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ACCELERATING ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS PODCAST

EPISODE  
**131**

**Robert Skrob**

Show Notes at: <http://www.aesnation.com/131>

John Bowen and Robert Skrob  
**AESNATION.COM**



Building Solid Relations  
For Lasting Success

**Episode #131**

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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:** As entrepreneurs, we all want to grow our business dramatically. Well, I'm going to let you in on a secret. That's what we're going to talk about today. There are two ways to do it. One is to attract that steady stream of pre-qualified, pre-endorsed clients, customers, for whatever your service is or your widgets you're selling. Second, I'm going to say even more important, is keeping them.

Today, I have a really remarkable entrepreneur, a good friend, an extremely talented individual and one who I go to because he is the expert. I don't say that very often but the expert in member retention not only for not-for-profit but for-profit organizations. This is one of the biggest secrets of being a super successful entrepreneur, is keeping your customers longer. You do not want to miss this. Stay tuned.

Robert, I am so excited to have you here. You're looking awful comfortable there. You're looking kind of the guru that you are, we try to appreciate. First of all, I want to just thank you for joining us here at AESNation.com.

**Robert Skrob:** It's a privilege to be part of this program. Thank you so much for having to be a guest. To be on the name, and now and forever, I get to add to my biography that I was on your program. This is a thrill. It's awesome.

**John:** I tell you, it's a thrill for me. I've been following you, Robert, for a number of years. It will come to some of the books you've written because really, you're one of the players in the information marketing but you've carved out a little niche that is huge. It's all about retaining clients and customers and the value there. I'd like to do it before. I mean, I want to dive in because you've given me some great advice. We've had a chance to go over a number of things and now, I'm constantly learning from you. All the assets and different resources you have.

I want to really help everyone get a little bit of the back story. How did Robert go ahead and get to this point? This is not a business ... Again, we wake up at 8:00, 5:00 and say, "I am going to be the expert in customer or client retention."

**Robert:** It's a happy accident as so many accidents are. I came out of college with an accounting degree. I did public accounting for about two months and hated it and got a job as a bookkeeper for a company that manage associations. Within about 5 years, I bought that company. I was 28 years old, 27 years old, I had 30 employees. It was 1999 and we had all these associations that we were managing which are professional trade groups, groups of doctors, groups of OB-GYNs, anaesthesiologist, pain medicine, occupational therapist, movers, and motorcycle dealers. All these niches that we were putting on meetings, putting out magazines, doing events, selling trade shows and all at the same time that Google was out on horizon yet Ask Jeeves right there.

Members were going, "Why do I belong to an association when I can just go to ask.com and find out the answer to our question?" It really kind of shock waves through the whole industry and certainly through my company. What I discovered was, certainly answers and information are part of the reason why folks belong to an association or buy from your company but more importantly, there's a lot of other reasons why they're your customer that can actually be more value.

**John:** I had to say for all entrepreneurs, Robert, I want to make sure. Someone might say this, "I don't have a membership program. I don't need this." If you're selling anything, you're building a community, you're creating that tribe, however you want to describe your customers and clients and to the extent that you can build that emotional connection and memberships ... I have a number of businesses. They're all around information. It's so easy to think that's what we're providing. If that's all we're providing, Google does it pretty well now. They've learned from those days that you were just talking about it. They gotten pretty good. Go ahead.

**Robert:** One example that's not membership related is Starbucks. It's essentially delivering you a cup of coffee and part of the experience is important. One of the very most important parts of that experience is the logo on the front of the cup that that says to the buyer, "I am worth this. I rewarded myself." You can walk in to your office and you're showing that, "You know what? I've got enough money that I can buy coffee at Starbucks. You all can go to Dunkin Donuts and tell me how much better it is. I am important enough to go to Starbucks."

That whole thing works in large part because of the logo on the cup. That's exactly what we're going to talk about today is how you can use that logo in the cup kind of principle for your own business and get that same value that goes way beyond just the filtered water in the cup.

**John:** It's so funny because I know a few of the early investors of Starbucks. They got sold at vision of how important that was in the community. It wasn't that the coffee was that much better. I unfortunately didn't invest in that part but I'm drinking a lot of their coffee particularly when I'm traveling and everything else. It became passion and used it at home. We got bunch of espresso machines.

One of the things I want to tell other entrepreneurs, I think this is important. This is really, what you're showing us how to do is that if it's not enough value, it can be displaced. There's a new kind of coffee, Bulletproof coffee. Dave Asprey just raised a bunch of venture money and he's come out with a different process and he charges more than Starbucks. I, now, I'm on a regular mailing, you're getting my coffee and saw it.

Dave's building a ... I think he might be one of those guys that builds a billion dollar business. This is why it's so important to think through all these aspects of it. I'm thinking, Starbucks

logo, I love. Sailor and all that. I love seagull in it and everything but Bulletproof sounds even better.

**Robert:** Well, I think that it's also fascinating, really example of entrepreneurship that in so many businesses, they're trying to figure out how they can deliver coffee cheaper than Starbucks. We're going to go and we're going to be at coffee shop and we're going to be just as nice. It's going to have big puffy couches and we'll have little tinkling music but it will be cheaper than Starbucks.

The smart guys like you're identifying, instead of figuring out how to do it cheaper, they're varying out to be even more expensive. Let me be the super-premium provider even on a top end of Starbucks. I think that's a brilliant example. Absolutely.

**John:** Let's dive in to the key lessons because you've been doing this for a long time, Robert. You're providing counsels in some big companies, small companies, all the way in between. Number one in our discussion as we're getting ready to do this recording, you talked about every one of us is an entrepreneur, need to have this important discussion with their selves, our senior team, about the difference between retaining clients and finding clients. I talked tiny bit in the opening but why don't you take that further because to me, this is one that's so easy. I mean, I've started a few businesses. I didn't focus on retention. Boy, that's hard.

**Robert:** Good question. I think of running a business, I have a little analogy story about running a business is very similar to driving a car. Just like your car goes nowhere unless you give it gas, your business doesn't grow, doesn't go forward unless you're adding new customers. The rate at which your customer, your business is growing, is directly proportional the rate of you putting in new customers in your business. That is the fuel, that is the gas; but, you're not going to get where you're going unless you're steering this thing. I've always felt that the steering of your car is, if the one side is getting your customers to buy more with each transaction and then second, getting your customers to buy from you more frequently.

Those two keys are things that you've always got to consider because if you're just putting in new customers all the time, it's really just like flushing them through. You can completely transform the value of a customer by focusing on getting each transaction to be larger. I mean, that's what McDonald's came out with the value meals. That's what all about it, is that people would come in and buy a burger and a coke. Then, McDonald's said, "Wait a minute. We have to figure out how to get them to buy fries too and make that part of the order." They did. It was when I first came out with that, it was 25-30% depending on the store increase and transaction size. If you can do that to your business, imagine if every customer suddenly bought 25% more with each transaction, it completely transform the business.

**John:** I'm going to put me on the camera so they can see the smile at 25% more. That's a big deal. That's a huge deal. It's one of those things, it's so important. One of the lessons, Robert, I've learned is, I first focus in our client lifetime value and you're talking about how to maximize it, then I've always, in every business I have, I create a client patting of what we're going to do whether it's a professional services, whether we're offering hamburgers, that type of thing. What's the progression? How can I maximize the client lifetime value to the business by delivering really the differentiation value to them?

**Robert:** John, this is something that I'm very excited and passionate about. There's a lot of different businesses but if you're a professional service firm, you're delivering some sort of thing for your customer or if you're ... A lot of the folks that I deal with are in the subscription business where the customer is buying some sort of piece of software or some sort of subscription and how to integrate that into their life. That if the customer doesn't take action with what they've purchased, then they're not going to want to buy the next several ... You're not going to buy the Bulletproof coffee three months from now if you don't use the coffee for this month. It's essential that they get you to use that product.

One of the things that we've been really focused on is making the first steps that the customer needed to take exceptionally easy and simple and small. Now, so often, we as marketers, as business owners, we define value in bulk. It's kind of like one of those television commercials on TV, if one towel was good, how about eight? More of the same isn't always more value. A lot of times, it can be less value just because there's so much to do or so many options.

That's one of the interesting things that like Apple has done, is they've eliminated the number of features and made their products very simpler to use. It isn't as full featured as an Android but it's also simpler to use and maybe the battery last longer. That's what we need. First of all, we engineer the offer and the product so that it's simple to get started.

**John:** I think this is so important. I mean, I'm thinking as you're saying it, Robert. I've experienced it, in fact, I had today. I'm in the process of looking at doing the solar installation, solar panels for electricity. I've kind of put it off but our utility bills keep on going up. I got a pretty large property, 20 acres of whole bunch of landscaping and multiple buildings. It's kind of like, "Okay. I got to do it." Boy, the difference, getting some references, identifying down to a small group for that we're going to have conversations with.

Looking at how hard one group is making it, you got to hang out with them for three hours. You're going to all this stuff. Today someone came by. The only one that's an hour appointment got all the prelim information, came out in a quick site survey, went up to this cargo, did maybe 10 minutes of my time, interviewing to get what I wanted. I went up to his car, printed out a very complicated executive summary then detailed report and just spent time going over the executive summary and a whole process of following up.

This is something that's probably a couple of hundred thousand dollars. They can spend a little more time. You're going to have products that are hamburgers or a couple hundred thousand or maybe you're selling something and it's an office building. Really, the point I want to do is you talked about making it simple. It's simple getting people started because I mean, I like the guy. He made it easy. Then, I've always signed a long term contract. Their lifetime value also would be phenomenal because I would probably bring up their name and subsequent ones, interview their CEO.

Sometimes we forget, we're all raising so hard trying to get the client. We make it hard for them to come and then we don't have that escalation or client pathway to help them to go along and we got to deliver value all along the way.

**Robert:** That's an interesting point too, John. One of the other things that I see about that client pathway is we spend a lot of time getting out pain points. There's a book called Spin Selling where you're investigating the pain and you want to irritate the pain points. Then, there's Challenger Sale, the next edition to that which is about challenging their beliefs. Are you going to accomplish your goal? John, if you don't do this solar system, what's going to happen with your power bill? It's just going to get higher, isn't it? Well, I guess we better go ahead and get this done now to save yourself a lot of money down the road.

We do all these sales things and then we get the sale and we just flip right over to delivery mode. Very quickly, our customer forgets about the whole thing. There's this path that immediately start as soon as they're very excited and then they buy. That's kind of the tick of excitement and then it wanes. What we have to do is even during the fulfillment process, maintain that excitement and remind, "Hey. We're going to save a lot of money on this utility bills when we get this done. Only a couple of more weeks left." Especially if your customer has to adapt anything into the program or do anything with what you are selling them, yet to maintain that excitement and keep selling even after the sale is made, in order to help get the compliance you need for the customer to actually get value and experience your program.

**John:** I call it, "reminding them of the wow," type of thing. What's happening is you're delivering on what you promised and that's what they expect but in today's world, so often people don't even deliver on what they promised. Then, in just a little bit more, it's pretty amazing and people get excited in that lifetime value just takes off. I want to go in really the second point. Big takeaway, we want them to walk away with us. To recognize this, there's a lot of ways to serve clients.

One of the temptations and I know I've had this problem when I'm at work, it's so important to keep on the client path, the lifetime client value. You just going to keep on dumping in more

and more things that caused an awful what. All of a sudden, the profitability that client can go down pretty dramatically. Sometimes, they don't appreciate all of this.

**Robert:** One of the things that I figured out within the non... I was in a non-profit association world, almost exclusively for about 10 years. Then, I discovered this for-profit information marketers. I've been working with them for the last ten years. Most information marketers, folks that are selling and packaging what they know are mostly focused on delivering content, providing information. I was just one of five things that we did in the association world. What we're finding is that when you also pack together the other things such as...

We can go through this, John, if you want more detail but really if there's five things that associations give. One of which is ROI, that kind of content, the actual what somebody wants. Number two is an opportunity to be part of something bigger than themselves. Number three is recognition. Number four is an opportunity to grow. Number five is an opportunity to connect with others like them.

By offering those other four things, generally it doesn't cost you anything to do that. It gives as much or even five times the value that you could deliver only on information or only on return on investment alone. That's what I mean with that Starbucks cup. That's recognition. That is Starbucks allowing that customer to identify themselves as a customer and how wealthy and rich and how successful they must be because they can afford to buy Starbucks coffee.

**John:** It's something we're all alienated about in life. I mean, life is so busy. Certainly, entrepreneurs but everybody is. We want to be part of something whether it's a Starbucks coffee or it's your company, your services. I have a mastermind group of top financial people. We've got obviously a virtual mastermind here at AES Nation. Robert, I know you have different groups. We'll go into that in the resource section but people come not only to get the information but to be part of the group. So often, they learn their peers more than the gurus.

**Robert:** That's one of the things I discovered about that connection. That fifth one I mentioned. I was putting on an annual meeting for dermatologists. We're waiting on some people to get us the agenda and it was late. I sent out a marketing brochure and they're like, "Send us a save-the-date card." I'm not going to send anything out unless there's a way for people to send back money. We did the save-the-date card but it also had a registration form on it so you can go ahead and register right then. I'm waiting again to get your attention.

What we found is that we had as many people register from that initial mailing without outlining the details as we had in years providing with all the details out about what they're actually going to learn. When I got to the meeting, I discovered why. It was because they were coming to see each other. Their wives were there or their buddies were there. They were out going



golfing. They were going on a fishing trip. It wasn't all about the program that we could put together. It was about what connecting them to each other and being the club where they can be feel part of it. That's an essential thing.

One of the things that we've been doing with meetings that we put together is having structured networking. Not like a cocktail party where everybody's standing around, having drinks and feeling awkward but actual ways of getting folks connected so that they can create those relationships so the next time the brochure goes out, then it's not just seeing Robert what he's going to talk about but it's Charlie and Ben and George. I want to go be part of that group again. You're nowhere near as powerful as all your other customers.

**John:** If you're doing ... If the lifetime value of your client is really high, this is something that is critical. I mean, Peter Diamandis, Abundance 360 Mastermind and he is really about the future technology and a little bit philanthropy. He had some data scientist and data mining going on and so on. What he did for networking that I was really blown away with is he has 250 people in his mastermind group and he wanted to have and really run in algorithm. One of the data scientists run in algorithm and match up and said, "These are top 10 that you should meet during the conference." Well, it's extremely valuable and everybody did it.

I now do it in my mastermind group and I've got almost the same size group. I got a couple of data scientist and we put it together and we're actually sitting them together at different events and so on. The feedback has just been amazing. I'm going to go back to what you're saying, Robert, if you throw events, often times as not the speaker. I hear over and over again from our programs and programs that I attend, make more time for the conversations. I go watch people like we are today on video, really easy. I can't get those personal connections. It's so important.

**Robert:** It's funny. I did the data scientist method. What we did is we had three different groups and we rotate through. The first group was data scientist were we match people up. The second one, we matched people up. The third one, we did it random. By the time we're already done two tables, it's actually difficult to find third matches for each of the people without matching them ... Anyway, we just did it completely random. I can't tell you how many people are like, "You know, I wasn't really sure about your matches until the third one. I was blown away. You had it so ... You had me begged." I go, "Okay."

Yes, whether you're in a financial services, just get your clients together and allow them to meet each other. If you're a local business, create a forum. Make your own little chamber of commerce within your customer base and be the connector because there's as much value in that as there is in your core deliverable. Your customers will keep buying from you and be buying your core deliverable just so they can stay connected to you for everything else that you're offering.

**John:** We see that all the time, Robert, when we do research on the affluent, successful entrepreneurs on networking and so on. Many of them would never leave that relationship they have because of the power of connection. You know why? Yeah, I'm going to save a thousand dollars but this person introduces me to million dollars' worth of business. I'm with that person.

Let's go and talk about the client. As we talk about this life cycle, we have new clients or customers coming in and then they go through a growth with us and they become more mature. How should our communication change as we do this?

**Robert:** Well, even acknowledging that it should change is important. Just think of, I mean, you're probably a regular at a restaurant where you go all the time. Their restaurant probably needs to connect and talk to you differently than it does somebody who isn't a regular. The new customer needs a whole lot different orientation than you do. That's the same with all of us.

**John:** It's funny. Last night, we went to a new restaurant. We eat out a lot. We're on a nice little boutique community and see sun rises. That happens. It's so funny, Robert. The waiter, it was a new restaurant, we've been the third time and he greeted us by name now. He brought the drinks that we order the first two times. It was like, "Okay. I guess we're regulars now." Assuming that, it was a nice touch. It was well done where you expect a new ... There's some that we go to where they don't even give us a menu anymore because we're regulars there, asked us, and so on. It feels a little bit like a norm and cheers and some of these, too.

Whatever the experience is, think about this, because we tend to ... My experience most of the time, people love me as a new customer but then, take for granted down the road. What's going on? Boy, its hard work in any customer but it's so much easier to keep and retain in that value proposition so high.

**Robert:** The new customers, to put this down in index card, something that is a ... We could write books on this topic but to put it down on an index card, your new customers need reassurance because they're scared. This is real. If you're going in to a restaurant for the first time, is this going to be a good experience, is the service good, and is the food good? Even if you've heard the things, you're still looking for reassurance. That first experience needs to be about reassurance helping them feel good about the experience.

The subsequent experiences needs to be about helping them feel important and helping them feel like they are in the right place that they are connecting to people they couldn't get, other places that they're being seen and the fact that they're there is recognition of how smart they

are and even to the extent that you can, depending on the type of business. I got restaurants in my mind in the moment helping them feel like they're part of a cause.

Even when you buy an Apple laptop, I've seen people that were like, "Man, I had this new laptop. I felt like I had to really write something good. It can be worthy of this Apple laptop because how nice this thing is." The extent, you can make your customers, those regulars, the repeat customers, it's all about making them feel important.

**John:** This is so good, Robert. Let's change to a new segment. This one's called the book of the day. You are an information marketing guy. You're actually brilliant relationship guy, however you do it. Sometimes, we get this online, offline discussions. The most successful entrepreneurs are great at relationships. They deliver real value. You do that.

I want to share the book that you did. If you go to Robert's Amazon author page, you can see he's extremely prolific. Tell us a little bit about this official get rich guy to information marketing. Why is it applicable for entrepreneurs who are in the information marketing side?

**Robert:** It's interesting you bring that up because that's actually the second edition to the book. That one came out in 2011. There's a whole section about adding information marketing as a marketing function for any type of business. This was also a first book that had a real step by step process for how to get started in the information marketing business.

I saw it. I see the whole information marketing as how any business can build on recurring revenue, subscription revenue, and membership revenue into their business. Whether you have it and you want to get better in retention or you're looking to make that part of your business, information marketing could be a very valuable process to do that.

**John:** I want to go to and just say, I'm going to echo how valuable it is. I read your book. I think I read the first edition and the second edition. I read almost everything you've done. It was about that time of the second edition because it's been just over four years when I decided to start implementing information marketing techniques, communication techniques or strategies or tactics into my business. I got to tell you, Robert, it's been worth many millions of dollars.

I want to encourage other entrepreneurs. If you're watching this podcast, video podcast, you're listening to this ... I mean, if you're not using this because you say, "Well, some of those online guys are ... I mean, there's some bad apples." Well, there's bad apples everywhere but strategies and tactics to communicate the value have, just so in valuable.

Let me go to next section which is the App of the Day. Robert, you got your smart phone. What would be the application that you would recommend to your fellow entrepreneurs that you've got a lot of value out of?

**Robert:** I do want to say, I'm just very, very thankful for what you said about the book. I really appreciate your input feedback. Thank you for that.

**John:** I'm glad that you didn't charge a licensing fee for executing on these things. I owe you a lot. A sincere thank you is very much there.

**Robert:** Yeah. As you were talking about, that I was thinking about how much work with actually creating that book. I'm so happy that it was valuable. The app that I use a lot is Trello. We manage all our in-house projects with our clients even between me and my clients using Trello. It's a very nice project management tool that it's very simple to use. You can use it on your PC, through your web browser. You can use it on your iPad or iPhone. Actually, there's a Google app as well or android app as well.

It's just very simple. I was at a meeting and I needed to create a little project. I pulled up my phone, added it and added a due date. Not only is it done, not is it there and communicated to my team but it's also will be there when we sit down for our next weekly meeting. It remind me that we need to talk about that and have a deadline. I love Trello. It's a very visual way of organizing projects and to-do lists. It's a nice little tool.

**John:** I'll echo that. It's both as an individual or an enterprise. It's either free or relatively inexpensive depending on what you want to accomplish with it. Let's go ahead to the next segment which is resources. Robert, I'm going to put up your website, AssociatingMarketing.com. I remember all the links and everything Robert and I talked about will be at AESNation.com so if you're in your car, don't try to write these things down or if you're in the gym, lifting a bench-pressing 300 pounds. Again, stay focus.

Robert, tell us a little bit about your website and what you're doing. I do want to go ... Let me just do one more. You are one of the ... I get probably ... I know because I use same box to track all my email and sort it. I believe, I'm averaging now about 1,500 emails. That's not kind of any junk mail that comes in each week. It sorts everything and so on. Yours is one that I haven't put into they call the block box which would be unsubscribe. It just does it without telling the party that you unsubscribe in.

It's one that I have. I have it in my later file to read every time. That conversation that you're doing, whether you have membership or not, this is really in valuable. Robert, tell us a little bit about the site.

**Robert:** I'm honored that my email is worthy of your attention. That's quite a statement. Thank you. At AssociationMarketing.com, one of the things that you can get there is my report on that customer path that you were mentioning. Whether you have a business or a subscription

program or a membership program or you're thinking about doing that, you want to think through the experience. I have a report that include, that really gives you my breakdown of it as well as a checklist of the items that you need with each step of that customer experience throughout ... It really to retain them for years.

So many of these programs, they lose 50% or more of their members within the first three months. We'll tell you how to solve that and solve the problem where they're aboard after a year or two. It's a free report right there on the site. It's a nice little tool.

**John:** All you got to do is go to AssociationMarketing.com and you'll see Robert there, ready. All you do is click on the red box and you are there. Let's go to the next segment. I want to bring this all together. This is Key Takeaways. Robert, I've been taking a lot of notes. This is really in valuable. Something that's very important to me. For my fellow entrepreneurs, as you're listening to this, I'd like you to think about the big three drivers of success that Robert and I talked about, that he walked us through.

Number one, is to have that important discussion with yourself and your senior team about the value in really retaining your clients. I mean, we all have lots of conversations on marketing. This can be almost every day in every organization but that retention, it's so easy to put aside. That's really the value creation that we can have.

Number two is start thinking about the different ways that you can serve your clients. It doesn't have to be piling on value. One of the things we really talked about, I love surveying them and getting ... Sometimes, they don't know what they don't know but really testing things because it can be some of these most valuable ... Robert and I talked about, one, is about facilitating network. That's so inexpensive. The mere fact that you're doing conferences, you don't have to pay for as many big name keynotes. It's cheaper. Look at what they want.

Lastly, number three was going to have in changing your communication style. In my time zone, Robert were at lunch now. I was ready to follow you in the restaurant side. Whether you come in as I come in to the restaurant the first time, when they come in to your business the first time, I mean, how are you doing that? How do you have that conversation? Having that really powerful orientation if you're at premium service and then taking them through the process. This is something that we all do but we got to do it well. We got to do it better. Robert, I want to thank you and I want to encourage everyone to go to AESNation.com. Get the show links. Definitely, connect. Robert, get on the newsletter. Download the report. Don't let them down.

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Best of success,



John Bowen  
Founder and CEO  
Financial Advisor Select