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ACCELERATING ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS PODCAST

EPIISODE
63

Ben Altadonna

Show Notes at: <http://www.aesnation.com/63>

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John Bowen and Ben Altadonna
AESNATION.COM
Episode #63

Dear Fellow Entrepreneur,

We are thrilled that you have joined us here at AES Nation, where we're dedicated to accelerating entrepreneurial success—your success.

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Thanks for being part of the AES Nation community. We'll see you online.

Best of success,



John Bowen
Co-founder, AES Nation

John Bowen: Every one of us as entrepreneurs, we want to make a difference. We want to have huge success. We want to do it by attracting the right clients, and oftentimes we have to reinvent ourselves. I have a remarkable individual that I've known for a number of years. He's in some of my CEO groups, and he was in the late '90's one of Dan Kennedy's, one of the top marketing gurus, most successful marketers, and I've asked Ben Altadonna to come and join us and share with us his secrets.

I'm John Bowen, AESNation.com. Stay tuned. You're going to be glad you did.

John: Ben, I am so excited to have you. You and I are usually sitting at MasterMind groups brainstorming. I have gotten so many ideas from you. I've seen so many of the great marketers, business entrepreneurs, get some great ideas, and to have you on AES Nation is just fantastic.

First of all, thank you for joining us.

Ben Altadonna: Thanks, John.

John: Well, Ben, I know you from a lot of your reinvention, what you've been able to do, and the amazing things. I pay attention to all your marketing, and I want everybody who's watching to do that as well, but before we dive in to all the lessons learned, what I'd like to do is have you share your background and what got you to where you are today.

Ben: Excellent. I will. Thank you, John.

Welcome, everybody.

As you know, John, I was a chiropractor many, many years ago, decades ago. In the late '90's I learned about marketing and it changed my life. I've always been an entrepreneur. I've only had one job, real job, growing up, in college. I've owned limousine companies. I detailed jets. We've done a lot of work in the healthcare arena, in the medical device field. Then I learned about marketing, and it totally transformed my life.

It's not easy. It's a process that never ends, but it's something I enjoy. I feel like I have the most control and influence over my marketplace, and it's just a whole hell of a lot of fun.

It started about 17 years ago, and since then I've reinvented my business three times, and we're always ahead of the second best. Whatever we're doing is working. I'm a little bit superstitious, so I'm going to stick with my own path, which is a lot different than most entrepreneurs, and I'll be happy to share that with you today.

John: I appreciate it. One of the things that I see over and over again from some of the most successful entrepreneurs is that they reinvent themselves. Part of it is, we let the market tell us what we're good at. We all have jobs where we started, like limo drivers. I didn't have jet detailing, but we do different businesses. You're known really worldwide as one of the top on marketing, but I also know that you've helped out a few other entrepreneurs in our group as well as outside. I play golf with a couple of the other guys. You've been down to my place as well giving some great advice.

I'd like to have you share that evolution of maybe being a chiropractor and then how you really took marketing and how you use that. You're one of the top people doing that.

These are lessons, you go, "Okay, well, that's marketing for chiropractors. I don't need to listen." Here marketing is marketing, whether you're professional services or whether you are selling widgets, and Ben is a master at this.

We have some good friends, I think the main company is called LifeAID.com.

Ben: Yep.

John: Ben, I met these young gentlemen, Aaron Hinde, I interviewed. I don't know if he'll be posted at the time of this, but I've interviewed the CEO, and Aaron just telling me, they've even got mail order soda drink, energy drink or high-quality drink. They're doing it mail order. We did it off camera, and he goes, "Ben. Ben taught me everything," These guys are just taking off like crazy.

Ben, tell me that progression of being good at something, a chiropractor, then get that great client experience and start scaling up marketing. Now you're one of the top people in the world in marketing.

Ben: Yeah. Thank you. The website is LifeAIDBevCo.com just for clarity and accuracy.

When I went to chiropractic college, I was passionate about chiropractic, and that was my world, and I was in a small, little bubble, and I didn't even know it, but it didn't take me long to realize that I was exchanging time for dollars, and my impact in the world, there was a ceiling and a limit to that.

My next logical progression was to teach chiropractors, and thanks to people like Dan Kennedy and Dan Sullivan and my friend, Joe Polish, and the circle of friends I maintain, including you, John, I've created a business of creating value for chiropractors based on what's best for their clients more than what's best for even them.

It's a paradigm shift that got created, because I was so into my practice, practicing as a chiropractor in survival mode, that it became a lot easier once I saw things a lot differently. My main takeaway from going from a chiropractor to a guru in the profession was to find out how to help people that I know what they're going through. I had more of an affinity towards chiropractors, quite honestly, than their patients or my patients, because I always kept myself pretty physically fit. I can relate to my peers more than my patients.

Because of that it just was a natural progression to build a business around the type of people that I wanted to be around, which was my peers more than the treating patients, treating folks at the time.

John: One of the things, I just want to bring it up. Dan Sullivan was the first one to say it to me, was, "You've got to find a group that you want to be a hero to." In my case, I've got two groups. One is really successful entrepreneurs, AES Nation, and the second group is top financial advisers from around the world.

Once you really can identify that group that you want to be a hero to, then all of a sudden, then you can get clear on the value. You can be very client-centric, and you are a master at that, at understanding their unique needs, what you can help them with to serve their end users.

I've had many conversations. It's not all about money. Maybe when we're in survival mode we think that, but it is really building a great life.

Tell me some of the ways that you've helped entrepreneurs, and these would be largely chiropractor, but I know you're doing other entrepreneurs as well. What are some of the lessons you've learned as they reinvent themselves, they accelerate their success even more?

Ben: No doubt. No doubt. I think it's important to realize who your market is and what they really want is key. Don't assume that they want to make more money necessarily. They want health and happiness I have found. My life's always been about health and fitness. It's always been a passion of mine.

I haven't seen you in about six months. I've noticed a transformation in you obviously and so whatever you're doing is working, John. Congratulations.

John: I'm hanging out with a lot ... I decided I either had to find fat friends or I had to get in shape because of hanging around with so many healthy, successful entrepreneurs.

I'll tell you, it does make a huge difference. You're one of the inspirations, Ben, on this.

Ben: It's so much easier to stay healthy and it's so much easier to be wealthy than it is to struggle, and so I have found that it's more important to think accurately and really take the time to create the right lifestyle and strategy that you can win and your clients can win and simplify it if you can.

Try to simplify your message, simplify your unique abilities, like Dan Sullivan talks about, and highlight your unique abilities, and make sure that there's not much that you're doing that others can do. Be the number one. If it requires you to create your own category, that's fine, but if you're doing anything that your competitors are already doing, you need to reinvent yourself, no doubt.

John: So many of us as entrepreneurs spend so much time tracking our competitors, what they're doing. Quite honestly, it's largely wasted. It's okay to take a look every once in a while, a reality check. Really, your clients are going to tell you what your competitors are doing anyways, at least from their perspective, which is more important.

Designing your business, Ben, one of the things you've done so well is designing your business to be successful on purpose is really identifying what you want to do, where it's aligned.

I want to encourage all of you, Ben and I are great examples of this, we don't take all business. We're very clear on what we want to achieve, our lifestyle is so important. That doesn't mean you can't build large businesses. There's some really successful entrepreneurs who are building lifestyle enterprises that are huge.

Ben, how do you go about creating that vision of what you want? Okay, I want to be successful on purpose. I don't want it to be over complicated. How do I get there?

Ben: Well, for me, I can only speak for myself. That vision sometimes happens organically. I think it's a byproduct of creating a fertile ground life and to be around people that might have more confidence in you than you have in yourself. You really have to pick and choose what you consume in terms of content, online, offline, who you associate yourself with.

I've always associated myself with people that I wanted to aspire to become rather than being the one-eyed ... What's that saying? "In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king." I've always tried to push myself, and I've done that by associating myself with people that I thought were having a bigger impact in the world. That doesn't mean they made more money necessarily, but they're people that I respected or people that I feel had the confidence and the competence and had a way about them I can feel in my heart and my stomach that these people are authentic and quality human beings.

This is the first time I've ever done Skype in my life, and I'm doing this for you, John, because I respect you, and I think that you want to create a business that your customers, your clients, respect. You want to be able to sleep nights. I don't go after the money, because that will be short-lived. Have the right strategy, have the right intent. Recreate yourself if you have to.

Usually it's easier to reinvent than improve. If you're struggling, I personally ... Jeanne Jackson calls it, "Creating power positions." My power position when I want to really think is I go to Napa. It's about 55 miles away and I spend the day there, or Carmel-by-the-Sea or San Francisco or Petaluma. There are certain places I go that I feel tranquil, I just feel good. That's when I bring a notepad and a pen, and with a notepad and a pen I can create a future, pretty large, for myself and others as long as I'm being true to who I am.

John: Ben, I do know you do that because you stopped by on the way to Carmel-by-the-Sea one time and we had a great visit. Taking the time out to be reflective. It's so easy. We're charging so hard, and you've got to create the systems and processes in your business, but one of the biggest parts is you've got to give yourself some free time to really think through what it is. You're doing that.

We, as entrepreneurs, with all the tools, the talent, all the people we could hang out with, the MasterMind groups, AESNation.com is a virtual MasterMind. Find a group that you really align, that are more successful in the sense, what I'd like to see is, they walk the walk that I want to. They don't have to be making more money. Whether it's health, whether it's the business model, whether it's ... really, anything. You want to have people who see the world of abundance, that they don't see you as a competitor. They want to share. They want to help you be more successful.

That's they way I think, Ben, you and I have a relationship. Obviously, any time you'd call me I would pick it up and anything I could do and you do the same. There's so many people in the world like that. There's the givers and then there's the takers. You want to get people who are aligned with you and want to make the world a better place.

Ben: Yeah. It's just like eating right or exercising. It's a habit. It's something you need to nurture. I'm a big fan of testing new habits as well.

This is an aside, but there's some parallels in business is I used to work out in the mornings. Now I work out at night. I don't even eat till noon. I'm really into intermittent fastings. I think it's worth Googling that.

I'm always testing industry norms or even my own opinions. I always challenge myself, and so I just recommend that for everybody listening or watching, no matter what you're doing,

don't assume that it's the best way about doing things. It may be, but it might be way more work or not as elegant or not as effective or efficient.

Just consume a lot of content. Be around people you respect and just let it kind of ... Don't over-think it. Just be around areas or people that make you feel good and things will just come to you organically. It's a lot easier than it used to be for me 15 years ago.

John: One of the things you do, Ben, is testing, you're talking about diet testing and exercise testing. A lot of us stumble and think this through. You're pretty systemic about it. I want to talk about the marketing side, because I do see some of your market involved in it. The whole process that you're doing is just ... It's pretty amazing. It's step by step by step. That's one of the things that you do with your clients is you help them think that through.

Most of us, when we think of marketing, it's the classic one-and-done. Let's launch something. What are some of the words of advice that you've learned in creating these very successful campaigns to attract the right new clients?

Ben: I like to use propositions, bullets, benefits, features, anything that matches the benefit of what they're going to get from my service versus the obvious. I'm a little bit more angular about it. I'm not like, get rich, make money. It's more about a feeling and a lifestyle, and I really preach happiness.

I used to target chiropractors that wanted to do \$100,000, \$200,000 per month, and my market, I reinvented myself, and now I help doctors that want to get up to \$25,000 a month and just coach soccer and work four days a week or whatever they want to do, have a life.

Because I found by making money is that the things I enjoy, it doesn't cost money. Just do things for the right reasons. Ego can really waste a decade of your life or more, and just be honest with yourself and have fun. For me, it's not really about the money. It's about delegating as much as I can. It's about spending as much time as I can thinking instead of doing, outsourcing. It's all the things that you teach, John.

John: This is where I think it's so powerful as we go ahead. We have that process, we're thinking through a system and testing. One of the things I love reading your emails, Ben, is that you have some great campaigns that you're doing. I don't know what they call, but the angle marketing. Everybody on the online side is, "Get rich." Really you want to enter your perspective client, the clients you want to work with, write in what they're thinking about.

While all of us could make more money, what we typically want is we want to build a business to support a greater life for ourselves and our own enlightened self-interest but for the rest of

our team and all stakeholders, particularly our clients. Where do you fit in, whether selling a widget or professional service.

Ben, how do you test these things, because not everything works?

Ben: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I do things a lot differently. I do things a lot more simply than most. I don't follow the norm, which is make your money online and do everything online. I'm not opposed to spending money. As a matter of fact, anything that I can do that's different than my competition or what people are used to creates a whole different category, so I don't have competitors. I just position myself differently.

I do a lot of direct mail, John, to what we call lead generation, for those of you familiar with that term. I do a lot of direct mail to drive people online. I don't do landing pages that you can buy, templated landing pages. I create my own style. After that we do definitely use email to convert, and our email is daily. We do daily emails to my doctors. I do daily emails to my leads, my prospects, doctors that have expressed interest but are not yet members yet. We also do daily emails, believe it or not, to their patients for them, daily, Monday through Friday. I definitely am a big fan of email. I like its simplicity.

I personally don't do webinars. I rarely even do teleseminars anymore to convert. My main model is direct mail for lead generation, typically postcards, believe it or not, have worked best for me, of all different shapes and sizes, but usually small postcards. I don't waste money on production value like full color. It's just black and white, black ink and maybe different colored card-stock paper, but simple, but clean.

I don't over-sensationalize in my marketing. I respect the market. The way I communicate is appropriate for my industry, and I try to give them value. My direct mail provides value for their email address in exchange. Then I may email them for days, weeks, or even months before I even solicit or pitch them, so to speak.

I'm in it for the long run with my leads and my members. I'm in it for lifetime value. We don't do a lot personally, a lot of up-selling or backend marketing. It's everything for one monthly fee. I prefer it that way. It's simpler. We just created the right product for the right market at the right price.

John: That is so much, Ben, you just said. I look at, first of all, many people today, because email appears to be free, we just blast it out. I am having success with direct mail as well. It's much like you and I, on the video, there will be multi-casting, use different tools, test which ones work. You do that starting with the direct mail. I know you have the postcard, but I know you also have other pieces that go out.

Then, boy, what I love is you give the power of reciprocity. You actually give a lot of value before you ask someone to start doing business with you. So many people are doing the one-and-done marketing, shooting it out, tons of it, and just, "Give me money" type thing. There's not value.

Then the last part that you mention is a lifetime value of clients. Very few people take the time to really look at that, and you have. We can spend more. This is one of the ways we can get rid of our competition very quickly is they're not willing, they look at just that one transaction when we look at their lifetime value of clients. We can really invest a fair amount in building that relationship and attracting the right client.

Ben: No doubt. Even for those listening, if you don't have a product or service to sell past clients, customers or patients, they're a perishable asset, so I highly recommend starting emailing them, snail-mailing them, providing them value, some information, links to YouTube videos, white papers, PDFs, anything you can provide in terms of value regardless of if you have anything to sell or if they've already purchased what you've sold. Those are referral ... These people can potentially refer to you.

The best thing you can do right now, and there was a quote, the Direct Marketing Association ... I'm sure you're familiar, John, did a study years back saying that for every year that you ... If you ignore a client or customer for a year, they're about as convertible or responsive to your marketing as a stranger picked out of the White Pages in the phone book.

I recommend making sure that, find out who's been on your list in the last year, who you've talked to, who your friends, your acquaintances, your patients, your clients, your customers, and just start providing them value, snail mail, email as often as possible, way more often than you think you can get away with. Again, we do it daily, and our opt-outs are very low.

That's the biggest takeaway I think everyone should learn is you spend a lot of time, energy and thought procuring clients and customers or accounts, but you don't spend enough money once you've got them, marketing to them and providing value. Then you're building equity that you can cash in on at a future date once if you have something worthwhile to present them.

John: I think this is probably one of the biggest things that any of our fellow entrepreneurs can do is, I always think of conversational marketing. We've got to start a conversation. There's so much noise out in the marketplace that if you don't keep that relationship going, and it's not just sending an email, it's not just sending a postcard, it's not sending any of the direct mail, it's not giving a webinar. It's giving value.

If you're giving value to them, they're going to continue that relationship, and when you have a solution that's aligned with them, they're going to come to you. I've seen that over and over in my businesses and, Ben, you've been illustrating it. It does.

I do want to switch subjects just for a second, though. We talked about reinventing. You and I have reinvented ourselves along the way. We've got some entrepreneurs who are wondering, hey, they've got this business and they want to play on a different platform or do an extension from that. How do you get the marketplace to see you differently when they've branded you, your market, this is who you are.

Ben: Well, I don't think we should assume that they do brand us that way. That's our head, not theirs necessarily. If you provide value, I think that dissipates or it isn't created. If you're creating value, they don't pay attention to that. They appreciate it. I think they're used to in the marketplace, on television and products, that everybody reinvents. You have to reinvent to adapt to the opportunities and the marketplace and the psychology, the economy.

As your skills and competence increase, you have more to offer. If you're doing the same thing you were doing ten years ago in the same way you're doing it, chances are you're leaving a lot of money on the table. It's time to slow down, think about what you're doing, and come up with another plan worth testing for sure.

John: I always like the term, "Get on the right side of complexity," which is simple, effective, efficient.

Ben, let's go to this next segment here.

What would you recommend to your fellow entrepreneurs that they, a book that really touched you.

Ben: Yeah, yeah, no doubt. There's a book by Jamie Smart. It's entitled Clarity. Maybe you can pull it up now or later.

John: Yeah, I've got it up on the screen now.

Ben: It's one of the books. It's called Clarity. You've got to make sure it's the right one. The author is Jamie Smart. It's called Clarity. It's about how to create breakthroughs with better thinking, creating a simpler business model, a more narrow-minded approach to your market and becoming more authentic and transparent and vulnerable in creating relationships with your marketplace.

John: It sounds great. I'm going to download it, but let's go to the next segment, and that is the half of the day.

Ben: Okay. This is fun for me, because it has nothing to do with business. Sometimes it's good to, when you enjoy your life, you enjoy your business, because there's a reason why we're working. It's to help others but it's also to serve yourself and your family. You shouldn't feel guilty about it. I found this app when I had an iPhone ... I have an Android now, and they have an Android, the app for the Android. It's called Mosaic, John.

I'm going to pull one out. Actually, every time ... I don't know if you can see this. Each one of these...

John: You've got a bunch of books there.

Ben: Yeah. Each one represents an experience. For example, I just bought a mobile office. It's called an Airstream Interstate, and I recommend everyone gets one. Wherever I go I have my office right there; shower, restroom and a kitchen, but it doesn't look like an RV. It's by Mercedes. Wherever we go, my family and I, we take pictures. I take the best 20 and I create a book.

What I like about this app, John, is, let's say I go to your house for dinner, a dinner party. I'll take 20 pictures, and in four days you will have this at your doorstep, and it's all done through my app. It's a great gift. It arrives in four days. It's a little over \$20. Wherever I go I try to create, and I think Dan Sullivan talks about banking your experiences.

In this digital age we tend to take a lot of pictures but we never go back and actually enjoy the photos that we did take. This Mosaic app allows you to create tangible memories in an easy way. Everybody listening should get that app. It creates great gifts for others. They'd appreciate it, and I know you'll enjoy it. It's a lot of fun.

John: Let me put up, Mosaic Photo Books, and on the iTunes, I'm sure they've got it on Android.

I tell you, at the time of the recording, we're doing it over the holidays. I am definitely going to use that. We just had a whole bunch of family things, and take the photos and I'll put them together. It's a nice-looking book. It's that little touch you can send off to the other family members that they'd like, but you can do it in business too. This is where ... The tools are so creative.

Let me go to Resources here, the next segment.

Ben, for entrepreneurs, your fellow entrepreneurs, you've got a website. Tell me a little bit about it first.

Ben: Sure, John. It's GuruRockStars.com, GuruRockStars.com.

John: Let me just pull it up so that we have it.

Again, remind everybody, the transcripts, all the show notes, the links, all kinds of other freebies are at AESNation.com, but anything that Ben and I talk about will be at the site. You can go and get that information.

Ben, what's there?

Ben: Yeah, no doubt. Once you enter your email address, you'll be receiving an email from me every day. I write them every morning. They're fresh. They're timely. They have to do with entrepreneurship, specifically, direct response marketing, because I think that's what I'm really good at. That's my unique ability is to be able to procure leads and convert leads.

If that's a challenge or that's something you haven't explored or you want to do more of or you're interested in learning more about it, go to GuruRockStars.com and get on my list. There's nothing to buy. I don't sell anything at this time, and I have no plans on doing so in the immediate future anyhow, so I create a lot of value. There's nothing I'm selling other than giving information on different strategies, campaigns, different ways to identify hidden opportunities or hidden profits in your existing business, ways to think, elegant ways to think, and to ask better questions.

John: I can tell everybody, Ben is one of the few guys that I do follow their emails. I even have a separate file that's automated, I go back to and review everything for Ben, so I would encourage everybody...

Let me put it up again. It's GuruRockStar.com, and you can see really how a master takes what we're talking about.

Let me go to the very last segment.

I think a key takeaway; I'm looking at my notes here. Number one, it's all about making your client's life simpler. What I heard over and over about, Ben is very client-centric. He's looking at not just money but what they're looking for and creating those systems and processes to serve them.

Second, don't be afraid to reinvent yourself. In today's world, and I think, Ben, you said it well is, that it's in our head what we think we stand for.

I know when I sold one of my first businesses and I changed what I was doing and I was so worried. I thought it was going to take forever to do it. I just said, "You know what? I don't know how to do it. I'm going to just start doing it." As long as you're delivering value, it is just amazing.

Then the power of reciprocity. So many people are pitching. There's so much noise. There's studies out there that the average person gets over 4,000 messages. We're talking a huge amount of messages.

What we want to do is we want to make sure that we are giving first, that we're delivering value, whatever it is, whatever part of the market that you're in, you're going to deliver great value ...

A Second Opinion on Your Finances

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

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John Bowen
Founder and CEO
Financial Advisor Select