforts at many of the top retailers in the world, including JCPenney, eBay, BestBuy, Nordstrom, Levi’s, and Walgreens. Many of these change efforts either succeeded or failed based on how well teams within the organizations worked together and shared information and best practices from other businesses within the retail industry.

I’ve since come to believe that you can take any business or industry in the world that does not collaborate well or share best practices, and
improve its earning potential by a factor of ten, in eighteen months or less, simply by helping it do so.

With this belief in place, to say my mind was blown when I entered the expert industry would be an understatement. To my complete shock, almost no one in the community was really sharing best practices in how they spread their message or built their business. The industry was disconnected, and almost no one knew what worked across businesses and consumer groups. It was mystifying to me, so I started asking many of the top experts in the world why this was the case. They were wonderfully frank and giving in my interviews. Three themes began to emerge that could explain why the industry had been so “in the dark” and disconnected from itself.

First, we have to understand that the expert community is made up of entrepreneurs who mostly work from home and alone. With no employees, no coworkers, no managers, and no regular contact with their peers, it’s easy to see why they don’t feel a part of a larger community. They are truly “solopreneurs.”

As an employee in traditional organizational America, your peers are around you every day from eight to five. You see them at their desks, in meetings, at the water cooler, and at annual conferences. It’s easy to consider yourself part of something larger, because you are around so many people. And when you’re around people at work, you tend to share casually what’s working and what’s not.

But experts don’t have that experience. They are often toiling alone creating their content, like artists. Though their lives may be seemingly public while they are sharing their information in books or onstage or on the Web, the opposite is true. Their lives are quite private, even isolated. In fact, the more popular they become, the more barriers are built around them to protect their privacy. Worse, without regular connection and communication with their peers, experts end up reinventing the wheel over and over. No one knows what works. No one knows what doesn’t work. Everyone is adrift, trying to figure out how to get their message out there in a bigger way.

All this leads to an industry that does not “see” itself. Our members do not consider themselves connected or part of the same whole, despite
the fact we all are essentially doing the same thing—marketing our advice, knowledge, and how-to information to consumers and organizations. That’s why, as one of the first to publicly and consistently emphasize that we are a real industry, I’ve become a sort of ambassador for the expert community.

To be fair, there are organizations within the industry that have attempted to bring people together. The challenge is that these organizations also approached the industry as a set of silos. There are writing conferences and associations for writers, speakers’ associations for speakers, coaching associations for coaches, and so on.

The challenge in chopping up the industry in this way is that experts rarely learn the multiple skill sets they need to earn multiple streams of income. If you are just an author and don’t know anything about speaking, seminars, coaching, consulting, and online marketing, then you are boxing in your message—and leaving millions of dollars on the table. A speaker who doesn’t understand online marketing is doomed to a life on the road, away from family. Coaches who do not know how to monetize their knowledge through books suffer, and so on.

That’s why I decided to start Experts Academy in the first place. I wanted to share the industry’s best practices across the silos for authors, speakers, seminar leaders, coaches, consultants, and online information marketers. I’ve done that successfully for years but decided to take it to the next level with the creation of the Experts Industry Association. Rather than just hosting a one-time seminar, I wanted to bring together the entire community on an annual basis. I also wanted to create something beyond me—Experts Academy is mine, but Experts Industry Association is ours. It’s an organization that is not about me, though I’m one of its founders, but rather about all of us. We’re going to get together each year, share our best practices, build bonds, set new standards, honor our heroes, and empower new generations to succeed.

I will likely get a lot of flak for having the audacity to start such an association, but I think it’s time we all came together. Almost every industry in the world gathers to see how it can set new standards and grow as an industry. Why not us?

The second reason we’ve been such a disconnected and individualistic industry: Many experts fear one another. It’s ironic that a community
that prides itself on helping people overcome fear is so fearful of its own members. Experts are notoriously terrified that someone else will “steal their idea.” In this way, I would argue that this is one of the most fearful industries in the world outside the inventor community—another group, by the way, that never grew up and considered itself an industry.

The misfortune of this reality is that so many experts hold their information and business practices so close to the chest that no one is learning from anyone else. Everyone is constantly reinventing the wheel or throwing stuff at the wall to see if it sticks. Aside from a few elite and often inaccessible and outrageously expensive mastermind groups, experts rarely share their best ideas about “the business” with one another. They are irrationally fearful that someone will rip off their training content or marketing strategy. While any businessperson can understand a desire to protect proprietary ideas, the level of fear in our community hurts us—it has hurt us for decades, and it will continue to do so unless we change our approach. If we don’t start sharing what we know openly, how will we, as a collective group of experts, ever advance our industry?

My personal belief about sharing information stems from this metaphor: If you never let the baby out of your arms, it can never go out in the world and grow up. I believe that any idea I have can only get bigger and better if it is exposed to the world. While the amount of training I put out in the world is staggering, I’ve found that more people use it and buy it than blatantly steal it. Besides, with the ease of search and social media available to us these days, I would certainly find or hear about anyone illegally using my content. Here’s the number one reason why I don’t fear thieves and why I openly share everything anyway: I know I’m a creator. Even if someone were to steal all my training ideas and content today, I’m confident that I can create new information tomorrow. Experts are students and creators, and we can always create more useful information.

Let’s go further. It is not just a worry that our content will be stolen. Everyone fears that their marketing strategy will be stolen. But who cares? Knockoffs and copies never do well, anyway. It’s time we all admit that sharing our business models and marketing ideas will only help all of us do better in the marketplace. And the better we all do, the better our community will be perceived. I personally want others to model
best practices so our reputation as an expert community grows. Makes sense, right?

Third, the industry is disconnected and still in its infancy because many of the old guard failed to look outside themselves to the future of the industry. This is my most controversial observation, and I know I will continue to be accused of many things for making this assertion. But the facts are the facts: Gurus have failed to groom new gurus.

This is evident in so many ways. Tens of thousands of people have failed trying to start in this industry, because there has been no collective wisdom shared openly about what it takes to succeed—there has been no roadmap. If you want to start a real estate business, there are hundreds of books on the shelf about how to do it. But how many books like this one have you seen? Why is this one of the only books to address the expert space as a real career and a real industry with best practices that anyone can follow to get ahead? Lack of general consumer information and training about our industry says a lot. And what it says is not positive.

There is no clearer evidence of the gurus-do-not-groom assertion than what I call “the open bench.” In every Fortune 500 company in the world, there is always talk of a succession plan, a plan for new leaders to emerge when the current leaders leave their jobs or retire. There are plans in place to groom the next generation of leaders—talent and skill development plans, mentoring programs, and so on. Corporate managers and executives are always asked to share how they got where they are. The same thing happens in sports—you’ve got the A players out there, but on the bench the B players are being groomed and waiting to step up.

But where is the “bench” in the expert community? Think about it. Who in the personal development arena will be the next Tony Robbins? Who is the next Wayne Dyer? What happens when Oprah retires? Who is in line behind Deepak Chopra and Marianne Williamson in spirituality; David Bach, David Ramsey, Robert Kiyosaki, and Suze Orman in personal finance; John Gray and John Gottman in relationships; Gary Hamel and Clayton Christensen in innovation; Seth Godin and Jay Conrad Levinson in marketing; Rick Warren and Joel Osteen in religion; John Maxwell and Warren Bennis in leadership; Brian Tracy and Jeffrey Gitomer in sales; Andrew Weil and Mehmet Oz in health; and Dean Graziosi and Donald Trump in real estate? Of course, these are just a few of the top leaders in
a few sample fields. I bet you couldn’t name even a handful of people in each of these areas with major exposure, and I think it’s time we start to ask why not?

This question led me to ask many of the people I just mentioned how they built their businesses, so that we could share that information with future experts. Indeed, many of the people I listed have spoken at Experts Academy, revealing exactly how they did it, including Tony Robbins, David Bach, and John Gray. What’s fascinating in the case of Tony, David, and John is that each of them was actually shocked when I first asked them to reveal how they built their multimillion-dollar empires. They each had to create an entirely new presentation, one they had never before delivered even though they have all been training for two or more decades. It turns out that no one had ever asked them to speak specifically about how they built their expert businesses.

What was more extraordinary was that most gurus do not even think people are all that interested in learning how to step into their shoes. I personally don’t think Tony ever fully knew until recently how many people wanted to have a career like his. The person introducing a session I was going to be conducting at Tony’s famous “Unleash the Power Within” stage asked the audience something like this: “How many of you would love to have a career like Tony’s and help people with your advice and motivation?” Almost every hand in the room went up. There were over 2,000 people there. To a degree, all those who follow us or learn from us see something of us within themselves.

Another issue is that many experts feel we are so unique that nobody can do what we do. This, of course, is true. Nobody on earth is like Tony Robbins. Or like you. Or like me. But remember, Tony started his business as a “young kid” who was washing his dishes in his bathtub because his tiny apartment didn’t even have a working kitchen sink. He had no certification or formal education that allowed him to do what he does. As Tony likes to say, he had no formal education, but he has “a PhD in results.”

Clearly, no one can be Tony Robbins. He is a legend and has his own orbit. I admire him deeply, count him as a friend and mentor, and think he is irreplaceable. He is the single most impressive and inspiring person I’ve met in my entire life. But what he has learned about business can be taught, duplicated, and improved on. Starting and sustaining a business is
a replicable practice, and more newcomers could sustain their businesses if more legends shared their lessons learned. I honor Tony and all the legends who have shared their insights at Experts Academy. We need more people doing this all across the industry and through multiple vehicles so that we can build the bench.

I'm doing my part the best I can. I issue free videos all the time to my list subscribers; I point them to other experts doing great things; I host Experts Academy and Experts Industry Association. In addition, more than 100 mentees are in my Empire Group Mastermind and are receiving my coaching and training so that they can get their message out on a grander scale.

Other industries understand this concept. Everyone knows that no one can replace Warren Buffett, Steve Jobs, or Bill Gates. But all three are working hard to train the next generation to step into their huge shoes. We must do the same.

I think we can learn a lot from both the corporate space and the hip-hop community. Yes, hip-hop—that community does a great job of honoring its legends. When you hear Jay-Z speak about rap, it's like a history lesson. But as much as he and other leaders honor its pioneers, they also disdain knockoffs and constantly look for and celebrate new talent. It's actually quite remarkable. In one interview, Jay-Z was asked about the new crop of rappers, and he immediately named 10 or more up-and-coming rappers with ease. That would be unlikely in our industry.

I know this was a long, roundabout way of saying, “We need to get together, share what we have learned, and groom a new generation of leaders.” But because of the attention that falls on me as founder of Experts Academy and the Expert Industry Association, I had to take the opportunity to share the history and rationale. I'll move more swiftly through the rest of the resets.

**Reset #2: Renewed Focus on Innovation and Distinction**

The expert world is full of copycats. They are about to get a rude awakening and quickly be swept aside by a new generation of content creators.
While the last three decades were very kind to our industry, a slew of would-be experts grew up trying to emulate the legends. This has led to a community that steals its own stories, quotes the same passages, fails to create new content, and rests on the laurels of legends. Few are reinventing the game. That has to change.

As an example of this problem, there is nothing sadder to me than speakers who still use the acronym F.E.A.R. This is a common acronym for discussing fear: False Evidence Appearing Real. It has been used for over thirty years, and you still hear it all the time. It’s sad.

Another example: trainers who use the starfish story. It’s a great story but badly overused. If you haven’t heard it, in sum: Kid throws starfish back in the ocean. Old man says there are so many starfish on the beach, why bother? “It doesn’t make a difference,” he says. Kid throws another starfish back into the ocean and says, “Made a difference to that one.” This story has been attributed to Loren Eiseley.

Another: the Cathedral story. Man asks laborers what they are doing, and one says, “I’m busting rocks, earning a living,” while the other says, “We are building a cathedral.”

Yeesh. This is not a judgment of these stories—they’re great. Instead it’s a blasting denunciation of the unimaginative copycats who lack the care of their craft and career to create and share new stories, metaphors, and examples. Our industry has gotten a bad rap for being repetitive, unimaginative, and “soft” simply because we’re not innovating and creating enough new ideas. I believe I echo all the top leaders of our community when I say, collectively, “Shame on us!”

Beyond recycling old stories, many have also failed to create new value in quite some time. We must never become a “staple” industry like the T-shirt and socks industry. We want to be Apple, releasing new, relevant, and pioneering ideas and products that move our industry forward. While many reasonably argue that Apple releases too many new shiny things—I have no idea how many versions of the iPod I own—the point should not be lost. We cannot rest on products and programs that sold well five years ago.

I remember sitting in San Diego with a top female trainer after she had just returned from a seminar that she had first attended 20 years earlier.
Her disgust inspired me to write this particular reset. She said, “Brendon, that seminar hasn’t changed in twenty years! The person conducting that event hasn’t grown or learned anything new in two decades? Worse,” she continued, “is that no one has pushed [that guru] to change, because they follow like lemmings and are scared to say ‘Evolve!’

Very, very few products or programs can stand the test of time. And even if they could, the creator of such a program owes it to his or her audience to deliver new value and information. It would be a disservice to put out a blockbuster program and then stop. Customers want and deserve mastery, and that doesn’t come with just one program.

I get a lot of criticism for these arguments. Many people object to this idea by pointing out that many books, for example, are timeless, like those in the self-help genre. Personal growth concepts are always relevant in some way, they say. I agree. Books like *Think and Grow Rich*, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, *The Alchemist*, and thousands more are awesome and will always be awesome (although many of even those books have been revised).

But my point is not that we should toss out the old. Rather, we simply don’t have to keep rehashing old material. We have to challenge ourselves to continue delivering new ideas, distinct stories and perspectives, and cutting-edge information in new products and programs on a continual basis.

This can be difficult work, I know, and sometimes new ground is hard to find. It is also very common for new experts to cover old ground without knowing it. As they say, there is nothing new under the sun, and nothing new has been said since Adam. We all have to be comfortable with the fact that so much has already been said in this industry, what we are teaching may have been taught in some way before. If you ever get called out on this, either apologize for it (“Wow, thank you, I didn’t know someone else had said that before.”) or address it and explain your points of distinction (“Yes, I’ve heard someone has taught this before; here is how I’m different.”).

This reality hit very close to home when I began. As you will recall, my car accident had inspired me to think about my life and ask, “Did I live fully? Did I love openly? Did I matter?” I had been sharing those questions rather broadly, probably for about three or four years. Then one
day after a speech, a mentor told me that Norman Cousins had asked very similar questions decades before me. Cousins—whose work I have since come to admire tremendously but at that point had never heard of—found that people do indeed ask such things when evaluating their lives. Cousins wrote,

“The great tragedy is not death, it’s what we allow to die inside of us while we live. When you are on your deathbed, you’re not thinking about how much money you have or how much you have accomplished. The questions people generally ask on their deathbeds are: 1. Have I lived wisely? 2. Have I loved well? 3. Have I served greatly?”

You might think I was horrified to discover these similarities. Instead, reading Cousins’ passage became one of the most validating moments of my life. I was so happy to find out that I was not the only one to believe these things. It made me feel connected to our universal values and experiences as a human being. It proved to me that what I knew to be true was true for others.

That said, I had to quickly begin explaining my perspective in my work to avoid any future issues. I recently found a speech transcript in my personal archives that showed me addressing this way back in 1999, long before I would become known for my three questions with the launch of my book *Life’s Golden Ticket* in 2007. While it is a rather long passage, I thought including it here might help to show how you can openly and honestly address any similarities your life’s message might have with others’ work. The truth is that we all have common human experiences, and when sharing our life’s message we will often overlap. But even if it has all been said, what is new is our own unique experience of learning our own lessons, getting our own results, and creating new value for people. I hope this transcript reminds you of that.

*From the archives:*

As I’ve been sharing since my car accident, which was the most important and yet terrifying moment in my life, I discovered a lot about myself and the world back then. When I was recovering I kept thinking about all that had happened. I still to this day remember those last moments of the turn, life about to disappear, and learning how important life was. I came to realize we’ll ask if we lived fully, loved openly, and made a difference, because in that experience I wondered whether I was
adventurous enough or really connected enough or had lived for something
or someone outside of me. The sad truth is, I hated the answers. I was just
a young, directionless kid who didn’t know any better until I crashed into
life’s greatest lessons.

Since then I’ve volunteered at hospices, and I’ve seen so many people
struggle with the same questions at the end: “Did I live fully? Did I love
openly? Did I matter?” I think it’s good to know those are the questions we
may seek to answer at the end, because then we can live our lives so we’ll
be happy with the answers.

These questions are not just my unique findings. Last year a friend of
mine showed me a passage from Norman Cousins, and it meant so much
to me. It was validating and amazing all at once. It turns out Cousins had
written long before me that people on their deathbeds ask, “Have I lived
wisely? Have I loved well? Have I served greatly?” It was just so amazing
that I crashed into a lesson that others had found to be true. In fact, if you
know any hospice worker or end-of-life counselor, they will all say pretty
much the same thing: “Yep, people reflect on their life, and they wonder
if they really lived, and they wonder who they loved, and they wonder
what impact they had.” It’s a universal thing, so I’m not seeking credit
for it in any way—certainly generations of people discovered this before
Cousins or I or anyone else ever wrote about it. I just hope to share my
unique story and perspective.

The only thing that may be unique about my three questions comes
down to word choice, I suppose. Cousins asked if we lived “wisely,” but I
wondered a different question: if we lived “fully.” It’s subtle yet important
to me, at least in how I live. I want to live vibrantly and burst across
the planet like a firework and make foolhardy decisions and have adventure.
But who am I? Just some young punk kid, because Cousins said “living
wisely” and Buddha used the same phrase when he said, “Even death is
not to be feared by one who has lived wisely.” Cousins also talked about
“loving well,” but I was probably too damn young to know what that
meant when I forged my three questions. To me loving “openly” was my
word choice because I had been so closed off from love as a young man
after the breakup with the first woman I ever loved. It seems to me that
whenever love goes wrong, it has a lot to do with how open we really were.

Anyway, the last word choice was important for me at the time, I
guess, and says a lot about what I try to do now. Cousins talked about
whether or not we “served greatly,” which I think is such a great phrase. I
guess when I crashed into reality I ended up thinking about it differently
as a young man. I didn’t think about serving greatly, though, as I said, I
like that, because I didn’t ever think I could make a “great” difference. I
think many people don’t think they can change millions of lives or do
“great” and grand things that change the world. Some just want to make a
difference with one person, and perhaps they don’t consider that a grand or
great thing, which is too bad. “We don’t have to change the world; we just
have to change somebody’s world,” is something I heard once. So I simply
ask, Did I matter? Not Did I do something great? Maybe it’s just a small

Of course, this is all just silly semantics, but it really meant a lot to me
when I found that my accident and my experiences in hospices led me to
similar conclusions that others had drawn. It helped me realize we are all
on the same journey of life, discovering similar things. I hope we all try to
share those similar findings even if they are worded a little differently or
even if it’s from our own perspective. It turns out, living and loving and
doing good are universal values we all find important, and I hope sharing
a little with you today about those values helped.

The takeaway of this section is this: Be distinct. Share your own stories
and create your own content. Continually create new value that wows
people. That’s what will elevate our reputations and our revenues in this
industry. If, for any reason, your work ends up being similar to others’—
which, of course, will happen—address it. But do understand that teaching
points can be similar in nature because of our universal human emotions
and experiences, but our training products and programs should be unique
to our brands. Does that make sense?

**Reset #3: Better Branding**

Ever go to a seminar and get a crappy binder full of “resources” that
seemed to be photocopies of photocopies of photocopies? Ever receive in
the mail a chintzy self-published book that looked as if it were designed by
a gorilla? Or ever go to a guru’s website only to see a postcardlike site that
seemed from circa 1995?

I’ve asked these questions of audiences from around the world, and
they all laugh and raise their hands in acknowledgment. It is funny but
also tragic.

It’s vital that as a community, we start making our websites, products,
and programs look better. Just as Apple did to the personal computer and the
mobile device, we must upgrade our industry’s overall aesthetic and design.
We need to be cognizant of the massive shift our society has experienced
from function to form, from buying bland to buying creative, customized,
and colorful. The world does not like crap or clutter, and we, as a group of professionals, are often guilty of creating websites full of both.

To put it bluntly, our industry needs a facelift. As an observer, I see three key areas that require a makeover, pronto. First, we have to refresh our websites to be more contemporary and interactive, which now means video-driven blogs with comment sections. We also need to make our membership sites look as if they are worth people's time and money. People should enjoy and be proud of being part of our online communities. When is the last time you had someone mention feeling that way?

Second, we must start making our shipped products look "retail ready." The DVD home-study programs, audio programs, binders, worksheets, and resources mailed out in this industry are abysmal. This is almost entirely across the board except for the top 2 percent. Believe me, I'm not a design snob, and I'm not into spending too much money on graphic designers. I understand there is still a core group of marketers teaching people to "get it done fast, get it done cheap, get it out the door now." I also know that many customers don't care what our information looks like—they just want the content and knowledge and don't care about the vessel.

All the objections to making our products look better actually make sense in a silo world. If we can stretch our field of influence to understand that we are a community with real careers in a real industry, we can understand that our community has a singular reputation. Unfortunately, crappy-looking products are like a ripple in the pond and affect the entire aesthetic of who we are. If we all step up and make our products look good, we can all enjoy the benefits of a more appreciative, impressed, and happier customer base.

Finally, we desperately need a makeover of our approach to doing seminars. With the exception of perhaps five to ten brands, the industry is still hosting seminars, workshops, and conferences in cheaper airport hotels with dim lighting, poor ventilation, and uncomfortable chairs. Worse, promoters are barely spending any money on lighting, sound, branding, and materials. It's a disgrace, and it would never happen in the best of the corporate world. Believe me, I know that it can hurt to spend a little more on these things—I do over a dozen live events a year and now spend millions making them run well. And I understand that customers want promoters to get low room rates for them at travel-friendly and accessible
hotels. But it doesn’t cost a lot more to find a great hotel, put up a few well-designed banners, hire some good AV people, and deliver nicely printed and bound seminar materials. This is perhaps more detail than people would imagine I should go into in a book like this, but we all have to relearn the phrase “details matter.” Whether you are holding a free seminar or a high-fee seminar, your job is to make the learning environment look and feel terrific. We owe it to ourselves, and we owe it to our customers.

These three resets are powerful. When we move from an industry stuck in its own silos to a best-practices sharing and bench-building community, we all win. When we deliver creative, innovative, and distinct content and programs, we all elevate our game. And when we refresh our look and branding to be more clean and contemporary, we repair the cheap reputation we have been pinned with.

We can do better. It’s our time to look at ourselves as a singular industry with a singular reputation that we can all affect and improve. The change must start within. The revolution and reset is already at hand. Join us.

The Outward Reset

The previous three resets focused on what we must do internally to improve our industry and reputation. The next three are actions we can take with our customers to continue the momentum.

Reset #4: Transition from Sales Communication to Value Communication

A curious thing happened in list management over the past five years. Gurus began mailing coupons to their lists, following corporate America’s ineffective and poor choice at electronic marketing and communication. They also made a decision along the way that they would send either content-only newsletters or sales messages. This was just bizarre.

As I write this page, we are now caught in a moment when many experts are sending out too many sales-only e-mails. They do not send e-mails with value anymore, just links to sales pages or sales funnels. This must change and it must change now.

The reset in the industry will finally achieve balance between sales and value by combining them instead of forcing an either/or decision. If you are one of my subscribers, you know that almost every e-mail I send out
adds major value, even if I’m promoting someone else’s product or offering a sale of my own.

For example, I recently promoted a friend’s informational course on social media. Almost everyone promoting the same course simply sent an e-mail to their subscribers that said, in effect, “Here is an awesome new course. Click here to buy it.” There was no value offered, and thus their e-mails were what I call “sales-only communication.”

I designed a different approach. I sat and thought about my customer and what I was doing in social media that was working well. Then I went into my video studio and shot an informational video explaining my best social media strategy. At the end of the video, I essentially said the following:

“I hope that serves you in your own business. If you would like more training on social media, I’m not really the expert, but you can click the link below this video to learn about my friend’s new training on social media. I think you’ll enjoy it a lot. If you happen to enroll in his course, I’ll give you two of my training courses as congratulations. My two courses really complement his, so you’ll be getting twice the value.”

See? I added value by doing what experts do: teaching. I taught my subscribers something useful, and whether or not they bought my friend’s program, they still learned something. So no one was upset, and no one was put off. Does this take a little more effort? Of course it does. But it keeps me in good standing with my list because it does what I promised them, which is to add value to their lives. The result was that I was the number one promoter of that course and made over $200,000 in affiliate commissions. Affiliate commissions mean that I was paid a percentage of the sale when people signed up for my friend’s course, which I disclosed clearly to people in my video and on the page where my video was hosted.

This example illustrates that we do not have to choose between adding value and selling, and I think it’s important that the community start doing this. Most of the successful gurus out there, including those in the online marketing world, are already leading the way and have been for a while. Now everyone else should follow.

In the sales arena, I also think it would be helpful if our community became more thoughtful in strategically planning our communications and promotional calendars. It turns out most experts don’t actually have a
promotional calendar planned out. Instead, they end up at the end of the month realizing, “Oh, I guess I’d better send a monthly newsletter today. I’d better figure out a topic to write about or find something to sell.” This is just bad business and bad practice.

I’ve been very blessed to consult with many of the world’s best retailers and have some perspective in this area. I remember speaking with brand managers at Nordstrom and BestBuy and being blown away by how far in advance they plan their promotional calendar and product releases. Retailers know what they are doing not just the next couple of months but in the next couple of seasons and quarters. We need to learn that skill and be more diligent about planning how and when we will add value and make sales.

Finally, as a last point on sales, I believe our entire community would breathe a sigh of relief if we all notified each other sooner about our upcoming promotions. I cannot tell you how many e-mails I get that say, “Tomorrow we are launching our new X; please promote for me!” Let’s all give each other several months of notice on what we’re doing, and forever put to sleep the last-minute monster.

With sales out of the way, let’s talk about value. What constitutes value in the how-to world has evolved over the decades. No longer is a newsletter article sufficient to keep an audience engaged and served. Most customers tell me that value to them means they receive actual content and implementable ideas that they can act on right away. Sending people funny videos or short overview articles or blog posts is not value; it’s distraction.

To serve your customers best, think about what their goals are, and send out useful training that helps them move from point A to point B. Give a simple-to-implement idea, but also give the bigger picture and process. Ask yourself, “If I received this communication, would I find it valuable personally and professionally, and would I be able to do something new and important after seeing it?”

Again, I understand that all this takes work. But it’s what we were born to do anyway—to teach—and it serves the customer.

Everything I’ve mentioned so far will do little to improve our industry’s reputation if, at the same time, we don’t improve our customer-service approach across the board. Bad customer service has become the expectation of customers, and because of this, fewer customers buy, and frankly, many have started to send jaded, aggressive, and flippant messages to get what they want. A friend of mine recently said, “Too many of the new customers in our industry act like skeptical jerks, and it’s our own fault.”

Since day one, I’ve been extremely, if not obsessively, focused on customer service. We have always made sure to respond to people at least on the same business day we receive a call or e-mail from a customer. We often reply within the hour, except during heavy promotional periods when we may be briefly overwhelmed. We make our trial, return, and refund policies clear in our videos, on our checkout pages, and in our terms and conditions for every product or program we release. To be fully transparent, I did get this wrong during one promotion when we were not clear enough about the refund policy, and it created unneeded angst and hassles later on. You often learn customer service the hard way in this industry. But in general, I would say we have a very strong and positive reputation for great customer service.

Unfortunately, that means very little these days. Yes, you heard me say it: Having a great customer-service reputation does not mean as much as you might think it would in this industry. Now, before I get critical e-mails for saying a good reputation is not important, let me explain why I say that. Two realities about the greater context of doing business as an expert will serve you here.

First, most of your sales on any given promotion these days come from buyers who have never heard of you, especially when you start out. I’m fairly well known, but a full 72 percent of the buyers of my last promotion had never heard of me. People who come into your sales funnel are often brand new prospects who have never heard of you and know nothing about your reputation. Because the expert community is not active on Yelp or other customer-evaluation-oriented websites (yes, this will change too), there is really not much information out there about the personalities, brands, and companies in our industry. It’s odd, because other industries are driven by community product reviews.
Second, because most people who buy from you have never heard of you, they default to their preconditioned assumptions about the industry as a whole. This is a horrible thing. I say this because historically, “gurus” have been so ego driven or adored by forgiving fans that they simply never focused on customer service as a business practice. It turns out that rock stars and celebrities, too, have abysmal customer service for the same reasons.

Because of this tragic track record with customer service, we all lose. Personally, I’m tired of getting customers who call or e-mail us in advance of buying and are jaded, rude, skeptical, or needlessly challenging with their questions. This is crazy because we probably have one of the best reputations in the expert community. We deliver what we promise, and more. We are responsive. We care deeply about our clients’ success, and if anything, we overcommunicate our terms and conditions. Still, here’s an unedited e-mail we received during my last promotion:

“Hey, I think I like your stuff and I think I’m going to buy it but I need more convincing you guys aren’t like the other guys in this industry who rip us off and lie about refunds and guarantees. If I don’t like your [insert expletive] stuff I want to know if I can return it right the [expletive] away otherwise I’m not going to buy it. So, let me know, are you guys honorable or thieves like everyone else?”

Doesn’t that speak volumes about the preconditioned assumptions this person has about the expert community? You have to understand that most people approach the guru industry with this level of energy and caution these days. “Gurus” and experts in all industries have gotten a bad reputation in the past few years, and it’s tragic. That’s not the fault of anyone else but those in the community who spoil it for the rest of us.

With that said, I want to emphasize that I don’t think most experts out there are bad businesspeople or acting without integrity or with any malice toward their customers. I strongly believe that almost to a person, our community is made up of deeply caring and committed experts. It’s just that the bad few do taint the picture of all of us. And while almost everyone in this community is good and caring, they are, in fact, extremely busy and creative people who are running small businesses from home. This leads me to conclude that it is distraction and lack of resources that have led to our industry’s bad customer-service reputation.
The good news is that this can all be easily and swiftly corrected if we all decide to flip the switch and reset our compass to focus on our customers as much after the sale as before the sale. At a financial level, we should all remind ourselves that the lifetime value of a customer is worth ensuring that they are happy, cared for, and well served.

Besides my doing my small part in this reset of practicing what we preach, we have also committed our team to ensure that the Expert Industry Association recognizes and celebrates brands known for excellent customer service.

**Reset #6: Honor More, Expect More**

In the late 1980s, there was a subtle but distinct shift in the tone coming from the expert industry. And it was not a good one. Gobbled up by the “greed is good” Wall Street mantra and the time period’s celebrations of shock jocks and heroic CEOs, we went astray. Many self-help gurus and experts in every field started two poor practices.

First—and this upsets me greatly—experts started speaking and writing in a tone that smacked of condescension to their clients. Gone were the honoring tones of experts and writers of the past. Replacing them was the “bootcamp guru,” the harsh-talking in-your-face expert who was clearly much more attuned to your problems and reality than you were. In fact, to these types of gurus, I say your whole life is out of whack. You are sleepwalking through your life. You do not know how bad your unconscious is derailing everything you do. You are screwing up your relationships and your job, and you are tossing aside your future. Oh, and you are lazy and foolish. And because of it, no one loves you. There! Did I forget anything?

While this may sound exaggerated, the most extraordinary reality is that people were basically saying this garbage. It still happens today! Pick up a self-help book, and it seems as if it were written for complete losers who have lost all control of their life. Authors in that space started writing and speaking to the lowest common denominator. It’s as if the whole industry started sounding like that horribly screeching condescending phrase Dr. Phil became famous for: “What were you thinking, [insert “dummy” here and you’ve got the sound]?”

For the record, I like Dr. Phil’s work, his books especially, and I think he’s helped millions of people. I also think it’s obvious that he uses that
phrase with a sense of tease and humor that makes it palatable (sometimes),
and that he truly and genuinely cares for his clients and audience.

But you get the point. Experts became very condescending and started writing and training as if they were advising either children or the most severely out-of-touch or maladjusted among us.

It’s time for a new tone. It’s time for us to honor our audience more. Let’s assume that people are doing their best, not their worst, that they are capable, not inept, and that they are pretty tuned in since they did reach out to us for advice in the first place. Personally, I don’t think people are out of touch or sleepwalking through their lives. Like most of us, people are very aware of their problems and their reality, and they are just looking for some inspiration and instruction to reach the next level. I have great respect and admiration for my clients and audience, and I speak to them as peers, not as their “guru,” camp counselor, or drill sergeant.

Of course, at this point, it’s common for people to say, “Yeah, Brendon, that all sounds good, but c’mon, man, you and I both know that the media reward shock and awe and the drill sergeant over the quiet servant.” I sadly agree. But I also think we get to choose what kind of games we will play in life in order to be rewarded and recognized. Personally, I don’t think it’s worth my being someone else or bullying someone else just to get their attention or the media’s attention.

Let’s start believing in our customers and looking at them with as much admiration as they do us. By honoring our audience once again, we will bring a reputation of honor back to our industry.

Next, as much as we honor them, let’s also begin expecting more out of our fans, followers, and customers. This chapter has been about us expecting more out of ourselves as leading experts, but now I want the emphasis to be about expecting more out of our audience.

I haven’t been able to place my finger on exactly when it started happening (though my research and interviews point to the mid-1990s), but there was a shift in the industry when suddenly it became okay and casually well known that our clients were not implementing what we were teaching them. Suddenly there was a laissez-faire attitude about the results our clients get when implementing our advice, ideas, strategies, processes,
systems, and so on. “Well, I can’t control whether they implement my training, so oh, well,” went the attitude.

That attitude is so pervasive today that it has created an entire generation of experts who do little to set expectations, challenges, accountability systems, or follow-up programs with their customers. In turn, our industry’s clients are not implementing and getting results, which in turn hurts our reputation yet again. It’s time for a reset here as well.

I don’t pretend to have all the answers, and like everyone else, I want more of my clients to actually use and implement my programs. Like everyone, I’d be happy if more of our customers would even open the book or DVDs they ordered!

In all seriousness, we can all start the reset immediately by changing our tone and verbiage with our clients. We can begin telling them directly that we only want serious students and that we expect them to take action. Sometimes just having someone tell us that we can raise our standards can be an impetus to actually change. We can instill the desire and challenge with them without being drill sergeants. All we have to do is be greater inspirations and enable our customers with more tools, goals, and follow-up communications. We can say things like the following and do it not for marketing but because it’s true:

“Look, if you are like many of us, there are too few people in your life who are holding you to an elevated standard of excellence. People want to protect you and keep you safe, and they make it okay not to push yourself further and harder. But our paths have intersected because you believe you are capable of more, much more, and you are looking for new ways to reach your highest potential in this area. So let’s make a deal. If you are a person who genuinely wants to succeed at this, and you are truly willing to implement what I teach, then let’s begin. But our industry is full enough of tire kickers and fly-by-night gurus who just sell and run. So let’s make a deal. You implement this stuff, and I will follow up with you with a reminder series from our system. We need more doers, and if that is you, then let’s begin. But if you feel like just ‘trying’ my stuff out and dabbling in this area, then perhaps you should browse my blog but not become a student. I’m setting a high standard for my students, and I expect you to have a high standard if you become one.”
Perhaps that’s too hokey and not the best argument or marketing strategy. It’s easier to say, “Hey, just buy my stuff, and we’ll see if it fits you.” But it’s important that our programs inspire people to set a high standard and implement our ideas. Change often happens when we communicate differently to the marketplace, so this is an easy area to make a change.

Personally, I do my best to give my clients a very hard time if they don’t do what they said they would. I hold high expectations for them and for myself. I try to give my customers the checklists, samples, and resources needed to take action. I can do better at this, though; I think we all can. Today is the day we must all begin.

A Tribute

I am keenly aware that in writing a chapter like this I run the risk of sounding negative and overly judgmental about our expert community. I will likely be harpooned on a few blogs for being too audacious or bigheaded in making these assertions. My goal here, though, was not to be negative or come across as flippant. I know I am but a bit player on the historical stage of this industry, and I didn’t write this chapter for self-aggrandizement or to point fingers. My goal was to take full advantage of this platform to help you lead this industry. And to lead, we must all be transparent about where we are and how we can improve. Until we point out what is not working, we cannot fully serve our customers or advance our careers or community.

With that said, there’s a lot that is right in this industry. Our work changes people’s lives for the better, and that is extraordinary. Our community is the most creative, brilliant, thoughtful, and caring of any I have witnessed. I would happily challenge anyone to find another industry that has helped as many people live fuller, richer, happier, and more meaningful lives than ours has.

I hope you’ve sensed my joy, appreciation, and excitement for having the opportunity to have a career as an expert. This industry radically changed my life and has changed millions of lives before me. Now it’s time to continue the good work of those who came before us and, at the same time, elevate our industry to the next level. I hope you will join us.
Brendon Burchard is the founder of Experts Academy and the best-selling author of Life’s Golden Ticket. He is one of the top business and motivational trainers in the world.

Brendon was blessed to receive life’s golden ticket—a second chance—after surviving a dramatic car accident in a developing country. Since then, he has dedicated his life to helping others find their voice, live more fully, and follow their dreams. He founded Experts Academy and wrote The Millionaire Messenger to teach emerging advice experts how to have more impact, influence, and income while spreading their message and building their businesses.

An influential multimillionaire expert himself, Brendon inspires over two million people a year with his books, newsletters, products, and appearances. He has been on ABC World News, NPR, Oprah and Friends, and onstage with the Dalai Lama, Sir Richard Branson, Stephen Covey, Tony Robbins, Deepak Chopra, Marianne Williamson, John Gray, Keith Ferrazzi, T. Harv Eker, Tony Hsieh, David Bach, Jack Canfield, and other leaders and legends in the expert industry. His clients have included the largest companies and nonprofits in the world as well as thousands of executives and entrepreneurs from around the globe who attend his speeches and seminars. Brendon’s famous seminars include Experts Academy, High Performance Academy, Partnership Seminar, and World’s Greatest Speaker Training.