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ACCELERATING ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS PODCAST

EPISODE  
**23**

**Mike Cline**

Show Notes at: <http://www.aesnation.com/23>



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Best of success,



John Bowen  
Co-founder, AES Nation

**John Bowen:** Have you ever struggled with technology? Have you been frustrated when you hear all of these fellow entrepreneurs who are out there really using technology and marketing and having all this success and you're not? Well, I'm John Bowen at Accelerating Entrepreneurial Success where we bring together each business day one of the top entrepreneurs doing something remarkable.

I got to tell you, my guest today is going to help you with that frustration. As a matter of fact, he might just take it away from you so it's very important for you to hear this whole thing because I met him about four years ago. And this was before I was using technology, videos, marketing automation, all this stuff, and I got to tell you Mike Cline really pointed me in the right direction, been there for me, amazing Tech Guys Who Get Marketing. I didn't believe it when I first met you Mike and I'll tell you I now know that it's true. Thank you for joining me today.

**Mike Cline:** Thanks, John.

**John:** Mike where did that name come from? My companies... I don't have companies even approaching your clarity. Where did it come from?

**Mike:** Well, I was actually trying to explain what we do and what the proposition of the business to Dan Sullivan many years ago. And when I originally got into business, this sort of a formal name of the company was Generic Solution Engineering because I really didn't know what I wanted to do. And in the conversation with Dan long the way, he's like, "So you're telling me you're a tech guy but you do marketing." And it kind of hit me, I was like, "Yeah, in fact that's a much better, easier brand to create and let people understand exactly what we do in one line."

**John:** Well, and I'm glad Dan coached because Dan obviously is a good friend to both of us. You and I are in a couple Mastermind Groups together, we're good friends. We're doing projects together and so on. So I have learned a lot and I want our viewers and listeners to learn a lot too. Tell me how you got so passionate about this technology stuff and helping marketing people?

**Mike:** Well, I got started on the technology side first, sort of mechanics, mechanical stuff, electromechanical stuff has kind of been my passion just sort of personal interest. And I got into the computer world back in 2000 for I started doing like a help desk support you could say for a company, bounced to a bunch of different positions in that company. Eventually, I got into some of the programming sides, sort of understanding web development. And then I stumbled across a couple guys in the online marketing space who needed technical support and this would have been in 2004.

And in 2004, it was really about that kind of a start of the second wave of the online marketing world that will say kind of like hit peak in '06-'07. And anyways, they had me modifying websites and doing updates and stuff for him. And I questioned all of them like, "This stuff is ugly. What is the point of this? No, I can make something way better." And one of the guys says, "Mike, don't touch any of this stuff. Come to this event first and listen to this guy talk." So I went to an online marketing event. They started off the event. And this is one of the partners of this company that I was helping. He says, "Every tech person that you talk with about this is going to tell you that what I'm saying here today is wrong. The reason it's not wrong is the money doesn't lie. Follow the dollars."

And I was instantly humbled by that because I hadn't thought of monetization at every step along the process before. In fact, e-commerce wasn't even really in my head. It just didn't click to me. I mean I was passionate about the technology and how all the pieces worked and this and that. And that was the big switch though, is when he got up on stage at this presentation. I was humbled. I was like, "Oh my gosh! I've been thinking about this entire equation completely wrong." So I kind of went back to school per se and just studied and studied and studied.

And over the past ten years, I've built some really wild campaigns and pretty large scale stuff. By kind of... on those two areas, technology and marketing really juxta positioned because the mindset for a marketer and the mindset for a tech person are very, very different so I've definitely found a little niche there.

**John:** Well, you did. And when I met you, that was kind of a big turning point as well for me. And that I've always been a reasonably good entrepreneur. I've always enjoyed marketing a lot. And all of a sudden, I'm listening to you and I go and I like technology. I'm in Silicon Valley and I've used it a lot. But I never kind of put the things together... when you started showing me some of the things of how you could leverage and actually track marketing and really the economics of the whole thing all of sudden. For many entrepreneurs, we look at marketing almost as a call center. We look at technology as a cost center. All of a sudden, now they've become kind of wow and then what's happened since has just been amazing. Back in 2004 for instance, YouTube didn't exist. What's been some of the progression that you've been seeing entrepreneurs really leverage and have success and help grow their business exponentially?

**Mike:** Well, I kind of break it into two separate camps. You have your strategic thinking and your tactical thinking. And one of the downfalls or one of the pitfalls, it's not really a downfall, it's a positive but it's a pitfall that people get stuck in, entrepreneurs get stuck in when it comes to online marketing or leveraging technology on the web... is that there's so much of it, you can get distracted right? There's a million ways to place, to generate traffic online, variations

of ad types and different social networks to play in and drive traffic from and all that tactical stuff, really trips people up.

So the thing that I think is the most important kind of the starting point is to understand your own strategic plan and to understand strategic database marketing, which is an old concept. So it kind of all emerged when computer horsepower became really cheap and guys could start segmenting list and breaking large chunks of data apart and testing, mathematically testing offers to statistical significance.

So with Tech Guys, we take people through a process of looking at your funnel, your sales funnel, we actually call them the immersion sequences and breaking apart how you're actually trying to move a customer through your world. And thinking about it like a relationship matters more, right? The strategic side is really relationship building, long term relationship building because we care about lifetime account values. We care about clients for life and then applying the tactical on top of that. So if you don't have your strategic foundation dialed in and you start throwing tactical stuff at the wall, you're really going to confuse yourself more than anything else.

**John:** I see that all the time Mike. We see that in the groups we're in, even among really talented marketing people, so often they're kind of the "one and done." You know, "I got this great idea. I'm going to blast it out there." And they have little success. But there's no follow up campaign. And, "Well, I'll blast it one more time." And there's diminishing returns. And I see the guys who oftentimes are the quiet, thoughtful ones in the group that we don't hear from as much. They've got the play and they're out there executing, they're listening to ideas. They refine that. When you talk about putting the play in together, how do you see entrepreneurs successfully put the strategic plan together, the whole client experience side?

**Mike:** Well, we take people through a process. There's actually a couple worksheets that we have. But we kind of start with the client avatar, which is really forcing someone to define who their ideal client is. What the conversation in their head? What's the real life events going on? What does that person look like? And then applying that avatar information at thinking to an immersion sequence.

I have a longer presentation that kind of goes through the immersion sequence stuff in depth but essentially, it's how do I build that relationship from the, "Hello! Hey, somebody new," to... "Want to go on a date? Want to get married? Want to have kids? Want to have grandkids?" I put it in a context of human relationships because it's a lot easier for people to get their head around in when you start positioning products and offers to them.

So building that, that immersion sequence, that flow and then answering to your own customer avatar and asking these questions, these strategic questions can really set you up

for success so that you're not trying to stuff a square peg in a round hole and succeed despite yourself because you're trying some new tactical marketing approach, new type of media buying, new type of ads, that... it will work because your immediate cost is so cheap. And that's what we really saw in the early 2000's up till about 2007-2008. I had the luxury of being kind of that front edge of Google AdWords. Unfortunately, I didn't know...

**John:** I missed it.

**Mike:** Yeah, only of course I didn't know everything I know now so I was working under the guys, working for other's campaign at that time. You know we're tracking penny clicks, two cents, three cent clicks or hot keywords. So the media was so cheap because there was no competition. And that's the problem. That's the rabbit hole is that as new tactics come out you can very easily turn into somebody who's jumping tactic, tactic, tactic, super cheap. Throwing your hands up when it quits working. That's certainly a trap to be careful of.

**John:** From a technology standpoint, usually it's a lot of freelance guys and maybe a little group, but you guys have really worked on some big projects. I was wondering as an entrepreneur, what was the breakthrough? Was it that linear? You know everything just kind of built one day at a time or did something hit that was a big breakthrough for you?

**Mike:** There was one piece that did hit really well is this would have been back in '06-'07, we actually put some software together to do really elaborate post-transactional upsell processes using Infusion soft, which is a... we call it an entry to mid-level CRM tool but a lot of the individuals in the information marketing space is. And we had really elaborate pre and post transactional sequencing capability so we were able to increase average order value for individuals doing online launches, pretty sizable online launches so the increase was 50%, 100%, some pretty big numbers when you're talking a multimillion dollar launch and that kind of put us on the map of building technology to suit marketing needs.

**John:** I want to just get, you know it's easy to pass well 50%, 100%, I know some of the guys you helped along the way. Those are big numbers. And this is what I love about using technology and marketing together is that you can test so there's not this putting your finger up and say, "Hey, is it working?" We get the statistics. We can test almost everything. Any a good marketing person who's in tech in today's world and this should be you is A/B testing at a minimum, and seeing 50 and 100% increases and this is in the information marketing world and they've kind of led the charge on using some of this technology. But it's available to all of us as entrepreneurs and they're doing it with just intellectual property. Some of you are building widgets and you've got really great platforms. But you're not using this technology.

Mike, what are you passionate about? For entrepreneurs who haven't done this but they've got really good businesses, they've got 5 million, 10 million, 100 million, and even a billion

dollars of revenue... some of the viewers and listeners today. What are you excited about at this point in time that they can really look at and maybe get that exponential growth that we're talking about?

**Mike:** I mentioned before strategic database marketing or I mentioned database marketing, which really is that basis of building a list, growing a list, segmenting the list. So I think the biggest opportunity for entrepreneurs that are out there that they're not using any of these tactics or have not followed we'll call that information marketing world, which is great at leading the charge, but all of this stuff applies across every business. It really boils down to building the list, right? The list of prospects, the list of buyers at the different phases they are with respect to the relationship they have with your business. Build that list. Mine it. Talk to them. Build in the communication models. I mean that's the biggest thing that most people aren't doing that. You can turn it on over a night practically. You got to have good marketing copy. You got to have a reason for reaching out. All the standard marketing stuff applies. But huge gains are there and just leveraging what you already have in a more thoughtful manner.

Like I've just went to... I have this business card here. We stopped by a little shop in town just yesterday and it was very interesting how their entire list-building strategy is pushing people to their Facebook page. That's the methodology they chose which for them, it's a clothing retail company that posts a lot of neat things. That works pretty well. It's more of a social sphere kind of list, limitations on mining that list because of Facebook's technology versus doing email or other methods, but it's great to see it. And it's funny how many businesses are out there are like "Like us on Facebook." And that is everybody's first, almost exposure to database marketing. And it kind of makes me giggle a little bit.

**John:** I'm using Salesforce and marketing automation Eloqua and I mean there's Marketo There's HubSpot. There's all these marketing tools out there. Every week I run a webinar and it's a minimum of \$50,000 each week. I'm increasing the number of webinars. We are testing different things and it's a great way to have a platform that you can bring out whatever business you are. Mike, let me go to... we have a segment called the App of the Day. What's something that you're using or you're using with your clients that they're having some big success with?

**Mike:** Oh two things come to mind. The first is we call it the social application which is Kickstarter. If you don't know what Kickstarter is, go to [Kickstarter.com](http://Kickstarter.com) check it out. It is the, we call it... we're at the beginning of the wave of crowdfunding. And there's a... I could on this for quite a while but Kickstarter itself is getting individuals to donate or buy, purchase, pledge towards some goal that you have put forth, right? We did a campaign that did \$1.5 million last year.

Planetary Resources. It's the asteroid mining company. We did a one million dollar Kickstarter for a publicly funded, controlled/operated space telescope that's the initial part of the campaign for really their business to go mine asteroids. So the whole goal was to actually involve the public, more than it was to raise the money because the company is backed by multiple billionaires.

So Kickstarter as a tool really allows you to catalyze individuals around a cause or an epic mission or a concept as well as get funds or have people pay for things that you haven't even built yet. If the campaign doesn't succeed, they're not paying you anything. You got to hit your goals. It's kind of like dry testing from a marketing perspective. But one of the really neat ones to watch right now and probably by the time this goes out, the campaign may be finished but it's a great study in social cause and social impact is Reading Rainbow. LeVar Burton put up a Kickstarter to bring back Reading Rainbow to every child everywhere, which is a very awesome, noble epic goal. If everybody remembers Reading Rainbow, it was about helping foster the love of reading in sort of a sideways, backdoor method to increase literacy rates particularly in intercity areas, etc. It wasn't about teaching you to read per se but it was about creating that love of reading. And the campaign he's put together is awesome... totally worth checking out. He did an AMA on Reddit, supporting it, also really great content, really great marketing perspective and LeVar is one authentic dude and it's a great one to look at and model. So Kickstarter by far as a tool is something to keep an eye on.

On a mobile side for anybody to develop mobile applications, there's a little tool called Prototype on Paper. It lets you as an entrepreneur draw out your application on a piece of paper. Take photos of it. And then link the screens together. So the app feels like somebody's using it. Wonderful little tool, if you search Prototype on Paper or POP in the app store. I know it's on iPhone. It may be on Android as well. Great little tool to simplify the app design thinking process. You still got to have to pay somebody to build the thing but it really lets you get to a mental prototype much faster.

**John:** We live in such an amazing world. This is great way; you don't have to do a multimillion dollar campaign. You can do some really interesting things for your business. Get a look at these. Let's go to the Entrepreneurial Insight of the Day. What would be, given all that you've learned, the one insight that you would want to share with our viewers and listeners?

**Mike:** So many, but I guess the one I would say is develop a working knowledge of strategic marketing for your business. It can't be completely outsourced to somebody on your team and just really get your head around the strategic side of this because the tools that are out there to do this... there's so many tools out there to do it and it can make such a radical impact on the business from a sales efficiency standpoint.



I can speak on a technical efficiency standpoint with one other great idea which is consolidated data models. If you have your data scattered across multiple systems still, kind of early 2000's when the tech didn't exist so it kind of fully existed in the cloud and built under one system, etc. Look to consolidate your data from the efficiency side of reporting. Better reports, better KPIs, real time data and any parts of the business will have a radical impact.

**John:** Let me play back the Key Takeaways and Mike let me know if I got it. Number one I'm hearing loud and clear is strategic plan. Have the whole client-pathing, the client experience, customer experience mapped out before you embark on any of this.

Second big thing is really knowing who the client is. We can argue the order of those two but the client avatar. I just see so often where we get so excited we're going to change the world and we forgot that we've got to have at least a primary focus and I've heard that loud and clear.

And the third that jumps out of me... you know each of these have been very important to me but the third one has been the biggest kind of new thing that you've helped me with Mike is just understanding the ability to leverage databases. So I come from the financial services industry and there are so many databases that companies have and they're all over the place and they're not brought together. They're not used efficiently. They're not segmented. They're not really mined.

And those are the three big takeaways that I'm going to work with my senior team to really go ahead and make a difference.

Let's go to resources really quick. I'm going to put up on the screen your website Tech Guys Who Get Marketing. Now if you want to reach out to Mike and his team, really doing some extremely interesting work. I really appreciate you joining us today. I appreciate even more having you as a business associate and friend. You're leading the charge on this stuff. Thank you. I know my fellow entrepreneurs thank you.

To get a copy of this transcript because you might have missed something. Go to Accelerating Entrepreneurial Success dot com. [AESNation.com](http://AESNation.com) because we're building a community of like mind entrepreneurs who are doing remarkable things. Mike, thank you again and let's go out and make a difference!

**Mike:** Awesome! Thank you, John.

## A Second Opinion on Your Finances

*A Complimentary Service from Financial Advisor Select for the Members of AES Nation*

Dear Fellow Entrepreneur,

Like many members of AESNation, I'm a serial entrepreneur. In addition to co-founding AESNation, I'm the founder and CEO of Financial Advisor Select, a firm dedicated to helping successful people make informed financial decisions by introducing them to top financial advisors.

If you're like many successful entrepreneurs, you and your family already have a relationship with a financial advisor. You may even work with several financial advisors. If you are completely satisfied with these relationships and confident that your finances are on track toward helping you achieve all that is most important to you, we congratulate you.

However, you may not be entirely satisfied. You may be wondering if there's a financial advisor who is better-suited to address your family's very specific financial challenges. If so, you are not alone. In today's uncertain economic climate, many successful entrepreneurs are wondering if they have the right financial advisor.

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Best of success,



John Bowen  
Founder and CEO  
Financial Advisor Select