



Episode 47



Jay Baer

Jay Baer has spent 23 years in digital marketing, consulting for more than 700 companies. Convince & Convert is the fifth multi-million-dollar company Jay has started from scratch. His [Convince & Convert blog](#) was named the world's #1 content marketing blog by the Content Marketing Institute. He is the author of *Hug Your Haters*, the world's first modern customer service manual.

Voiceover

This is Business Reimagined. Every week we talk with thought leaders and revolutionaries who are bringing innovation to their industries, like today's guest Jay Baer.

Jay

If you were terrible at customer service, for hundreds of years there was no real penalty for that. Now in an era where customer service is a spectator sport, the math of being great at customer service is way different. The math at being terrible at customer service is really different. That's why I wrote the book, that's why it's so important.

Audra

This is Business Reimagined with Danny Iny.

Danny

Today's guest, Jay Baer is a best selling author, marketer, podcaster and blogger. There are a lot of those these days, but Jay brings an incredible



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amount of experience with them. Having started in the very early days of the Internet in 1994. At the time he was a tour guide for a juvenile detention center, when he was approached by his friends who had started the first internet company in Arizona.

Jay

We're on like the third beer and they said, you know this internet company is getting kind of busy and we don't know anything about marketing. I said, well that's fine, because when you say the word I don't really know what that word means exactly, but I will do anything to not give another tour of this prison, so I walked in the next day and quit. Started as the Vice President of Sales and Marketing of an internet company having never really seen the internet, which was an interesting first day.

Danny

After what he calls an infinite learning curve at his first internet company, Jay has devoted his professional career to online marketing. That experience taught him a valuable lesson in humility that many business owners and marketers should heed.

Jay

You never have online marketing figured out. There are certainly pieces of it that you can figure out. You've tested it. You've optimized it. You understand it. Probably disproportionate to other people. There's always somebody smarter than you. This game changes on an hourly basis, only fools believe they got it sorted out.

Danny

Now with such a pedigree in marketing, you think that would be his core focus, but lately his attention has shifted to the world of customer service which is an upheaval.



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Jay

The fact is customer service is being disrupted for the exact same reasons and the same ways that marketing has been disrupted. It's the same story. It's consumer behavior. It's mobile. It's millennial. It's social. The same things that we've had to do to kind of totally change the way we think about marketing and how we practice the art of marketing. The same revolution has to happen in customer service, but largely it hasn't happened.

Danny

After undertaking a massive research project while writing his new book, Hug Your Haters. Jay uncovered some pretty shocking realizations, that over a third of customer complaints are never answered. Most of those are on social media where it's playing out on the online stage. It's a mix of businesses not realizing things are being said about them, but there's also what Jay calls strategic lack of participation, despite tools being available to address this.

Jay

Well, in some cases you can be using geo-software which surfaces all social content that is created in a particular geographic location. If it doesn't tag your name, it may tag the geography, then you can look at that as a lens. You can be listening and running searches for queries that may be related to your company name, perhaps a product name and name of employee, even competitors and things like that. Some of it is just broadening your Symantec mix. Then some it is just broadening your channel mix. Obviously Twitter, Facebook, etc., but we're entering an era now very, very quickly



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where Facebook messenger is a huge opportunity. WhatsApp is a huge opportunity.

You're going to see a lot more customer service being done in Snap Chat and beyond. The channel proliferation is almost as difficult, perhaps I might argue more difficult than the volume proliferation.

Danny

Okay, so in the last 60 seconds you've give a migraine to a set of my listeners, because people are thinking oh my God, Snap Chat and WhatsApp, Instagram, and I have to listen with a special software. I'm not even finding time now to update my Facebook page.

Jay

Yeah.

Danny

How practical is this for someone who doesn't have a customer support team and budget, technological expertise, etc., etc. If someone who's listening to this has never even been on Snap Chat just to see what it is, how practical is it for them to effectively get into it for purposes of providing meaningful customer support?

Jay

Not practical yet. Customer service usually lags marketing in terms of what customers expect. Customers aren't going to realistically expect you to answer their questions in Snap Chat, unless you were there, unless you were already present there. You have a demonstrated time expenditure in that channel. The best way to make sure that nobody answers or asks for your help in a channel is just not be in that channel. However, you can't do that



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forever, because eventually customers will say, look, this is a channel we like. This is a channel we're spending time on. You have to help us in these channels. Ultimately that is always what happens in a customer service context.

Eventually business is forced to address customers in the channels that the customers prefer, not the channels that the business prefers. There was a time in my life where there wasn't e-mail. I was in business when there wasn't e-mail. Not the e-mail like we have now. I sat in meetings where people said, how are we going to find the resources to answer customers, if they can e-mail us. We've seen this movie before. We've just got to re-watch it. For people who say, I don't have the resources. I'm going to throw a stat up for you Danny. Each year globally we spend about 500 billion dollars a year on marketing and about 9 billion dollars a year on customer service.

Now, that's despite the fact that everybody in business knows, you learn this in the first day in business. You learn that in almost every case it makes more financial sense to keep the customers you've already earned, than to continue to have to pay to get new customers over and over and over again. Yet, we don't actually run businesses like that and we surely do not spend our money like that.

Why do you think that is?

Danny



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Jay

Because, customer service has been a necessary evil and nothing more for three generations of business people.

Danny

Okay, you're going to have to unpack that a little more for me.

Jay

Well, look there's a lot of people who have degrees, even MBA's with a concentration in marketing. There are very, very few people out there who have an MBA with a concentration in customer service. Customer service has always been something that's sort of looked at as yeah, we have that, because we have to have it. There's always been examples of companies who have been differentiated, because the quality of their service, but they have historically been very rare, and I'll tell you how I know that. If I ask you right now, if everybody listening just closes their eyes for a second. I'm going to ask you right now, name two companies that are really, really good at customer service. Every single person listening could name two companies.

You know why? Because, they are so rare. They are so exceptional that you can name them on command. Now that tells you all you need to know about the state of customer service historically. That it is so rare, so unusual to be great at it, that you can stand out instantaneously. Look, the reason this is the case is that for a long time, for generations and generations, hundreds of years, there has been almost no advantage for businesses to be great at customer service. Let's say you delight a customer in a face-to-face or telephonic capacity, which is all we had for a long time. You're going to make that customer really happy and that person is going to be so delighted that he's going to tell his friends.



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Well, how many people does he know? How many people does he see at church, etc.? Conversely if you were terrible at customer service, for hundreds of years, there was no real penalty for that. You might lose that customer. He might talk about you to the few people that he sees every day, but again what's the amplification opportunity there, not huge. Now however when every customer is media potentially. Now in an era where customer service is a spectator sport, the math of being great at customer service is way different? The math at being terrible at customer service is way different. That's why I wrote the book and that's why it's so important

Danny

I'm just processing and my brain is going to a few different places, because it jumped at me, you're right there's no people studying marketing in business school. They'll study accounting. They'll study finance. They'll study operations. Never mind the concentration. There's no customer service class.

Jay

Exactly, which is crazy. It's crazy when you think about it.

Danny

People often in business they're driven by very short term decision-making. Like I can see a scenario where people like yes of course, it's important to keep the customers that I have, but if I just keep the customers that I have, that's still not enough. I need to get more. Of course people work themselves onto a treadmill. The flip side of that is they don't teach sales classes in business schools either.



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Jay

Yeah, good point. I will tell you one of the things that we looked at in the research is what is the impact on existing customers if you treat them disproportionately, not even disproportionately, if you even answer them. Here's the numbers. If you answer even one customer complaint in social, it increases that customer's advocacy, their propensity to promote you to their friends, to their contacts by 25%. It doesn't just keep that existing customer. It causes that existing customer to be 25% more likely to tell everybody how awesome you are. Now play that out at scale. What happens is at some level, I'm not saying that you don't need marketing, that is stupid. I'm a marketing consultant.

At some level your need for marketing goes down, because your clients and your customers are doing your marketing for you. A company like Zappo's who's built an entire business on that exact same principle. They don't spend any money on marketing. Their entire marketing is being so good at customer service that it compels word of mouth.

Danny

I have two thoughts on this. On the one hand I agree completely. The quality of people's experience, their outcome is the gap between what they expect and what actually happens. If their expectations are super low, it's very easy to exceed them even dramatically. When people are upset that's a golden opportunity. The flip side of that and so the smart business person can capitalize on that by saying, oh bingo opportunity. I'm going to hug my haters and that's going to be great for business. The flip side of that is it kind of ties into an ethos of the squeaky wheel gets the grease.



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Some entrepreneurs at least kind of thinking, I don't want to reward my crankiest, meanest customers and community members. I want to devote those efforts to people who are quietly being well served. What's your take on that balance? How do you reconcile those two things? Doing the smart business thing, but also not penalizing the people who are not complaining.

Jay

Yeah, that's a really perceptive question. I mean the reality is most people don't complain, which is I guess good, kind of from a resources perspective, but actually terrible from an insights and operations perspective. In fact, research which was started in the 70's and is still true today 40 years later, shows that of all your unhappy customers, on average only 5% of unhappy customers ever complain in a form or a fashion that the business will find it. Okay, so that means that 95 out of a 100 unhappy people just disappear.

Danny

Is this still true in the age of social?

Jay

It is still true. Those numbers are changing a little bit, because the friction necessary to complain, the barriers to complain are of course fading away. It's one hand on an app. Over time that ratio will change a little bit, but it will never in my estimation change in a really significant way. Because, most people just don't care enough to complain.

Danny

Exactly, you've got to be pretty upset.



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Jay

Yeah, there's other people who sell sandwiches. Yeah, I'm good. That's why when I talk about it in the book is that the haters, the people who complain are your most important customers. Yet, we almost always treat them like our least important customers, because complaints are the Petri dish of improvement. The most overrated thing in business. The most overrated thing in life Danny is praise. Every time somebody says, "Oh Danny, you're so smart. Danny, you're great. I love your podcast. I love your company. You're amazing." It makes you feel awesome, but it doesn't teach you anything, because you almost always already know what you're good at.

What makes us better, what makes businesses better is negative feedback, complaints and criticism. That's why even though it's hard to deal with sometimes and it can be expensive to deal with, it is really, really valuable. In my estimation, I would rather have as many unhappy people as possible complain, because at least then I can do something about it. The thing that kills businesses isn't complainers. The things that kills businesses are the silent complainers who never raise their hand.

Yeah complainers, they're giving you an opportunity to turn it around.

Danny

Jay

That's right. It shows they care enough to tell you.

Danny

Okay, so I'm a business owner. I have a lot of customers which I'm very grateful for. Many of whom are great and are very happy, some of whom are not happy for legitimate reasons I can learn a lot from. Some of whom are not happy, because their expectations were unreasonable from the get go.



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They didn't read my sales copy or anything. They came in with their own assumptions. They signed up and they shouldn't have bought to begin with. They were not the right customers.

Jay

Yes, yes.

Danny

How do I make sure that I'm listening to the right unhappy customers and not turning my business on a dime, because some crank who never should have gotten into the community to begin with did anyway.

Jay

It depends on your volume of complaint, but this is where one or two approaches, one of two approaches is really the best idea. Either the same person in the company should be looking at all the complaints, because that person will if they continue to be that person who does this, be able to see patterns and be able to identify what is a pattern and what is just nonsense. Now at scale, you use software for that. You use something like Clarabridge or NetBase or some other kind of software that big companies use to look through the entire morass of griping and say okay, where are we actually seeing patterns of complaint that clearly must be true, because we see them often enough that there's no way they could be outliers.

It really depends on if you're a small business or a large business, but the fact remains the same. You have to have some sort of consistency in monitoring in order to see the forest through the trees, or the trees through the forest as the case may be. Where it gets kind of dangerous is when you have one person looks at Twitter. One person looks at Facebook. This guy looks at this location and this guy looks at the other location. That gets



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tough, because you never see the entirety and then you can start either going down blind alleys, or you can use one little person's complaint and think, sort of a mountain out of a mole hill problem. That's the best way to do it.

Danny

Let's say you're and everybody listening to this is most likely a small business owner, or involved in a small business. Let's say they're the one person, or they've got a small team. They've got to kind of stay on top of monitoring everything, because A. They don't have the resources. B. It's better if they look at everything themselves.

Jay

Yes.

Danny

I'm just realizing we never actually closed that loop. How did they actually do it? How did they make sure they're listening in a way that's meaningful enough not to miss something that's important?

Jay

Yeah, so what you want to do is figure out all the venues that you could possibly be mentioned on. Obviously, your own social properties. Any sort of comments or contact us forms that you may possess on your own website. Then you want to set up searches on places like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. Some of those could be native in those platforms and to save your search, sometimes you could use inexpensive software like mention.net, or Buffer's new tool. An inexpensive version of HootSuite or things like that to look for words that may not be your name specifically, but



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near your name could be common misspellings, etc. to pull all of those complaints and mentions into one person's sort of field of view.

Certainly for discussion boards and forums which are sort of the untapped customer service opportunity mentioned anyways. Usually what you have to do is either subscribe to updates or go to those places on a weekly basis and just kind of see if anybody has mentioned you using a search tool. The bad news is that for small businesses, some of this has to be manual. There's just no software package out there that is affordable for small business that puts all this in one place, partially because a lot of these sites don't have open APIs as well. That's the bad news.

What I would probably do in the real world as a small business owner myself is have an intern or other very inexpensive person go out and do all the searches and pull all the stuff together. Then I as the business owner would actually look at all of those things myself and try and pick up on those patterns.

Danny

Perfect, we've got our report. We're looking through. We're seeing what people are saying. Practically speaking, I thinking most haters, their complaints will fall into one of two categories. Either they're upset, because we screwed up like we did something wrong and we of course need to apologize and fix it, or they're upset even though we didn't do anything wrong. Essentially they're in the wrong. Their expectations are unreasonable, etc. What do you do in the latter situation? Do you bend your policies? Do you bend over backwards, even they're being totally unreasonable? Where do you draw the line?



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Jay

You don't do that. The customer is not always right, but the customer deserves to be heard for two reasons. One, even if that person's expectations were unreasonable, although I will tell you as an aside Danny, having studied this quite a bit, most of the time, it's because the customer was not informed enough. That's not the customer's fault. That's the businesses fault. The business says, well there's a sign that says X, or it says on the menu why? There's an e-mail we sent you that said Z. You know what? They're not going to pay that kind of close attention to your business, because they're living their life.

Most of the time it's, because we don't spend enough time double and triple informing the customer. In fact, one of my favorite case studies in the book is from a moving company in Texas called Square Cow Movers. They went through the same process. They had a bunch of complaints from customers and it was, because they didn't understand what was happening, because they explained it what they thought was very thoroughly, but it wasn't thoroughly enough. They went through audited their communications, doubled the amount of communication that they sent customers in every channel and solved a bunch of those problems.

They have a new philosophy in the company which is over communication, that is a myth. Back to your question. You should answer everybody, because you never know whether or not you can save that person until you engage. Most importantly as mentioned earlier customer service is a spectator sport.



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Yes, the revenue potential of saving that person is considerable. Especially if you then turn them into an advocate, but the revenue potential of all the people looking on from the sidelines, which could be five people, it could be 5000 people or more, is potentially huge. You want to go on record. You want to demonstrate your values, because after all no response is a response. It's a response that says we don't care about you and we are unconcerned that you are concerned.

Danny

Now, I want to talk about the "strategic ignorance." The people or companies who see stuff going on. They've made the choice not to respond. I want to ask about that on two levels. First of all, I'm assuming that most of the examples you're looking at are bigger brand examples.

Jay

No, not at all. In fact, most of the examples in the book are small business, because there's more of them.

Danny

Okay, so even more so I want to hear the rationale. I also want to hear, I don't know if this is included in that bucket of rationales, but if you're a sole proprietor, you're running your own business. Dealing with irate customers is important, but also incredibly draining.

Jay

Yeah usually.

Danny

Business case aside, I'm just not going to deal with this kind of feeling sometimes. I want to hear all the like strategic ignorance. What's that based on and again where do you draw the line personally?



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Jay

Yeah, you nailed it. Some of it is just look we don't have resources, to which I always say, well you should do less marketing and do more customer service, because you try to keep the customers you have first. I hear that question every single day, we don't have resource. Sure you do, you just choose not to deploy them that way. Some of it's resources. Again, we don't have the time or the energy to answer here, so we don't. Second issue if there are channel biases. Businesses, especially small businesses say something like I don't like Yelp, because I think those Yelp reviews are lies and they are written by our competitors and, and, and.

In fact, I've got several friends of mine who own small businesses here in the town where I live. Many of them are just nah, we don't do Yelp. I'm like well okay, I get that you have a bias about that, but your customers do do Yelp. If you've got negative reviews there that remain unanswered, it makes them true in a lot of ways. You are silent in sort of a very self-flagellating way, I think. Some of it is channel bias. The third thing you nailed it. I'm so glad you mentioned it, because most people don't pick up on it, is it's just simply to painful. For small businesses if somebody complains about anything. In many cases it feels like somebody telling you your baby's ugly.

One of my favorite parts of the book again is we actually interviewed psychiatrists and said what happens when you're confronted with negativity about something that you care about? Your entire brain chemistry changes, your heart rate increases and you get flushed and all these things. That change in your chemistry, which is essentially very similar to a fight or flight response can persist for 26 hours. Here you have a book, my book saying hey



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you've got to answer people really quickly, because they expect speed now. Meanwhile, for 26 hours you're all haywire, because somebody said that you suck.

Sometimes people just can't deal with it. I don't want to hear it. It's not even turn the other cheek; it's turn the other ear.

Danny

Well, that's fascinating. There's a nuance to that that is really interesting to me. The question you ask psychiatrists is what happens when you hear critical feedback about something that you care about, not when you hear critical feedback about something, but specifically something you care about.

Jay

Yes.

Danny

Which would suggest to me the emotional pull on whether it's the entrepreneur or whether it's the organization, the more you care about your company and your work, the more engaged your workforce is, the greater the emotional toll.

Jay

Yes.

Danny

It's almost a paradox. It's almost like the more you care, the harder it is to deal with.



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Jay

Yeah, that's so true. It's tricky right, because on one hand the best practice is to have the owner of the business answer the complaints, because that person is closer to the customer. That person is going to be able to make more out of the insights gleaned from customer complaints. Many of the great case studies in the book, Hug Your Haters are owners of small businesses and how they handled this kind of stuff personally, but yet that person has the most invested psychologically and emotionally in the business. It's a really really difficult line to balance on.

Danny

What do you do?

Jay

I think the answer cannot be we're going to ignore these customers, because it just has too much potential revenue impact. You just turn your back on a lot of insights that you can use to make your business better. I refuse to embrace the concept that not being part of this is the approach. From a small business standpoint, I think that the ultimate solution is that the small business owner should be in charge of responding, but I recognize that in some businesses that is impractical. It just doesn't really make sense from a workflow standpoint. In those cases, I think there should be a person, of some measure of authority. A general manager, an ops person or whatever, who can actually really solve problems, not just acknowledge complaint, that handles it, but the owner really does need to be looking at



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that report that we talked about a little while ago, and know what's happening.

One of the things that drives me crazy. It happens in small businesses, but you know what? It happens in big companies too. Is this idea that especially for social media customer service, what we should do right? Because, social media moves really fast. There's all this technology involved. They've got software. Hey, what we should do is get the youngest and least expensive in our company to do that, because you know what? They grew up with this stuff. I can tell you that in most cases, that's not a super good idea, because they can't actually answer any questions, because they don't know any answers, because they just joined the company.

They don't have any institutional memory that allows them to understand scenarios and be empathetic with customers and all that kind of stuff. Look, categorically it's way easier to teach somebody Twitter than it is to teach them your whole business.

Danny

I want to dig a little deeper into the psychological side of all this, because where we started this conversation is customer support is not a real kind of recognized discipline in the business world. You don't study it the way you study marketing or accounting, etc., etc. It's kind of been the lonely child of



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the business world for decades. There are a whole bunch of reasons for that, many of which we've already talked about. One that we didn't is just that it's not fun. Nobody wants to grow up and have a long term career in customer service, if anything that's the kind of job that you feel like you're going to get into so that you can eventually get out of it.

It's not the kind of work you want to be in. For exactly this reason. You're spending your day dealing with people who are basically pissed off at you. The more you care about the work that you're doing, the harder and emotional toll that's going to take. How do you create a scenario where doing customer service is not a soul crushing experience? Where it's an experience and a job that smart, capable senior people in your organization are going to want?

Jay

Yeah, I think the answer is to spin it around a fact that yeah, you're dealing with negativity, but not always. Sometimes you're dealing with positivity. In some cases, you can really say look, yeah you've got to deal with unhappy customers, but you also get to be the first person to deal with happy customers. That is a little bit of a psychological [inaudible 00:26:30]. What I see right now in the industry is this pivot away from customer service for customer service sake, to customer service for insights generation. That we are using our interaction with our customers to understand how to make our operations better.

To understand what kind of content marketing to make. To understand what kind of key words to buy. To understand what kind of social content to create. That I think is a much more interesting job. If it's look my job is to



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figure out what customers want, but the way we get at that is to interact with customers whether they're happy or unhappy. To me that changes what that whole role is in an organization. I'm really excited that you're starting to see this move from customer service to customer insights. I don't think it's just Symantec. I think it's how you look at your world.

Danny

Essentially what you're calling for is not just for companies to "beef up" their customer service, but really it's to transform customer service into either customer insight gathering or coaching or product specialists. Essentially they're changing the role of customer service in a way that's much better for the organization long term. Like people say, we don't have the resources to do this. Essentially what you're telling them is A. You've got to make the resources to do this. B. You've got to do it in a way that's going to cost a lot more than you thought. How is that going over with the organizations that you're talking to? Are they receptive? Are they open? Are they like yes; this is what we've been waiting for? Are they like I don't know? Nice idea, but maybe next quarter when we have more money?

Jay

I think what I've seen is everybody knows this to be true, but they didn't have the mathematical scaffolding to walk into somebody's office and say, look we've got to spend less money on marketing and more money on customer service and here's why. That's what I think this book does. It arms you to have that conversation. It arms you to say look, we've just got to make a little bit of a resource allocation shift here, because we know it's right in our heart. Now we can figure out it's right in our head. We're starting to see companies like yes, this is the proof that I needed to go in and have this conversation. Time will tell.



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Here's my vision which is probably never going to happen, but when I wrote this book my vision was this. As mentioned earlier, if I asked you, who's great at customer service you can instantly name somebody, because it's so rare. My hope is that if I ask you 18 months from now Danny, who's great at customer service, you nor any of the listeners can actually name anybody, because so many companies have committed to being great at customer service, that it's no longer a differentiator. That it no longer stands out from this whole sea of companies that are mediocre at customer service. That's my vision. That's what I hope happens.

Audra

That was Jay Baer reminding you to grease that squeaky wheel even when it's difficult for your personally. Keep the customers you have. Attend to them, so when they step on the world stage that social media has created, they'll be singing your praises. Maybe you can be the CEO of one of the two businesses people name when they're asked about great customer service. To find out more about Jay Baer and his new book, go to hugyourhaters.com. You can also get the book at Amazon and wherever good books are sold. This has been Business Reimagined with Danny Iny. Join us next time as we talk with Craig Ballantyne.

Craig

Control what you can. Cope with what you can and concentrate on what counts. I thought that works really well for the three parts of the day. The morning, the afternoon and the evening. We control the morning. You control what time you get up. You control what you eat. You control what you focus on for 5-15 minutes the first thing in the morning. Then the rest of the day – you kind of have to cope with what you can't control, which means



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Episode 47

you cope with an angry boss, or you cope with traffic, or you cope with bad weather. You cope with all these emergencies, servers going down and all that type of stuff. Then you concentrate on what counts at night, in the evening.

Audra

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