

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/how-to-build-trust-without-a-track-record/>

MasterClass founder and CEO David Rogier explains how he landed the first celebrity teachers for his company through hundreds of cold calls and emails, and offers advice on avoiding early-stage discouragement. When trying to attract talent to a new venture without a track record, he advises, it helps to consider what the other party will get out of the transaction, and reference respected collaborators to build trust. And when people tell you that what you're doing is impossible, he says, take it as a sign you've found a new and novel opportunity.



Transcript

Ravi Belani How did you successfully recruit those 00:00:06,150 first few famous and busy people to teach classes when you did not already have the reputation for them to trust you, and it was just the very beginning? - I mean cold calls and cold, cold emails.. 00:00:16,623 One of the first was James, Pat James, Pat James, Pat James, Pat.... James Patterson, who's like the best living author in the country.. I sent lots of cold emails and notes.. I mean lots and lots of em.. And, and then one day, I'm walking in Santa Monica, and I get a call on my cellphone.. It's from this phone number I don't, I don't, I don't I don't, I don't recognize, which is like.... But I answered it.. I don't know why I answered it.. Now I wouldn't probably, right? And, and he's like, "Hi..

This is James Patterson." And I was so unsmooth.. I was like, "The author?" And he's like, "Yeah." I'm like, "I'm probably surprised to hear from you." And James is like, "Well, I'm a surprising guy." And I was like, okay well, now he's funny, right? And he's like, "I saw your proposal (indistinct).. I would love to, I would love to teach." And you're like, "Oh." And in my head I'm like, "Wait, how do I know if this is really James Patterson?" Like, is it a friend playing a prank? What is it? And then, you know, we met, we met him.. We spent time with him and.... But it was cold, it was cold calls and cold emails for the most part.. I think one of the things that we tried to do was think, okay, what is it that these folks care a lot about? Well these folks, you know, it's not, it's not, it's not about, it's not about money.. They can do an American Express commercial and earn much more money.. It's like they, there's somebody in their life that taught them that had a big impact on them that they want to give back.. Okay.. Well, that's one thing..

Two is, they're gonna care a lot that it's good.. I mean they're putting their names on it.. So they all wanna make sure that it's good.. Okay how can I show that? I don't come from film background.. But they're other folks I can work with.. So for example, Bill Guttentag, who's a professor at Stanford, who does some film classes.. I talked to him, and we went to him to ask for advice.. And he's like, "I'm going to shoot a few." And you're like, "Wait, really? Cause if you're gonna do that, there's gonna be a much easier process." Jay Roach is a director who did the same thing.. And so, by attaching some of these folks, it was a sign that they could.. (ambient microphone static shimmer) It was gonna, it was gonna be something, it was gonna..

They could, they could.. They were gonna be a part of it.. - That's terrific.. 00:02:23,010 How many cold emails, just out of curiosity, did you have to send, do you think before you got your first bite? - Well, I mean probably, in the, in the, 00:02:30,870 in the hundreds.. And, I think one thing I learned was lots of people are gonna tell you that your idea is impossible.. Those same people after the idea works are gonna tell you "I always told you it was a great idea." But, the important part is, when somebody says impossible, I used to get discouraged about it, to be honest, and like sad about it a little bit.. Cause like you're trying any signal or sign that your idea is gonna work, and so anybody who says something bad about it, it, like it hurts.. I was looking at that completely wrong.. When somebody says an idea is impossible, chase that idea.. Because what any start, any startup, if your idea, or you're gonna join somebody else's..

You have to believe in the impossible.. You have to believe in something that the rest of the world thinks cannot be done.. Otherwise, they would do it.. Or, they think it's just a bad idea.. So you're, by, you have to get okay with that, and now you can look at that, when somebody says it's impossible like, "Ooh, if they think it's impossible, that might mean's opportunity there actually.. (mild techno sci-fi music)..