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ACCELERATING ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS PODCAST

EPISODE
28

Steve Sims

Show Notes at: <http://www.aesnation.com/28>

John Bowen and Steve Sims

AESNATION.COM

Episode #28



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Best of success,



John Bowen
Co-founder, AES Nation

John Bowen: Accelerating Entrepreneurial Success. I mean every time I say that I just feel so good. I'm John Bowen and I am here with my friends, fellow successful entrepreneurs, like-minded successful entrepreneurs that are sharing their remarkable ideas. They're out there proving strategies, tactics, actions, and making things happen not only because they build business, but they build a great life. And every business day I have the opportunity to interview one and share with you their secrets of success, what makes them remarkable. And today I've got a really special guest, a good friend, Steve Sims.

Steve is an unbelievable guy. He does something that probably all of us have dreamed about at least once doing. And he has taken it to such a high level. We all talk about client service or customer service and delivering a great experience. We know as we move up market and well the demands are just so high and what I want to share with you today and I'm going to ask Steve to come, is just share the opportunity to make a difference, make a big impact on your client experience by treating your clients right and Steve is the top personal concierge to the ultra-affluent.

So Steve, thank you so much for taking the time today to join me. This is a big deal. I know how busy you are all around the world.

Steve Sims: I'm chopped off on it. Thank you very much for taking an interest a little about me. Thank you.

John: Steve, one of the things I want to bring out to everyone. I use Steve's service. The company's Blue Fish. And not only do I feel so strongly about it but I have the privilege of having a Mastermind Group of top financial advisors and they use Steve as well. And it's a great partnership. Steve, tell me what is a personal connoisseur to the affluent? I know, but all of the entrepreneurs out there don't know and I want to bring in, why do they care?

Steve: Well, you can make more money, you can't make more time. So our clients choose us quite similarly to save that time. And there's a lot of demands they have, whether it be appropriate travel, whether it be events, incentives, experiences, gifts. When I say appropriate, there's no point in somebody going down to the Florida Keys in August in hurricane season. So we're the kind of people who are like I know you want to do this but I would consider this, this, this and this. So our experience or any concierge's experience should be first and foremost to save you the time and take the effort of finding what you want.

John: Successful entrepreneurs typically, they have a little bit of capital, what they don't have is that much time. We all have the same amount of time, 168 hours a week, but there's a lot more demands. And Steve, give me a little background. How did you get involved in this concierge service? Because Steve doesn't look like the typical of what you might envision, the personal concierge. He's the tough-looking, rugged guy from the right side of L.A. but it looks like he could go either way. Steve, tell me how you got in to all this stuff?

Steve: Well, I was delusional. My family aspired to be middle class. We were working class through and through... construction firm in London and through an old friend of mine, but he wasn't an old friend at that time, he got me into the banking world to just answer the phone and take orders in the 80s. I used the gift and the gap to get me into a brokerage firm in Hong Kong. I landed on a Saturday. I was fired on the Tuesday.

That wasn't really a healthy long career there and I started working in clubs. What I thought I would do delusionally is have these parties for very affluent people that I would then walk over to the bank and say, "Hey look, please give me a job now because I'm now known to rich people. And it kind of went the other way. I found I was better at doing the services and the fun side of life than I was in the banking. And one of the parties, well we use them in all of the parties we used to have these passwords. And one of the passwords was one fish, two fish, big fish, plea fish. So we would send you a note saying one fish, two fish, finish the rest. And they walk over to wherever the party was and they would go big fish, plea fish and we would let them in.

So that is how it started. And getting to know that circle of people, the request got a little bit more abstract, and they'd say, "You're very good in Hong Kong, but do you know anyone in Monaco? Do you know anyone in London? I want to go to the Kentucky Derby. I want to go to Wimbledon. I want to go to the Royal Escort, Monaco Grand Prix. I want to go in space." And bit by bit, the request got bigger and bigger and bigger. Eighteen years later, we are respected as one of the top concierge firms that do the amazing. So that's from soup to nuts.

John: Was there a breakthrough along the way? From being someone to be aspiring to be middle class to now organizing space trips, there's a bridge there. One of my experiences in life, for most of us as entrepreneurs, there's not a straight line. There's some bumps in the road. Where did you have that inflection point that it all started coming together?

Steve: I think I mentioned earlier, I was delusional. I really wanted to be a banker so while I was throwing parties I was just getting groups of friends together so that way I got to treat them as friends and not as revenue streams. And so I was able to like to say to certain people, "I don't want you to get in. You're not coming to my party." And because I wasn't making money out of it, I actually was, but because it wasn't my future. I couldn't be that selfish and only hang out with people that quite simply, I liked. We were not in business. "In business," that's the opportune word there. You got to pay the mortgage. You got to keep the lights on.

So sometimes, there's a climb you take on or you count your word that you really not enjoy. But you make a lot of money. And because I thought that I was going to be in the banking world, Blue Fish was actually fun. And quite simply, we realized in 2000, after six years of working Blue Fish, that my income in the banking commissions was very small. My income in Blue Fish to the demands and the people and the smiles that I was getting - and that was the

key thing for me, the interaction I was having with clients on the Blue Fish stuff, was fun. I couldn't wait to phone them. I wanted more hours in my day so I could do something that was just awesome with these people. But the banking life just wasn't me.

And that was my breakthrough. I suddenly realized that I had something that was growing and growing and growing. Without me knowing it, I'd never sold my soul to make it somebody I wasn't. So I never thought I'd allude to that. Then the switch came. And that's where you get your first tip. I made it a business.

And then all of a sudden, you have to make it a business. You had to make a website. You had to do all those things. And that's when you're starting to get the work you've grown. So I had some interesting periods to get me to the position I am now. Stay true to myself, stay true to my clients, stay true to the relationship and feeling and it's what Blue Fish was. And dumped the bank and so I'd focus on that and the rest is history.

John: Well, I know it's been a great journey. You and I are in a CEO Mastermind Group and I met you, it came out of that group. Joe Polish is a good friend to both of us and some of the guys in the group had already used your service. I didn't know you at that time and they were putting together some pretty spectacular events that they participated in. And then also, people were using you for their clients to build that kind of that bond, that relationship. Maybe touch on some of the specific things that you help those people really create those moments for themselves as well as for others.

Steve: Well, for yourself, you've already said it loud and clear and it can be repeated so much you can have a T-shirt made, you don't have any more time in the day. It's simple fact. You can't develop anymore. So when we're working with entrepreneurs, that busy day, we handle all the rest of the stuff, the access, the travel, the trips to make that seamless. But when you've got a client and you want to look after them... doesn't have to be expensive. It could be anything from... You book a hotel reservation, they turn up. There's a bottle of their favorite, not generic, that favorite wine, champagne, liqueur, anything, cake. We've actually done a cake...probably the wife was mad on the red velvet cupcakes from this cupcake place called Sprinkles. We should send it up at the hotel. There were six Sprinkles cakes there, saying Welcome. So just those tiny attention to details that we have done for our clients, for their clients, I've had them coming back saying, "Thanks for the thought."

And at the end of the day, that's what we want. We want that thought. We want them to realize that we're different. And most importantly, we want them to realize, we care. And if we can get them thinking and believing... believing we care, then they go from a transaction to an emotion and we want an emotional connection all the time for our clients.

John: So often we think doing something... it has to be spectacular and business is all about relationships. We get caught up in the technology that you and I are doing today but the reality

is it's not just technology. It's not people hitting buttons and ordering stuff. That's not the value, the lifelong relationship. It's these little things in life. And they're very emotional and my guess Steve is that woman will never forget those cupcakes.

Steve: Not a client. We thought that business is business. And everyone sits there, with their stuff you sew onto their tight to tight and sits there all the time. For me, that's BS. Business is personal. And if you can get that connection, you've got some loyalty being built. As long as you're doing your job, then you have what's next to a servant kind of basis. You don't want to just do your job. You want to bring value to that person's life, whether be your client, your friend, your wife, your relationship, and your kids.

So that's what it has to happen. So yes, make it personal. Get out of that business is business crap. Make it personal. Get to know the person you're dealing with and deliver something. And it doesn't have to be expensive to be wow!

If you're a fan of golf, and you go past a magazine store, and there's a golf magazine, buy the damn thing, sign the front of it. Send it to your client. And just say, "Saw this, looked really cool, thought you might want a quick meet." Even if he's got it at home which he probably already has or maybe he couldn't even be bothered, get him that signed magazine in the post that you took the time and that you were thinking, shows that you're thinking of him. And that makes it personal.

John: It's so powerful. I do that fairly frequently. I'll cut a video because we got a studio here. I'll cut a video, just make a personal video and send something along with that. And people know in today's alienated world that somebody cares. They have that relationship with someone that's important. And it's very powerful to do.

Steve: Certainly it did. In fact, we have so many platforms now that we can communicate with people – Facebook, Twitter, email, texting – any of these platforms. That has actually diluted the kind of communication that we do have. And quite often we react so quickly especially on a tweet or an email that it doesn't converse the emotion we're thinking when we're thinking of that client. And even just out of picking up a phone and say, "Hey, we haven't chatted for a while and you'd be amazed at how many people that you email, and you tweet, and you text. And you suddenly look at it and you realize, "I haven't faced or spoken with this person for six months." And so that's working against us. Bring back communication. That's what I should say.

John: We have a mutual friend who's in our Mastermind Group who... really, I think I've always dreamed to being a rock star. I don't know Steve, maybe you know this better than I do. I know sitting next to him, how excited he was after the fact. I didn't know about it before the fact.

Steve: Well, the story goes that he was on Necker Island with Richard Branson and Joe Polish and someone wanted to do a charitable event with Jimmy Buffett. And the story goes that Dan has always been a fan of Journey so he said, "Look, Richard if you can do anything for Journey, I'm in." Well, it didn't get anywhere with Richard. And so he was directed over to me. And I spoke with Dan and quite simply he said, "I want to sing with Journey." That was it. That was the entire parameter of his request. I didn't have to go, it was real. You've seen the video. They made a video out of it. I didn't know how committed he was. I asked him for a small check to show his commitment. He opened in the video because he thinks I was full of crap.

John: Steve I got to tell you as much as I love you, initially I thought Richard was more connected. I'm not sure anymore.

Steve: Well behind the connected man, there's someone more connected. For any of you that are now listening to this on video and are listening to an audio. But I have to face the radio. So we spoke to Journey. Put it together and it was one of the examples that I've got on later on. I never like to give clients what they paid for. And that may sound the complete opposite of business but if someone gets what they paid for, they got what they paid for. There's no growth. There's no emotion. There's no extra. You can't ask for an eternal investment when someone gets exactly what they paid for.

So we spoke to Dan, took it a little bit further than what he dreamed. He had a meet and greet with the band about six months prior. Then he actually went on stage in San Diego, sang four tunes with the formed band, smoke machines, lasers, the full concert effect. He wanted three signed guitars, we got him five. Then we got him a meet and greet afterwards with the whole band where they came out and said Hi especially to a group of 25 of Dan's closest friends, included John Benson, Joe Polish, Eunice Miller, and a whole bunch of other very successful entrepreneurs. So we really did the big splash out. That guy would have settle for singing in a sound studio with Journey because again his parameter was just sing with Journey. You can't get better than that when you're singing live with on stage as what is now the show has turned lead singer of Journey.

John: Dan is going to tell this story until the day he's no longer with us. And it's a great story and he loves it. See, you're a top entrepreneur, you hang out with entrepreneurs. What are you passionate about now?

Steve: I've got a passion project called Blue Cause. I'm very upset with the online auction world when it's surrounding charities. Somebody's out there to promote meet with Mark Walberg, play guitar with Sting. They do all of these wonderful experiences and it benefits a charity. What really upsets me is the fact that anywhere between 10-50% of the money that's raised on those auctions sites actually goes into their pocket. Now, I don't mind possibly small

margins for there's too many companies charging the bigger margins. So we're actually launching a project now and a platform called Blue Cause where every single cent that you bid for that opportunity to do something spectacular, whether it be lunch with Donald Trump or drum lessons with Matt Sorum from Guns n' Roses, will physically go to that chosen charity. So we want to make a difference so Blue Cause is the Blue Fish Group of Companies. And we're making not a dime from it and we're very happy to do that.

John: You are making a difference. It's really important. I think that so often people don't understand how all these things work. And what I love is by doing good for the world, you also do well. The connections that come out of this just make your ability to serve and there's nothing wrong with that. And the reason why I want to point that out is that everyone of the entrepreneurs watching and listening to us today, this is amazing, the technology, the connections, being part of a mastermind group like Accelerating Entrepreneurial Success or others, the network you can do to make a big difference is huge. How valuable is your network?

Steve: My network is my lifeblood. And without my network, I'm going to turn the lights off. So it's everything to me.

John: Tell me how do you build this network?

Steve: It's great. Once you've actually got out of there, it's the typical kind of push that elephant up the hill. Once you've started to do a couple of things, you gain that credibility. So then when you do another couple of things, you all of a sudden got a tall chest of credible accomplishments. So that when you go forward and you ask for something that's out of your wheelhouse, you can go "Hey, I want to do this." But I've done this seven times, and very well with it. Perfect example of that is Journey. I did that event with Journey. I have not dealt with Journey before. I've dealt with Sting before. I've got someone within Sting's camp to contact someone within Journey's camp that made the introduction so it came from a credible source. So when I phoned up Journey, they already knew about me because I've been validated by somebody else.

And then last year, last November, I had an Australian client of mine, said "Hey, I've got noted guitars. I collect guitars. But I'm only going to play them when I get a guitar lesson by Billy Gibbons from e-guitar.

John: You might as well start at the top. If you're going to do it, then let's go for the top.

Steve: Don't mess around and I'm using that politely. Exactly. So have standards damn it. So that's what he said. So alright fine. We met up with someone at Journey. We were just chatting and I said to him off the cuff I said, "Do you know Billy Gibbons from e-guitar?" "Yeah I do why?" Send him a text now. Let him know I'm going to be calling him because I have a client

that wants to play guitar with him. And he went “Alright.” He pulled up his phone and. “Sims is going to call you.” There’s a lot of expletives on there about how ugly I was and I couldn’t talk American. It was very rude, which was probably the perfect introduction there to Billy Gibbons. And I reached out to Billy and he was like “Yeah, alright yeah.” And he did it. It was totally the Billy Gibbons accent and I apologize, Billy. But he did it. My clients went over there, strummed down for the afternoon, went to a concert, hang out after the concert. The following day, I had the client go into the New York Fashion Week, going to a few shows, Billy asked him if he could hook him up, said if he and his girlfriend, hang out with them for another day. So I had them get involved and got Billy into the show for the day. So it was really cool.

So it’s building up that credibility. People don’t work with me because I’m stunningly good-looking or I’ve got a beautiful American accent. They deal with me because they know I’m the man that can, because I constantly can. I constantly do and my credibility is the only thing I have going for me.

John: I’m going to go farther too Steve. I think that’s totally true and there’s one more thing. It’s reciprocity. You are a guy that’s out there giving. You make sure that you’re delivering value. Like you said that you always make sure that someone gets more than what they paid for. And oftentimes you’ll get them started even before they were paid for in some of these relationships. That’s real value.

I want to jump to... we have a little segment here called App of the Day, the application of the day. Tell me an application as an entrepreneur you’re using that you’re excited about.

Steve: It sounds precocious because most of my apps are like stupid games or like motorcycle results or things like that but there’s one that I have on the phone which I do actually read a lot and it’s the Harvard Business Review Tips and they’re very short, very precise. It’s a great application and it just comes out with some very simple bullet points and I probably look at it about every two or three days and I would backtrack to see what I missed. Really sharp stuff comes out of that. And there would be one line in there that would just change your day. And this stuff I just implement and implement and implement. Funny enough I was looking at it before we came on the Skype.

John: I was thinking what app you’d bring up and I was thinking more motorcycle than Harvard Business Review.

Steve: It’s just really good. It’s simple. It doesn’t over-explain. It doesn’t make you feel belittled. It’s really easy for entrepreneurs to understand, emulate, and action on them.

John: Being an entrepreneur, money loves speed. Loves ideas that you go out and execute and those are very actionable ones from other fellow entrepreneurs who are connected to that academic community that are really good.

How about one more? We have the Entrepreneurial Insight of the Day. So here what I'm looking for Steve is that you've been on this journey, not only the band but the whole journey of life being an entrepreneur and one lesson for your fellow successful entrepreneurs that you learned that you would like to share with them?

Steve: It sounds corny but give 110% of what they've asked for. So if they want six cupcakes, give them seven. That example I gave you of Journey where Dan wanted three guitars, and I managed to get him signed five. He was so over the moon about that. He paid for the guitars. I just managed to get them two more. But he was so over the moon by getting something a little bit more than he expected. When you walk into the hotel room and there's a glass of wine or a bottle of wine sitting in there, just saying, "Welcome. Enjoy your day. All the best, Blue Fish." Just that tiny little bit. You'll be amazed by the amount of emails I got from people when there's been a bottle of wine, a bottle of champagne, a bottle of whisky, Jack Daniel's, just in the room saying "Welcome. Glad you traveled for the last ten hours. Take a sip. Enjoy your holiday." Everyone emails that they love that little attention to detail.

John: Let me share back with you and I'd love to get your comments on what I'm taking from our conversation today. I got three real big takeaways.

Number one is small things matter. Every time I say that from now on, I'm going to think of these red velvet cupcakes. Two, never give the client what they pay for. And I think that's huge. And three, really follow your example of Blue Cause. You can do very good by doing good. You can do extremely well by doing really well by others. And you're really providing a lot of leadership there. Those good takeaways?

Steve: I think they're accurate. I'm going into the verse, doing good does everyone good. It cannot give you a bad reputation and it cannot make people think less of you. It's impossible. You do good and the return on investment by doing good is a thousand-fold. Don't discount it. Start doing stuff for charity. Start doing stuff for a foundation. Find something you believe in and even if you're just giving some time or Friday afternoon, finish at three, go down work somewhere for three hours. Just give those three hours. You'll be stunned at what comes back to you from there.

Regarding that don't give clients what they paid for, don't. They won't remember it. Give them a little bit more every single time. Again, it could be an extra cupcake. It could be a magazine. It could be a bottle of wine. It could be a glass of wine. It can be just a sentiment. It can be a note, a handwritten note. You give them that little special piece of detail they were not expecting. Again, it will come back to you a thousand-fold.

And then the first, what was the first one you picked on?

John: Small things matter, the red velvet...

Steve: Your boy said it the best, you never get bit by another friend, it's the small things that bite. It's the detail. The devil is in the detail and also your ROI is in the detail. Focus on the detail. Don't focus on the big thing. It will look after itself. Focus on the detail. Make sure each one of those is perfect and you would just excel.

John: Go to Blue Fish on the web. You can also go to Accelerating Entrepreneurial Success, AESNation.com. We'll have the resources that Steve talked about. You can just click the links there and there'll be a transcript of all this. Above all, what Steve and I both want is for you to do a great job by your clients and take those takeaways, these pearls of wisdom that Steve gave us. Go out and make a difference. Steve, thanks again.

Steve: Thanks, John. I appreciate it.

A Second Opinion on Your Finances

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John Bowen
Founder and CEO
Financial Advisor Select