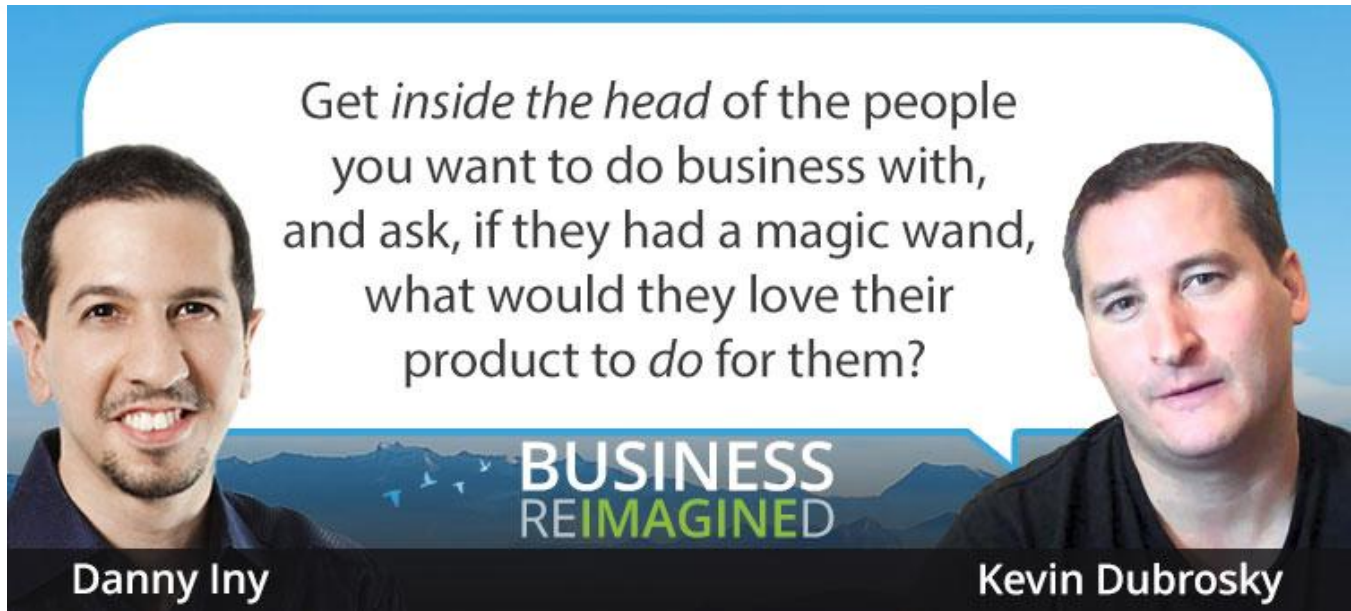


Business Reimagined #62

Being Whale Vomit with Kevin Dubrosky



Kevin Dubrosky is the author of "Why Everything You Think You Know Is Probably Totally Wrong", "\$600/hr", and "The Whale Vomit Method." He's presented marketing-related seminars in 9 US States and has been retained by 160 clients in 13 different industries, spread across 4 countries and 3 continents. He operates a [very] small boutique marketing agency out of his home in downtown Toronto.



Voiceover: This is Business Reimagined. Every week, we talk with thought leaders and revolutionaries who are re-imagining the way business is done in their industries, like today's guest, Kevin Dubrosky.

Kevin: Making sure you deliver relevant value to the market you're serving, guaranteeing you are unique from all of the alternatives available, and then manufacturing and tapping the power of scarcity. Those 3 things together allow you to extract the maximum price from the market, [inaudible 00:00:31] your conscience, and with your customers still loving you.

Voiceover: This is Business Reimagined with Danny Iny.

Danny: Today's guest on the show helps businesses with their branding, marketing, advertising and public speaking, and he's a best selling author several times over, but if you ask him what he does, you'll get a confusing answer.

Kevin: My name is Kevin Dubrosky, and what I do is turn brands and products into whale vomit.

Danny: Yes, you heard right. Whale vomit. You'll understand why in a few minutes. Kevin is someone who made his first forays into entrepreneurship in the window washing world, what he terms the "squeegee sphere," running a successful franchise for 4 years. Then, against his wife's better judgement, he decided he could run his own business and build it from the ground up.

Kevin: I realized it was kind of a gun to your head, burn the shops, there's only 1 way out that's forward, kind of mentality. I remember the first month on my own, I made \$136. 4 years later, my little company made \$32,000 in that same 30 day period 4 years later.

Danny: Not only did he build his business, he did it very unconventionally. Most people spend every minute of their lives trying to build a business, but not Kevin.

Kevin: The part I didn't tell you is that I also did all of this part time only. Too many people work too many hours to buy things they don't need, to impress people they don't know, et cetera, as the saying goes.

Danny: Clearly, Kevin was doing something very right. So much so that a random person in the cleaning industry reached out to him via email asking for advice. Kevin offered a few thoughts on a situation and immediately the guy emailed back, asking for more.

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Kevin: When I got that email, my gut reaction was, "Who are you? I don't know you. You're not my friend. Why would I help you?," kind of, you know? I wrote an email with that spirit back to him. I said, "You know what, Joe? I really appreciate the interest. To be honest, what I've learned, I've learned the hard way, blood, sweat, and tears. I know what you're trying to do, and I respect it, but really, I'm not comfortable just telling you what else you could do for free, but I do wish you the best, take care. Kevin," expecting to never hear from him again, and he replied right away and said, "Totally understand. I get it. How much would it cost me?"

Danny: This was a turning point for Kevin, being offered money for advice. He remembered something that Dan Kennedy once said, that the hardest part of charging a premium for a high value product is looking someone in the eye and not flinching.

Kevin: I mustered some courage and I wrote an email right away back to him and I said, "Okay, I'll tell you what, Joe. I'll give you 5 hours of my time on a Saturday afternoon if you drive from Montreal to Toronto for \$1000, and you have to buy me lunch. All the best, Kevin." Inside my head, I thought he's going to get this email and think, "Whatever, Kevin guy. I'm not going to do that," but to my surprise, he replied almost immediately and said, "How about 2 weeks from this Saturday?"

Danny: From there, Kevin started blogging about his expertise. This led to an audience which him to start writing his first book.

Kevin: I remember going to this book publishing seminar with this expert teaching this course, and he said, "Okay, to everybody in the audience, I want you to know, if you're going to try to sell a business book, never try to sell it for more than \$50 because nobody will ever buy it." I went home that night and I thought, "You know what? I disagree. I'm going to sell this book for 100 bucks."

Danny: Not only did people buy his book, they raved about it. Kevin started speaking at window cleaning conventions. It was at one such convention that Kevin realized that he was actually starting to be known for his books.

Kevin: "You might not know this because Kevin is the author of this brand new book," and he held up my book, "Why Everything You Think You Know Is Probably Totally Wrong." Does anybody here

have it? Like, 6 or 7 people held up their hand, and I realized, "Wow, in this room, I'm kind of like a known entity, like almost like a mini celebrity."

Danny: Kevin became a squeegee celebrity, and went on to write 2 more books. This is all fascinating, but you're probably still wondering, "What does any of this have to do with whale vomit, and what does whale vomit have to do with window cleaning and re-imagining business for that matter?" Well, Kevin's 3rd book is called "The Whale Vomit Method."

Kevin: I came across this story of the sperm whale, just a year or 2 before that, and it fascinated me, this bizarre, weird story. I used it. I adopted it as a metaphor to help my clients to follow this 3 step approach to build their brand no matter what space they're in. I wrote that book, "The Whale Vomit Method," to help any company in any industry to do that.

Danny: What's the story?

Kevin: What's the story behind the whale vomit?

Danny: Yeah, when you say whale vomit, that doesn't sound appealing to people, I'm assuming. To me, it doesn't.

Kevin: No, it's true, it's true. The sperm whale is an amazing, amazing creature. It's that whale that's in the Moby Dick story. It's got that giant, rectangular head, and in reality, the sperm whale today grows to 50 to 60 feet long, so it is this enormous, enormous creature. It's actually the biggest predator on the planet. It's got the biggest head of any creature on the planet, it's got the biggest teeth of any creature on the planet, the biggest brain, it makes the loudest noise of any creature on the planet. Divers that swim near it say that when it starts to click and use echo location under water, it feels like you're being kicked in the chest by a horse because of just the sheer voice of that sound, but it's also the deepest diving mammal, and of course, it's a mammal, so it grabs air from the surface, and the sperm whale can go down under water for like 70 minutes on 1 breath.

When it does that, when it dives deep into the ocean and it swims down to 3000-4000 feet below sea level, what's it looking for to eat is giant squid, and giant squid themselves are huge, right? They're the size of those mini school buses that we see on the road, and the only problem with the sperm whale eating those things is that the squid themselves have these razor sharp



beaks that they eat fish with, and whatever they're preying on, and they also have little sharp tentacles, or sorry, hooks in their tentacles, that they grab this prey with and feed their mouth with, so when the sperm whale is slurping down this giant calamari, it's almost like, I compare it to you and I eating a bowl of jello with razor blades suspended in it, and it actually has the potential to disembowel the sperm whale from the inside out.

Amazingly, remarkably, only the sperm whale has this bizarre digestive mechanism built into it, so that whenever it does consume or swallow down something ultra sharp, it actually coats it with this icky goo and then barfs it back into the ocean. This piece of liberated sperm whale vomit that's between the size of a grapefruit and a soccer ball, will be floating and bobbing in the ocean water for weeks and months and sometimes even years, and that time in the sea water environment actually changes its composition, and it starts to acquire the properties of a fixative, and fixatives are incredibly valuable to the perfumery industry.

A fixative is what allows a little bottle of perfume that you spend several hundred dollars on that's only a few ounces, not to evaporate, because the perfume of course, is made mostly of alcohol, right? For hundreds of years, sperm whale vomit has been recognized and treasured as an amazingly powerful and effective fixative. Even today, in 2016, the highest end from Calvin Klein, Christian Dior, [Chi Von Chi 00:09:28], features sperm whale vomit or is purported to. Because it is incredibly value to its unique market that uses it, because it is absolutely unique in its value proposition, it is different from all of the other options available, the alternatives, and because it's unbelievably difficult to get your hands on it, sperm whale vomit is also, what?

Danny: Very expensive.

Kevin: Yeah. Ridiculously expensive, exactly, and it sells on the open market today for 6 to \$9000 a pound. If you Google "sperm whale vomit" you'll find stories of 10 year olds walking their dog on the beach and happening across a piece of sperm whale vomit that's worth like \$100,000, it's ridiculous. The book is about how to turn you into whale vomit, by using that exact same 3 step approach, by making sure you deliver relevant value to the market you're serving, by guaranteeing you are unique from all of the alternatives available, and then manufacturing and tapping the power of scarcity, and those 3 things together allow you to extract the maximum price from the market, with a clear conscience, and with your customers still loving you.

Danny: How do you do that? I mean, the reason sperm whale vomit has that incredible value is that it is truly and legitimately unique, right? There's nothing else that can do that. Most of us, even

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those of us ... I mean, I'm very good at what I do and I have a unique standing in the market that allows me to charge pretty high rates, and there are not a lot of things that you can come to me for that no one else in the world can do. There are maybe not a lot of options, maybe not great options, but there are other options, right? How do we ... And, I'm in a favored position. I'm in a position that a lot of people are not in currently. How do you work yourself into being in that position when, at the very fundamental level, what you're offering is a commodity at some level?

Kevin: That's a great question. You're saying if you're not selling what's unique, what can you do?

Danny: If it's not unique by virtue of a chemical composition in the manufacturing process and so forth, what do you do?

Kevin: Well, you have 2 options. You can make the experience that surrounds your product or your thing unique, or you can tinker with the fundamental nature of your offering. I would say the second one is actually more effective. If you have the ability to tinker, and to re-engineer and rethink what it is that you're bringing to the market, that is absolutely the better option, so stop selling a commodity, but if you're forced to sell a commodity for whatever reason, then play with the experience that your customer will enjoy, in shopping for your product, and actually consuming your product.

Danny: Can you share for me your own experience? I mean, \$600 an hour selling a window cleaning service, which is very, to my mind at least, I know nothing about the industry, but it sounds to me like it's very much a commodity. How do you do that?

Kevin: That's very interesting to hear you say that, because we're all like that, right? The bottom line is, not all of us care about everything, nobody does. We all have our own little unique obsessions and preferences, so what you have to do is get inside the head of the people that you want to do business with, and ask yourself what is it that they ... If they had a magic wand, what would they love their "insert brand or product here" to do for them? In the case of window cleaning, if you want to, let's say tackle the high rise market, you have to ask yourself, what is it that a buyer of high rise window cleaning services would value more than anything else?

A good example of just a general well known example that I think your listeners can relate to is Domino's Pizza. When Domino's came on the scene there was already a billion pizza companies, all talking about freshness and the deliciousness of their pizza, and how wonderful the crust is,

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and Domino's came along and said, "You know, what we think is that people are just annoyed waiting for pizza. They want fast pizza," and that was their value proposition. They were like, "Okay, 30 minutes or free," and they didn't waste time talking about deliciousness and freshness and crusts and all that stuff. They focused on the one thing that they believed annoyed the market the most, and then obsessed in that direction, and offered something that the market had never seen before, this "30 minute or free" guarantee.

That's what I advised my clients to do, as well. To stop and think, "What is it that would be the ultimate, amazing, unique," kind of like, "Finally. Finally I've found a product in this space that does what I wish it would do," and then try to build that thing.

Danny:

Kevin, I'm going to push back a little bit, because I know that some of the people listening to this are having the same thought that I'm going to articulate. I'm with you 100%, you want to find the untapped value proposition, the thing that is being missed in the market, and Domino's is a great example of that. They recognized that what a lot of people want with pizza delivery is convenience, and the industry was missing that. Sometimes there's that glaring thing and sometimes it's not glaring, you've really got to look for it, but what happens if you're not the one who noticed it, right?

Domino's pizza is a great example of what Domino's did, but 6 months later it was done by Domino's, then what? If you're opening a pizza shop 6 months after Domino's, then what do you do? There is a finite number of glaring holes of service in the market, or is there? Maybe that's an assumption.

Kevin:

Yeah, that's a very good question. My response to that would be that I would respectfully push back and say that perhaps that is an assumption that needs to be tested, and that there's always room for something that is remarkable, and there is an endless variety of ways that we can create something remarkable. In my book, "The Whale Vomit Method," I have a list of, I think there's 1300 words that can inspire somebody to think, "How can we differentiate from what's currently being proffered by the competition?" What I will say is that there is a huge danger in thinking, "Well, yeah, you're right. Okay, so if Domino's does 30 minutes or free, we're going to do 30 minutes or free," but Domino's wins that competition because they were the first one.

Another great example of that is the iPhone. A few years ago, when Blackberry completely lost its way and stopped obsessing over security and servicing a corporate client, they tried to out Apple Apple with their products and that was suicide. That's like trying to out-cool Steve

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McQueen. You can't beat Apple at its own game. What they should have done is change the game, rig the game in their favor by completely changing the rules of the game.

Danny:

If you hypothetically had been ... I mean, unless you actually were. Nondisclosures prevent you from talking about, but if you hypothetically had been consulting for Blackberry at the time, what would you tell them? I'm not looking for ... I want our listeners to see, "Here's how this works in practice," because it's easy to point to the big examples that everybody sees, "Wow, they totally blew it," and say, "Wow, they blew it." Because I mean, Blackberry, it's like Blackberry is the new Kodak.

Kevin:

Right, right. Actually, it's funny, because a few years ago I actually was so frustrated with what Blackberry was doing because their head office is an hour and a half from where I live here in Toronto. I actually Fed-Exed a letter. I wrote a blog post on my website, to be more specific, about how to save Blackberry and how to re-position it against Apple, so it's interesting that you ask me that question because I actually explored it in some detail. I had some random investment bankers reach out to me and say, "Hey, you should send this to Blackberry," and I did. I sent them a copy of it. I printed it out and Fed-Exed it to Balsillie, one of the co-CEOs of Blackberry, whatever it was, 4 years ago.

His executive assistant actually bounced it back to me and thanked me for it, but to answer your question, here's what I would do. I would stop trying to beat Apple at its own game, and re-position Blackberry as the ultimate solution for a serious business person. Apple is pretty and it has this nice user interface, and it's fun and intuitive, but Apple never talked about its security advantages. Blackberry, what if Blackberry had doubled down on security patents and technology that offered an unprecedented level of corporate protection so that they could now come to the market and say, "We are the most secure operating system available in the smartphone industry."

Then, if they were able to legitimately secure that position for their brand within the market, then they can change every conversation that is sent out into the market, right? I actually gave them a campaign. I said, "If you did that, then you could launch a campaign saying, 'Toys are for kids, Blackberry is for business,'" and downplay the cutesy little iPhone as like, "That's teenagers and kids have, but if you're serious about business and you can't risk important documentation being leaked into the world, et cetera, or an email being intercepted off your server by the competitor because there's a 300 million dollar on the table, if that's you, then you get a

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Blackberry." That's what I mean about change, completely repositioning and then changing the conversation to be in your favor.

Danny: I like that.

Kevin: Does that ...

Danny: Yeah. I think that's a really good illustration. That's a really good example.

Kevin: Cool.

Danny: "The Whale Vomit Method" is going into 2nd edition now, isn't it?

Kevin: Yes.

Danny: The 1st edition is a collector's item. How much is it on Amazon?

Kevin: That's pretty funny. I put it on Amazon in 2013, September, and to my surprise, it actually became a best seller for the global marketing and advertising category within about a month, within about 5 weeks on Amazon but then about a year and a half after that, I guess, I'm not good with the math, but I pulled it off the market because I knew I was working on the 2nd edition, because I just realized, "Man, there's so many more conversations I want to add to this book and I need to expand on a few of these different arguments and provide a bit more clarity around the examples," so I pulled the plug on the supply chain, feeding Amazon, and all of the copies were sold, of course I have no inventory whatsoever. I don't even have 1 copy of my 1st edition of "The Whale Vomit Method," but there is 1 reseller on Amazon that holds on to the last 3 copies of my book, so if you try to buy "The Whale Vomit Method, 1st Edition," right now on Amazon, like if you Google it right now, it's for sale for \$8000.

The price does fluctuate between \$6000 and \$10,000. It just kind of depends, I guess, on whatever the algorithm tells them inside Amazon and how many people are searching for it, and how much demand there is. Yeah, do not buy the 1st edition of my book for \$8000. You can grab the 2nd edition in a little while on Amazon for a fraction of that.

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Voiceover: That was Kevin Dubrosky, reminding you to become whale vomit. What does that really mean? Make yourself relevant to your market, guarantee you are unique compared to the alternatives, and tap into the power of scarcity. Do it while keeping a clear conscience and customers who love you. If you would like to learn how to become like whale vomit, pick up the newest version of Kevin's book at WhaleVomitMethod.com. This has been Business Reimagined with Danny Iny. Join us next time as we talk with Louie La Vella.

Louie: Obviously the marketing is 100% important before the event because you're trying to get them to see and feel what they're going to get, so that's got to cover them. It's got to convince them that it's worth \$200, \$300 tickets, \$50 tickets, whatever it is, and that marketing is just massive. It has to be right on the money, the strategy has to be there, the creative has to be there, and on point, so that they get that feeling, they get attached to it, they start loving the brand and the brand voice, and they want to purchase a ticket.

Voiceover: Learn more about us at Mirasee.com..