

This is an edited transcript of the November 19, 2014 SmallBusinessTalent.com podcast interview titled: [Creative Marketing Ideas for Solo Professionals: An Interview with Donnie Bryant, Jr.](#)

Announcer: Are you a hard-working, self-employed professional striving for small business success? There is help. Welcome to the SmallBusinessTalent.com podcast featuring candid conversations about successful self-employment.

Stephen Lahey: Welcome to the SmallBusinessTalent.com podcast. I'm Stephen Lahey, and I'll be your host.

My special guest on the podcast today is [Donnie Bryant](#). Donnie is a well-respected direct response marketing copywriter and marketing consultant who helps small businesses and solo professionals like us to connect with and convert "should-be clients" to clients with unusually effective marketing messages and systems.

Since launching his copy writing and marketing consulting practice seven years ago, Donnie has been hired by a variety of high profile clients, including Early to Rise and Experian. In addition, he has helped a wide variety of solo entrepreneurs to grow their sales through creative and cost effective marketing strategies.

The bottom line? If you want to learn some powerful, highly ethical ways to "get to yes" with your ideal prospects, then you'll find the information that Donnie shares in this interview valuable and refreshing.

Thanks for making the time to be here, Donnie.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: The pleasure is mine. Thanks for having me back on your show.

Stephen Lahey: It's great to have you back. When you first joined me on the podcast that was about eight months ago and—

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Has it been that long?

Stephen Lahey: Yes, and a lot of new subscribers have come on board since then.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Congratulations.

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Stephen Lahey: Thanks! Of course, this also means that a lot of the people listening today don't know you yet. So tell us a little bit about your professional background and then what led you to become a self-employed copywriter and marketing consultant.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Before I started my business I was a manager working the wild world of big box retail. And spending 60, 70, 80 hours a week in the store and away from my family, that motivated me to start looking for something that I could do from home where I could make enough money to take care of business and be able to also spend time with my family. I providentially stumbled across copywriting and marketing and spent about two years just grinding really hard and trying to learn, trying to get my first clients. I kind of got my start there.

Stephen Lahey: So you've been full time focused on copywriting and consulting around different marketing issues for many companies for the better part of a decade now. Who do you serve these days, Donnie?

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Today I'm working primarily with small businesses and solo professionals. A lot of people who are also marketers, too. You know how hard it is to market yourself. No matter how good you are at marketing, selling your own services tends to be the hardest sale that you can make. So, I sometimes work with other people involved with marketing. And recently I've picked up a couple of CPAs as clients. So people in those kinds of entrepreneurial ventures, too.

Stephen Lahey: I think for professional service providers particularly, most of us aren't that interested in tooting our own horn. But, you know what? You have to be able to promote yourself.

You and I have discussed the need for solo professionals think outside-the-box when it comes to marketing and not just do what everybody else is doing. Why is that important, especially for let's say that solo CPA or solo consultant?

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: There is so much noise out there today, online and offline. The most recent statistic I heard is that each of us, at least in America, are bombarded by something like 4000 to 5000 marketing messages per day. We're not even aware of most of them. If I asked you, Steve, what commercials have you seen or heard or

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what ads have you seen today, you couldn't name 5000. You probably couldn't name a hundred, but they're there. So it takes something to grab our attention in order for us to notice that marketing message. And the only way I'll do business with you is if you first grab my attention and secondly put something in front of me that I might want and believe would be beneficial to me. So if we don't think differently than our peers and our competitors and just the overall noise, we'll never be able to sell our services and our products.

And like you said, it's really hard for us. We don't go into business to become marketers. We don't go into business to toot our own horn. We go into business to help people, to provide a service, to share those gifts that we have with the world. We want to do that, but in order for us to make the impact on the world that we can have and that we're called to have, we need to be able to get in front of those people whom we can help. So that's why we have to demonstrate our uniqueness in a way that calls out to the people whom we can help.

Stephen Lahey:

Yes, and I think that then relates to strategy because you're marketing to someone in particular, not just "a market", and they have specific felt-needs and your strategy kind of grows out of that. So, how important is developing a sound marketing strategy upfront? And then what are some of the basic steps involved in doing that? Let's take that CPA, for example, or someone who is a solo professional service provider. Why is it important to develop a strategy and how does that happen? How do we do it?

Donnie Bryant, Jr.:

I've found that most of us as small business people or solopreneurs, we don't like to think about marketing. Again, we didn't go into our professions to be a marketer, so a lot of times we either do what everybody else is doing or we do what the person before us did, but we need to be more purposeful about it. So I think it's essential to have a good strategy as soon as you can start having one. The best time to plant the tree was 20 years, according to the proverb. But the 2<sup>nd</sup> best time is now. So if we haven't had a strategy in the past, now is a great time to start.

I think of strategy in a few different sections. First of all, deciding who your ideal client is. Who is it that needs what you have and whom can you benefit most? Not everybody can or should do business with us. You have to decide who you want to market to,

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otherwise you're just going to be adding to the marketing noise. Of course, the best way to get somebody's attention is to talk about something they're interested in. Talk about problems they have. Talk about dreams that they are trying to accomplish. Talk about what's going on in their world.

The only way you can be targeted in your message that way is to know exactly who you're talking to. So I think that's first. Deciding who it is you want as your client.

Secondly is figuring out a way to get their attention and to turn them into a lead by offering them a reason to get in contact with you or to give you their information and allow you to contact them in the future. We call that lead generation.

And then there's follow up, which is just staying in contact. Why? Because people are not necessarily going to buy from you the first time they see you or hear from you. As a matter of fact, that almost never happens. But you want to at least be in touch with them until they're ready to buy or until they decide that they don't want to hear from you again. People are at different stages in business and life all the time, so you want to stay in front of them and keep top of mind awareness.

And ideally you will continue to educate and add value in a way that makes you trustworthy and makes your email or your newsletter a welcome arrival rather than just junk mail. And then at some point you're making an attempt to sell them something or to make an offer. So it goes from deciding who you want to talk to, turning them into a lead and nurturing that relationship until they're ready to buy.

And then I take it a step further. Once you've turned them into a customer, you want to be as valuable to them as you can be. Serve them in every way that you can. In fact, if there's a way that somebody else can serve them that you know, you probably should say, hey, I know a guy. Steve Lahey can help you with something I can't help you with.

So I think that's four or five steps. Picking who you want to talk to, turning them into leads, making the leads, giving value and giving them a reason to buy from you until they buy, and then just making that relationship as mutually profitable as possible.

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Stephen Lahey: Thinking in terms of the theme of this podcast, one of the things I had talked to you about before we started the recording was let's dive into some outside-the-box or creative approaches to marketing our business. So, with a solo entrepreneur in mind, give us a few examples of what you've implemented or what you've seen in terms of out-of-the-box approaches to standing out when we market our business.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: I'm of the mind that there's benefit in going backwards in time, pulling out the old stuff and making old things new again rather than trying to be always on the cutting edge.

Other people will tell you, you've got to have the newest shiny thing or you got to have Facebook this or Twitter that. That's all fine and dandy. Everybody is kind of doing that. But some old school ideas I think you'll find are pretty compelling and they're going to grab more attention than online stuff or cutting edge stuff – because nobody else using them. None of your competitors are going to do some of these things.

So the first idea is a classic. It's maybe not super outside-the-box, but it's not used nearly often enough today. That's using direct mail with something lumpy in it. We call it lumpy mail or 3D mail, or grabbers.

As you know, we used to hate getting junk mail. But now you don't really see that much mail, at least I don't, compared with what we used to get. So you're not competing with the thousand messages in somebody's email inbox. You're competing with three or four envelopes, two of which are probably bills, and nobody wants to look at those anyway, in somebody's physical mailbox. And especially if you add that third dimension to it, if you put a little something inside of the envelope to make it “lumpy”, well, then the appeal is almost irresistible. I've got to see what's going on inside of this envelope.

I've gotten a bunch of them and I've used some of them, too. You can send a lot of things, but I like sending little flash drives with recorded messages. Yes, this has a little bit of cost to it. You have to be purposeful with who you're sending them out to and you have to know that what you offer is going to benefit those that are going to convert.

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The purpose behind this approach is to make it almost impossible not to open the mail, but you want to have something enclosed that's relevant to the message. Let's say I'm selling my copywriting services. I can send somebody a pen and say that the pen is mightier than the sword, and then explain how my writing services can benefit your business. And, okay, that pen isn't going to change their life, but it will get their attention and get them to open the envelope and it ties in to the letter in a way that gets the imagination going and is memorable. And if it's a nice pen, they might keep it around which reminds them about me.

So I think a relevant tie-in to the message is important. I think if you send something that's useful, like say a pen, I don't throw away pens. I don't know anybody who does. You keep them around and you never know when you'll need one. I have a pen from the lawyer who helped me buy my house six years ago, seven years ago. I still have that pen, so I know the guy's name, I know his address, and I know his phone number. So I think having something of value, first of all, makes a big impression on the recipient, and then they might keep it around as a good reminder. Make sure that they can tell you put some thought into it.

I think the next thing is, and it's something that almost nobody does today; it's taking it even further by making it a series of mailings. I'm not just sending one and hoping it works. Send three. Send five. Send one a month until you've said everything you want to say or until the person buys what you're trying to sell or tells you that they don't want it. So you can use a series to build momentum and you build awareness and build credibility.

Stephen Lahey: I think it ties back to something you said initially. Basically if everybody is zigging, then you might want to zag. And one way to stand out is, as the old baseball saying goes, hit the ball where they're not. That's how you get on base. Hit the ball where they're not.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Right.

Stephen Lahey: I love what you're talking about because you're mentioning something very basic. We all get mail and I think we do all understand on an intuitive level that if we get something that's like a little package, something "lumpy", then we're probably going to open it. We're going to check it out.

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Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Sure. You will.

Stephen Lahey: And if you get something that lingers like a good quality pen, for example, one that doesn't just stop writing right after you get it—

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Right.

Stephen Lahey: —then that does keep you in front of people in a positive way. So those are a couple of interesting things. Are there other outside-of-the-box ideas that we might also want to think about?

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Yes, I've got a couple. Let me say something else. There are companies that specialize in these kinds of grabbers that you put in an envelope. In fact, I've got some that are shredded money in a little plastic bag. I'm serious. I mean, I guess it's real money. But I think it's illegal to do that. Anyway, I have little plastic bags of shredded money. I guess the message is that you're throwing money down the drain if you're not doing this. Of course, it grabs your attention. And yes, I still have the little bags of money in my desk. It's really fascinating.

So just be creative. Do something, again, that it kind of proves your point or makes your point and emphasizes it.

So I wanted to take this a little bit further as point number two, if you will. I told you this story before. If you have a “best buyer” strategy, which is what the late Chet Holmes would have called it, and you pick a certain number of people who will revolutionize your business if you get them as clients. They'll cause your revenue to skyrocket. They'll put you in a whole other league as far as your business status goes. Pick a few people who really will change your business if you get them as clients and dedicate a special amount of attention to them.

A buddy of mine and I did this. There was a guy whom he wanted to do business with. Our idea was let's record an interview. Let's future-pace an interview, meaning let's pretend that it takes place five years from now. So, basically, we're going to record an interview looking back at the past five years, but pretending that these two guys actually connected and did business together, and how they ultimately created a great product together and served hundreds or thousands of people and made millions of dollars, how much fun they had. So, this interview was a fun

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conversation. And after we recorded it we sent it via FedEx. So that's taking direct mail to another level. Nobody just throws out FedEx. Nobody throws out UPS. They definitely open that.

So, we knew he got it and we knew he was going to open it. And inside the envelope there's a little letter that's an introduction to the idea and you pop the flash drive in and listen. And my buddy got a call the next day, the very next day. I guess it was the next day that he got it. It was late at night. Ten o'clock this guy called him. And they sealed a deal to do business together. He had a specific project that he wanted to work on with him.

Now he knew the person who he was reaching out to personally, not just generally. We actually knew that he had used a similar approach to get in contact and connect with the guy he wanted to be his mentor. He reached out to him in a similar way. There were no flash drives at this time, but he sent him a fake newspaper article. And that's how he met his mentor who changed his life. So we kind of pulled a story from his own life, and turned it back on him so it resonated and said – yes, we know you, we care about you as a person, we're not just trying to get money out of you, and in fact I have something valuable to offer you.

I think that the same thing applies to any of us. If there is somebody, an influencer in the industry whom we want to connect with or there are partners who have a similar customer base that we would like to tap into in a non-competitive business situation. Like a CPA, for example, may want to get in contact with a lawyer's client base because they're not competing, but I can help your clients with something that they need help with. You can benefit and I can benefit.

Stephen Lahey:

Yes, couple things come up with that strategy as well. For one thing, it's bold. And that's one of the things that makes it work. It's bold, but it's very tuned-in to the particular individual.

Years ago, I used to listen to Tony Robbins tapes and he had this feature called "Power Talk" where he would send some recordings every month. This was a long time ago, but I do remember that he talked at one point about how he had received a cassette tape—and yes, this is like in the 1980s or something—in the mail from someone who wanted him to hear about the concept of a reverse



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mortgage. This was way, way back when reverse mortgages were kind of a new and interesting concept. But the way he framed it was exactly what Tony was thinking about because he had this huge house right by the ocean, California taxes were killing him and so on. So, in other words, what you're doing is you're stepping into the mindset of the person that you're speaking with—

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Exactly.

Stephen Lahey: —and speaking to them in a creative enough way where it not only gets their attention, but also gets their interest. It's a little bit entertaining because it's novel. And like you said, it ties back to exactly what you're saying. It's novel because really not that many people are doing it, so you're standing out in a way that, I mean, it's not tremendously expensive.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: It doesn't have to be.

Stephen Lahey: Yes. It doesn't have to be. But it's different. And if you're really dialed in to that individual and their mindset, then it gets their attention. Obviously, you want to go with something that you think is going to relate to your brand and relate to them. So that's really interesting.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: And it's genuine. Like you say, you know, I think that I can help you.

Steve Gordon, whom you've interviewed recently, he's a buddy of mine, and he sent an email not too long ago and he was talking about a client of his who used the word "schemed"—but he used it in a good way. He went through a whole process to acquire a particular client. And he sells life insurance. Well, nobody wants to buy life insurance. It's not a pleasant thing to buy. But it's something that we need to take of our families.

Anyway, he said he went through a whole "scheme" to get this clients' attention, to get him to an event, to get him signed up for a newsletter, to get him to come into the office, to get him to buy the best life insurance policy that he could, not because he just wanted to get something out of him but because this is what you need to take care of your family and your situation. And in the end, it works out beneficially. Nobody likes to think about what

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happens when you *use* the life insurance policy, but you're sure glad that you have it.

So, Steve Gordon was talking about his client making it *personal*, making it *bold* because I care about giving you what it is that you need that you may not get from somebody else. This guy proved that he cared and he got the business.

Stephen Lahey: Yes.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: And I think that we can do the same thing. We're not just trying to get your money. I'm trying to effect change and transformation in your life. Maybe nobody can do it the way I can. And if we aren't a good fit, that's fine. But if I am, then you don't want to miss out on this opportunity, and neither do I.

I expect to get compensated for the value that I bring, but it's about me bringing value. That's what I'm here for.

Stephen Lahey: Yes, and that value comes through someone whom they can identify with from the standpoint of their personal values.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Right.

Stephen Lahey: So in the example of life insurance, of course most people really care about their families, but you're dealing with them from an equally caring perspective.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Right.

Stephen Lahey: And it's about identifying with their genuine concern for their family and so on. It's about sincerity. I think that's what all of us need to think about. It's not about marketing tips or tricks. It's about the caring spirit behind what we do.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Right.

Stephen Lahey: Given my values, that caring spirit, and given who I'm marketing to, then what marketing approach makes sense? We all need to have a certain set of values and a caring spirit behind our business, otherwise we're not going to have any kind of passion behind our strategy. And the strategy isn't just to make money.

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Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Right.

Stephen Lahey: The strategy is to do business in a certain way that reflects our values so we feel good about what we do. So, I like that you're kind of tying that in, Donnie.

And I'll just leave this thought with the listeners, if there a lot of sharks in your industry, or uncaring people, well, guess what? The low bar is everybody's friend, including yours. Meaning then it's pretty easy to stand out by just being a caring human being and doing it creatively.

Well, Donnie, so I don't know if you have any other thoughts you wanted to share before we wrap up.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Yes, let me mention one that I think is great. And everybody—I shouldn't say everybody, but they say the biggest fear that people have is public speaking, but events are a great way to do marketing.

I'll tell you how to do it in a way that involves almost no pressure. You can go to Ticketmaster and have physical tickets printed out. I think it's 300 for something like \$40. It's very cheap. You can give them to your clients, your current clients or colleagues who, again, have a similar client base to what you have but they're not competitive with you.

So a lawyer can say to a CPA, for example, here are 50 free tickets for your clients. We're going to have an event where we're going to teach something cool, whatever it is, or a networking event, etc. So, the people you're handing your free tickets to can hand them to their best clients and say – I value our relationship, I think you'll get a benefit from this seminar in town.

This is about getting them in a room where, again, you're going to be teaching them something. And hopefully, they're bringing in people who are potential clients and you can turn them into leads by bringing them into your event and getting their contact information. You can tell them – if you're interested in the thing that we're talking about here, then I can follow up with you in the future. I can send you a newsletter. I can send you a book in the mail. I can send you an MP3 download if you give me your email address. However you want to convert that into a lead is fine.

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But there's no pressure because it's free. And because the event attendee values and trusts the other person who gave them their free ticket, then that transfers trust from that person to you.

Stephen Lahey: Interesting. Let's say a typical CPA, I think you were talking about, a CPA, their clients have certain needs that aren't being met by them because it's just not the business that they're in.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Right.

Stephen Lahey: I'll give an example. Not every CPA, for example, is going to want to spend the time and energy to teach their clients how to use QuickBooks or whatever.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Sure. Right.

Stephen Lahey: But the bottom line is, if you're someone who can come in and make their life better by helping their clients learn how to use QuickBooks in a way where they can do a handoff of their records to that CPA which is a lot more clean, then that's great.

So it's kind of finding those relationships where there's a need, I would think, on the part of that CPA, or whomever, and hopefully you can educate their client base on something that they wish they could but it's just not the business they're in. It's just not where they want to focus. Does that make sense?

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Absolutely. And that's a great point. The nice thing about it is if the CPA invites the lawyer, and he invites such and such, then you can say, hey look, you're going to have even more people so each of you who bring your clients here, you have an opportunity to mingle with other people who may become your client, so everybody wins. Everybody wins because the room has all these different needs that this one group probably has in common in a room filled with trust and a room where value is being delivered. I think that's a "can't lose" situation, like I said, as long as you can find a way to get in front of the crowd and deliver value.

Stephen Lahey: Yes, and I'll just say as we wrap up that of course that implies that you've built trust with that person to whom you give those free tickets. That's what it's all based on. And that's one of the reasons why it is so valuable to build cooperative relationships

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because over time you can do some creative things that otherwise you probably couldn't accomplish alone.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: Right.

Stephen Lahey: Well, as we wrap up, Donnie, I know that people will want to connect with you online. How can they do that?

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: My website is probably the best way. I've been neglecting it lately, but you can still go there. You can sign up for my newsletter there at [Donnie-Bryant.com](http://Donnie-Bryant.com).

I also hang out on Twitter more these days than I probably should. I'm [@DonnieBryantJr](https://twitter.com/DonnieBryantJr) – and I respond to everybody because I think that's how social media should be.

Stephen Lahey: Well, thank you so much for joining me on the podcast again, Donnie. Appreciate it.

Donnie Bryant, Jr.: My pleasure. Actually, this is a really fun way for me to spend my time. Love you and your show and I hope your audience got something out of this interview.

Stephen Lahey: Well, I'm glad that you could join me again and share some creative marketing ideas, Donnie. The audience will not only enjoy this interview, but they're also going to take some of your ideas and run with them. That's my hope. Thank you again, Donnie.

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