



**PERPETUAL**  
TRAFFIC  
— PODCAST —



≡ **THE 3-STEP STRATEGY** ≡  
TO GROW AND SCALE A  
**MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR**  
**MARKETING AGENCY**  
EP. 92

*with* **Keith Krance,**  
**Molly Pittman & Ralph Burns**



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Keith Krance: Hello and welcome to *Perpetual Traffic*, episode number 92. Today's episode is going to be pretty much all Ralph and [Molly](#). I was actually not in the virtual room recording when we did this episode. I'm going to add a few very important tips here at the beginning, and then I'm going to let them take it from here. This episode, I was actually gone at Southern Oregon on a trip with my best friend's 40th birthday. Eight of us went down to Southern Oregon to the Bandon Dunes golf resort, so this is going to be all Ralph and Molly talking all about how to grow and scale a seven-figure marketing agency. I'm going to give you a couple tips here and give you a few Steve Jobs quotes as we kick it off and as we end it as well because that's one of my idols and everything we have done from the very beginning.

We always try to look at what these great ones do and one of his quotes is, "My model for business is the Beatles.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

They were four guys who kept each other's kind of negative tendencies in check. They balanced each other, and the total was greater than the sum of the parts." That's how I see business. Great things in business are never done by one person. They're done by a team of people. 2013 is when Ralph and I met at one of my workshops and that's when things really started taking off. It's already been almost exactly a year since Ralph and I agreed to completely hand over the reins of the agency side of the business to Ralph, so he can continue taking things to the next level and beyond, which he has done more than I ever could've expected or imagined, and it's been an amazing ride because we have so much synergy together, which is why I led this episode off with that Steve Jobs quote about the Beatles.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

'Course, we both have a stake in both sides of the business. Myself, I'm the agency, and himself in my side of the business which is the education, coaching, consulting, certifications, account manager, placement program and referral program, and the reason I led this episode off with that quote from Steve Jobs about the Beatles is because you can have all the ideas you want but if you don't have somebody, or if you're not that person that can execute and implement, then you're lost, and if you don't have the ability to innovate and continue staying on the cutting edge. As Steve Jobs, one of his quotes says, "Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower." Now I'm going to let Ralph and Molly take it here, but hang on to the end of this episode because I'm going to give you my three keys that are the foundation. If you don't have these three keys, you'll never be able to grow, truly grow an agency at massive scale.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

And my number one key is really the number one growth hack, and once you understand this, this is how you have constant demand while constantly raising your prices, and I'll explain how we have done this. So enjoy the episode, and I'll talk in a few.

Molly Pittman: Hey guys, I'm really excited about today's episode. We're going to take a different route than we usually do. Usually, you hear a lot about ads and running traffic on my, on this podcast, and we wanted to take a step back today. We actually wanted to talk a little bit about how Ralph Burns, which you guys all know and love, Ralph, one of the co-hosts of *Perpetual Traffic*—

Ralph Burns: Maybe just know.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Molly Pittman: Definitely love, exactly how Ralph builds a multimillion-dollar virtual marketing agency. So if you've listened to some of the previous episodes here along the way, we've talked a lot about what each of us do. So, myself, Molly, I'm the VP of marketing at [DigitalMarketer](#). Keith and Ralph have [Dominate Web Media](#), so Keith is more focused on creating courses and coaching and speaking and teaching Facebook ads to others, while Ralph actually takes on clients, some pretty huge clients with really big spend. And over the past few years, he's been able to build a multimillion dollar ad agency from his house. So today, he's going to explain exactly how he did it. I think this is going to be a good one. Hello, Ralph.

Ralph Burns: Hello, Molly. Thanks for the wicked awesome intro.

Molly Pittman: Of course. I'm excited about today's episode.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Ralph Burns: This is definitely something that I didn't realize could be a podcast episode, quite honestly, because most of the time we're talking about how to do Facebook ads, but apparently a fair amount of our listeners are people that are doing what I'm doing, or maybe want to do what I'm doing in one capacity or another, or maybe a little bit smaller, maybe a little bit larger and just looking for different ways to scale up.

Molly Pittman: It's interesting. I know a lot of our listeners out there, are freelancers, agency owners, they are people that do this for others. For you guys, this is obviously going to be incredibly helpful, but even if you don't have an agency, whatever your business is, Ralph is going to share stuff about hiring and working virtually and some really good info that, honestly, I was looking through the slides. It's great info for me to take and even apply over at DigitalMarketer.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

So really, whatever position you're in, even if you don't own an agency, I think this is going to be incredibly helpful for you.

But to get started, Ralph, I think your story's pretty interesting. Can you tell everyone how you got in to this stuff?

Ralph Burns: Well, I mean the agency started by pivoting a lot in this space. This is definitely something that a lot of people do in their careers to eventually get to the point where they're running a successful business, is if the first business that you run might not be the business that you run that actually makes you money and, you know, employs people and does all the things that we do inside the agency here. But you know, my background is primarily in the corporate world, in sales and sales management.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

So, you know, while I was actually in the corporate world, I started my very first blog, my very first sort of website and I figured my employer wouldn't be too ticked off if I did that about something that I was actually doing all day long, which was managing sales people, you know, or directing salespeople from a director's standpoint. So, I created this very feeble and not very good website way back when, all about sales management and how to teach sales managers to do this stuff that I kind of learned how to do.

So eventually they found out about that and really didn't like that all that much and they thought I was moonlighting and not really paying attention to my day job, which all I was really doing was just laying the foundation for doing something on my own, which is, I've always wanted to run my own business, so, but I found that I didn't really like doing that particular subject matter as content.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Like, I didn't enjoy talking about it, but what I really enjoyed was the process of marketing it.

Molly Pittman: Right.

Ralph Burns: And that then led me into the affiliate world where I was a super-affiliate for a number of different types of offers which shall remain nameless at this point in time, but-

Molly Pittman: But it's where you learned, right? It's where you learned how to do this.

Ralph Burns: It's where I learned. Yeah, I meant, I was spending, you know, over six figures a month of my own money on affiliate offers, so you had to good at it. I mean, I was eating what I killed.

Molly Pittman: There was a lot of risk.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Ralph Burns: Yeah, no doubt. No doubt. So that's really where I learned how to do [ad copy](#), how to place ads, how to, you know, buy banner ads, how to buy banner space on websites, how to use pay-per-click, Google AdWords, Bing, MSN, I guess which it was back then as well as Yahoo.

Molly Pittman: Mmmm, MSN. Sweet.

Ralph Burns: And after multiple account bans for all of those, I finally found Facebook and Facebook was just starting out at that point, and Facebook really just only had where you lived, what your marital status was, if you were interested in men or women or both and your age and where you lived, and that was pretty much it. So that type of targeting has since become very much more advanced as we all know. If you're listening to this podcast, all of you realize that the interest targeting inside Facebook is really, is one of the killer apps.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

I ran lots of ads for Christian Mingle which was a dating service which was actually ideal for Facebook. So you're a female, 25-35 and lived in Dallas, Texas about seven years ago, I sincerely apologize for clogging up your Facebook news feed back then. Actually, they were right-hand column ads, there was no such thing as Facebook News Feed ads. So, we pivoted a bunch of times, and then started doing ads, started running advertising for customers, and then Keith and I connected and things sort of took off from there.

So I think this story here is, really is, you know, how a guy with a, you know, a guy in his basement with a VA, which is how I really started out turned into what's now a multimillion dollar virtual marketing agency, and all of our, you know, workers, everyone who does work for our agency, customers, is virtual. So we've got, you know, over 20 people on staff and definitely in an upward trajectory.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Molly Pittman: Yeah, and you guys are spending a bit of money.

Ralph Burns: Yeah, I mean, we're spending anywhere between, you know, two and three million dollars a month. It's probably more in the coming months, but if you're spending two or three million dollars of customers' money, you probably are getting a return for it, and that's one of the things that we do really well, is we scale and get higher return on ad spend or ROI for our customers, and that's led to a lot of learnings and a lot of things that we talk about here on the podcast, so we test them with the customer accounts, handling their money like it's our own, and then we teach it inside Dominate Web Media, and then obviously we talk about it here on the podcast, so it's a good mix between the three of us, I think.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Molly Pittman: Awesome, Ralph. I know you have a three-step strategy to share today, but I'm excited again whether you own your own business, you own your own agency, this is absolutely applicable to you.

Ralph Burns: Yeah, and for anybody who's running a virtual business out there, I designed this basically because my wife loves to travel, and I created this business so that we can actually do that. We haven't done a whole lot of it in the last two years because of kids and, you know, a lot of obligations from the agency, but the point is that it is possible to build a culture and a virtual company and grow it and grow it to, you know, seven figures, which is what we've done and we've experienced, you know, 'bout 300% growth every single year, this year included and, you know, it's because of the three steps that I'll talk about here in this episode.

Speaker 3: Step one.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Ralph Burns: All right. So step number one, this is a really important step, and we've been very fortunate to be able to do this because of a lot of the stuff that Keith has done at Dominate Web Media, Facebook Ads University which is our paid membership site, just a lot of the stuff that he's done over there had led to us being able to achieve step one. So I by no means did this all by myself. Keith was there at every step of the process. I was the guy who implemented it, but a lot of the strategies and everything that we teach inside our paid courses, you know, comes from Keith's ideas, which we then implement in the agency, and we just do it at massive scale, but one of the things that we're very fortunate, is that there's lots of people who we teach already how to do this stuff, you know, whether it's on the podcast, or whether it's on our own sort of membership site. So step number one is getting A-players.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

So that has allowed us, because we're already teaching people how to do this stuff, it's allowed us to attract the very high quality personnel that we can then use to run advertising inside the agency itself, and I think one of the things when I was building this agency and also when I was building sales teams back in the corporate world, is that initially, when you're hiring people, you want to find people that are just like yourself, right? because, all right, I know how to run Facebook ads, I'm fairly creative, fairly analytical, can kind of run things and do it at scale, pretty good with customers, you know, why can't I find people exactly like me to then just do what I was doing and replace myself? But what I found is that really isn't the solution. The solution to building a company is, especially a fast-growing people in a niche where it's in demand certainly helps.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

People want Facebook ads run for them, as a company, is to find people that are people that are better than me. So one of my big goals was to set my ego aside and say, "All right, I know how to do this stuff pretty well, but I want to find people that are complementary to my skill set." Maybe even more analytical, more creative, you know, see things from a different perspective, and I think, you know, if you set your ego aside when you're doing your hiring, especially if you're first starting out, don't try to find little clones of yourself. I mean, if you can, yeah, that's okay, I mean, but you ultimately really want to attract people that are better than you and see things differently because collaboration inside the agency is really is the biggest reason why I think we've experienced such a great amount of success and will continue to do so.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

So when I first started, like I said, I mean, I was the agency CEO and, you know, then I just had one virtual assistant who is still with me to this day. You know, she's been with me actually since the days when I was in the corporate world. Right before I got fired. Thank you, by the way, for firing me. Thank god. I celebrate that day every year, by the way, Molly. January 29th. Every year, Independence Day. So that's how we started, but then what I realize is in order to run ads, what I really need is people to run ads. So we started to attract what we refer to as account managers. I don't call them ads managers because what they do is they manage the account.

They don't just manage the ads, they manage the client relationship, they manage the day-to-day operations of the ads as well.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

As we continue to grow, we've added more and more of these account managers, all who work virtually, you know, all who are paid by the ad account that they manage, all independently, and some of them do work together on some larger ad accounts that just have tremendous amount of volume or high degree of complexity. But in most cases, an account manager is assigned to an ad account, and that's how our structure kind of works. So we evolve from guy at a VA to, you know, multiple account managers with all kinds of support staff.

So we didn't do this overnight, but we did it sort of overtime, so we added designers, we added copywriters, we added people who optimize ads, we've now added, you know, high-level programmers. We've got virtual assistants now that do, you know, a number of different tasks. As well as, we've got a data scientist who really gets deep into some of the analytics.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

So what we try to do is create a team of people who have highly specialized skills but in aggregate, they're better than they would be alone because we found that collaboration is the key to success. What we did see is that there's certain character traits that I think are really, really important for not only just account managers, but for everybody in the agency, and this is something that I sort of took from the corporate when I used to hire sales people, is that you want people that are hungry and humble, H and H is what we call it.

Hungry and humble, meaning they're never going to think they're too big for their britches, so to speak, as dad used to say, but they're always improving themselves, like they have this never-ending improvement mentality. Also, highly analytical certainly helps when you're analyzing heaps of data from Facebook. Also creative, to a certain degree.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Some people have that more than others, same thing with analytical, and the biggest, biggest thing for me is solution-oriented. I could hire a hundred people that will tell me what's wrong, but what I tell our guys all the time is "That's great, you're telling me what's wrong, what are you going to do about it, what's your solution? Even if it's not the right solution, let's work through it." So that's how we've been able to scale, so I try not to give everybody answers to the questions they're asking, but have them present to me, so collaboratively we can think of a better solution. So solution-oriented is hugely important, especially if you're running a virtual company because you want people to be able to solve problems on their own, you know, obviously with your guidance.

Molly Pittman: Yeah, and I think that's important, especially here at DigitalMarketer. We're always looking to train and help people grow internally.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

And the best way to do that is to give them an output that you're looking for, that they're looking for, right? Give them some hints for how to get there, give them the resources they need to get there, but don't always tell them exactly how to get there. Back to what Ralph said about being able to solve problems, that's huge in any job that you do. So if you're constantly giving your employees and team members answers to every problem, they're never going to figure out how to solve those problems on their own, but I think that's something that [Ryan](#) and the leadership here at DigitalMarketer, that's how I've learned, right, is because they didn't always give me the answers, they gave me the resources I needed to figure out the answers and I learned because I had to figure out the answers on my own. So just to really hammer in how important that is.

So how do you find these people, Ralph?





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Ralph Burns: So the first thing we do is, you know, inside Facebook Ads University, we actually do postings there, but that's not the only place that we do it, but we do a posting, you know, that says we're actually looking for an account manager. We have a job posting that's really, really specific to what it is that they get out of it. We always sort of try to remember that what's in it for me is actually is the most important thing with most people, so the posting we do on a number of different job boards, but Facebook Ads University, our own platform, really does help as well as in our own Facebook company. So if you've got a Facebook group in your company, that's a great place to start for sure. The second thing we do is, what we call the audition, which I'll get into in just a second, and the third thing is the internship and the fourth is the payoff. So I'll go through all these four steps, because it's sort of a methodical, it's a long process.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

If you noticed out of those four steps, the interview is not in there. Interview is actually optional for us because I'm a huge believer in the "show me, don't tell me" principle. So, because I've interviewed hundreds, probably thousands of people for just sales jobs or for sales manager jobs, when I was in the corporate world, one of the things that I always sort of came back to is if they could actually show me how good they are, instead of just reading it off a resume, then I end up with a whole lot better hires. So not that people stretch the truth on what they say in a job interview, I'm not saying that, but you know, what I really want to see is how are you going to perform, and so that's why the audition for me is, actually is far more important, but in most cases, I do end up talking to people live and kind of getting them through the process, but that's sort of scattered within this sort of four-step formula.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Might happen initially, it might happen later, and our track record has been pretty good with this, with retention and we're really having good folks come on board, so it's a formula that does work. It's a little bit unconventional, so imagine interviewing for a job but not having an interview. Like your real big part of getting hired is to show the person, show the employer that you can actually do the job. So what we do in the posting itself, is like I said before, is really appeal to their desires more than anything else. And then in that posting, in this step number one, of the first step of the three-step process is you try to weed people out immediately by throwing in sort of a curve-ball question, which I always did in the corporate world and I think when I was at [T&C](#) two years ago when Karen Kang spoke, she actually talked about this very strategy.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

So I redeployed it back into our job posting, which has really been helpful, which is to name their favorite food, like in their response back to us, which sometimes they do, sometimes they don't.

Also, there's an attention to detail part to this because a highly attention-to-detail job is, you know, running at for customers, so in that posting, we actually have a couple of different typos in the posting itself and they're supposed to figure out what the typo is and call it out and it's not very obvious in most cases, so that's kind of a hard one. And then lastly, we have them do a seven-minute video. Not 10 minutes, not five minutes, could be less than seven minutes, I suppose, but we've disqualified people because they did a thirty-minute video, they didn't follow the directions.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

So, it's got to be a seven-minute video on what they are currently doing with Facebook ads, what's their level of expertise, and I think within the first minute or so, I can pretty much get a sense as to what their, you know, what their level is, what their capacity is and what their sort of skill level is and how much training they might need.

So then the next thing which I just referred to is the audition. So the audition is them actually doing something specific that is also highly relevant and perhaps you can even charge for, which is always nice. So, if it's a webmaster, you know, that we're looking for, maybe a programmer, it's going to a customer's funnel and do, you know, do the tagging for the first part of this funnel and then show me exactly what you did. If it's a creative designer, I will give them a task from a customer that, "Hey, we're working on these creative designs, this is the background, this is the [hook](#), this is what they do.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Do some designs for me." That's a good audition. The audition that we tend to do a lot for our account managers is, "I'm going to give you access as an analyst to a customer account," and they of course sign an NDA so everything stays above board, and you know, all the proprietary trade secrets stay secret and they go in, they actually do what's called an Ad Account Audit and Game Plan.

What have they done in the last 30 days for Facebook ads, what should they do in 30-60-90 days based upon what you know about how to run Facebook ads, and then we actually, we will use this as the screening process for our customers as well. So we get a dual source of this, so we can then combine this with the other account managers and account audits and they actually use it as a screening tool for new customers, which we do charge for because it's highly valuable, even if they don't come all onboard for us.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Something they can use as a roadmap to be successful in the future, so we have these guys do that, so that's sort of the next step in the audit.

And then I always ask them, I say, "Hey, you know, want to do an ad account audit, but can you do it by ..." and I will give them a specific day and time, and the reason for that is that, as soon as they say "yes," I know that they've committed themselves to actually doing this thing, and this is also sort of a test question because this tells me, is this person somebody who I can rely on for doing certain projects at a certain day and time, because everything in the agency runs by tasks, and tasks are associated with time. And then the audition itself is actually, is fairly long sometimes, the length and depth of that Ad Account Audit tells me how detail-oriented they are. Shows me sort of their thought process.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Shows me how they can analyze and think retrospectively as well as prospectively, what they would do in the future. Gives me ideas about their creativity, so it's really, it's a good tool and I highly encourage you to think about, you know, what can you do in your company or what task can you assign a potential hire that you can use for an audition. And I know you guys do this inside DM as well, don't you?

Molly Pittman: Yeah, absolutely, this too. So, for example, when we're hiring a copywriter, we'll pay them \$500 to write a sales letter for one of our products, just to make sure they can actually do the work because, like Ralph said, you can look at resumes all day, and honestly, I really hate resumes. I love to meet the person, but I want to make sure that they align with the values with our company.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

I want to make sure that they have the grit to do the work that needs to be done here at DM, but I also want to make sure that they can do that particular job function. So for example, with a copywriter, we'll have them write a sales letter or emails to make sure that they end work that they're going to produce is actually what we want for the business.

Ralph Burns: Yeah, totally.

Molly Pittman: And yeah, paying them makes it feel less icky, right, if they don't get hired. And it's a great process.

Ralph Burns: Yeah, I mean, whether you pay or whether you don't pay, is really sort of a judgment call. I mean, at this point, we don't, but we could.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

What ends up happening is when we hire this account manager, we end up having them do lots of unpaid work, which is fine because, you know, I think you do have to invest a fair amount of time for most of the folks that run ads for us. They might be a consultant on their own.

Molly Pittman: Totally.

Ralph Burns: So they might be like I was when I first started. So, they started to have other ways in which to make money, but this is going to be a side thing that's going to show us how competent they are, how good they are, and then it comes back to them tenfold when they do a really good job, because we're really generous when we do bring them on board.

Molly Pittman: Yeah, absolutely.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Ralph Burns: And then we do what's called the internship, so once they pass the audition, we do what's called the internship, and the internship is sort of the last phase before we actually get them to run ad accounts or run actually paid traffic for customers, when we start, you know, paying them, and the internship is pretty in depth. There's a lot of training that goes on, we've got, I think, five different programs right now inside Facebook Ads University that we have them go through. Most cases, they've already done that. We also do have them go through a course called Agency Domination. We also do our internal Dominate Web Media agency training, which is 11 modules, pretty intense with videos, and then we give them all our agency SOP training, which is actually 15 modules, and then we have them do the [DigitalMarketer HQ](#) programs. Thank you, DigitalMarketer.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

And then a couple of other select, [Ryan Deiss](#) and [Frank Kern](#) and [Ezra Firestone](#) stuff sort of on top of it because, you know, we don't have all the ideas. Remember, going back to humble and hungry, we're constantly learning ourselves.

Molly Pittman: Absolutely.

Ralph Burns: So, we want to make sure that those people actually have the same mindset, so one of the things that we have them do is go through [Funnel Blueprint](#), which, I think, is huge for us as an agency. It's one of DigitalMarketer's best products. So, then lastly is the internship like I said, but there's a part to the internship that we call shadowing. So we'll actually bring them into our project management system, and they'll start shadowing and being in on emails and client conversations for active live accounts.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

They're not running at accounts yet, but they're observing what the account managers are doing on a day-to-day basis, they're seeing how the flow of information goes back and forth between us and the customer, and then, you know, if they have a high specialty in a specific area, we might actually have them start giving input and advice in some cases, and when that happens, pretty much they're fast-tracked because we know they've got a high level of proficiency.

Molly Pittman: Right.

Ralph Burns: So, then once that's all done, that could be like one to two months, and then we actually have them start running paid advertising.

The big thing with us, is like, we want to expand and grow, but not sacrifice quality one bit. Quality is the most important thing.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

We've actually resisted growing as an agency because I didn't feel we were ready from a quality standpoint. So we're at the point now where I don't think that's an issue, but we want to really make sure that people go through a really hard training, like they really do put in the time.

Molly Pittman: It's a balance, right? So how can we hire people and train them quickly enough to grow so that we aren't stunting growth but how can we also maintain the quality of the, the work and the efficiencies and the way that the company runs?

Ralph Burns: Yeah.

Molly Pittman: I think that's one of the biggest hurdles that we all have to overcome. You know, how can you hire fast enough but also train them and make sure that it's done thoroughly so that you're not just growing for the sake of growing and inevitably decreasing the quality of the output.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Ralph Burns: Everybody in the agency feels that way. We get that sense from people. Even though they're getting paid to do this, the big thing is that they all want and this is part of the screening process, and so I've matched them against what we refer to as the Agency Manifesto, which really is, I mean we're doing this to grow businesses faster, and the most gratifying part of the job isn't the money that you make necessarily, it's the fact that you've done something in an awesome way.

Molly Pittman: Absolutely.

Ralph Burns: And you just absolutely kicked butt, and you know, the customer appreciates that, and I think everyone in the agency feels that way, and that's sort of a company culture sort of thing. Even though it's a virtual agency, it's an undercurrent that runs through the entire organization.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Molly Pittman: Yup. Absolutely.

So what is step two, Ralph?

Ralph Burns: Step two is, well, we realized that we had to start growing and we couldn't do it all on email. And we couldn't do it just based upon what I thought. So in essence, what we did is, step two, is create systems. So, a very well-known digital marketer once told me two years ago, he's like, "You've got a completely unscalable business because it's too highly specialized," and I said, "It's the absolute reason why I'm going to grow it." Not because I just wanted to prove him wrong, but because there weren't any systems in place for this kind of stuff, so we had to create them all on our own. You know, myself and a guy on staff, Vladdy, who's been instrumental in helping create these systems, a guy who's been with us now for four or five years. So we created systems.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

So if there are no systems, you got to create them, and the problem is that getting that stuff from your head into a system that people can then use on a day-to-day basis is incredibly time-intensive and it did take us a while to do it, but what I think brought us back is that we wanted to sort of think like the airline industry, and I think this was something that was really influential from Keith, is that as a former airline pilot, he's like, "Dude, what you need to do is you need to create checklists of stuff, just put all the stuff that you know into a checklist." And when I did that, it was sort of the rough outline of what would become all our standard operating procedures and our manuals, our operations manuals. So I started, I got something down on every sort of aspect of what we do, and then I filled in the details after that.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

And we now still use both, we use a checklist, kind of like an airline pilot, but we also use our operations manuals that guide us when we have questions or when we run into problems, or we make sure that everything is very standardized. So if you haven't created systems or checklists for your business, the best time to do it is now, unfortunately. Because it's never going to get done on its own, you're never going to be able to scale without it. So, one of the books that I read, and I think I actually found it from Keith, Keith had recommended it to me, which is a book by Atul Gawande called *The Checklist Manifesto*, and it outlines how the medical industry actually was able to be checklisted, so having a background in medical sales and the medical industry, I knew that surgery which I used to sit in on as an anesthesiology salesperson was incredibly complicated. Incredibly complicated with lots of variables, and I said "If they can checklist surgery, why can't I checklist a Facebook Ads Agency?"





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

This book actually gave me a lot of confidence to be able to do it.

So checklists, the best thing about them is that it gives you an incredible amount of control, consistency, precision as well as duplicability, which I didn't know was a word before I did this presentation. But apparently-

Molly Pittman: Duplicability.

Ralph Burns: It's being able to duplicate stuff.

Molly Pittman: Mmmm, now we know.

Ralph Burns: Now we know, there you go, there's your 50-cent word of the day. But the problem is most people know they need this. They know they need an operations manual, they know they need a checklist, but where the hell do you start? And like I said, just start putting it down.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Putting down a piece of paper like as a checklist, "All right, do this, this, this, this, this," and then you'll fill in all the details after, okay, but just getting it down on paper or in an Evernote file is like your best first step, because at least you feel like, "I actually accomplished something," and then you fill it in SO write everything down you know, then revise it and edit it and fill in all the details and then just repeat that process until it's perfect.

And I mean, we've got, I think 15 different SOPs now that basically cover every aspect of Facebook ads that we can possibly think of and we're actually adding more because of cool stuff that we've learned in just the last three months, so just start with it. So if you're having trouble getting these ideas down on paper, couple of tips for you.

First off, big tip number one is get your top people to write them for you. So I add one of our top people who's been with me for a while now.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Actually, helped me write these together, so he feels a part of it, he feels, you know, he's got a sense of ownership with it, which isn't the reason why I had him do it because he just knows all the systems, so we did it together. So get your top people to help you write them as part of their job role. You might need to pay them a little extra if you want, but it really should be a part of their job role.

Tip number two is definitely use a sharing document. So we started doing this on PDFs and then we'd publish them and then we'd have to go back in because Facebook would change the interface or you know, the image on the ads manager all of a sudden looks completely different. So make it on a document that's a sharing doc. We use Google Drive Docs for this and it's worked out really, really well for us because we can revise it in real time, which is the last one, is also assign somebody on your staff to update it.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

And in our case, we update it almost daily. I actually have the same guy go back in and review all the checklists like every week to make sure that the images are correct, that they're up to date with what we're currently doing. So what we're currently doing isn't different than what we tell people to do, so we're constantly updating it.

It's not a perfect system by any stretch, but it's a pretty damn near perfect because we've got everything that we ever know or have ever done on Facebook Ads in a document so that we can hand this into a new trainee and say, "Read this, watch these videos and you'll be able to run ads just like we do inside the agency."

Molly Pittman: Bam!

Ralph Burns: Step number three, anything to add, Moll?





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Molly Pittman: Step number three. No, I mean, one of the core values at DigitalMarketer is document and share your knowledge.

Ralph Burns: Yeah.

Molly Pittman: And not only from the standpoint, of course, that's our business, right, to create content, to document what we do and to share with our customers so that you guys can then implement that knowledge and those checklists in your business, but there are a lot of things that are documented internally that we don't share, right?

Ralph Burns: Yeah. Yup.

Molly Pittman: And it's a part of every person's job not just to be good at your job, but to document what you're doing so that others can learn from it and so that someone can seriously sit down and pretty much do your job if they needed to.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

And it's been very helpful for onboarding, it's been very helpful for cross-training. If different members of your team know how to do one another's job, it's not only good from the sense of, "Oh, we can cover one another's back," you know, if you're on vacation, there's also a level of respect there. If you actually know what someone else is doing and how difficult that is and how much time it takes, you immediately respect them more, right, and you're more than willing to give them the benefit of a doubt, you have a better understanding of how your job function and what you do fits into what they do. So documenting knowledge and then sharing it with other people on the team, that's a huge part of our culture here at DM.

Ralph Burns: Yeah, that's awesome. And I think when you create that culture with everybody helping.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

That's what we really try to foster inside the agency because it's not because it's, like, contrived, it's like it's the right thing to do. Like, wouldn't you want to help somebody else?

Molly Pittman: Exactly. Yeah.

Ralph Burns: Just because you know something, why keep it to yourself?

Molly Pittman: Yeah, I mean, we have a hashtag that we use, you know, in our internal communication, and it's #oneteam and, you know, we all have different teams and work more closely with certain people, but we are all one team with the mission of doubling the size of 10,000 businesses, and if we forget that and get too siloed or quit communicating with people outside of certain departments, that's not good for the company, so we're always trying to foster that idea of "We are one team with one mission."





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Ralph Burns: Yeah, yeah, that's great. You guys have been able to really do that so well. I think a lot of, like, your company culture stuff, we've certainly adopted. Especially since we talk all the time.

Molly Pittman: Yeah, absolutely.

Ralph Burns: So always be looking at other model organizations to sort of adopt that mentality or maybe that way in which they manage their teams or do specific things, and I think your organization is going to grow and just make it be that much better in the process.

So step number three, and lastly in our three-step formula to building a multimillion dollar virtual marketing agency is simple project management software. So might seem obvious, but a lot of people, it's not.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Obviously, the amount of emails that I get in my inbox, I can't possibly run a team or a company just through email alone, and usually pain leads us to do something inside the agency. If it's too much pain, we need to create a better way of doing it, and we were running initially, when it was one guy and a VA and maybe an account manager, we remember doing everything on email, it just became unwieldy, and I realized it wasn't a way for us to grow. So obviously, we're all virtual, so we can't be in an office together and sort of collaborate on stuff, so we needed a repository for all these ideas, for all these processes, for all these checklists, and for communication internally among ourselves, and get everything off email as much as we possibly can.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

So we looked around for a lot of different project management solutions, and probably tested, I would say seven or eight of them and we settled on one that I really felt was the best, and we are still using it to this day. It was recommended to me by my friend, Mike Rhodes, who also runs an AdWords agency and is awesome at what he does, which is, we use Podio. Podio is our project management software of choice, you can certainly use whatever you want though, however it works. I've seen other systems work really well as well, but what we love about Podio is that it's super flexible, it's customizable completely, it's totally task driven, and it's also just easy to use. And I think if it's easy to use and you've got virtual people all around the world, you want them to use this thing, because if they don't use it, then you're really screwed.

Molly Pittman: Right.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Ralph Burns: Like, you're just not going to get stuff done.

Molly Pittman: It has to be used systematically.

Ralph Burns: Yes, it has to be actually used. So, when we introduced this, I sort of said, "Hey, you know, we're going to do this," and this is when we were much smaller at that point. I'm like, "I need your feedback, does this thing suck or is it good?" I wasn't beholden to it, you know, I always say there's only one thing I'm married to in my life, which is my wife. Any idea and business, I am not married to. So if you show me a better way, then let's figure it out. So the team really, they adopted it and they embraced it and made it better. So if you make a team, you know, a part of a decision like that, like we're evaluating a third-party software platform right now, I'm getting everybody's feedback. Like, if you guys don't like it, we're not going with it.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Like, it's the same sort of thing with Podio. So they liked it, we adopted it, we changed it, it's super flexible, now you can integrate it with Zapier and a bunch of other different applications, it's way cool. And you don't need to be like a tech person - I am like the least tech person there is to be able to operate it, but I created the whole, you know, project management software on my own inside Podio, and you can do the same. I just customized it for how we need to use it. So that's one of the things we like about it. The other thing is that I can literally run the agency from my phone. The app for Podio is really, really good, as well as the iPad app and the application on your web browser. So that's one of the things I really liked about it, which is because we're all mobile and we want to be able to be informed of what's going on, but not necessarily attached to our jobs. So the Podio app on iPhone and Android as well as iPad are just really awesome.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

So how we use it is we use it, sort of in three different ways. And when we use it for like, daily updates, there's a setting that actually gives daily updates as well as anybody who @s you, like if they need your help, I say, "Hey, if you need my help specifically, @, you know, Ralph Burns inside Podio and I'll prioritize that. So I prioritize my tasks based on either @s or my unread notifications. Super simple. There's a chat feature so you can actually chat with people both mobile as well as in the web app, which makes communication, especially with an international group like we've got, real easy. So we separate how I run the agency basically into two separate projects. So there's a sales project which is myself, my business development manager and a couple of select people, and then the management project, and inside management is where we sort of have an ongoing conversation about what's going on with a customer.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

So how we've been able to produce this and put this together is that we sort of do it from left to right.

Like when a customer is just about to become a customer, maybe we do that at Account Audit and Action Plan. That's our first app inside that management project. And then the next step would be onboarding. The next step after that would be create their Ad Copy and create their Creatives, like we have an Ad Copy and a Creatives app and then we have the Campaign app where we put together the whole Michigan method and pull it all together. And then there's a reporting app and there's also Training which we use for our international training, so we work with everything sort of in a left to right way.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

And in each individual app, there's tasks which you can assign to people, and you can communicate with people pretty effortlessly with a, sort of a activity area and comments so you can stay up to date on what's going on. So we try and put everything into Podio, and communicate with the team through that activity part of Podio, which is super helpful.

The end result is that, you know, we use all these three steps together to just create as best a result as we possibly can for our agency customers, and so we don't really think of ourselves as a Facebook Ads agency. Our company is, we grow businesses faster than they could've done it on their own because Facebook Ads is just the platform for it.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Because as you guys know, listening to this show and if you listen to any of these episodes here, you know it's a very advanced advertising platform, and if it's used the right way, you can really grow businesses and really help a lot of people and that's really what we aim to do, and these three steps have enabled us to get some really good results for our customers.

Molly Pittman: Really good information, and again, great information not just for an agency, not just for a marketing agency, but anyone that has a business or works for a business and manages team members. So thank you so much, Ralph.

Ralph Burns: You bet.

Molly Pittman: It's cool to see how we all ended up here, right? Not just the podcast, but in the digital marketing world. So I hope you guys found this valuable.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

If you're part of any of our memberships, Keith and Ralph's [Facebook Ads University](#) or [DigitalMarketer Engage](#), we love to hear your stories, we love to hear how you got to where you are right now.

Keith Krance: Hey, this is Keith again and I hope you enjoyed this episode. I think even if you don't have an agency or a consulting business, that there is a ton of gold in this episode, for really scaling any type of business. So, I'm going to give you my three keys here. Number one, my number one growth hack is figuring out a way to build authority or piggy back off someone else's authority. By far, the number one fastest way to grow a consultancy or an agency and what that will do is it will give you a constant influx of clients that are asking you to take their money. When I first started, for some reason, I probably learned this from reading one of [Ryan Deiss' articles](#) or watching one of his videos, I knew that I needed to build my authority because I was new into this space.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

So I went out and wrote and published my own book. I self-published it through Amazon's KDP program, did a Kindle and a printed book, only printed out like, I don't know, 50 copies or something like that. And I did it for authority.

I wasn't trying to make any money, I wasn't trying to use a book funnel, but that book led to one important client because he saw me as an authority. That client was in a mastermind with Perry and Marshall, next thing you know, he's telling Perry about the results he's getting from me, and I hear from Perry, his marketing manager, Jack Borne. Then I start running Facebook ads for free, for Perry. Next thing you know, they're getting customers cheaper than they ever had before. And fast forward another year and a half, two years, and we've done three courses together, and Perry asked me to co-author his book, which is published by Entrepreneur Press, and in Barnes and Nobles now, and the rest is history.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

But we've done this over and over again, and we're continuing to do this with people on our team, with our consultants who get certified through our program. So when I first met Ralph at one of my workshops in late 2013, he came to me and offered a solution.

And I have authority, but guess what, I can't execute. I'm trying to build my own programs, products, and build a team and manage clients and it's hard to say no to everybody that wants to hire us, and Ralph comes along and offers an amazing solution. Takes on one client, next thing you know, that leads to two, next thing you know, that leads to him running the agency side of the business, and we had amazing synergy. We still had a problem. Everybody wanted to talk to Keith because he was out front, he was the face.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

If you read the book, *Pre-Suasion*, which we've talked about quite a bit lately, you'll see some of this two-thirds into the book or so, and the celebrity effect is kind of crazy, what happens, but I've seen it happen as we have continued to position different people as authorities.

And once we started having Ralph do consulting calls, when people were buying consulting calls, then having Ralph on our webinars, then having Ralph on the podcasts. Next thing you know, he's crushing it in the agency, but if he's crushing it in the agency and nobody knows about it, you don't have the demand without the authority. This is why we took so long to build our certification the way we did it, because I know the number one driver is authority. Now that leads to number two. You have to get results. Another Steve Jobs quote, "We don't get a chance to do that many things, and everyone should be really excellent, because this is our life. Life is brief, and then you die, you know.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

And we've all chosen to do this with our lives, so it better be damn good. It better be worth it." And that's one of Ralph's amazing strengths, is that he does not quit. He is not ever satisfied if the results are not up to his standards, which are high. And clients know that if something goes wrong, then he will do whatever it takes to get those amazing results.

Number three is know your strengths. This goes back to the quote that I said at the beginning of this episode, the Beatles. "I am a visionary leader and I know that. I have been the background pushing to innovate. We don't want Kodak, right, we don't want some guy on the other side of the country working for some small agency doing amazing things, next thing you know they're completely out of touch. But I know that's my strengths and I know that I'm not going to try to get in there and manage every person on a day-to-day basis.



## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Does that mean we have to have 20 different people that all have perfectly different puzzle piece traits? No. We've got a guy that came out of our certification that's completely crushing it and has been for the last year, really, with one main employee. He's just got amazing systems, and they complement each other. Their strengths are fairly opposite, and they have amazing systems. So Ralph and I were doing this with just both of us. Then we get a couple other people pretty quickly but still, you do not have to build a massive team.

You just have to know your strengths. So get results, know your strengths, and do whatever it takes to hack that authority. Piggyback off somebody else. I promise you, it will be worth it. And I'm going to sign off with this quote from Steve Jobs: "Your time is limited, don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma which is living the result of other people's think.





## Episode 92: The 3-Step Strategy to Grow and Scale a Multi-Million Dollar Marketing Agency

Don't let the noise of other opinions drown your inner voice, and most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary. This is what we've done from day one. We've always taken the systems, they are proven, and we've slightly innovated fit with our unique perspective and our individual clients' unique position. So be your authentic self, and I promise you the results will take care of themselves. I can't wait to talk to you next week. Good bye.

Thanks so much for joining us this week. Want to subscribe to *Perpetual Traffic*? Have some feedback you'd like to share?

Connect with us on [iTunes!](#)

iTunes not your thing?

Find us on [Stitcher](#) or at [DigitalMarketer.com/podcast](https://DigitalMarketer.com/podcast).

