

Episode 46: How To Enter The Global Marketplace On Amazon with Stephen Somers

0:00:00 S?: Welcome to the Neon Noise Podcast, your home for learning ways to attract more traffic to your website, generate more leads, convert more leads into customers, and build stronger relationships with your customers. And now your hosts: Justin Johnson and Ken Franzen.

0:00:16 Justin Johnson: Hey, hey, hey, Neon Noise Nation. This is the Neon Noise podcast, where we decode marketing and sales topics to help you grow your business. What's up everyone, this is Justin Johnson and with me, I have my co-host Ken Franzen. How are you doing today, Ken?

0:00:31 Ken Franzen: Today is a good day. All is well...

0:00:35 Justin Johnson: Nice.

0:00:35 Ken Franzen: How are you doing today, Justin?

0:00:36 Justin Johnson: I'm doing well, thank you very much. Today is a good day. Today is the opening of college football, just in case nobody knows that, so I'm excited 'cause my team's playing tonight.

0:00:47 Ken Franzen: You do have something to watch and I had to wait a couple days, but I'm excited that there's good games on tonight so...

0:00:54 Justin Johnson: Yeah, so good stuff.

0:00:56 Ken Franzen: It'd be some fun, fun stuff.

0:00:57 Justin Johnson: Good, good, good stuff. So alright, let's get into this. I'm looking forward to hearing from our featured guest today; he's an expert when it comes to selling on Amazon. Today we will be speaking with Stephen Somers, he is the co-founder of Marketplace Superheroes, an informational product that teaches anyone how to start an international e-commerce business: Selling on Amazon. Stephen has a unique strategy that he focuses on and teaches that is different from anything else out there. Most of his success-selling on Amazon involves his method for product and market research. He has a goal to help 100,000 entrepreneurs create financial freedom using his system. Stephen, it is good to have you on today, welcome to Neon Noise.

0:01:41 Stephen Somers: Thank you so much, gentlemen. And I gotta say before we start, you're gonna have to teach me how to get this smooth, deep voice going on because [chuckle] I'm so impressed by the two of you guys. Holy crap, this is amazing.

0:01:52 Ken Franzen: We've invested in voice lessons. They weren't cheap but it sounds like it's paid off.

0:02:00 Stephen Somers: They were worth every cent, Ken, I'll tell you that now, my god.

0:02:03 Justin Johnson: Good stuff.

[laughter]

0:02:05 Justin Johnson: Hey Stephen, do me a favor: Fill in the gaps, anything that I may have missed and share with us little bit of background.

0:02:10 Stephen Somers: Sure, I will indeed. Well first of all, I think it's important to mention that myself and my business partner, Robert Rickey, we've grown Marketplace Superheroes and I guess it's our strategy together that really we're gonna talk about today. But in terms of how did I get to this point really goes back about eight years ago. I was in this situation where a lot of people were in where I was trying to figure out what to do when I grew up, even though I [laughter] I still haven't grown up yet.

0:02:40 Stephen Somers: I was in this situation where I was early 20s, working as a data processor for the government. And as you may have imagined this is a very exciting job, just sitting there typing crap into a computer all day. And so [laughter] I was researching online, how to actually start a business because at the time, I always say to myself, "If I didn't make it in the music industry, which I was doing part-time at that time, I was gonna do the business thing". Because I'd always been an entrepreneur as a teenager and a kid but never had to feed myself, from business which is a whole different story, right?

0:03:19 Stephen Somers: And so here it was, this job, the band's just ending at that point in my life, 'cause I didn't make it in music, you may have guessed that by now. And the band ended and I was like, "What do we do?", because this thing that was supposed to be my life forever, is no longer my life. And so I started Googling around how to make money online. And you may have guessed the crap that I found [chuckle] was unbelievable. I found every scam under the sun when it came to, "I'm gonna make money online, by teaching you how to make money online. And then you teach people how to make money online, and we all make money together", and all that. And so I just said to myself, "This isn't how you do it. Surely there's a better way to actually build a business that I can be proud of, make money, and then in the future, when I actually learn how to do something, maybe I can come back then and help other people figure it out". Because nowadays, where we are at this point in time, there's so much information online, so many great programs, etcetera.

0:04:23 Stephen Somers: But even when I was starting, which is only eight years ago, there was nothing. It was just crap. So anyway, cut a long story short for you, I figured out one day that I wanna do physical products. Because I didn't have to be an expert in anything per se, no one had to know that it was me doing it. That was a big fear for me, what if people see me trying to be some expert which I'm not. And so I just went on a journey then of how do you actually find products, how do you then sell those products online? And so again that was another big rabbit hole and it really ended one day when I just realized I'm 20 whatever, two years old, I know absolutely nothing about this, I've gotta find somebody who actually does. And luckily for me then when I asked the right question... Now I got a better answer... And I found this guy, Robert, who is doing this kind of stuff over in Ireland, which is technically in the UK, Northern Ireland is, which is a whole political debate which I think we'll leave for today guys.

[laughter]

0:05:25 Stephen Somers: Robert sort of had me and he said, "Look, come work with me for a week and I'll help you out", because he was a friend of my aunt's at the time. So I went up there and I'm just watching. For the first time in my life I saw real products in a real warehouse actually being sold, actually being sent out from a warehouse. And it kinda changed my life 'cause I said, "Now that I've seen this thing, I feel like I can really get behind it". And so I quit my job, and I went out and I just started working with this guy, and basically became an apprentice for nine months and from then I found a better way of running his company, thanks to the reading I've been doing and sort of joined forces, started a new company and we said what we're gonna do is, we're gonna focus on selling 100% on Amazon because at the time Robert was selling on both eBay and Amazon and a couple of other places, and we said if we can just go global on Amazon and sell it in multiple countries, the same products, we can scale our business a lot faster than having to be stuck selling in just one country.

0:06:28 Stephen Somers: That's what we did, we grew a multi-million dollar business doing that together and now we're in this situation years later, where we're now helping other people do it on a global scale and not just on amazon.com, because we're in a globalized world now and that's the beauty of something like Amazon. We get all the benefits of selling there, using their fulfillment services when we use their what they call fulfillment by Amazon where they send their items out on our behalf and do our customer services, and it's just an awesome business to be in. So that's kind of a really quick story of how I got to where I am now and hopefully it wasn't too long.

0:07:03 Ken Franzen: No, that's perfect. So the products that you're selling are the products that you're manufacturing yourselves or are they products other people manufacture that you're selling or reselling?

0:07:13 Stephen Somers: Great question. So yeah, when it comes to the types of products we would sell on our heroes, as we call them would sell, they would be products that would... We would say are pre-existing but we get them manufactured. So what the hell does that mean? Well in simple terms, some factory in the world, be it in the Far East or be in the US or whatever the case may be, they're already producing an item and so what we do is then we create a better offer that's on Amazon. So we don't just sell an item on its own, we bundle that with say another item or whatever the case may be or increase the pack size, sell more than one in a pack and then we put our own branding on top of that so some people might call it white labeling, some call it private labeling, that's essentially what we're doing. And when it comes to the type of products we sell, people kind of laugh at us, we're very different to what everybody else says to do right and that's why we get extraordinary results because we do it different way. And what we do is we focus on selling what we call best products. So that's boring, established, sustainable, and tangible. So boring products, we're dead serious when we say we sell boring products. I'll give you an example of a boring product, was one of our heroes Kansas one day and he said "You know what guys, I sell the pads that cover the feet of a washing machine".

[laughter]

0:08:36 Stephen Somers: Which... Who the hell would think of that, right? Who would think of this. But at the end of the day it solves a problem out there for a customer because people, like the washing machines vibrate and that's going through the floor and people wanna fix that problem, right? So essentially that's a boring product. An established one means like it's been around for a long time, it's not like an iPhone cover where it's gonna keep changing with the times and it's trendy and all that, and really it's very hard to keep up with it, we just keep established boring products. When we say sustainable it means that they're gonna continue to sell. Like an iPhone cover, I mean geez, the guys that had iPhone 3 covers, they're probably thrown into a dump somewhere now around the world and so we don't wanna be in that situation. So that's why we go with products that are going to be around for a long time. And then tangible, it just simple terms we only sell real physical items, we don't mess around like all these other guys do like going on about putting digital bonuses with products and all those kind of crap. We keep it real simple and that's sort of our model of the types of products we sell and we'll get into our business strategy as well on this call because that's like really how we are very different to everybody else as well. That's to answer your question.

0:09:47 Ken Franzen: So give me an example of a bundled product.

0:09:49 Stephen Somers: Yeah I guess, it's more to consider an offer rather than just a product, like I would say if you think about... I'll try and give you a simple example like, so we used to sell years ago TV stands and TV brackets. Now in different countries they call them different things, so a TV bracket for anyone who's not sure, it basically means you can mount your TV on the wall, simple. Now what we used to do years ago, we don't sell them anymore 'cause the market's moved on now, but when we did sell them, what we did at the time was we said, "Well what else are people like doing with this bracket?", and we sort of said, "Well they're not doing a whole lot more than putting their TV on the wall". So then we said, "Well, if they put their TV on the wall that means they have to have a TV, right?". I mean that would be a pretty obvious thing to deduce, so we said, "Well if they've got a TV then why don't we give them a bonus which is a TV screen cleaning kit as a bonus".

0:10:50 Stephen Somers: So that would be an example of a way that we did years ago differentiate that offer. Now since then everyone did that and that market's kind of moved on and changed, but the point is that's what we mean by a tangible bonus with a product. In terms of a bundle then people do bundle items as well which would be more like, let's just say you sell a Christmas related sort of gift or whatever, you might bundle multiple different types of gifts you sell together into a big bundle and that might be something that you sell to people who maybe want that particular problem solved. But for us, we don't do too many bundles per say but we do more like those physical bonuses.

0:11:31 Ken Franzen: Understood, okay that makes sense. Now, a question that I get, we have a lot of clients, we built a lot of e-commerce websites for over the years and most of these clients of ours have brick-and-mortar, they also sell on the websites we've built and they see Amazon as this growing behemoth and particularly a couple of my clients have said, "I can't compete with them because there are people selling the very same products I sell online at my cost, how can I compete with that?". So you look at this global market place, Amazon is growing faster than anything I can think of right now, how does one compete with so many competitors?

0:12:18 Stephen Somers: Yeah, it's a good question. And again, I think it really depends on the type of product that you're selling, of course. So let's say, as an example, 'cause retailers can be really dumb a lot of times and they can be really smart at other times, and I think the problem with retailers, especially if they're resellers, just to get the kinda, I guess, exactly what we're talking about, a reseller being somebody who buys a pre-existing brand, puts it in stock in the retail store and sells it in the retail store versus what we're doing which is private labeling, meaning we find a product, we find demand for a product rather, we create a better offer than what's already out there and then we get that product and scale it globally. So they are the two differences.

0:13:01 Stephen Somers: Now, when we take a reseller, well, sure Amazon are killing resellers every single day because Amazon will actually buy products in to stock in massive quantities when they're buying from a pre-existing bigger brand, let's say a Black & Decker or someone like that, huge company. And the problem with retailers for many years has been is that they don't want to actually buy enough products to keep in stock to actually sell them, therefore people come into the store and stuff isn't there, they gotta order it, all that jazz. So Amazon have come along and really taken those people out because they've been able to negotiate better supplier relationships and better deals for themselves, better credit terms, etcetera, which really has made it difficult for a retailer who's a reseller to compete.

0:13:46 Stephen Somers: Now when we take a private label side of things, like what we're talking about, the core thing that really changes the game for our heroes is that we don't consider ourselves sellers per se, we consider ourselves investors. And so what we do is we look at the market and we say to ourselves, "Well, what products can... Where is the demand right now for products?", where the supply is poor, there's a gap in the market, and there's an opportunity for me to come in and create one or more offers to better supply and better satisfy the demand in that market. Now, that's very different to what a lot of people are doing with e-commerce now with Amazon, and what they're doing is they're saying, for example, "Yeah, I basically love yoga, so I wanna start a yoga brand and I wanna use Amazon as a distribution hub".

0:14:45 Stephen Somers: And so what happens in that situation is then if you start with a brand or you start with the product, then you're saying, "Well, where can I find customers for my product?", and then you really get yourself into a situation where a lot of people, they're gonna do a similar thing because they perceive a yoga brand to be very popular, and there's so much demand out there therefore I'm gonna do my own one and I'm gonna differentiate based on the product; I'm gonna make the product a better quality, better branding, or whatever the case may be. Whereas we look at it and we would not sell something like that because we would have already looked at that market for yoga products and we would say "That's way too competitive, it's very hard for us to differentiate ourselves, really the market is way too saturated". Well, not saturated, that's unfair, just too big for us to come in. And if we were gonna come in there, we would have to be buying so much traffic and pushing so much traffic to our listings, it would just be so hard for us to succeed.

0:15:44 Stephen Somers: And so we're looking for very simple products that sell small quantities every day, and so I mentioned earlier on about our business strategy, which I'll explain now 'cause I think it'll answer your question in more detail again. And so what we do is we've got something called a Rule of Five, and that's how we think about our businesses. Now what that means is, with a Rule of Five you can have five simple boring physical products like we talked about, and I say boring with love; so five simple products, you sell them in five countries on Amazon. And again, people panic here; it's a lot simpler, and we can mention it a little bit more about that today. Five Amazon countries, you make five sales per day, per product, per country, at an average net profit of $5. So when we take that, over a 30-day period, you're looking at a small business there that's producing $18,750 per month in net profit, or $225,000 over a 12-month period of time.

0:16:42 Stephen Somers: Now before anybody asks, no, a product doesn't have to just make $5, it is simply to show you what we mean by multiple countries with small profits, small amount of products in multiple countries. And so what's the point I'm making here? Well, the point is, when we start with the demand, when we know we're gonna have to sell multiple products in multiple countries, we don't need to sell hundreds of them a day to make a life-style business. Now, if you on the other hand, are thinking to yourself, "Well I wanna build a big brand and I wanna really go out there and invest a lot of money manufacturing something that's totally unique, is my own design", all of that, I would suggest to that person that's a very different business to what we're teaching our people to do. We're basically saying there are millions of people on these market places, there is so much demand for so many different products on here; you've gotta go out there, find those products, find the demand and scale them across multiple countries. So I hope I've explained the distinction well enough there for you, Ken.

0:17:51 Ken Franzen: No, that's awesome; I love your math there just to show that, because I think when people think about selling online they think of these gigantic numbers, these volumes that are beyond recognition. And so one thing that pops to my brain though, is selling to other countries.

0:18:10 Justin Johnson: Oh, yes.

0:18:13 Ken Franzen: There's language barriers, things along those lines. How does Amazon help you do that?

0:18:18 Stephen Somers: Yeah, it's great. So I'll take Europe to begin with because that's really going to show you how simple it is nowadays. So a lot of people in the US, especially, 'cause we have tons of US clients, thousands actually at this point. So we know people from the US very well, we speak there all the time. We understand the culture of the US. And we love the culture, by the way. It's an amazing country, and I guess the thing about people from the US is they would sort of look it online, they kinda say to themselves like, "Well the US is huge, right? And so I can just dominate in a state, and I can build a multi multi multi million dollar business". But when it comes to these online marketplaces, really you've gotta imagine Amazon as a big shopping mall. And if you think of different shops that are in shopping malls like global brands, they're not just gonna locate in, say, one state in the US. They're gonna locate across the US and across the world, these bigger brands. And the thing Amazon does for us is, it gives us the ability to be in multiple countries in these shopping malls without having to build all this infrastructure ourselves.

0:19:28 Stephen Somers: So in Europe we've got something called the EFN, which is the European Fulfillment Network. And what the EFN really is, it really changes the game for business because it allows you, as an Amazon merchant, to store your products in one country. And then what it allows you to do is activate your listings in multiple countries. So you get a listing done, you get it written up, you translate that listing into Italian, Spanish, German or French. So then you actually... Once you do that you literally can sell in all those five countries with your stock sitting all in, say, the UK for example. So, the beauty of this now is all of a sudden, you instantly have the ability to sell to all those five countries as well as the surrounding countries. So let's say in Germany, you would have an Austrian person who'll be on amazon.de. They'd be looking there for a product because they would buy from dot de site, because there's no Austrian site for Amazon.

0:20:35 Stephen Somers: Like in Ireland here, we're a tiny country so we would buy from Amazon.co.uk. So you as the merchant then, you just get your products, you order them from your supplier, you put them into stock on Amazon, they hold them in stock in let's just say the UK, and then as you make a sale in Germany, France, Italy, Spain... Well, Amazon will pick that up and they'll ship that out to each of those customers on your behalf from the UK. You pay a slight little surcharge, it's not very much and now you're selling in all these different countries. So in the US right now in North America I should say really, you can have an Amazon account where you have Canada in there, as well as Mexico in there. But the problem is, it's not really a big deal, but it is an issue, is that Amazon still haven't had... They haven't really tied it up as well as Europe just yet because the area is so much bigger and you don't have what we have in Europe, things like the EU, and stuff like that. And I'm already sensing you're gonna ask me a Brexit question, so I'll come to that shortly, don't worry.

[chuckle]

0:21:37 Stephen Somers: And so anyway, if you're selling in, say, US, Canada, Mexico you've gotta ship your products to each of those different countries right now, despite the fact you can manage all those countries under one roof, if you wanna call it that. So in Europe right now, what we have is we have the EFN, and we also have this account, unified European account. And all that really means in really simple terms... The people who are on Amazon, even if you're not, you'll totally get it... Is if you can just imagine you're logging in to an Amazon seller account and you have a dropdown menu where you can see multiple countries in the dropdown, so all you do is you would click amazon.de and that brings you into your German account. And now that is managed independently of the other countries but it's all under one roof, so it's very easy to manage. And like I say, the EFN is a game changer. And to those who are maybe more advanced, who may be listening to this show, you've got something called MCI, which means Multi Country Inventory, and that's for someone who's more advanced. You wanna send products to say just Germany, just France, etcetera, and you'd only really do that when you hit a certain sales level. But I don't wanna get into that too much because we're gonna get into taxation and stuff and that could be a rabbit hole we just don't wanna go. We don't wanna go down.

0:22:55 Ken Franzen: Sure.

0:22:55 Stephen Somers: The good news, though, for everybody listening who wants to learn more about that is, we've got a new site that we're creating with these other guys which will have free information on there for everybody. There's nothing... It's not like a sales-y thing or anything, it'll be muloot.com, that's M-U-L-O-O-T dot com. You'll be able to go there in the future. There's not much there right now, which you'll be able to go there and learn how all this stuff works. And the reason we can teach you that, just so you know... So we're totally transparent... Is, we'll be giving say, people who live in the US, who wanna trade in Europe. That company, sole purpose of that company is to make that very easy. Whereby we can get you a payments account in Europe, we can do your accounting for you, all that kind of stuff. 'Cause that's like a challenge right now guys, that people are experiencing. Which is, well, if I'm from the US, let's just say I'm doing really well on amazon.com, I wanna sell in Europe. The problem right now is that you would have to fly to Europe, get a bank account set up, do all that kind of stuff. This company that we are creating or have created, you don't have to do that, you can just... You can still be in the US and we can set up your payments account and all that kind of stuff for you in the UK, without you having to fly there. So I guess Ken and I should probably talk about Brexit now, should I? [laughter] I'm assuming that what...

0:24:10 Ken Franzen: Sure, you brought it up.

[laughter]

0:24:15 Stephen Somers: To answer your question that's in your head that I'm reading from you. A lot of people then say, "Guys this sounds great, I get it but what about Brexit?", because that's the fear, right? And so to answer that there's a couple if things. Number one, originally Brexit wasn't supposed to happen until 2019. But recently they've just agreed it's not gonna happen for at least another four years after that, 'cause they're gonna stay in what they call the customs union for another four years. For anyone that's listening, I really wouldn't worry about it when it comes to Amazon sales, reason being Amazon are actually building more warehouses right now in the UK which tells you one thing. But also the reality of the... Basically someone saying, "Oh you're in the UK, you're selling to something in Germany". And there being these massive fees and massive... Everything is highly unlikely. Because if you think about it when you sell a product to say someone in Norway or somewhere like that, there's no real big deal, you just basically ship it to him and that's it.

0:25:18 Stephen Somers: I don't believe that Brexit's gonna have a huge impact on these types of e-commerce sales, because of what we're talking about. These are online sales they're not like these offline traditional companies. That's really what Brexit's gonna impact a lot more and even if there was some sort of weird levy, all you do is move your stock to say Germany and fulfill from Germany. It's not a big deal and I don't foresee it being a big issue in the future really for Amazon sellers.

0:25:49 Ken Franzen: Okay. Reassuring them.

0:25:52 Stephen Somers: So there you go. Yeah.

0:25:53 Ken Franzen: Very good.

0:25:54 Stephen Somers: Absolutely. Whenever times change, people get terrified but the reality is that it's not gonna be a big deal for e-commerce merchants, I don't believe.

0:26:06 Ken Franzen: Right. We have a hard time keeping track of what we're doing over here in the US so that's what you're talking about. Expanding to a global market place. It's always... You bite your nails a little bit when you look at the housing inventory in a foreign country and what political changes there have... What impacts those are gonna have on your investment.

0:26:32 Stephen Somers: Yeah, but I guess the good news is that really it's a lot simpler than I guess people... People from the US when you don't understand something I totally get it, but for us we actually went the other way. We expanded into the US from Europe, and yeah we had a lot of questions, how does this work? How does that work? Etcetera. But I guess for us, the good thing for everybody nowadays is that we've built these services to make it really, really easy with these things we're doing. The good news is you will not have the problems that, I guess, other people may have had in the past.

0:27:07 Ken Franzen: Let's jump over to Marketplace Superheroes. Tell us more about what is that... 'Cause you explained the general process of Amazon and selling products, bundling things. Tell me more about Marketplace Superheroes. What do you do and how do help others?

0:27:24 Stephen Somers: Sure. Marketplace Superheroes really we do a lot of different things for different types of clients. But our core program is what we call the Marketplace Superheroes core system. And really what that does is it teaches anybody who wants to learn our unique method of starting and scaling a global Amazon business, how to do it. How to find the demand on the products. How to find suppliers. How to deal with the importing process. Right the way through to how do I actually expand into multiple countries now.

0:28:00 Stephen Somers: And there's a lot of different people out there teaching this kind of stuff, but the truth is, unfortunately is that the reason we started this whole thing was we were just sick and tired of watching people not teaching critical business processes that you must know. For example when you're calculating profitability, you've really got to know your numbers and you've got to understand to calculate profit. And amazingly most of these other programs, they don't take into consideration how heavy a product is, how big a product is in terms of the size of it. And this just blew our mind. We're like, "How can this be?". And the reason for it was that most of these programs were built by marketers who saw an opportunity to sell a program to somebody.

0:28:48 Stephen Somers: And really like, Robert, my business partner in Marketplace. He's the guy that taught me to do this originally and he's not a marketer, he is a seller and has always been a trader for 20 years. We're very different in that we're painfully focused on the numbers. Because we always say whenever you're selling an item, there's two key numbers to think about. Number one is what we call your profit on investment which loosely could be termed your return on investment. And then you've got what we call your profit on your return, which I'll describe. A profit on investment is very simple; what is my percentage profit on my original investment. We would look for a product that does 100% profit on investment, meaning you double the value of your original investment. The second number then, it's just really the same kind of number, it's just expressed as a percentage of your sales. In real simple terms, you sell something for 20 bucks, if your POR is 30% that means you've made six dollars net profit on the item. When we think of that, we think of those two figures now and I'm not gonna get into the calculations of them, because that really will put some people to sleep.

[chuckle]

0:30:04 Stephen Somers: I guess the important thing to remember is that you gotta know these numbers because with your POR, that second number, that means you can look at your revenue per month and you can really quickly sorta get a snapshot of your rough net profit that month. So if you did 100 grand, you know you've made roughly 30 grand net profit. And okay, it may not be exactly 30, maybe more, maybe a little bit less, but the point is you've got a ballpark. And unfortunately like a lot of these other programs, they don't really focus on this stuff so they just kinda say, "Get a product and just market it". And just like, "Pump, pump, pump". And sure you'll make some sales and all will be well. And what happens is that we find a lot of people have just turned a lot of money into more money. In other words, no more money, just [chuckle] the same money back out again. Because A] they don't know their profitability and B] a lot of times they're pumping so much effort into one product because they believe they wanna build this huge brand, that they really don't make a whole lot of profit.

0:31:08 Stephen Somers: And the problem is that whenever you're trading on Amazon, you don't have access to that customer. They're not your customers, therefore, if you pay to acquire somebody outside of Amazon on top of what you're already paying, it's pretty inefficient really, because you can't re-market to those people like... Well, you can break Amazon's POS which a lot of people do and they've been kicked off. But the point is that it's a different business to what we're teaching our guys to do. Our whole model is just predicated on focus on Amazon, expand your business on Amazon, take advantage of the millions of people on there, use Amazon's advertising platform, okay to get some competitive advantage, to get yourself in front of your competition, create a better offer, etcetera. But we're never really focused on building a worldwide big brand, which means we can end up selling all different types of products. We could be selling a shoebox, we could also be selling a TV bracket at the same time, which people outside of our community can't get their head around because in my opinion, they're trying to build a brand, but they're building it on Amazon which makes no sense to me. You'd be much better building your brand on your own website, putting your own pay traffic behind that, then using Amazon as just a distribution channel rather than your main source of business. Does that make sense?

0:32:32 Ken Franzen: It does. It definitely does. So, speak to me a little bit about the marketing side of things. What areas do you teach your students to focus on? If you're looking at Justin and I came together and said, "Alright Stephen, we are ready to get started". And you take us through your process where you educate us on all the tips and tricks we need to understand, all the lessons you've taken and experiences you've had that... We're basically buying the shortcut route there, you're teaching us exactly what we need to know. And we get down to the nitty gritty of, we have products. First, let me sidecar. Depending on the product how much of a product do I need to house or invest in for inventory would you recommend if I'm just getting started?

0:33:22 Stephen Somers: Yeah, so I'll back up a second and kind of answer. I think the question you're going at, and it'll answer the second one too. So, we've a process for finding products that we call the 4S Product Gauntlet. Now, I'll describe it but it won't mean a whole lot unless you're actually looking at all this happening, but I'll just high level so people can understand what we're doing. We call it the 4S Product Gauntlet, therefore there are 4Ss, very original. So, [chuckle] within the 4S you have at the first stage, what we call "Search". So, what we do is there we go to an Amazon category, let's say Home and Kitchen or whatever, and we start looking at that category, look at the best sellers in the category. Now, we never find products generally speaking in the top 100 best sellers, 'cause they're usually too competitive, but we start there because we gotta start somewhere and also we just wanna see what's happening in this market, 'cause at the end of the day if you go into one of these market's like... Like I was when I started, I had no clue what would sell online. I was thinking about the most [chuckle] obvious things everybody thinks about, 'cause I didn't understand our core principle, the Marketplace Superheroes, which is we fulfill demand, we don't create demand.

0:34:35 Stephen Somers: So anyway, we basically start there and we go through all those products and we start saying to ourselves, "Okay, what can I sell?". In other words, "What are products that aren't prohibited for me to sell, that aren't chemical related, that don't have sharp edges, blah blah blah?". We have a whole 15 different criteria we use there. So, we do that first and we make a big list of products basically. We've a software tool we built as well, but we do it all inside there. But anyway, let's keep going. So, we start there, we get a big search list together, then we go the next stage. We say, "Well, now I gotta start asking myself logically what should I sell?". And so that's based on six different criteria in that stage, which really relate to stuff like how good the listing is, how good a job has the seller done on the listing itself? What's the competition look like? How big is the market?

0:35:28 Stephen Somers: We've got something we call our MAP process which is Market Analysis Process, so that basically just tells us, look, how big is this market? Is there room in the market for me? So, we look at how many listings are out there. We look at how big basically a category is, and we're able to determined, "Yeah there's room." "No, there's no room and the listing is too good, forget it", sort of the thing. So, we basically rank in each of these six criteria. It's really simple with the tool. It's a lot more difficult when you describe it. We go to the third stage then where we say, "Look, first of all I say, can I sell it?".

0:35:58 Stephen Somers: It's past that. I've got second stage, I've seen yes, I should sell it, and then the third stage is, "Okay well, what's the profit in it?". We go to the third stage which is what we call 'Select'. So at this point we're going to suppliers on Alibaba or wherever we want to begin, be it a trade show, maybe in China some people go there as well. Somewhere where there's suppliers, so we know the product we're looking for rather than allowing the product to pick us. Then, we basically ascertain what's the cost price, we put it through our software and we'll see based on the size, the weight of the product, the cost price of the product, really get a good feel for what the profit on investment and profit on return are, those two numbers I talked a bit earlier. We're looking to see are we at least doubling our investment. And we should be when you're bringing something in from the likes of the Far East because it takes a long time to get it in stock for one, and it's time and it's obviously money down. Therefore, you've gotta make sure you're at least doubling your investment.

0:37:01 Stephen Somers: A lot of people, I've seen it, they far less than double their investment and then they put advertising [0:37:08] \_\_\_\_ added, etcetera, and before you know it they're making no profit or maybe even losing money, 'cause they're not doing their mathematics properly. Then finally, with the last stage which is really, "Look, can I afford it? What's my budget look like?", etcetera. That's like a high level of what we're doing in our 4S. I'm again, looking for products that can sell us a small quantity a day in multiple countries. We're not looking for something, what we call a home run product which most other people are obsessed with, but you can never predict a home run product, this is very hard to do. We've got many products that do and have sold hundreds a day, certainly a 100 a day. But we didn't kinda start out with the intention of, "this is gonna sell a 100 a day." That's our process, now I can't remember the second part of your question [laughter] 'cause they were all...

0:37:58 Ken Franzen: I was just asking about the marketing.

0:38:00 Stephen Somers: Yeah right, perfect. When we do this four stage process and we go through all the steps involved, we're really in a stage where we have a [0:38:09] \_\_\_\_ micro bar. There will be some supply, but to be honest the supply that's out there is gonna be kinda poor. When we do that then we can improve the offer. Therefore, because we've spent so much time on the research, the marketing is a lot simpler because as, I think Peter Drucker said, "The whole purpose of marketing is to make selling superfluous". And in our case the whole point of research is to make marketing a lot less important than it would be if we're in a highly competitive category, a highly competitive product. Lot of our products like our friend who's doing the feed for washing machines, he's not making a hundred sales with that thing a day. He's selling that in multiple countries, and he doesn't have to do the world's most incredible mind blowing listing because he's fulfilling very simple demand with a better offer. That make sense?

0:39:04 Ken Franzen: It does, it does.

0:39:06 Stephen Somers: Good, good.

0:39:07 Ken Franzen: Now, earlier you touched on a couple different scenarios, you said, and I just want some clarity here 'cause maybe I'm the only one to question this. You said Amazon doesn't allow you to capture your customer's information.

0:39:25 Stephen Somers: Yes, right.

0:39:29 Ken Franzen: In that, you had the other opposite scenario where you create your own website in market traffic to that website, and then use Amazon as the distribution channels.

0:39:42 Stephen Somers: Yes, yes. When you sell something on Amazon, basically, that's still Amazon's customer at the end of the day. You're on their platform, you're paying a commission, usually about 15% of your sales price to sell your product there, and you're getting access to millions of customers basically. The thing there is that we're very aware, and the people in our community are very aware of what we're doing. We're leveraging the power of marketplaces to grow a lifestyle based business. We're not on the other hand saying Amazon is my business. As in it's my only source of business for this big brand I'm trying to build, and I'm going to get people from Amazon to come back to my website. I'm gonna capture them there and then I'm gonna try and upsell and ascend the relationship with them back to my website. That's not what we're doing and it's against Amazon's terms of service. As you'd expect because they don't want you pulling people off their site and bringing them back to your own site. In very simple terms we're using and leveraging the millions of customers that are on there and continue to be on there to sell products, to fulfill demand.

0:40:57 Stephen Somers: And that's really the key difference. And as I say, if you wanna build a big brand and you wanna really be in a very high range of products. My thing to you would be if you start with the product rather than the way we do it, you're really gonna be a lot better served building your own store, your own funnels and using the same traffic you were gonna use to point your Amazon listing. Use that to point back your website. Now we don't do that in Marketplace Superheroes, that's not our business strategy or business model, but obviously we do do it in other businesses we're involved in etcetera, like Marketplace Superheroes. We totally understand buying traffic and all that we buy tons of traffic, but for our heroes in Marketplace Superheroes that is not the strategy that we're utilizing and we're very clear about that. Whereas a lot of other people, they're not so clear and they're like, "Oh yeah, you can sell on Amazon, also you can do this big Facebook strategy, etcetera". But what they don't tell you is that, well what if your product's not a purchase... Someone's gonna buy more than once, you could be in a situation where you're acquiring that customer to break even on say, Facebook.

0:42:06 Stephen Somers: And now what do you do? You gotta sell them something else so you gotta get involved now in another range of products that they may or may not buy to make the profit. So, we tend to focus on the front end profit by leveraging Amazon's in built traffic. The only paid advertising we do is we use Amazon's pay-per-click advertising on their website because A] it's very inexpensive and B] it's a nice way to get in front of the people we're already trying to get in front of... And yes, we're paying a little more than the commission we already pay them, but in the grand scheme of things, it can be worth it because it can allow us to get in front of people more efficiently.

0:42:42 Ken Franzen: Very cool. Definitely a different approach to that, I thought before we began this conversation, you were gonna tell me about, so, I like the idea there where you go back just a couple comments ago, where you have a product that doesn't need to be jazzed up and it makes the marketing that much more simplistic and so through the research and identifying these best products using your 4S Product Gauntlet. Hey, [chuckle] it's my job. And so with that, it almost eliminates all the complexities that marketers face everyday, right?

0:43:29 Stephen Somers: Yeah, yeah because again like, we're looking at ourselves as investors. That's our core focus here. We're looking to take an amount of money and we're looking to at least double that amount of money inside, at six to 12 months. Well obviously as your business grows, what's gonna happen is, and this is a more advance thing but I'll just mention it briefly. Your turn time is going to decrease. In other words, the amount of time it takes you to sell out your product is going to decrease as your velocity in Amazon increases. Which really a lot of people asks, "So how do I get my products selling better?". We always tell people, "Look, if you've done your research, you've optimized your product, you're doing some PPC. Generally, it's just a matter of time on Amazon. It takes time to get into the system, takes time to get your first sales, takes time to start ranking better in the Amazon system.

0:44:21 Stephen Somers: And what's happened is people become so obsessed with manipulating these rankings. It has happened for a long time, as now against POS. People, observers even have tried manipulate these rankings for a long time. And Amazon have become very wise to that. We've spoken to Amazon a number of times and they're always amazed with all these things people are doing and they're like, "Why don't people realize there's millions of customers here and the likelihood is it needs a bit of time and you just need more products". So we actually just, we're getting a new t-shirt done for our heroes, which they're all very excited about getting. And basically, just says on it "you need more products." Because that's what you do, you need more products, you need to give them more time, you need to take time and as we always tell our heroes, like you don't want a product that's gonna sell a hundred everyday on day one. Because if you think about it, if you're selling a hundred a day, and let's say you're doing that everyday, that's 3000 sales a month.

0:45:15 Stephen Somers: Now if you want to keep yourself in stock, you're gonna wanna have three months rolling stock at all times to make sure you stay in stock. Therefore, you want 9000 items ready to go, and if your cost price is $5, let's just call it $5 all in, landed etcetera. That's $45,000 you need for that one item. Now you can work up that overtime but you wouldn't wanna start there. Especially if you were in a situation where you weren't like, [0:45:45] \_\_\_\_ flushed with cash and that's why we tell people with an Amazon based business like what we do, you're better starting small, scaling up with multiple products and letting your business organically grow albeit, with a little bit of PPC. And just keep adding to your products because if you have a small number of products, you make a small number of sales, that accumulates quickly when you're making the adequate amount of profit.

0:46:11 Ken Franzen: So your average student, how many products would they have in their portfolio?

0:46:18 Stephen Somers: Yeah, I guess our average student now... We've got someone now who, I'll be honest, they were already trading before they came to us. They came to us to learn how to expand globally. The guy was doing $55 million a year on Amazon, in the US, which was insane. I've never met anybody who's doing this kind of business in my life and this guy is now trading in the UK and Europe. He's already doing multiple millions now with that sort of business. But most of our students they do, they're much much smaller than that. They might be selling seven, 10 products in the first six months or so. And then, the idea is to try and scale up to whereas many products as possible, but a lot of our students their goal within sort of 24 to 36 months is to be selling 20-25 products at a time. And again, we've got people selling 200 products and all that jazz.

0:47:11 Stephen Somers: So it's hard to say the perfect amount because it would depend as well, like A] what's your cost price of your product? And B] how much profit do you make on an item? So, it's hard to say but again a lot of our students, I guess, they wanna get maybe anywhere from 10 to 25 different products. Let's just say making that $5 or so within that 24 month period of time. But that's relatively aggressive because we would tell people, to get a product going, you want at least a $1000 but you really want more like, three grand when you're starting your business to get going. But I guess, like even at that, we started to change a lot of how we speak to our heroes because one of my heroes in business, someone you guys probably have heard of, a US guy. A guy called, well, Michael Masterson is his book name, but Mark Ford's is his real name.

0:48:00 Stephen Somers: He wrote some great books like "Ready, Fire, Aim" and stuff like that. And he runs a website, I think it's called the Palm Beach Newsletter. And I read this a few years back and it really hit me. He was talking about great businesses you can start for less than $25,000. And I think that, for us, we often say to ourselves, two things we say: Number one, we have something called the coffee shop reality, which is if you're in any other business, you're starting a coffee shop, say, well, you guys are in different parts of the US. But on average, you'll probably agree with me, a coffee shop would cost at least $50,000, if not more, to start a coffee shop in a relatively small town, right? You guys agree?

0:48:44 Ken Franzen: Sure. Absolutely.

0:48:46 Stephen Somers: Yeah. So why are we in this situation and when we have an online business, be it an Amazon-based business, be it even an expert-based business where you're selling information-based products, why do we try to start 'em like 500 bucks? [chuckle] It doesn't make sense because these are businesses, so we're sort of looking at that and we're redefining the... This is a business now, and we're saying, "Listen, this has been in a huge shopping mall with phenomenally targeted customers, and if you were in a shopping mall to even start a store in a shopping mall, it's gonna cost you at least 50, if not 100 grand, if not a lot more than that, just to get going". If you're starting a franchise, jeez, it's gonna cost you hundreds of thousands. So I guess the point where I'm making now is we're changing the conversation and we're saying to people, "Look, yeah, you can start from one to three grand. It's gonna take you time though to build up to the level where you're producing 5,000, 10,000 15,000 bucks a month in net profit".

0:49:41 Stephen Somers: So we're looking at saying, "Why not start with 10,000 bucks? And, okay, you don't have to invest it all from day one", but you'll learn the process and then you look at yourself as an investor and you say, 'Well, if I'm making a 100% profit on investment, if I can turn 10 grand into 20 grand inside a year, how many other investments can do that where you have relative control?'" Not very many, right, at all?

0:50:08 Ken Franzen: Sure.

0:50:09 Stephen Somers: So, we're really changing the game and looking to discuss this more in the case of, you're buying online assets that produce money for you and increase your return on investment as an investor rather than just being a retailer. So we see ourselves more like investors.

0:50:27 Ken Franzen: Very interesting. And I like that approach, looking at it from... Because a lot of people do approach an online business and they say, "Well, I wanna put as little possible into this, but I still want the maximum return".

0:50:41 Stephen Somers: Right. Exactly.

0:50:42 Ken Franzen: And your analogy's spot on with that as far as the coffee shop goes. One question popping in my brain, because before Amazon there was eBay, I'd say eBay is gone, eBay is still very much there. Have you ever considered selling on eBay or any other platform? I know that it's best to dominate one particular area, and then... But have you moved on to any other platforms? Or do you recommend that to any of your students?

0:51:09 Stephen Somers: Yes, we have in the past. As a matter of fact, whenever I first met Robert, his business was bigger on eBay than on Amazon. But Amazon has just sort of become a behemoth, I think you said earlier on, which I think is a good phrase for where they're at now. But, yeah, absolutely, why not? Because we talked about the Rule of Five. And, okay, maybe we don't get a rule of 10, but jeez, we certainly get a rule of more than five when we start to sell on more than one platform. The only challenge really with places like eBay, etcetera, is you've gotta start providing customer support yourself, whereas in Amazon, when we use their fulfillment capabilities, they do all the inbound customer services for us in multiple languages as well, to answer your earlier question of language barriers.

0:51:55 Ken Franzen: Sure.

0:51:55 Stephen Somers: So language barriers is not really an issue on Amazon, which is great. So that changes a little bit though when you start going on to places like eBay because, yeah, many of our heroes actually do trade on multiple different marketplaces including eBay and in different countries as well, in different languages, but the only challenge really for them is when they have to provide customer support. They can use Google Translate and it's fine and there's no problem. But you actually have to provide the support. And for myself, when I started this business with Robert, I had tons of experience with eBay, and the challenge with eBay is that you just get a lot of customer support because people, as Robert once said to me when I started, which was so funny, he said, "The truth is, whenever somebody orders a product online, it's already late". [chuckle] From the minute they press Order, it's just late. It hasn't arrived yet.

0:52:47 Stephen Somers: And so eBay customers are particularly crazy like that. They're very... They have a lot of demands. Now Amazon is good if you fulfill your order from Amazon because you can track even a small item through Amazon, whereas for us at the time, we did a lot of our own fulfillment when I first started to a lot of eBay customers and the problem was that you were... People saying, "Where's my item?". A small item at the time, we would've sold. And honestly, I would've said, "I don't have any tracking, therefore it should be with you in a day or so. Well come back if it doesn't arrive". And so it's not great customer support because it's very difficult as a small business to be able to get track services on small light items because it's expensive to do. Whereas Amazon have such a great postal service. It's totally doable. So you can fulfill your item sales from your Amazon stock through those people for a slightly higher fee, which is a good way to do it, which is a lot of what our heroes do, or we just sort of to say, "Start with Amazon, and just know when you do move to other platforms, you're gonna have to provide more things like customer support, etcetra". It's not the end of the world it's just you gotta be ready to do it.

0:54:03 Ken Franzen: Can you tell us a little bit about some of your success stories or some of the case studies from some of your students? I see you have some videos on the Marketplace Superheroes website.

0:54:14 Stephen Somers: Sure, look there's many of them. And one of the big things I guess for us is we're in kind of a funny market because Amazon sellers are really, and investors now as we reclassify ourselves, they really don't wanna tell anybody [0:54:31] \_\_\_\_ what it is they're selling. They're terrified someone's gonna find out and so we've had a tough time actually with that because people they don't wanna tell you. They don't wanna talk about their items, they don't wanna talk about anything like that, purely down to the fact that there's a lot of fear in the market right now which we're working with. We're trying to show people like "look, it's not the end of world" and most people in truth, which I hate to be true, most people they take an online program, they do nothing with it so don't worry too much 'cause 10%, 20% of our audience unfortunately are the only people that actually get to selling something because people for whatever reason don't take massive action which is a problem.

0:55:12 Stephen Somers: But anyway there's many stories there. One in particular I like which is... I'm actually gonna look at some of them just to come at it from a level of... Make sure I can remember everybody's story 'cause we've got so many at this point. But we have Bill's story, particularly amazing. This guy's in the US and he was a person who had failed in business massively before he came to see us and I believe was in his 30s and moved back in with his parents. And it's all on our website by the way if anybody wants to listen to this. But he was really damaged from his previous business experience and he was looking for a new way to get going and so he invested in our program and he just went through everything, took his time, followed our advice and he started selling a fairly inexpensive item and then multiple items at that same kind of price point.

0:56:07 Stephen Somers: And within a couple of months, he was in a situation where he was basically able to go full time with his business. Now it wasn't making him a hundred grand a month but the guy was making personally a few grand a month and it allowed him to A] have the confidence to know this is something I can do, and then B] again the confidence to actually leave home again and get himself going again. And so that was an inspiring story because at the end of the day when you do an online program you want people to take action and get the results and Bill's a great. And we have Debra and Verdi, they're two ladies from Australia. They get a ton of people messaging them all the time and they actually respond generally with their experience in our program. But they actually are from Perth and when they came to us, I'd say it was 2015, they had never had an online business before. They had never even made a sale before and they just had got their products into stock on Amazon and they arrived at a... We did this customer appreciation event of our own in 2015, and they arrived on our doorstep and they were like, "We haven't even made a sale yet but we're really excited and here's where we're at".

0:57:15 Stephen Somers: And the cool thing is that they made their first sale at that event and since then they've gone on to do it full time and they've got a pretty good business. I believe they're looking to do 200 grand a year net profit is where they wanna be. So they're near that Rule of Five end of things now. But accumulatively, after we tracked about 20%, 25% of all our heroes, we saw that of that small number at the time, 20%, they produced in the last 14 months or so, I believe the number now is about $37 million and they did over 1.5 million orders. We tracked it at a website called acceleratortools.com which right now is active but we don't actually sell the tool on there but that's where we're tracking things from so people can see that we're actually tracking this.

0:58:03 Stephen Somers: So overall, lots of good success stories on our website. People who've been in situations where they've not been succeeding but I say, I just be totally honest and I say we would have so many more here but most people are so terrified A] to share their story because they're afraid people are gonna look them up and find their products and B] there's another side of it too which is just... It's a weird thing that people in our market they just don't wanna share as much as say, if I'm a successful... I have an online program and I help somebody else make an online program, they wanna share their story because they wanna get the word out on their online program and it's just a weird market but again, to be honest, that's what we've learned over the few years we've been here.

0:58:52 Ken Franzen: Very cool. Yes and we'll put links in the show notes to the website and specifically to the case studies.

0:59:01 Stephen Somers: Yeah, cool. And again they're very detailed. They're 20, 25 minutes long where we go into a lot of different stuff with those people so I really encourage people to check 'em out.

0:59:11 Ken Franzen: Very cool. So what would you say, if I was thinking about getting started in this? What would you say are some criterias that I would have to have? If you had a checklist that says Ken and Justin are the perfect match for being a student of Marketplace Superheroes and a perfect match for getting into this line of business, what type of person is that?

0:59:39 Stephen Somers: Yeah, we thought a lot about this lately 'cause we've actually been creating some more intensive ways for students to work with us and get access to our team and all that and I suppose... Really I would take it from two points of view. Really it depends what your goals are, your financial goals. Where do you wanna be? How much do you wanna do? Because if you're in a situation where you wanna make an extra two grand a month. That's really nothing when we consider $2,000 a month net profit over 30 days. It's $66 profit a day, I think. Let me just do my maths on that, [chuckle] make sure I'm right. Yeah. It's 66 bucks a day profit. Therefore, in terms of sales, you're gonna be talking about at 200 bucks a day sales to get 66 bucks roughly speaking at 30% net profit. Now, will you put two grand in your pocket every month if you're doing that kind of level of trading or whatever? My answer is probably not. Because you're probably gonna wanna put more money into your business and grow it. But you could and you could just keep it at that level forever and never grow it and you would never grow it.

1:00:53 Stephen Somers: So, that's really the first thing, I would start with somebody's, "What are your financial goals?". And then we break them down into daily goals. So, let's say you wanna make 10,000 bucks a month or immediately we would divide that by 30. Let's say 300 bucks a day is where you wanna be at profit-wise. And so, roughly speaking, that's gonna be about a grand a day in revenue, okay? And so, when we break that down we would just go with... Okay, but let's just imagine our average sales price is 20 bucks, just to keep things simple. That means we gotta make 50 sales a day. Therefore, if we've got five products, it means we gotta make 10 sales a day of each product if we're in one market. Well, I just divide that by two because we'd say we're in two continents; we're in Europe, and we're in the US. That means each product you gotta make five sales a day. [1:01:41] \_\_\_\_ funnily enough to come back, we come down to five sales a day.

1:01:46 Stephen Somers: So, the point is that you look at that first. You break down your goals. And you say, "Okay, well, do I have, if I wanna get say 10 grand, that 10 grand profit, well do I have capital to invest to get myself there?". And I would suggest that that was what your target is. I would start my business with 10 grand invested just to get started. And I would grow it from there. If on the other hand, you're gonna make say 2K a month, I would be looking at [1:02:11] \_\_\_\_ between 3K and 5K just to get started or whatever. And I can grow it slowly. Yeah, I can do that, cool. So that's like the money side, can I do it? Then I would be looking at more so. What do I wanna do? And what are my skill-sets? Do I enjoy researching products online? Do I enjoy not like necessarily working with people one to one? Because if you're more of a people person and your business really, you wanna be more like an online expert, I would say, this isn't the business for you. I would say you're better learning those skills and creating a different type of business.

1:02:47 Stephen Somers: So, it comes down to money, capital, can I do it? It comes down to what is my mindset? Do I wanna be that kind of a business owner? Then it comes down to really your lifestyle consideration. So, I would say our sellers, investors, heroes, whatever you wanna call them; they wanna build a passive income based business. And that's what this is. And so, that means that everyday I don't want to be in the business, working in the business, worrying about the business. I wanna be just working on it more so. I wanna be spending my time researching more products, looking at my reports, making sure I keep myself in stock, all that kind of stuff.

1:03:30 Stephen Somers: And so, when you put a lot together, you sort of realize that you've gotta be somebody who A] has got some capital or B] has got the availability of money. Then you gotta be somebody who has an investor mindset: Is happy to build something over the longer term, has more of a longer term vision. Rather than short-term. I must be making money today or I'm not happy. And really from then, you gotta be decisive. You gotta be able to make decisions to yourself, in the now. And really on from that then my last thing would really be you gotta be brave. And you gotta be prepared to take a calculated financial risk rather than someone who doesn't wanna take any financial risk at all. And then the grand scheme of things, when you're a business owner, you understand that. It's not really a risk when you calculate it out carefully. And you realized that I'm making 100% profit on my investment. So, if I really screwed this up, I could just get my money back. And I guess that gives you a snapshot of the kind of person you wanna be.

1:04:23 Ken Franzen: And all that being said, it's helpful having a blueprint to follow.

1:04:27 Stephen Somers: Well, absolutely. That's I guess...

1:04:28 Ken Franzen: That you provide.

1:04:31 Stephen Somers: I would say that goes without saying really I would not be...

1:04:32 Justin Johnson: Sure.

1:04:33 Stephen Somers: I wasn't good at trying to figure it out myself. Pretty difficult to do that, in my opinion.

1:04:37 Ken Franzen: I could only imagine. I could only imagine, I know that Justin and I we didn't have a blueprint 10 years ago when we started Neon Goldfish. Now, we have one or at least lots of memories of wins and fails. But it would've been a lot easier if somebody said, "There, start with page one and go 'till the end". And everything you need to do is all laid out there. Just do it.

1:05:00 Stephen Somers: It's funny you say that though right, because I, actually, realized this phenomenon. And I've checked myself on it actually, funny enough. In that, what I find sometimes is you have all these things and people invest and they wanna learn. And then, sometimes, for whatever reason I don't know what it is with us humans, but sometimes we go, "Yeah, I'm totally learning everything you're saying there. And you wanna know something? I'm just gonna actually do this part the way I think I should do it. Then, I'll do this part kinda like what you did. Oh, I'll do this a bit the way I heard somebody else do it". And you end up with this a-la-carte system, which is so different from the original system. And I think they call it something like gradual degradation or I don't know. There's some really fancy term. But the point is, is that I realized even lately in Marketplace Superheroes we're growing that company. And we're helping more and more people now. And I've realized we're putting together something lately. And I was going through this program learning how to do it and then I said, "Maybe I should just do it this way". And I realized I'm being like that person.

1:06:00 Stephen Somers: I'm actually trying to just figure this out on my own, again. And I don't know what it is. I think sometimes people have this thing, "if I don't figure it out then I didn't really achieve it." But I would just sorta tell anybody, whatever business you're doing, it doesn't even have to be this type of business, when you find someone who's got the results you're looking for, do everything they say. Don't deviate. Even if in your own mind it doesn't make sense to you right now, there's a reason why they're doing it that way, and always remember that.

1:06:28 Ken Franzen: Great advice. So all that's going on right now, you've alluded to a couple things you have that's new. What has you really excited at the moment? What do you see coming in the near future? Or what do you have that you're working on that might be something new, that you can't wait to share with everyone else?

1:06:49 Stephen Somers: The biggest thing we're working on... We're working on so many things now to help people. But, Muloot, I mentioned earlier on, M-U-L-O-O-T is something we're really working on big time with a couple of other guys in the payments industry, which I mentioned. Basically there we're gonna be helping non... It'll work for people who are resident of Europe, too, well for people who are non-residents of Europe, it's a company we put together to really make growing there so simple, getting payments accounts so simple. Getting an accountant who knows what the hell they're doing and just takes care of your books for you so simple. Writing a software for that as well, but we're gonna be able to help people manage their business, make sure they never run out of stock. All basically baked into this one company. It's just kind of a baby right now. We do help people as we speak, get their accounts set up in Europe, etcetera.

1:07:40 Stephen Somers: But it's got a huge vision for it. We, actually, just met a bunch of investors in London a few days ago. We explained the vision to these guys, and they were like, "Geez, this will change the game really for people who wanna expand globally". Even outside of Amazon. They have their own website and they wanna get their products into Europe to fulfill them faster for customers etcetera. That's one thing we're working on. We're working on a software tool called Stock Intel, at the moment. Which again, is a really advanced tool which is going to look at your past sales as an Amazon seller, look at your future sales, look at your lead time, I.e, How long it takes to get something from supplier in stock. Basically, what we wanna have that tool do is analyze your business and then say, "Hey, Ken. You need to order 243 of this item, 422 of those, and 197 of those by the 10th of September, or you're gonna run out of stock". That's kinda where we want that to be. Some of the main things, and obviously Marketplace Superheroes is gonna keep developing. We have a lot going on. [chuckle]

1:08:42 Ken Franzen: Fun.

1:08:42 Justin Johnson: Very cool. When do you expect to roll those out?

1:08:45 Stephen Somers: Yeah, good question. Muloot is kind of already beginning to be rolled out. We're just redesigning the site and stuff like that right now. So that's gonna have a lot more education on there for everybody very, very soon. So that will be there pretty much now. These other tools, I would say, 2018 they'll probably be ready to go. We're hoping to have an MVP of some of those tools ready in the next month or so from now, which is exciting. I've got other stuff going on, other businesses. I've got other partners as well that I personally work with. 'Cause I guess with Marketplace Superheroes now my role has changed to being the CEO, co-CEO. My whole focus is on growing that company now and helping serve our members better and help them grow their businesses. Within that, I've sorta learned how to grow and scale these other kinds of online businesses now. I really enjoy helping people who are, say, experts in certain industries and they don't know how to grow and scale their company. I've been helping some of those people, too.

1:09:45 Stephen Somers: That's another thing I hope to do in the future, I don't have anything on it right now. I just enjoy that because whenever I was growing in this business, I use to hear people say things like, "Well, I've made all this money now and the thing that I love doing the most is just helping people", and I always use to think, "Oh my god. This guy is so full of crap", when I heard that. [laughter] Then you get there, you make money, you help people, you do well. I'm making more money now than I've ever made, and I'm very grateful for that fact. We worked a lot to do that, but at the end of the day, genuinely, when I see somebody succeed now, our Marketplace Superheroes members, people from other things I help, honestly, that is what lights me up, because, as I'm sure as you guys know, you get to a level of income where the money becomes quite irrelevant because you don't get anymore utility or satisfaction from increased the money because you don't need any more. It's nice to get more, as Jim Rolin always said, "I don't need the money, but I'll take the money". At the same time, it really, for me, honestly, I really enjoy seeing people succeed after having given them advice so I'm sure I'll be doing more and more of that, no matter what I do.

1:11:00 Justin Johnson: Fantastic. That's awesome. Hey, Stephen, what's the best way for listeners to get in touch with you?

1:11:07 Stephen Somers: The best way right now would be to go to marketplacesuperheroes.com. I'm actually in the process of having stephensomers.com ready, which God knows when I'll be there, but hopefully I'll be there very, very soon. Go to marketplacesuperheroes.com now. Any questions about anything we talked about today or anything like that, send us a question if you have one. Or you can just jump into a free Facebook group, its called Heroic Empire, just search that in Facebook. We'll put up a link there, I'm sure as well. That's a free group, you can jump in there on Facebook and you can ask us questions. I generally post videos and stuff like that in there as well. You can come in there and get some value. You don't have to buy anything today. We're not those kind of guys, we're here to help people genuinely. I really enjoyed today's call, guys. I think I gotta go have a lie down after [laughter] because you definitely got me going into some serious detail, but I enjoyed it.

1:12:00 Justin Johnson: Good Stuff.

1:12:01 Ken Franzen: Good deal.

1:12:01 Justin Johnson: Hey Stephen before we say goodbye if you had one piece of parting advice for our listening audience, what would that be?

1:12:07 Stephen Somers: Yeah, great question. God, one piece of advise is tricky but I think for me the thing I have learned the most is really so important to find somebody who is way ahead of you in business and do whatever it takes to work with them. 'Cause that's what I did, I worked for free with Robert originally and I found a way to learn things and be in a business and grow it and within that then I learned very specifically how to succeed in an industry. I think too many times people don't understand in the industry at all and they... You go on [1:12:45] \_\_\_\_ shared time with these ridiculous inventions that nobody will buy and it's because they don't understand industries. So find somebody who's way ahead of you, pick an industry that you wanna be in, find someone in that industry who's way ahead and do whatever it takes to learn from them. Buy their online programs, become a mentoring student, whatever, because I'm telling you, you will get so much benefit from having someone guide you along the way and I'm not saying this as a pitch for what we do at all, I really am not. Work with whoever just find somebody and learn and just go from there and take action.

1:13:20 Justin Johnson: Take action, beautiful. Neon Noise Nation we hope you enjoyed our conversation today with Stephen. Be sure to go over and check his website out at www.marketplacesuperheroes.com. Stephen thanks so much for being on the show today we really appreciate your time. The show notes for today's episode will be available at neongoldfish.com/podcast. Until next time this is Justin, Ken and Stephen signing off. Neon Noise Nation we will see you again next week.

1:13:49 S?: Thank you for listening to this episode of the Neon Noise Podcast. Did you enjoy the podcast? If so please subscribe, share with a friend or write a review. We wanna cover the topics you wanna hear. If you have an idea for a topic you'd Justin and Ken to cover connect with us on Twitter @neongoldfish or through our website at neongoldfish.com.