

Introduction: Welcome to the Enchanting Lawyer Podcast, the show that walks you step-by-step to improving strategies you can use today to grow your business. We show you how being kind, useful, and, of course, enchanting will bring you more clients and build a thriving community.

Now here's your host from sunny San Diego, Jacob Sapochnick.

Jacob: Hi everybody, this is Jacob Sapochnick and welcome to the Enchanting Lawyer podcast where we talk about marketing, leadership, and just doing great business and how to be enchanting. Today, I have a very special, and I'm honored to have Peter Shankman on the show.

For those of you who don't know Peter, he is recognized as radically one of the most innovative marketers and expert in social media PR and advertising. He's actually best known for founding Help a Report Out, HARO, which is under a year became de facto standard for thousands of journalists looking for sources on deadline; offering them more than 20,000 sources around the world.

He's an author, entrepreneur, speaker, and a worldwide connector and I'm privileged to have him on the show. Welcome, Peter.

Peter: Hello! Good to be here. Thanks for having me.

Jacob: Peter, for those people in the service business, why don't you give me a little bit of a background briefly about what brought you to do what you do right now?

Peter: I got very lucky. I found out that I could do what I do and I love what I do and you get paid for it and have a lot of fun with it. I've always worked in content. I started my career working for America Online as the founder of the newsroom there. From that I started a PR firm. And then from PR firm went to starting a company called Help a Reporter that connected journalists with sources around the world. It got acquired.

Primarily, I just spend a lot of my time having fun teaching companies how to do better, teaching people how to do better. I connect people. People that are good, people who might do well, things like that with each other.

I've been very, very fortunate to have a good time with what I do and I'm having a blast with it.

Jacob: I met you at the legal conference a few weeks ago. When you started the speech, I knew about you before. I knew about the book that you wrote about; helping companies, why they should be nice.

But, I think, one of the core things about you ... I mean you build a lot of your career about basically saying, "How can I help?" and you actually deliver. We had

a very brief communication. You gave me an opportunity to email you and you responded back. Why is it so difficult for so many companies to be nice and helpful?

Peter: I think a lot of companies spend a lot of their time focusing on trying to make money which isn't necessarily a bad thing in itself. They do it, and in the process, they forget to be nice. They forget sort of that golden rule we learned as a kid.

At the end of the day, being nice is really what keeps you abreast of all those things that are happening in the industry. You can find out what's going on -- you could do better -- in terms of knowing more and being aware more. You can get to share that. By sharing that information, you sort of create these mountains of knowledge where people want to get that from you.

It's almost like you're creating something they desperately need and you're doing it in such a way that they want to get that information from you but you're just helping.

All you're doing is helping them but they remember you and they see how important you were to them and they see how generous you are with your time and then they come to you when they need something. That's how you generate a business, that's how you generate relationships, that's how you generate clients. Not by going out and saying, "I'm awesome." But by giving people what they want, in any facet that they wanted.

You're not teasing them. You're really showing them, "Hey, this is information you might want. Thought maybe this would benefit you." Once you find out that it does, "Hey, he wasn't trying to get anything from me. He was really just trying to help me." It goes a long way.

Jacob: It's interesting because you work with all these big brands. These people called on you because they lost all their activity with customer service. How do you bring it back? You got to start paying more attention to that.

Peter: Imagine where we're going in the future. Imagine the world is really like a globe. You're just holding this giant sort of orb in your hand, right?

Jacob: Right.

Peter: The orb has everyone you've ever met. Everything you've ever done, every person you've ever met, every business you've ever interacted with. How you interact with every person on there determines where your relevance is for them.

It's not going to be about you saying, "Hey, I'm awesome." It's going to be about them saying, "Wow! The information he's giving me or the way he treated me was really titillating and it was really beneficial. Help me out tremendously."

At the end of the day, if I tell you how great I am, no one's going to believe it. But if I provide you with amazing service, something that really changes the way you look at me and helps you out, you're going to tell the world how great I am. That's where social gets involved and that's why customer service is so damn important.

Jacob: Again, more and more companies are starting to realize it now and I just fear that it maybe be too late because people, we are used to the standard now. We're not going to be quiet. We're going to go on Twitter and we're going to [crush them 00:04:41].

Peter: No question about it.

Jacob: The customer service is definitely one of the key elements here.

I was reading about you before the show and I didn't realize that one of your first businesses was actually a t-shirt business. You're making fun of some movies -- I think it was Titanic. That business became successful. It gave you the stepping stone to do all those things.

What did you actually learn from that humble beginnings and how do you use that, if you use that, in your coaching series -- on ShankMinds -- all the groups that you do.

Peter: You got to keep hustling. You always have to stay hustling and be constantly aware of how you can do new things. How you can create new ideas, how you can get involved to help customers, to help companies, to help people. What can you do to teach yourself all the new things? So, for me, it starts out with getting up very early every day and reading what's going on in the world and figuring out who I can share that with, figuring out how I can help people with it. You want to be able to do that all the time.

As companies start to grow they realize they can do that as well. It's very beneficial in the respect that you can teach your employees to do the same thing. And you could teach the people who work with you to constantly be on the lookout for things that your clients might benefit from, that new clients might benefit from. The best thing you could do is be awesome to the clients you have because that will get you the future clients that you want.

Jacob: Do you see people doing that right now or it's something that's still is to be fixed?

Peter: Oh, yeah. I mean you're starting to see that all over the place. Just the concept of people doing things that really have no benefit to them but had benefit to their followers, had benefit to their friends. Having an audience is a privilege, it's not a right, you know. If I have an audience that follows me on Twitter or that looks at my photos or things like that, the goal really is to give them information so they stay with me. They can leave me anytime. So you really want to be aware of being able to keep your audience happy.

Jacob: The most recent book that you released, Nice Companies Finish First, the biggest case study of that book is the hotel owner and the way he looks at things differently. None of his competitors are doing the same thing he does: follows up with his guests, being nice with them. What do you think is the biggest steak that any company can implement?

Peter: I mean, look, the very basics of being able to anticipate what your clients want, what your employees might need, what your customers might want, it all starts from listening. If you empower your employees to do whatever it takes to make the client happy or make the customer happy, they'll do that and they will do it to help you. They will do it in such a way that it helps the client and helps the company and everyone wins. But the worst thing in the world, having employees that don't feel like they're empowered to do this.

Jacob: Right.

Peter: For a law firm, for things like that, it's as simple as ... If I'm calling you, if I'm calling the law ... you don't call a law firm when you're having a great day. You call a law firm when you're having a problem.

Jacob: Right.

Peter: So if I'm having a problem, the best thing you could do is assure me everything is going to be okay. Right there, that helps me. Just understand that I'm calling and I have an issue. What can you do to help me feel better?

Jacob: One of the principles that we try to advocate in Enchanting Lawyer is to show that people are not professional attorneys. They should be nice. They should be enchanting. They should be helpful. Because once they do that, the clients are not going to need to come to them. They're going to be running to them.

Peter: No question about it.

Jacob: One of the things that you mentioned in your speech is that the change in social media. People right now are obsessed with likes. We're obsessed with how many fans we have. We completely lose the purpose of, you know, these people, they need to be attentive to.

You said something interesting. You said that the change of Facebook is transitioning to the way we actually act in real life where if you're not going to engage with somebody on a regular basis, he's just going to fade away. I would like you to tell me more about that.

Peter: The whole concept is going to be about if I'm connected to you and I'm being more relevant to you, I'll see more of you. I'm not going to need to like your business or like your company anymore -- like you as a person. As long as I'm having a good time and you're doing well for me, then I will continue to be using, and I'll continue to come back to you, and you will continue to be at the top of my presence in my life.

What I don't see ... I don't need to like you and then unlike you. We like companies, we never see them back. They never bother coming back. You want to be able to create moments and experiences that cause me to want to make you relevant.

Jacob: I wish more companies are going to embrace that concept but I think it's not going to happen so fast. That's why the people who will, they're going to have an advantage.

Correct me if I'm wrong. The company that you started, HARO, you actually started as a group on Facebook initially, right?

Peter: Correct.

Jacob: What was your vision, social media as a platform, for this particular service back then?

Peter: I think, for me, it was just to be able to help a few friends, you know? To be able to have some fun and sort of do a good job. How can I help some people and maybe get some work out of it, whatever the case maybe.

What wound up happening is it wound up growing much, much bigger and here's where we are. It's pretty amazing in that regard. It goes to show you that things that you build, you never know where they're going to go and how they're going to become big. It's pretty amazing.

Jacob: This is the power of social media because you never know. If the community embraces your concept -- which they did in your case -- it was an explosion, an amazing explosion.

Peter: Yup.

Jacob: The power of social media can go both ways. It can be a negative way. Very famous incident is of Justine Sacco's Twitter incident. It shows you that this is not a joke anymore.

Tell me what you feel is a good lesson from that case?

Peter: Be aware that what you find funny might not be funny in other words, in other places. It just doesn't ... You got to be very, very careful for everything that you do because you never know who's going to like it, and who's going to hate it, who you're going to piss off. Just because you find something funny in person with a couple of friends might be hysterical. But not necessarily the same way in a world where you don't control the message as well as you can personally. So that's something to keep in mind.

Jacob: Right. Just for people who are not familiar with the case in one sentence. This is the person that tweeted some racist remarks about some people that she went on a flight. By the time she landed -- I think she went to Africa. By the time she landed, it has just exploded all over Twitter.

Peter: She was fired.

Jacob: She was fired. Consequences are severe. I think taking responsibility for your actions online has now become very serious. It's no longer just online, it's the real world, right?

Peter: Yeah. Pretty crazy how quickly it goes away.

Jacob: Why don't you tell me a bit more about some of the things that you do in ShankMinds. It's kind of like a mastermind. What are the principles that you teach people who come to that event?

Peter: Yeah. We've created ShankMind just sort of a small business mastermind den in different cities around the world. It's also at shankminds.com. What we're doing is we're really creating ways for people to sort of blow past the barriers that prevent them from growing their business out to new levels. So it's really kind of that. We've had some great success with it and it's getting much bigger. We have one coming up in Toronto.

The keys are very simple, you know. Think differently. Learn to think outside the traditional line of how people think and really have fun with your business and all the principles that we've talked about in this podcast applies.

Jacob: What kind of people attend those events typically?

Peter: Small business owners, law firm owners, entrepreneurs, people who are starting their own thing, who have already started multiple things. It's growing. It's growing much bigger than I ever thought. It's pretty cool stuff.

Jacob: I know you're working on your fourth book right now. Why don't you tell us a bit more about that and what are some of the new principles that are in that book?

Peter: Yup. I'm creating the book. I just finished. It's called Zombie Loyalist. It will come out next year. It is about the concept that creating such incredible customer service allows you to grow your business in the ways that we talked about where other people will do your PR for you. It's wonderful because it gives you the ability to let other people tell you how great you are and you don't have to do it. As, of course, we've talked about, when other people share how great you are, it just looks a lot better.

Jacob: So you're talking about the concept of kind of like advocates. People who are your most loyal fans and they take it over. They build your community [unclear 00:12:12].

Peter: Correct. You have to be very little.

Jacob: I have a large Facebook community for our law firm -- one of the largest in the US. I always tell them that we couldn't build it without our most loyal fans. These are the people, they're always the same people who comment on our stuff. They share it. We keep rewarding them all the time because I want to get more of these people. I mean I was doing it without even knowing about this concept but I think that your book kind of nailed it. You can't build a community by yourself, you have to build it by spreading the fire. That's what they do, those zombies.

Peter: That's really the key. I mean if you don't do that then you're not really focusing. Again, I've said this before. No one believes how great you are if you're the one that has to tell them.

Jacob: Exactly. If other people are not going to say it, it's not going to be valid.

Peter: Yup.

Jacob: Peter, one of the things that fascinates me about you is that you're a sky driver. You've done more than like 400 jumps, right?

Peter: Yeah.

Jacob: You're a runner. You do all kind of crazy things. You're not the only one. We got major entrepreneurs, Richard Branson and people like that. Why do you think it's important to take to the extreme if you want to be successful?

Peter: I don't necessarily know you have to take the extreme but I love the fact that you can do things to improve your life.

Jacob: Right.

Peter: For me, that's how I do better. I'm a better person because of being able to do that, you know? So, for me, it's about what can I do to make myself a better person? How can I improve my life that way? That's what skydiving is. It's something that clears my brain, makes me very happy. That's where it comes from for me. Everyone has their own reasons. That's mine.

Jacob: I look at it more as a way to conquer your fears because, you know, we always have fears in business. We have fears in what we want to do something. If you do something that is not really business-related, it gives you more validation for your business fear. I don't know if you see it that way.

I've never done skydiving. I've done regular shooting in the military but that's on my list.

Peter: Sounds good.

Jacob: So you recommend that, right?

Peter: Oh yeah, big fan.

Jacob: Peter, people ask me major emails we get about work and life balance. How do you balance your work, spending time with your wife and your child? Is it really important to have that balance?

Peter: Yeah, you need that balance. You got to have a life. You got to have something outside of what you do for a living.

For me, you know, I'm on the road a lot so I try to get home and make sure that when I am home I'm focused on my family. That's really important to me. I care about them tremendously and I want to make sure that I have time to spend with them, that everyone enjoys it. For me it's really about finding the balance that works for me.

Look, what works for me might not work for you so it's your job to figure that out and find out where that middle ground is.

Jacob: One of the things that struck me in your speech is when you brought the example of your parents. When your father was texting you and you would try to teach them about text and now they cannot stop texting you all the time.

Peter: Mm-hmm.



Jacob: Who are one of your biggest mentors or was it your family or ... that make you so successful?

Peter: Parents are definitely influential to me. I watched them in their relationship. They had a very good relationship growing up. So definitely I'm a big supporter of that.

I was very close with my grandmother. Born in New York City, on the streets. I was a kid who grew up without a lot and for me it was very much about hustling and staying humble and all that. I had a very humble upbringing. I learn to really ... family really matters. If you're loyal to me, I will treat you like them.

My assistant, Megan, she's been with me for six years now. Feels like 100. I love her and anything she needs me to do, she has my back. The same thing with my wife and my kid. You don't want to mess with my family. I'm a very calm and rational person but mess with my family and I'm going to come after you.

Jacob: That brings a lot of the principles you mentioned in the book. You can be the nice guy image but treat your people like crap and talk behind their back. Give your back to your employees. If you validate them then you'll be able to grow as a business. That's part of being nice as well.

Peter: Yeah. No question about it.

Jacob: Peter, I always like to ask my guest if there's any book that they recommend or something that influence them. It doesn't have to be a business book but if there's anything that you want to share that you read recently or like.

Peter: I'm a huge fan of any of the Eastern philosophers: Sun Tzu, Lao Tzu, things like that. For me, I tend to have a lot of fun and just really ... when I'm not working and not focusing on work, I tend to sort of relax, enjoy myself. You might catch me watching Family Guy or The Simpsons or something like that.

Jacob: Very good, Peter.

As we come to the end of our show, I wanted to ask you to maybe give one tip for somebody who starts a business or they're having some difficulties in the business that will make their business better this year.

Peter: Focus on the customers you have. They will bring you the customers you want.

Jacob: This is the best tip. People are always looking to get new business. I want to put more money to Google AdWords, I want to get more clients. We forget about our existing customers. They're the best referral sources we have.

Peter, if somebody wants to find you, what are the best sources online to find you, your company, your seminars.

Peter: My life is at shankman.com. My email is [peter@shankman.com](mailto:peter@shankman.com). It's very simple.

Jacob: Thank you so much, Peter, for coming on our show. It was a true pleasure.

This is Jacob Sapochnick, [enchantinglawyer.com](http://enchantinglawyer.com). I welcome our audience to send us an email or a comment on the show if you have any questions.

Closing: Thanks for listening. You can find even more resources, including the show notes for this episode, at [enchantinglawyer.com](http://enchantinglawyer.com). That's [www.enchantinglawyer.com](http://www.enchantinglawyer.com).