

Nathan Chan

Three Key Pillars to Quickly Building
A Massive Audience

TheRemarkablePodcast.com
Remarkable
with Dave Mooring

The following is the full transcript of Remarkable Episode 5: [Nathan Chan on the Three Key Pillars to Quickly Building a Massive Audience](#)

In this week's episode of Remarkable, I have a chat with a young Australian entrepreneur who built a mini media empire in less than three years. He's the founder, editor in chief and publisher of a digital magazine for Entrepreneurs, a podcaster, and a marketing expert who has mastered [Instagram](#) to amass a following of over 500,000.

His list of interviewees is impressive and includes Richard Branson, Tony Robbins, Daymond John, Deepak Chopra and Arianna Huffington.

You'll learn how he got started in building a world class magazine, and get to hear his tips for building an audience.

You'll also hear his thoughts on powering through when he's nervous about big interviews, his secret to getting great guests, and the number one tool he uses to build his business. Here's the founder of Foundr Magazine, Nathan Chan.

Dave: Nathan, welcome to Remarkable.

Nathan: Thank you so much for having me, Dave, an absolute pleasure to be here.

Dave: The pleasure's all mine. I'm very grateful that you took time to speak with me. I know you have a busy schedule, and as I mentioned before we started recording, I think I see your name everywhere now, so you've got to be working around the clock.

Nathan: Yeah, I've been working hard, dude, but you know what, I think we're all busy. I don't really feel that busy.

Dave: Yeah, productive or effective is a much better target, I guess.

For those that are listening that don't know you that might operate in a different space - a lot of my listeners are not in the business or marketing world, tell us a little bit about what you do.

Nathan: Yeah, sure thing, man. So, March 5, 2013 I started this company. It was just a magazine at the time, it was called [Foundr](#), and it's a digital magazine in the App store, Google Play store, targeting young aspiring entrepreneurs, early stage start-up founders, novice entrepreneurs, and it was for mobile and tablet devices.

The reason I started it was because I identified that there wasn't really any business magazines out there that aspiring or novice-stage entrepreneur like myself out there could relate to. I started while I was working my full time job, and the reason I started it was honestly, when I first started it, was to make money.

I wanted a lifestyle business. But I quickly realized that the amount of money you make is in proportion to how well you serve your community, and I actually just fell in love with the whole process.

I was kind of curious about the entrepreneurship scene and start up scene, and I fell in love with it, and I became really passionate about the work that I do and I fell in love with the process.

The rest is kind of history, man. We've gone on now to be not just a magazine, but a multi-faceted, you could say media brand, you know entrepreneurial platform, you can say whatever, a podcast, a social channel, a high traffic social channels, a blog that we regularly contribute to that's starting to get a little traction. We've got a podcast, I think I mentioned that. We're starting to move into training products as well.

So yeah, we've got quite a bit going on now, but humble beginnings Foundr was just a magazine.

Dave: And so you were basically looking to start a product that really filled a need that you had, right? I mean, you didn't see the magazine out there that was giving you the information that you wanted. Is that right?

Nathan: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. I knew podcasts were really hot, not as hot as they are now, but I thought it would be a cool way to learn myself too. You know?

Dave: Yeah.

Nathan: A new interview series, interviewing entrepreneurs. It was the same, kind of a similar format, you know?

You do interviews, but instead of just publishing them then in audio format you publish them in original format. Plus, you have some valuable content. But, essentially yeah, it's still just valuable content.

Dave: Yeah, and so when you started the magazine, you hadn't started the podcast, correct?

Nathan: Correct.

Dave: And so you were just sending them written interviews, or were you doing the interviews over the phone and then taking notes and then publishing the information. How were you getting the information from the people that you featured on the cover.

Nathan: Yeah, so, I do [Skype](#) interviews, if I could. Otherwise I'd do written interviews. Like for example, [Richard Branson](#), that was just a Q&A written interview. But the majority, like 95% of the interviews that I've conducted have been Skype, and they're edited and then placed inside the magazine.

And then within that audio interview, we turn that into a feature article. So we have a featured writer that crafts out a feature on that article. And, we only started our podcast about 11 months ago.

Dave: So what brought about that? Was it just that you were interested in learning about podcasting, or did you see that you already had these contacts and these interviews, you might as well publish it?

Nathan: Yeah, more the latter. More the latter. I wish I had started sooner to be honest with you, Dave. We're just sitting on all these epic amazing interviews, and I thought

'dude, I'm doing a disservice to not only our community but the world by not having a podcast.'

And I tell you what, it was the best thing I ever did. You know, our podcast is really starting to get some legs.

Sometimes it's like one of the top business podcasts - at least in the top 100 business podcasts in the US, and you know it's just that slow slow slow consistent grind. And we're very very consistent and publish every single week.

We never stop. And, you know, to be honest with you Dave, I don't really even push it that hard. I just kind of let the content do the work.

The one thing I do is I just try and get epic guests. And try and get hard to reach people, and try and get really interesting guests and try and just produce really really valuable interviews that people can take a lot from.

I think word of mouth is working to a certain amount. We probably could do a better job of pushing it, but we do mail it out every week and that definitely helps. We've got an email database now of a hundred thousand.

Dave: That's great.

Nathan: Yeah, that's definitely helping now that we mail it out. We've only been doing that for about three months, but yeah, just getting as many reviews as you can. Just producing great work, you know, we didn't really do any promotions otherwise.

Dave: Yeah, I wanted to talk to you a little bit more about the podcast, but let me take one step backwards. When you first launched the magazine, how did you get readership? How did you go about - did you just let Apple do the marketing for you because it showed up on the [Newsstand](#) or did you actively start letting people know about it.

Nathan: When I first started the magazine, marketing is my real passion man, I love marketing. I love business building and stuff like that too, and I love the work we do, but don't get me wrong. I love marketing. I've very passionate about it. I find it so much fun.

I didn't know - I'd never marketed a product before, right? I didn't know what I could do to get readership. All I knew was that I had to launch. And when I launched, we had two readers. We made five dollars. We had seventy downloads.

I was like this is amazing, you know? People are prepared to spend their cold hard cash for something that I've created with my own two hands. It just kind of - knowing that we launched, knowing that people were paying the first month I think we made around \$80.

Knowing that people were paying us every single month to receive a monthly magazine, that kept me moving and kept me shipping, and still to this day we haven't missed a shipping deadline since the start. Now we've produced 32 issues. Every month, so it's been 32 months we've been in business.

Dave: Yeah, that's great.

Nathan: We've produced a lot more issues than that, bonus issues and stuff, but yeah, 32.

So to answer your question I think - the way I did it was, well I was like 'well, what's the lowest hanging fruit?' That's kind of how I try to approach all of our marketing. It's something one of our mentors told me, [Ed Dale](#), it's like, where's the starving crab?

I kind of worked out that if I could use app store optimization, that would be our biggest, lowest hanging fruit possible because there are people with the kind of devices that we were on. Because when we started we weren't on Android, we were only on Apple, and we actually weren't even on iPhones, we were only on iPads.

I realized that if I want to find people on iPads that are actually searching for apps in the app store, all I had to do was rank for those keywords. So I got very good at making sure that we could rank for the certain key words.

If you type in 'entrepreneur magazine' right now, Foundr will come up right next to it. Same with [Fast Company](#), [Forbes](#), and doing little tactics like that has allowed us to get a lot of readers in the early days. And that was one of the biggest things that I did. Does that answer your question?

Dave: Yeah, it absolutely does. And as you said, two things that I've already taken away that I think that my audience can learn from is just the quality of your guest, and the consistency of making sure that you're always there. That's huge.

I admire the fact that you filled a need or found a niche that wasn't being met early on instead of just trying to be another inc magazine or entrepreneur.com

Nathan: Yeah, I think that's where it's at. You don't want to build a 'me too' company.

Dave: Yeah, I totally agree.

Nathan: Just from even a creativity standpoint. I think I'm quite creative in some ways. And you know, you want your own outlet where you can say 'yeah, we're doing some cool stuff for our audience and this has been a ton of fun.'

You don't want to be like 'I've done some cool stuff for my audience and I've ripped off exactly what it is and I have no appreciate for my work and it looks exactly like someone else's,' you know?

Dave: Yeah.

Nathan: Don't get me wrong. There have been people that, or work that has inspired me, and I've taken a little piece of that and been like 'yeah, that's amazing, I want to take a piece of that and someone else's stuff. Yeah. That's amazing, let's take a little piece of that and do this. And then it becomes your own as well, you know what I mean?

I don't think there's anything wrong with copying, but I think there's a massive problem when it's so obvious that there's no differentiation.

Because essentially a lot of the stuff that everyone does in the entrepreneur niche, some of the stuff is the same, it's all packaged up totally different, so you want to make it your own. You want to have your own little bits and pieces to make it your own. I think it's really important.

Dave: Yeah, and I think a lot of the time you start off by mimicking or copying the things that you admire, but then, over time you realize what you can do to put your own unique spin on them.

Nathan: Yeah, that's it.

Dave: What was the scariest thing about starting? Were you afraid of reaching out to some of the big names? I know I've heard you talk about reaching out to Richard Branson. You've had some really well-known people in your magazine.

Has it been scary reaching out to those people? Have you been nervous, connecting with them and interviewing with them? Especially the people over Skype?

Nathan: Yeah, I've been massively nervous, bro.

Dave: Did you just keep pushing forward, or how did you overcome that?

Nathan: You know, the biggest thing that pushes me, even still do this day, dude, is that we have paid readers, and we've got to produce epic content, and we've got to.

Dave: You don't have a choice.

Nathan: Yeah, yeah, especially now that we've set this standard. You know, dude, it's one thing to make some goals, and it's another thing to keep kicking those goals.

We've had so many amazing guests on our podcast and in the magazine. Now I've got to keep doing that, dude. So, you know, even to this day I am scared, or I am nervous, or whatever, but dude, I've just gotta keep grinding, I've got to keep keeping these expectations.

So the only way I can do that now is to just be super super organized, and pitch like 6-12 months in advance. We've tentatively booked out magazine covers until June next year.

Dave: That's great.

Nathan: And, you know, I'm still pitching flat out like Oprah's coming to Australia, and I've pitched her team before, because they came to me, in fact, around interviewing [Deepak Chopra](#), and kind of were like do you want to interview her, and it didn't work out.

We just interviewed Deepak Chopra, and I've pitched them before to interview [Oprah](#), and I'll pitch them again, and you know, always always pitching dude. And just working in advance to get these epic podcast interviews, to get these amazing stories for the magazine.

Yeah, look it's safe to say that up until June we've got some amazing entrepreneurs coming, and some really really hard to reach founders. Some super super successful entrepreneurs.

A lot of people I might not be able to get in touch with because their time is so extremely valuable. And we've kind of set that standard. So it's one thing to set it, and it's another thing to keep it. Especially in the early days, dude, I'd be so nervous. Even most recently, like I was so nervous speaking to [Tony Robbins](#), man.

You know, to be honest with you, I was doing so much research. You know, at one point, I was just kind of thinking. You know when you're so nervous about something and you just can't wait until it's over?

Dave: Yeah, you just want the relief.

Nathan: Yeah, that's what it was a little bit like interviewing Tony to be honest with you. And I don't know why I thought that because it was such an amazing experience and he was a fantastic interview. I encourage anyone listening to this to listen to the Tony Robbins interview on their podcast.

Yeah, I was super nervous and this was only six months ago! And he, you know, it took three times getting in touch with him. You can imagine, it dragged out a bit. So yeah, yeah, I still to this day and super nervous.

You've just gotta push your comfort zone. That's so important, so important, to be able to push your comfort zone.

Dave: Since you're interviewing them, and recording them, and you're not just putting the text out but you're putting the recording out through your podcast, have you had any training or coaching or consulting on interviewing? And asking the right questions, or how have you prepared yourself to interview Tony Robbins, or [Seth Godin](#), or [Tim Ferriss](#).

Have you prepped for those, or have you just kind of learned as you've gone along?

Nathan: I've just learned as I've gone along man, to be honest, and I've spoken with friends and listened.

I try to talk myself, and listen to interviewers that I love, and yeah, I pick up different bits and pieces and study and analyze how they do their thing. And yeah, I've just worked it out along the way.

I think the best way to become a great interviewer -- and I certainly don't think I'm an amazing interviewer, but I'm not too bad, is to just keep doing a ton of interviews, you know?

Dave: And it sounds to me like, one of your success just comes - you're inquisitive, and you're curious, and you want to interview these people. It sounds like it started from day 1 that you want to get their insight. So you're passionate about learning from them, right?

Nathan: Yeah, dude, I've always been very clear from the start. I'm on the ground, in the trenches with it, everyone in our community. I always want it to be like that. I always want to find out what's working.

That's kind of been our ethos from the beginning. We need help, entrepreneurs need help, and we're here to find out what it takes to become a successful entrepreneur and come along for the journey.

It's kind of always been like that Dave, and probably always will, I think because you know, there's no one time, I don't think, where you just know everything about entrepreneurship.

Dave: No, no, you're always learning.

Nathan: Yeah, I love learning. It's just so much fun.

Dave: Do you have any idea, is your podcast audience the same as your magazine readership? Do you think they might be two different audiences with some overlap? Any idea?

Nathan: That's a really great question. To be honest with you, I can't confidently answer it. But I can tell you this - I was just going to say, our audio interviews we always put inside the magazine. Okay?

Dave: Yep.

Nathan: So we've always edited those audio interviews and put inside the magazine. Then, about a year ago, we've taken our best ones and put them in a podcast.

And then we have a podcast, and we actually have some interviews that are specifically for the podcast. We've always had some interviews that we hold back, specifically for the magazine, so we mix and match it.

What I've found was that the podcast was a brilliant way to complement the magazine, because some people prefer to listen to podcasts, and then some people prefer to read a magazine. And read, you know, a whole themed issue packaged up.

They do a lot of reading magazines, so I think what I realized is that there are different ways to touch our audience collectively across many different platforms and mediums.

One way is through email. There will be some people on our email list that may not even listen to the podcast or read the magazine. They might just read our blog content.

Then there will be some people in our audience that only listen to our podcast and aren't on our email list and don't read the magazine.

But then there are some people that read the magazine that aren't on any of those other two that I just mentioned. And there are some people that listen to our podcast that read our magazine and that are on our email newsletter, and that love our content.

And then there are some people that follow us on Instagram or on our social channels and that don't follow us on any of our other channels.

So there is some overlap, and we've really been such a noisy world that attention is difficult. I guess we have little tribes or communities in many different ways on many different platforms.

Dave: Do any one of those platforms lead the way? In marketing, we talk about a funnel. Do you focus on promoting either the podcast, and that leads to the magazine, or your blog and social media and that leads to the podcast, which then leads to the magazine.

Do you have one that you focus on or are you always pushing all of those equally?

Nathan: Yeah, so when the magazine comes out, new issue, you've always got to push it right? When a new podcast episode comes out, you've always got to push it, right? So we just go by events and announcements.

Dave: Okay.

Nathan: But to be honest, for the most part, all of our social channels and everything we do, we're very very - I wouldn't say we're aggressive, but we're very very focused.

The biggest focus is to build our email newsletter database. We build that, this time last year, dude, it was at around two thousand. We've got it to a hundred and five thousand almost.

Dave: That's incredible growth, that's great.

Nathan: Yeah, that is a big focus, because that way, when someone joins our community, we can speak to them and let them know what we're all about. And if you'd like an auto responder, or a drip feed campaign, and then obviously we email out our newsletter community every week about a new podcast episode, when a new magazine issue goes live.

And then also, when a new blog post goes live, and so every single week. And so, people can hop on board and find out what's happening from all of those channels, like you said.

Dave: I want to talk to you about social media specifically, because I know I've seen you do quite a bit with Instagram, and it sounds like you've, I think you're making kind of a name for yourself as somebody that's had really good success with Instagram.

Is that probably your top social media platform that generates the most results?

Nathan: Yeah, most definitely. We've built that from zero to 400,000 in 11 months.

Dave: Yeah, that's incredible.

Nathan: So the funny thing is, I launched the podcast just before I started doing stuff on Instagram. So you can see the momentum you can build with things if you're just super consistent.

Dave: Yeah, look dude, that's been a big drive on growth with our email newsletter. We can drive anywhere between like all the way up to 30,000 opt-ins a month, depending how hard we push. So, and when I say opt-ins, that's email optins.

So for your audience - that's been a massive channel. That's one of our best forms of customer acquisitions, not just from building our email newsletter database, but everything, dude.

Like, I try and post about the podcast once a week, and every single time I post about the podcast I see a spike on our downloads on Libsyn. We get an extra couple thousand listeners.

And also, whenever I post about a lead magnet, or another special guide or something, I always see a spike in the amount of signups we get. You know, signups from [Infusionsoft](#).

And then also, you know, when a new magazine issue goes live. When I post about that on Instagram, I always see a spike in downloads and sales.

Yeah, look, it's just such an amazing platform. I think it's very powerful.

Dave: Yeah, I think what you've done on Instagram is amazing. I've watched that, I've downloaded your free ebook giveaway which is great, so I'm on your list.

Nathan: Yeah, that's awesome.

Dave: Yeah, it's good stuff. Are you using most of your outreach channels like social media to build your email list more, or is that a bigger focus than getting them to download the podcast or the magazine.

Do you want them on the email list more than anything else because you know that leads to the others?

Nathan: Yes. Yes, however, please do know that the promotion of our podcast, the promotion of our magazine and stuff, all that's automated dude, through tools. Yeah. But for the most part, yeah.

Our biggest focus is to build a business. And one of the biggest ways to build that business is through email lists.

So that's what I'm very focused on.

Dave: I don't want to take too much time on this next question, but how many people do you have helping you? I know you have a designer- he does fantastic work.

Do you have administrative assistants, or social media help, or how many people do you have helping you execute all these things?

Nathan: We have quite a few contractors that we work with, we have at least, you know, at least 10-15 contract writers. We have an editor, who helps with the magazine and also our blog content. Our editor is part time, obviously our writers are contracting, and we've got a full time content crafter who's with me on the ground.

Writers all around the world. Tate, our editor, is in the states in Boston, which is part time. We've got a part time Virtual Assistant in the Philippines, we've got Angela who's a full time virtual Assistant in the Philippines as well.

Then we've got our designer in India, Karen, who's obviously a freelancer. Then we've got an editor who's a freelance contractor as well.

We are scaling up the team, though - I do plan to make a few more full time hires, at least one more in the next 3-4 months, and that will probably be someone that does community management. But I'll definitely need some more help very soon.

Dave: Yeah, that's great. I imagine it takes a lot of your time just to manage all those moving pieces from all those different people.

Nathan: Yeah, definitely dude. I think what I'm trying to do at the moment is build up those parts of the business so they run themselves without me, and that just comes down to empowering our team members, having solo documentation and stuff like that.

It's getting to a point now I can confidently say where I could take holidays for a couple of months, as long as I've done the interviews, and things should work pretty smoothly.

The only thing that wouldn't work is the email I get, missing opportunities or stuff. Where I kind of need to make some decisions, or I need to drive that. Because we've got some really cool things happening like partnerships, business deals, you name it.

Just those big things to move the needle forward and grow the business. Yeah, the day to day operations, monthly magazines, podcast, blog content, social content, all that stuff could operate without me.

Dave: Yeah, that's great. That's awesome, that's a good place to be in. So it sounds like you do like to listen to other podcast. Is there a particular podcast that stands out as being one of the most remarkable ones that you listen to?

Nathan: Yeah, [Foundation](#) by Kevin Rose. You know that one?

Dave: I don't, but I'm going to have to add it to my list now.

Nathan: A lot of people don't. It's funny. The way I see this kind of entrepreneurial world, or this community, or this big startup entrepreneurial scene online is that it's separated into two parts.

And I don't know if you know this, Dave, but this is the way I see it. It's separated into two parts - there's the start up people and the foundations, that are really hard core and they love everything that comes out of SanFran, and they're all about doing their startup. And the follow podcasts like The Foundation.

And the Foundation is by a guy called Kevin Rose. He's a very very successful entrepreneur based out of SanFran, and you know he interviews people like [Elon Musk](#), and the founder of [Twitter](#), you know [Jack Dorsey](#), or [Evan Williams](#), or the founder of Instagram. And you know he's heavily entrenched in the startup scene.

So there's people out there that are really passionate about the startup scene, and they might fall a little bit of internet marketing or online entrepreneur stuff, but not that much.

So, you know, in my world, someone like Kevin Rose or Elon Musk, these guys are absolute superstars that I look up to. And I'm sure everyone looks up to Elon Musk, but someone like Kevin Rose who's best friends with Tim Ferriss.

Right, but Tim is in the other side of the coin, or both sides of that table, where a big part of his audience is the online entrepreneurs, and they're the bloggers, and the podcasters. There is a definite overlap, but there's two divides that I see it. Two strong divides.

We try and service both, and you know someone like Kevin Rose, you know, you probably wouldn't have heard of, because you're probably more around that online entrepreneurship space, but you would have heard of Tim Ferris.

You would have heard Pat Flynn, you know what I mean? You would have heard of [Chris Ducker](#), you would have heard of [John Lee Dumas](#).

And those guys are kind of the leaders in the online entrepreneurial space, online marketing space. You would have heard of [Frank Kern](#), you know? So there's a few different clusters. So yeah.

I'm very passionate about the startup space, and yeah. Don't get me wrong. We interview people from all of those different sector and areas and clusters. I'm not even sure if clusters is the right word, but those communities, or influences in those communities.

Dave: Sure, sure. I like that perspective and I can see that for sure. Any parting tips for our listeners as they're working on their podcast and standing out and being remarkable, and doing something different? Anything that you've learned? Any advice that you would give?

Nathan: Yeah, I think the podcast space is very - there's a lot of podcast out there, you know? I think a lot of people are creating a podcast. I think you have to find a way, like you said, to be remarkable, would be to stand out. Whether that would be to get hard to reach interviews, hard to reach guests.

Whether that be you do long form on a certain niche topic, or whether that's, you know, just editing the absolute crap out of your podcast episode, like [Meron Bareket](#) would say. It's what you keep. It's all about what you remove, and he's very savage on editing. He tries to get it down to only the best stuff.

You just have to find a way to do cool stuff for your audience that they can appreciate. You just find a way to be a little different, you know? I think that's really really important.

Dave: That's great. Well, anywhere that you would particularly like people to go to find out more about you? Either to the podcast, the website? Where should I send people?

Nathan: Yeah, please, if you'd like to find out more about us, go to [Foundrmag.com](#).

Dave: That's great, I'll include that and some of the other things that you've mentioned in the show notes. Nathan, I really appreciate your time.

I know you're busy, you've got a lot going on. I admire what you're doing, and I'd just encourage you to keep going, man, you're doing great stuff.

Nathan: Oh, thank you so much, Dave, The pleasure is all mine. I really appreciate your time too. But, like I said, I didn't write the word busy, we're all very busy.

I'm sure you're very busy too and you have a lot of things going on. I really appreciate you taking the time to speak with me, and having me on your show.

Dave: Yeah, thank you. Maybe we can do it again one day.

Nathan: Most definitely, any time.

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