

"The Robert Plank Show"



Episode #028

[Copycat Marketing: It's How Business Is Done](#)

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We get on the internet, we try to make money, we try to monetize our passion. We do all these things.

Some of those activities pay off, some don't. It's up to us to stick with what works and adjust to the things that don't and take in the criticism or the failures that don't work. But also, have that thick skin because you know what, as we're ramping up, getting started, there are going to be a lot of people out there who hold us back – whether they realize it or not, and sabotage us and maybe even we sabotage ourselves.

I've wanted to talk about this for at least 10 years. When started online, I was afraid of people STEALING from me. I'm not talking about sharing products or blindly ripping me off, but people taking my ideas. I think that there are about a million things that scare the crap out of us, prevent us from doing those things we know we need to do, like putting up an opt-in page, sales letter, getting traffic, mailing our list, paying for adds, getting affiliates – all those things.

Memetic Ideas

It's good to be copied. Most people don't realize they're copying you. If you're being copied, you're doing something right. Chances are you've done the copying quite a bit in your internet marketing career and you didn't even realize it. That's how it works. Ideas are "memetic."

What's a meme? Sometimes you'll see funny pictures all around the internet... they're copied so many times that nobody remembers where they started. Ideas happen in the same way.

I've known so many people in my internet marketing career where I told them something, even a phrase or even some concept, and a year later, they themselves are presenting it and they come across as if they thought of it and that they tried all these things – they finally discovered this. I have tons of ideas in my head and I don't know if I thought of them or if someone else planted the seed, but that's just how things work and we can't be tiptoeing around and trying to be the only unique person on the internet because you know what happens, if you have the most original idea no one's ever thought of, well then chances are it's something that people have thought of but you don't see it around because they've tried it and it's failed.

The best businesses you're going to build and the best money making ideas and the best websites and the best products are going to be a result of combining things that already exist or adding one little piece, taking one little piece away or maybe it's something that failed in the past but are successful now. For example, cellphones would have failed in the 60s and 70s because you didn't have the infrastructure but now they are a great idea.

An idea on its own is worthless. Netflix is one of the coolest companies because they took this thing that you think wouldn't work: overnight mailing movies let you keep the movie out as long as you want it and then you send it back when you're done and then only works because they would run these huge amounts of volume. But do you think that after Netflix came out, that they were the only ones doing that? Well, of course not.

People have tried that. There was like Gamefly, I think tried that. There was Blockbuster Video tried their own and we all know what happened to Blockbuster, they went bankrupt.

An idea on its own is not good enough. I could cry over spilled milk myself. I was at the point where could list all these things where as far as I know, I created these software products and maybe others had ideas 10 years before me, 5 years before me that I'd never heard of, but I was the first one to create quite a few pieces of software. For example, the first piece of software that ran click based Ads and AdSense style blogs and guess what that was? Combining two ideas that worked quite well. I was the first one (as far as I know) to create what's called the 'dime sale' which is this thing where the more people buy from you, the higher your price rises by a few pennies every time.

Was that a 100% out of the blue original idea? Well, no. That came from the idea of this dynamic pricing where some people would create things where every couple of seconds your price would increase by a tenth of a penny and I thought, What if it increased based on number of sales instead of just the time?

The idea of using WordPress as a sales letter: I came out with this one years ago. Only one single plug-in like this already existed. It wasn't very good and I took so many improvements on it that the finish result was absolutely completely different than the original, and I had all these things like plug and play, headline swipe files and we've now improved that to this day.

As far as I know, my business partner, Lance Tamashiro was the first person to use the term "drip" as far as well, dripping extra content. The way that we close our webinars, the way we create webinar packages, it's like you try all these different things and only a few of them work.

In so many situations, only four or five ways that a certain thing can work like. Like making a sales letter, making a video, making a webinar pitch. It's fine if someone copies you. I have been copied so closely where someone actually once took my entire presentation and just presented it as themselves.

I've been in Mastermind Groups where the majority of people in that Mastermind use my ideas to create their own unique and individual products even though the whole point of the Mastermind, so ideas didn't get out. I mean, the head of the Mastermind was the worse suspect here. He ripped-off the most stuff and it's fine, water under the bridge and I'm not as upset about it now as I was back in the day, back when I first got started and I had this scarcity mindset.

Abundance Mindset

I have an abundance mindset. Now I have this idea, well, a few things. Dan Kennedy says, "Pioneers get arrows in their back." So if you're the first one to invent something, create something, what's going to happen is you're going to have the toughest time and every one after you is going to see how well you did and then duplicate it on their own and they are going to have a much easier time at your expense.

That's how business is done. Here's my strategy: put out a bunch of things and see what works and what doesn't. You can't plan for something to be a big hit. You just can't. The marketplace has to tell you, and then you continue on the path that's worked for you.

Internet marketer Yanik Silver trademarked this term called the "name squeeze page." This is a webpage with nothing to do other than to enter a name and email address. This was revolutionary and he thought, "I'm going to trademark the name so that no one else can use it without naming me." What happened? Everyone called it the "squeeze page", not just a "name squeeze page."

We copy whether we realize it or not.

Look at the drive through McDonald's or Burger King. Did they come up with the idea of having a number system or a certain sequence on their own? Of course not. One of them had something that worked, a good model, someone else copied them. The person that was copied absorbed the changes of the other and there was this back and forth until the whole marketplace worked out.

It's better to be a scientist, observing what works and what doesn't as opposed to a trailblazer. I used to get bent out of shape. I used to get bent out of shape when I put out that click sensor product, the click based and AdSense thing. Basically, first of all, one guy blackmailed me because he told me he had some idea four years ago, even though I'd never heard of him and he never told me, so how was I supposed to be a psychic and think of these things?

You Already Stole the TV

Have you heard of Steve Jobs? He invented Apple Computer and all this good stuff and they invented like a mouse moving type of deal where you could have things on a screen, icons and you point to stuff. Did Steve Jobs think about that? Well heck, no.

Xerox thought of that, and the big famous story is that, then Bill Gates made something else and Steve Jobs got all butt-hurt even though Bill Gates ripped off the same guy Steve Jobs did. Bill Gates said something like, "Well, it's not that you're upset that I've broken in your house and stole from you. It's that we both broke into the same house and when you broke in you found that I had already stolen the TV." It's this thing that we all copy each other and ideas on their own are worthless but what is going to make you more money are these things like building a list, being a better marketer, and when people come out there and they see something that you have that's selling well and they make their own version or their own knockoff of it.

Usually they'll actually knock you off better than what you created originally. In fact, they are doing market research for you. Look at what pieces of you or of your product or of your marketing they cloned. You might say because they did that from an outsider's point of view, I like that a lot better how they position that hook or how they presented this or that, and so it's up to us to observe the changes.

There are two ways to copy someone, the good way and the bad way. When you get copied, both things will happen. You will copy someone, whether you realize it or not. I could go on and on about people who I taught them things and they took notes on it and forgot they took the notes, came back since the seminar and said, "Whoa, I'm a genius! Look at all the stuff I wrote. I'm going to make a presentation." Next thing you know, they made a presentation very similar to what I said. That's okay. That's how the marketplace works.

Two ways to copy people and two ways to react to you being copied by others. Now, the wrong way to copy is the superficial copy. What I mean by that is, if someone sees for example, our back up creator plug-in, that's been knocked off at least ten times. Someone sees it and they might say, "Whoa, cool! He's got this sales here. He's got this video. He's got this little icon," and they'll copy the fun stuff. They'll copy the pizzazz or like the flashiness and not what makes it special, and not like how it's simple, or not how it's a one-button solution, or not how it's really fast. So they'll copy the colors on the sales letter, the font on the webpage and not the things that actually matter.

Mechanics vs. Secret Sauce

This is what makes me laugh the most because if I put out a webinar course about how we run a webinar class, how we use webinars for pitches and someone makes a knock off and they focus on how to record your screen. They think they're making an exact copy but there's no such thing as an exact copy when you look at someone's product and make your own. That's the wrong way to do it. You're letting them copy the wrong things. When that happens to me, I laugh at that because it's like, "I can tell that you tried to make something similar to me but we're not even a comparison."

The better way: small improvements. If I had my webinar course, and someone made their own and whether it was almost the same or drastically different, I would look at what could take from the copy. What do they show that I don't? What's the hole in my system that they are then doing?

What if someone knocks off my webinar course and they show all this cool stuff on how they get traffic to a webinar? How to fill up a webinar every time? I can now look at what they did and put my feelings aside and not get all butt-hurt because our ideas are not original, our subconscious stole them from other people and for all I know, this person subconsciously stole my course to make their own and didn't even realize it.

I say well, maybe I can just take this one improvement, just this one piece and then absorb it into the next version of my course and we play this arms race. We both play catch up. One person does one thing, one person does the next thing, and maybe your way to out-market them is because you are simpler or you are faster, or you're easy to use or you get to the result faster. It's not necessarily, about extra features or about bells and whistles.

Two ways to subconsciously copy is superficially which is where you're trying to copy everything once you copy the wrong thing, which is bad, but instead, you'll look at what is the slight edge that they now have on me that I can go there and put right back into my name product?

Two ways to react to being copied is first you could freak out and panic and go to this emotional roller coaster of, maybe I should just give up. Maybe, I should just shut my stuff down because that way, no one can copy me or going out and complaining and bitching to everyone who'll listen and saying the same thing, same thing, same thing and just getting worked up.

Be Ready For It

I'm going to tell you right now, that you will copy and others will copy you. It's better to be prepared for it, so when it happens, not if but when it happens, it might mean that you've been a little complacent in your business, in your marketing for a while. So, you have this really good idea you thought I'm such a genius. You put it out there, made the product, whatever that is, if it's (software or a book, videos, sales letter, auto responder sequence, traffic) put it out there. Let it sit for six months, a year or two years. Then someone new comes across the market and run circles around you and eat your lunch and now what's comparing you to them...well, now it's time to go back in the battle again.

With the internet and marketing you have competitors, you do have allies, you have enemies. If you don't treat it that way, that, where if you stop, then you're going to be forgotten and if you're not growing you're dying then there's no way then you're going to be left behind. So you could either freak out and panic and let yourself go deeper and deeper and then complain saying, "Why the heck do I do anything, and why did I even get in this position in the first place?" Or you can be more strategic about it and decide a couple things.

Don't ever call them out. You're unique, you're special, you don't want to compare YOU to THEM, but you say, "Is there something of mine that they have done better, that I can then absorb or is there something of mine that I can see, I'm glad I didn't go down that path?"

I'm thinking about Paper Template. I'm thinking about our Backup Creator plugin, where people make knock off WordPress sales letter or back up cloners for WordPress. They go down the rabbit hole of adding these bells and whistles and buttons and they actually do us a huge favor in that when we get requests for features, for WordPress multi-site or for this button or for that button, I almost would have done it. But then it's like, because someone made a bad copy of what we made, I can see the possibilities.

If I was going to implement that feature, if I was going to add in that extra training course, I can see how that would've ended up. You know what, check out a site. It's called managewp.com. It's a tool for managing multiple WordPress sites at once.

People thought they were ground-breaking in that. You could pick and choose all these features you wanted. The main core of it, it's free but if you want the scheduling thing, it's thirty bucks. If you want this other model, it's thirty bucks.

If you've used the membership plug-in in the past called Amember, it's the same way. If you want the Barebones, it's cheap or free but if you want to run an autoresponder with your membership site, it's thirty bucks. If you want to take payments at your site, thirty bucks. I almost went down that: launching a product with very little features and then to add-on it's this, this, this, this, this and I'm so glad I didn't go down that path because I see how it's implemented and it's the most confusing checkout process I've ever seen.

If we didn't have those other possibilities to look at, and you look at different sites, different competitors as different avenues you could take, as opposed to people who are copying every single last thing you do. There are different things you could do. I mean you look at any webpage, video, webinar page, sales letter or anything. It's better to look at it from a point of view of, "Is this something I could implement myself?" "Why did they add in that price structure?" "Why did they make the price look that certain way?" or "Why did they add in these certain pictures at this point?" and "If I were to use it at my business, would that help me or would that hurt me?"

One thing that is really going to help you is to, I guess be a better person and have what we call an abundance mindset, not a scarcity mindset. Are you going to be copied? Answer's yes. Are you going to copy someone? Answer's yes, and you're probably done it tons of times this month, this year and you didn't even freaking realize it.

That means that you found things that worked and I mean, it's up to you with a definitely judgment call and how different that you want to make things and honestly I don't recommend it anyway, violating trademark, copyright. But you can't copyright ideas.

If someone has a course on how to make an affiliate program, how to run Google AdWords, how to play Guitar, you don't want to ignore your competitors and you don't even want to hate your competitors. Go there and buy their course to see what they have, what they've left out, what hole they've left in the marketplace for you, put out your stuff and when you get copied, go ahead and absorb the changes.

This has been Robert Plank from makeaproduct.com. You can check me out right now at RobertPlank.com and when you're there, let me know. Comment on the blog. Tell me what you thought of today's podcast episode 28, [Copycat Marketing – It's How Business Is Done](#).