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## BOOST YOUR E-COMMERCE SALES WITH STEVE CHOU

### THRIVE BY DESIGN WITH TRACY MATTHEWS

*If you end up running a Facebook ad and driving it directly to your product, chances are that's not going to convert as well.*

***You're listening to Thrive-By-Design business marketing and lifestyle strategies for your jewelry brand to flourish and thrive. Let's get started.***

Tracy: Welcome to the Thrive-By-Design podcast Episode number 68. I am super thrilled to be here today. As usual it's Tracy Matthews your host and the Chief Visionary Officer over at [www.flourishthriveacademy.com](http://www.flourishthriveacademy.com). Today I have brought in a special treat. So we're right in the midst of the holiday season and we're all trying to get more traffic and more sales on our ecommerce sites and on our websites. So today I've brought in Steve Chu of my [www.mywifequitherjob.com](http://www.mywifequitherjob.com) and Bumble Bee Linens. I'm excited because Steve and I rap all about some interesting strategies for driving traffic, nurturing prospects and then getting those prospects to actually buy on your store.

What we're going to talk about today is a great long game and also short game of strategy to help boost and increase your sales and conversions on your ecommerce store. I'm excited about this because Steve really brings some solid marketing principles to the table and I wanted to interview Steve for a while, finally got him on the show and I know you're going to love what you're going to hear. The content was juicy. In fact, I was writing notes the entire time. I don't know why I know a lot about what he was saying anyway but I get so excited when people are sort of reiterating some of the things that we teach and then also bringing it to another level and sort of explaining how they've taken a similar philosophy and really gone gang busters with it.

So I think you're really going to love today's episode. Make sure that you have a pen and paper handy because you are going to need it. If you're listening on the go, make sure that you come back this episode later because you're going to learn so much about creating great email sequences, about driving traffic to your website and also about converting looky lous and turning those looky lous into buyers. Alright let's get started with the show momentarily before we do I would like to take a word from our sponsor.

*The sponsor for today's show is [www.ninadesigns.com](http://www.ninadesigns.com). Visit Nina Designs for jewelry supplies designed by jewelry designers for jewelry designers including charms, pendants, leather, tassels and*





*more. For over 30 years Nina has been inspiring beauty and creativity while caring for people and the planet. Nina is so cool. Nina Designs is offering Flourish and Thrive Academy and the Thrive-By-Design audience a really amazing deal. Grab \$10 off your wholesale order by going over to [3:00] [www.ninadesigns.com](http://www.ninadesigns.com). You're going to enter the code THRIVE at checkout and you'll get \$10 off your wholesale order. Go to [www.ninadesigns.com](http://www.ninadesigns.com), enter the code THRIVE, get \$10 off your wholesale order. I just want to remind you there is a limit of one per customer so head on over to Nina Designs after the show is over.*

Tracy: Okay let's dive into the interview and learn more about how to boost your ecommerce sales with Steve Chu. Today I'm really excited to have Steve Chu on the show today of [www.mywifequitherjob.com](http://www.mywifequitherjob.com). Steve thank you so much for joining me today.

Steve: Glad to be here Tracy.

Tracy: So before we get started I really want to dive into this interview. I'm excited because we're going to talk all about ecommerce and how to get more sales on your website. I first heard about Steve on Amy Porterfield's podcast in the Spring and then fast-forward it's now the Fall and the holiday season is upon us and I thought this would be a great opportunity to have Steve share some of his wisdom about how he built some really successful ecommerce businesses and now helps other people do the same. So thanks for being here Steve.

Steve: Thank you for having me Tracy.

Tracy: Before we get started I'm just going to give a little short bio about you and then I would love to hear more about your journey. Steve runs an online store with his wife at [www.bumblebeelinens.com](http://www.bumblebeelinens.com) and writes for the popular blog [www.mywifequitherjob.com](http://www.mywifequitherjob.com) where he teaches others how to start a profitable online store. Steve tell us a little bit more about your journey and how you got here and how you started an online business.

Steve: Yeah I'll give you the short version of the story. Basically where we live in the Silicon Valley it's very expensive to live, to get a house in a good school district, and my wife and I kind of had this pact that when she became pregnant she was going to quit her job. At the time she was making six figures so when that day finally came when she became pregnant we just thought of all different ways that we can supplant her income, and we came up with starting an ecommerce store and we sell handkerchiefs in our ecommerce store. The short story of that is when we got married she knew she was going to cry at that wedding. She didn't want to be in photos using nesting tissues to dry her tears so we looked all over the place for





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handkerchiefs. Could not find any locally. Ended up importing a bunch from China and then sold them online.

Those sold like hotcakes and so when it came time to start our store we got back in touch with that vendor and we managed to supplant her income, her six figure income in a year.

Tracy: That's amazing. That's such an incredible story because with the right strategy you can really easily generate a six figure income with an ecommerce store.

Steve: Absolutely.

Tracy: I love it that she wanted special linens. My brother just got married so you know all the details that go into planning a wedding. It's such a niche audience and I think it's so great that you guys found this niche audience. So are you only doing handkerchiefs for weddings or are there other things as well? [6:00]

Steve: No, so we do handkerchiefs for weddings, funerals, sororities, graduations. We also sell personalize napkins, linen towels, basically a lot of items that cater to the wedding and event industry.

Tracy: Oh that's so cool. So you've seen in your experience all types of ecommerce businesses. What are some of the biggest missed opportunities in your opinion to really grow ecommerce on branded websites?

Steve: So I also teach a class on this stuff. The thing is a lot of people come in to the class with preconceived notions of what they would want to sell and a lot of times what they're choosing to sell is just very broad. Meaning they're choosing really popular products and the best way to succeed with your own branded online store is to pick a very tight niche where you can provide a very strong value proposition and then press it. So basically do much better than all the general stores out there, and that's basically the way you succeed.

Tracy: Yeah so in our audience it's pretty niche. It's jewelry. It's niche in a way but it's also very broad. So do you have any specific examples of how some could maybe position themselves a little bit better with their ecommerce and their brand to get more excitement around their particular brand?

Steve: Yeah, so in the case of jewelry, and I do have people in my class who do sell jewelry and jewelry is tough. The reason for that is because, to me at least, all jewelry seems the same. So if you just throw up a website and you put up jewelry, it's made of gold, silver, whatever it is, it's really easy to kind of blend into the crowd. So the students in my class who are more successful with jewelry, they really have to





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present themselves as a personality online and they have to specialize in a certain type of jewelry. For example a student in my class she specializes in fair trade jewelry from Ecuador which has a very specific look and all the jewelry that she sells on there there's a story behind each piece. That's why through story she's able to be a little bit more successful.

Tracy: I love that because we're always talking about your story here and also creating interesting stories behind the products. The great thing about that is that you can use all that kind of story telling so to speak throughout all of your marketing. So your social media posts and if you decide to do Facebook ads or any of those other more advanced strategies. You can really help create interest and engagement about your brand.

Steve: Absolutely. In the case for niche stores also a lot of people make the mistake of just putting up a site and throwing up products, but when it comes to niche sites you really have to put a lot of personality into your store in order to be successful because we're going up against Amazon and other shops. Much larger shops which have a lot more capital to throw behind it. So you really have to just focus on the niche aspects.

Tracy: Awesome, cool. Everyone's always talking about I need to get more traffic [9:00] to my site. I need to get more traffic to my site. What are some of your favorite traffic driving strategies for ecommerce?

Steve: Yeah so for our store we have a three pronged approach. So one thing, we do a lot of pay per click advertising. We do a lot of SEO work in the form of content. Email marketing is huge and we also do a lot of B2B stuff where we actually contact other businesses who will buy from us in bulk. So I don't know which one you want to tackle first.

Tracy: I want to go with SEO first because content is huge. I would love for you to describe a little bit more about what you mean by creating content and SEO-ing your website and how the use of content can start to drive traffic because I talk about this all the time, but I think it's missed on some people the importance of things like blogging on an ecommerce site. So I would love to hear more about what you have to say about that.

Steve: So one of the fundamental difficulties of ranking an online store in search is that your categories and your products they don't have a lot of content. So the chances of ranking some of the those pages is a lot more difficult if you're trying to link to those particular pages directly. It can be done, but it's a lot harder. The best way to get traffic and link juice to your site is through a blog. Now a lot of





people get stuck when it comes to figuring out what to write about and the fundamental mistake that I've seen is that people write for the customers. I know that sounds weird, but ultimately ranking in search is all about getting backlinks to your site and strong backlinks.

So one of the things that you need to do is you need to actually write for the influencers as opposed to your customers which is a little counterintuitive because when you're writing for the influencers who have really strong publications and you get those people to link to you, that will ultimately get more traffic to your site because those links are much more powerful. When you write for just your customers they might read your content and they might be okay that's great, but you're not going to get any link juice out of it.

Tracy: Okay awesome. So will you give me an example of how you've done this with Bumble Bee Linens?

Steve: Yes. So what you want to do is you want to first make a list of sites that are strong that you might want to link to. For example, for our site we generate a lot of content on crafts that people can make with our products like with hankkercheifs and napkins and that sort of thing. So we might target a really popular DIY blog and we'll say hey this craft is awesome. You can make this really simply with our products. Here is a full tutorial on how to do this complete with really hi-res photos. Would you consider mentioning this in your next DIY roundup.

Tracy: Okay cool. So basically you're creating content that the influencers want to include in their blog so that they're getting traffic [12:00] to their blog and then you get clicks from their blog to your blog.

Steve: That's correct.

Tracy: Okay got it. That will make it more clear for the Thrive-By-Design listeners by what you mean by that so that's perfect.

Steve: Yeah so I think the key point here is to write for the influencers as opposed to your customers. Then once you have a bunch of links to a craft page, then you can link sculpt it so that you want a link from those craft pages, in our case, to the actual product categories that you want to rank. So what you're basically doing is passing the link juice from your strongest post over to the product categories where you'll actually make sales.

Tracy: Okay awesome. Love that. I would also love to talk a little bit more about pay per click because that's something that a lot of designers have been exploring and they're not really sure how to do it. So can you explain some of your favorite ways to use that strategy for traffic?





Steve: Yeah so for us AdWords and Google Shopping and the comparison shopping engines have been huge and also Facebook advertising. Again we have limited time here so I don't know which one you want to cover.

Tracy: Facebook ads is probably the one that comes up the most. If you want to talk a little bit maybe about combine retargeting in with that, that could be really cool.

Steve: Yeah absolutely. So when we run Facebook ads it's always in conjunction with retargeting as well as email marketing. The reason for this is when you're driving ads the majority of people are not going to be buying and you want to maximize your ad spend by bringing those people back. Let's start with Facebook ads. Facebook ads are really good when you're introducing a product like jewelry. For jewelry it's perfect because if you're using Google and you're bidding on keywords, jewelry keyword terms are going to be too expensive. I'm just guessing.

Tracy: Yeah.

Steve: So Facebook has a very economical way to get your products in front of the consumer. The problem with Facebook is that most people are on that platform just to browse or to catch up with friends and whatnot. So if you end up running a Facebook ad and driving it directly to your product, chances are that's not going to convert as well because you're interrupting someone from browsing. What we like to do with our site is we will drive traffic from Facebook to a content page where we can talk about our story, where we can talk about our unique value propositions and on that landing page we'll have email signup forms where we'll do a giveaway. We'll have links directly to products in case you want to buy now.

At the same time we are inserting a Facebook pixel, retargeting pixel on there so that we can run ads, more specific ads to the people who have actually landing on our site.

Tracy: I love that.

Steve: The idea here is chances are you're not going to convert them right away, but by getting them on your email and by retargeting them, you can constantly put ads in front of them so that [15:00] when it comes time when they're ready to buy, they will actually think about your store and make a purchase.

Tracy: Okay that's awesome. So when you have these opt-ins on those pages do the opt-ins typically go to some sort of sequence on the





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backend or is it just straight into your main funnel email list? How do you usually position that?

Steve: Yeah there's a sequence that we use. It's our pre-purchase flow. It's actually three months long. People aren't necessarily going to be buying right away. For weddings in our case some people come on. They're just doing a little research and they see something that catches their eye and they're like okay I'll just put this off. We can talk about my pre-purchase sequence a little bit if you would like.

Tracy: Yeah I would love to because we talk about this a lot and love hearing about how other people do it. So that would be awesome.

Steve: There's always a giveaway involved. So in our case we'll do arts and crafts to make yourself a DIY wedding because things are much more meaningful when you kind of make the things yourself. The first email is always just giving away some sort of ebook or some sort of tutorial related to weddings in this case.

Tracy: Okay cool.

Steve: Then the subsequent emails really are about establishing ourselves as a brand and telling our story. So one of the things that we like to do is we like to portray ourselves as a mom and pop shop, which we are and we're a husband and wife team. A very small shop, we take a lot of care for our customers. We make sure that we process your order by hand. All those little things that kind of makes them want to shop from you as opposed to a big conglomerate like David's Bridal. After that the subsequent emails are pretty much just providing content. We don't actually try to sell anything in these first couple of emails, but they do come out very often. So every other day in the beginning.

Tracy: Okay cool.

Steve: We'll introduce them to all the different products that we have to sell but nothing is overly salesy.

Tracy: Okay awesome.

Steve: And if they haven't purchased by ten days or so, we send out a coupon code. We only send our coupon codes to people who have not purchased in the past.

Tracy: That's brilliant. Okay what's the strategy behind that as to try to get those people as buyers?

Steve: We're trying to just get them as buyers after a couple of weeks of content and hopefully they gotten to know our store and our story at that point.





Tracy: Okay I have a quick question for you.

Steve: Yeah absolutely.

Tracy: Do you get a lot of repeat clients for linens.

Steve: We do actually.

Tracy: Okay cool. So how do you foster that repeat? Most of my business is based off of referral and repeat for my custom jewelry business. It's high end. I started the bridal market selling an engagement ring on the frontend off-end then they come back for anniversaries or whatever. [18:00] I'm curious how do you nurture that if someone is going from a wedding handkerchief, what's the next step?

Steve: A lot of our customers are B2B customers so these are the event planners and so we treat those people with very special care.

Tracy: That makes sense.

Steve: For the people who are consumers, what's funny about that is, we don't just do weddings. We also do other special occasions and a lot of people are actually into handkerchiefs and doing crafts and just giving them away as gifts. So we actually have a separate post purchase sequence which we can talk a little bit about also, after they have purchased. Just finishing with the pre-purchase sequence. Basically we provide them with a coupon and if they don't buy, we continue to give them content, wedding ideas and that sort of thing and then we present a \$5 gift card next. Basically this is just \$5 off. It's like cash.

We're basically just trying to get them to purchase anything, no matter how small because once you have them, once you're able to extract some money from them, the likelihood of them buying again is much higher. This sequence basically just goes on for three months.

Tracy: So you start with a couple of days, and we don't have to get into total weeds here, once the timing is spaced out, if they don't buy after ten days, you give them the \$5 gift card, then how often are you sending emails for the three months?

Steve: Once a week.

Tracy: Once a week, okay cool. Awesome.

Steve: And if they haven't done anything after a certain number of months we kind of probe them to see if they're even interested anymore and then we preen the list.





Tracy: Okay good. Yeah, so they you're cleaning your list from people who aren't really interested in being there in the first place.

Steve: That's correct yeah.

Tracy: Okay cool. Great content. So now let's talk about your post-buy sequence because I think that's important.

Steve: Okay so the post-purchase sequence it really just depends on whether they have had any of the content at all from us or whether they've gotten any of our freebies. Let's say someone just buys from us and they're not on the pre-purchase sequence and they're just kind of new to our store, we start out by just thanking them and going through the same story that we're a mom and pop shop, thank you for your first time purchase. We will make sure that your order is right. If you have any problems at all, contact us and we'll do whatever it takes to make it right. That's the first deal.

The second email we'll give away a gift and it really depends on what they provide, what they have purchased. So if they purchased handkerchiefs, we have a special handkerchief ebook that we give out. If they purchase napkins, we give out a napkin folding tutorial ebook, just a little value add that's a little unexpected.

Tracy: So cool. I love that.

Steve: Usually at this point we're all about getting some reviews because social proof is very important for an ecommerce store. So our next email is usually would you mind leaving a review on our site for the products that you've purchased and this does two things. One is social proof that goes underneath every single product page and second we use Google rich snippets. I'm not sure if your audience is familiar with that but basically you can get stars in search next to your product.

Tracy: Oh cool.

Steve: And so the click through rate when someone is doing a search and they see these star rating, they're much more likely to click on that.

Tracy: So do you have reviews on your site right now? Are the reviews on your site?

Steve: They are yeah. So if you 10" Hemp Stitched Linen Napkins, you'll see a whole bunch of reviews. If you do a search for that product in Google, you'll notice that that product has a bunch of stars next to it when it shows up.





Tracy: That's so cool. I'm not going to take our time right now to do it, but I'm going to check it out. You guys were on the Today's Show which is amazing.

Steve: Yeah.

Tracy: That's a huge social proof.

Steve: That was really exciting yeah.

Tracy: I had a friend who was on the Today's Show a couple years ago and her website crashed and they were backed up. They were prepared and they sold \$100,000 necklaces. It was crazy. Beyond anything that they'd ever experienced before.

Steve: Yeah we were prepared for it. I did a whole server overhaul and I revamped our site and we ended up getting 7X the order volume and it was just nuts.

Tracy: That is awesome. I'm sure even for a low priced item, especially for a low priced item is what I'm trying to say, it seems like something that you could sell so many units if you got on one of those shows.

Steve: Yeah.

Tracy: Okay cool. So we talked about an opt-in sequence where you're trying to nurture them to get them to buy and then we talked about a post-purchase sequence about how you get them nurtured after the sale. Is there something in that sequence that you try to bring them back to buy again?

Steve: Yes. So we actually have content that goes out once a week on the post-purchase sequence and it lasts for 60 days. Really it's all about just keeping our mind share so to speak of our store, in the minds of customers and we're providing good content. The reason why it's 60 days is because after 60 days if someone has purchased but has not purchased again, we send out another coupon to get them to come back.

Tracy: That's brilliant. Okay cool. How long did it take you to write all these sequences? Do you sit down over a week and do it all?

Steve: Not exactly. So we took a lot of this stuff from our blog. So you can take existing content you have and just reorganize it a little bit and frame it in an email.

Tracy: I love that okay. This is brilliant. Cool. I'm taking notes. I don't know why I like to take notes [24:00] when I interview. It's so weird, I can just listen to it again. It's so funny. That was awesome. We talked a little bit about Facebook. We talked a little bit about putting a pixel





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on your site so that you can retarget your customers. Then we talked about email sequences in order to keep those customers engaged and nurtured. Is there anything else that you would like to add as far as traffic goes? The next question I was going to ask is how you convert the sale, but we just naturally moved into that. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about? Converting sales or traffic.

Steve: We can talk a little bit about conversions.

Tracy: Yeah let's do that.

Steve: Several months ago I redesigned my site just based on some data that I had gathered and here's some keys basically. We're not amazon.com here. We're niche sites. So trust is a very important factor. So people care about several things. They care about free shipping because we're all being compared to Amazon at this point. No hassle returns. You are a new store. You want to make sure that there's some sort of recourse. The third thing is trust. So the ways you build trust for your online store is you include a phone number or you include social proof. Testimonials are very important. A lot of people say it's really hard for me to get testimonials when I haven't had any sales yet, but you can just give away some product to your friends and your family and just get their picture and have them write something about your products and plaster that on every single page of your site.

You mentioned that we were on the Today's Show. You notice that because it's on the footer of everything, of every single page on our site. If you have any sort of publications. We've been in Brides, Martha Stewart Weddings, Real Simple, Wall Street Journal. You want that stuff front and center on everything. So every single landing page on our store we have that stuff mention in the header and the footer so you can't really miss it at all.

Tracy: Okay brilliant, yeah. Social truth. Social proof is social truth. Yeah I think it's really important. One of the things that I've done, when clients find me I get a lot of organic random traffic on my site and people inquiring about customer design. So one of the things I've done to really build trust on my website, and I talk about this all the time, is the use of video so that people get to know what your brand is all about. There's so many different ways that you can do it. If you're more of a personal brand, I think it's important that you show your face and talk about your process and show happy customers in that process. There's other ways to use video too, just tutorials in different content, but just thinking strategically about what you feel comfortable with and also using some of these tried and true techniques to build trust so that when people land on your site, they





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feel like they're not going to buy something, their credit card number is not going to get stolen and swiped. [27:00] They're working with a reputable company. So super cool. Anything else?

Steve: Another thing I wanted to mention is that a lot of people make the mistake of including Facebook and Pinterest buttons on their site with zero on it and that just doesn't look good either.

Tracy: Say that again. They put social media buttons and then what?

Steve: It will say zero likes for example. It makes it seem like a ghost town. So when you do that it's actually negative social proof. So if you have Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest buttons with a big fat zero, that makes the site look bad because it doesn't look shopped in.

Tracy: That's a really good call. I don't even see any social media things on your site.

Steve: On ours we put it over the image. The Pinterest button is over the image and so is the Facebook share button and there's no counts on it.

Tracy: Okay so no counts on the shares and stuff like that. Okay perfect.

Steve: One other key for conversions is on all of your landing pages you really have to have your unique value proposition loud and clear. So for our store we carry the largest selection of handkerchiefs so we want everyone to know that as soon as they land on our site. This goes through along with the social proof. We also emphasize the fast shipping. We do personalization. One of the main problems with personalization is that it takes a long time. We do everything in house. So we make sure everyone knows that we can do really fast turnaround times on embroidery. So just little things like that that make people want to shop on your store and buy now.

Tracy: Okay that's awesome. Fast shipping, personalization, largest selection of handkerchiefs, those are all your unique value propositions. We call them desired sharing propositions. They're the things that make you stand out. Your clients identify if this is the right brand and then also connect with your brand on a deeper level. You're trying to take them on this emotional journey of why they should buy from you. So great feedback there. Steve this has been so awesome. I feel like I've been scribbling tons of notes the entire time. I don't know why. When I'm really interested in an interview I just take random notes. So this was a good one. So thank you so much for being here. Before we end I would love for you to tell our listeners where they can find you.





Steve: Yeah so if you're interested in ecommerce, you can head on over to [www.mywifequitherjob.com](http://www.mywifequitherjob.com). There is an email sign up form right there on the front page. I have a 7 day mini course if you're interested in this stuff and just go ahead and sign up.

Tracy: Awesome Steve. Thank you so much for being here today. So much value added into this podcast so I really appreciate you taking the time so early in the morning.

Steve: Well thanks a lot of having me Tracy. I really had a good time.

Tracy: Bye. Wasn't Steve awesome. What a great episode. So I hope you learned a lot about how to really nurture your ecommerce business and help grow it and really create sustainable sales because that's what it's all about. Those repeat customers, making sure that you're attracting people on your list who are the right people and then taking it to the next level with your tactics to try and get more traffic on to your site and really build your ecommerce business.

So thanks so much for listening today. If you are listening to it on the go, make sure that you head on over to [www.flourishthriveacademy.com/episode68](http://www.flourishthriveacademy.com/episode68). You can grab all the links and resources that we spoke about. Make sure that you go on and check out our sponsor. Finally if you love what you've heard today, we would love for you to share this episode with someone else in the jewelry industry or even a friend in the product based business. Then go on over to iTunes and rate and review the show because we love to hear more about what you think. Thanks so much for joining me today, and I'm looking forward to being here next week.

