Introduction:

TO

GROWTH HACKING

(Mindset, Framework, Tools, and Hacks) | E-commerce Edition

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*A Growth Hacker
isn't like an abstract artist
who leaves the interpretation
up to you, rather like a surgeon,
meticulous in his approach,
aiming each precisely crafted strategy
towards his targeted audience.*

– Rajiv Pratap Singh

HOW DID GROWTH HACKING COME ABOUT?

Five years ago, there was an initiation to a revolution in the way we think about Marketing. Sean Ellis, the father of growth hacking, coined the phrase a little over a decade ago.

He was frustrated, trying to find the right replacement for himself. What happened was Sean was helping tons of companies reach high-level growth, some to the point where they got listed for an IPO too!

In Silicon Valley, he almost became the one-person growth shop: he set up mindsets, processes, systems that could live on even after he decided to leave. His idea was to relinquish the reins to his growth machine to someone and eventually sail off into the sunset. This is where all the frustration started for him.

You see, while all the resumes he was receiving were good and decreed, they weren't relevant. All these folks sure had marketing degrees and experience within the field, but they were all missing that something; *that X factor.*

Your everyday marketing textbooks and guides would not show the strategies that Sean was using at this time. Thus, the challenge was if he were to give someone the reigns, would they really be a good fit?

Hey realized that traditional marketing would not help people in the long term since it focuses on the "let's throw multiple ideas on the wall and watch which one sticks." His issue with the traditional way things were working was that it wasn't focused enough to be a strategy to grow. *He needed someone who lived and breathed "growth".*

Sean realized, when he asked for marketers, he got marketers. Then he should be asking for a growth hacker, and that's how this term "growth hacking" was born. He famously said,

"A growth hacker is someone whose true north is growth. Everything they do is scrutinized by its potential impact on scalable growth". You must have come across this phrase whenever you searched the keyword "growth hacking".

So you can understand from the above that a growth hacker is not a replacement for a marketer, nor is he better than a marketer. He is just different from a marketer because all he focuses on is growth, growth and growth alone. Their uperpower is their obsessive focus on the one thing: growth. This is the very factor that differentiates them from the rest of the marketers. While traditional marketers do focus on growth, they are not as obsessed with it. They need to focus on various other factors like budgets, expenses, conversions etc. that would improve overall growth.

Right now if you are a start-up, I'm willing to bet you're no stranger to the term growth hacking. Earlier, the buzzwords used to be iterating and pivoting but now seems like growth hacking has taken over. And for good reason, I might add. Well, you might add it's highly annoying to see it everywhere; perhaps it's overused. Someone else might say that it's the most confusing word they have come across. Fear not, I write this book, so you understand what exactly growth hacking is in a simplified manner. I also intend to give you a step-by-step framework that you can use for your eCommerce set up.

If you are looking for shortcuts and hacks and tricks, let me save you some time and tell you upfront, this eBook is not about that. I will detail a proper framework that you can follow, which will bring you the success you envision for your brand. The reason for a framework is that shortcuts and tricks will only get you so far in your journey to success. There needs to be a proper vision, a plan, and a strategy to execute your plan if you desire exponential growth.

I have sourced a couple of examples that would show you the significance of growth hacking and inspire you with creative ways to hack your growth in this ever so crowded space of eCommerce. I wish you the best as you try to catapult your business. Let's start from the basics... What exactly is growth hacking?

Growth Hackers aren't afraid to challenge the traditional ways of marketing. Rather, they strive to chart new paths that generate explosive results.

– Rajiv Pratap Singh

WHAT IS GROWTH HACKING, ANYWAY?

According to Sean, *"the definition of growth hacking was actually based more on the definition of what growth hacking is not".* Unlike the first impression gained when reading the phrase, the growth marketing process is not sorcery of ingenious hacks and shortcuts. Rather it is a mindset. A mindset that is hyper-focused on fast-paced and sustainable growth via different actions.

It pertains to finding out how one can grow a business, most efficiently. If you can find $0 methods, technically, you can scale these businesses forever. If you can create a foolproof $0 system, you can rake humungous chunks of dollars and increase your profits faster.

But, in a more realistic sense growth hacking is the idea that you can take an ingenious and non-traditional approach to increase your growth rate and adopt your product by "hacking" something together explicitly for growth purposes. This essentially means that you need to create a system that allows you to ascend and duplicate that new process you discovered to efficiently accomplish, test, and gain more insights from these growth hacks.

As we have already discussed above, growth marketing entails a clear, outcome-oriented process. This means that you need to have a clear understanding of product-market fit, full-funnel strategy, rapid experimentation, optimization, analytics, and many other practices. This means that growth hacking is an intersection of marketing teams, product teams, creative teams, development teams, etc. As Brian Balfour says, when it comes to growth hacking, *"focus on the process first and tactics second".*

"

The principal objective of growth hacking is to create a user acquisition coefficient that is higher than one. For example, a company should aim to have more people using their product over time than it loses from attrition. By experimenting with different growth hacking methods, companies can determine the optimal means to increase that coefficient dramatically.

*– Andy Johns*
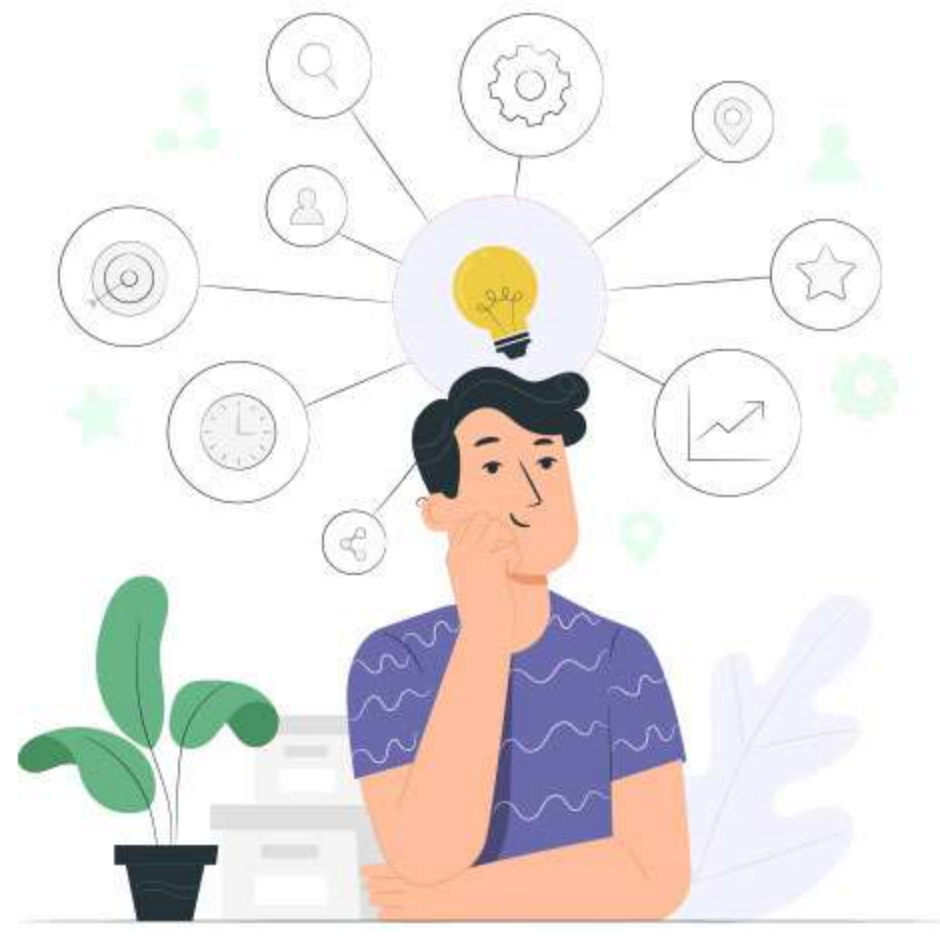
WHAT IS THE GROWTH HACKER MINDSET?

As I already mentioned, *a growth hacker is one who is guided by growth.* Whatever they do is always looked under the microscope of its potential impact on growth. So, for example, if they were posed with the question: Is positioning important? They would consider it **only** if it would have **any** impact on sustainable growth.

GROWTH HACKING

Engineering

Marketing

SUCCESSES!

Experiments

A growth hacker doesn't need to have coding experience. We have seen even people with sales backgrounds become good growth hackers. *What is important is that a growth hacker should have a burning desire to connect your solution with your target market.* They are creative folks who figure out new ways to drive growth even while testing/ evolving techniques already prevalent in the market. They are extremely disciplined and analytical souls that constantly seek approaches to find more ways to scale a business.

Did you ever stop to consider why the term "hacker" in growth hacker is so important? Let's draw some comparisons between different kinds of hackers to see how a growth hacker compares:
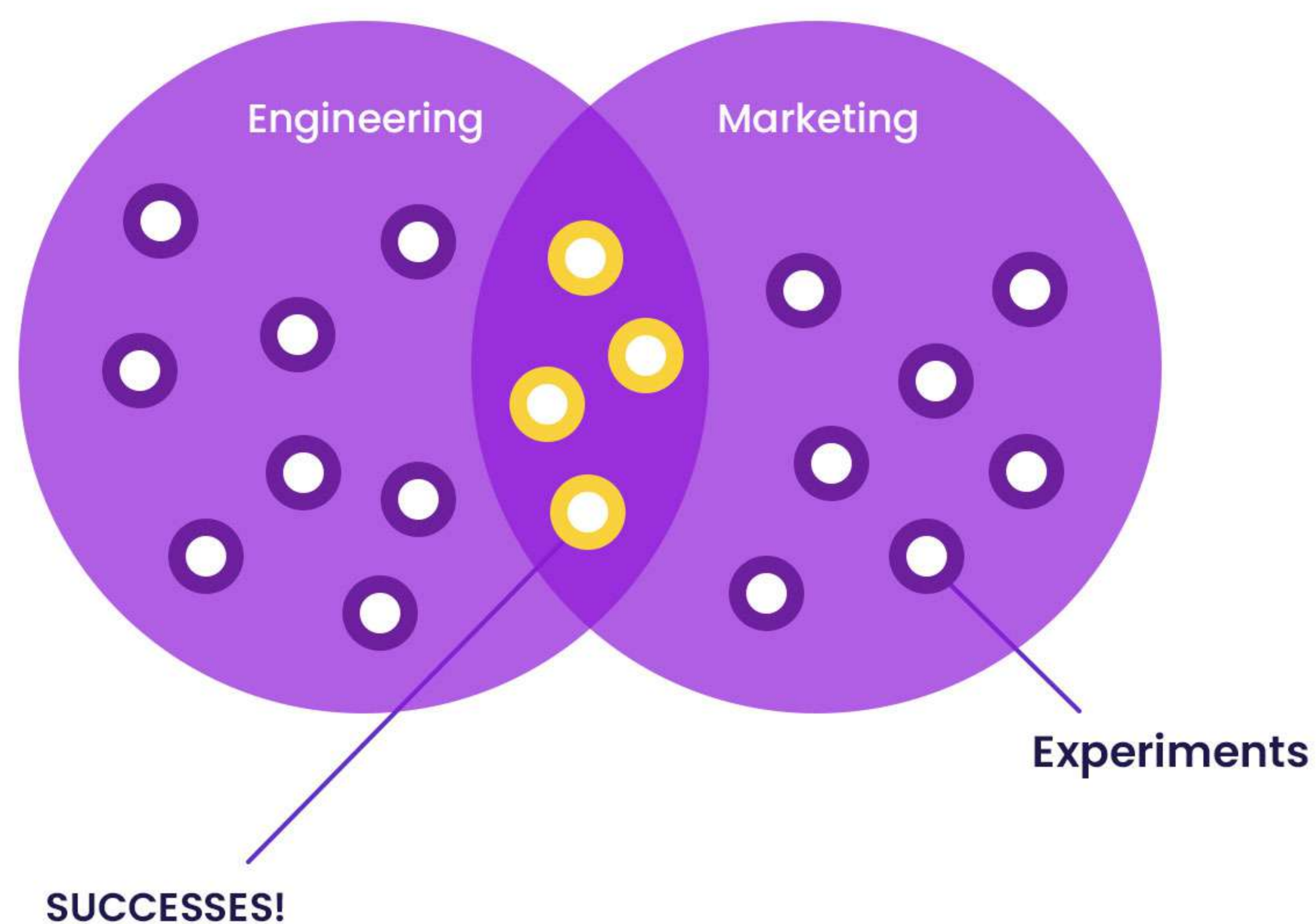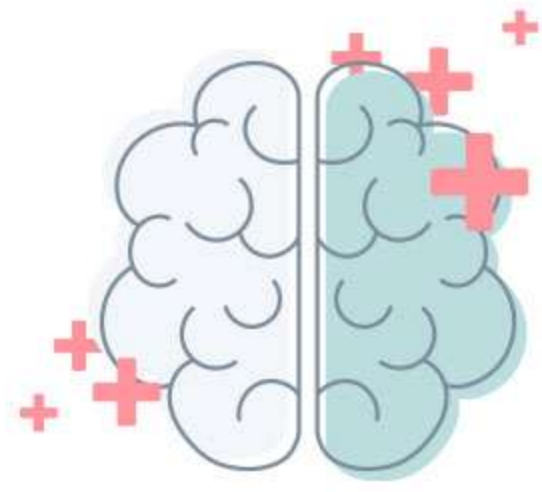
INGENIUS HACKER

If you were to look up at the definition of a hacker, you would come across terms like "clever" or "original" or even "inventive". You can think of a life hacker in these terms. *Growth hackers have a similar attitude as they are forced to get creative and inventive to find solutions to growth challenges.* Channels to growth aren't always that obvious, and it takes a sharp and creative eye to find a solution to those problems.

SOFTWARE HACKER

A software hacker is someone who uses programming knowledge to gain access to a computer or file. While a growth hacker may not be as sound in the technicality of programming, they *use technology-based solutions for the challenges they face.* They might end up using different kinds of softwares, databases, APIs, and other related tools for growing your business.

ILLEGAL HACKER

This is where we are talking about the unethical hackers who log into someone's system and gain unauthorized access to their files. A growth hacker would certainly not do something like this, but the reason I brought forward this comparison is to show you that *they too are willing to push the boundaries just enough to get what is expected of them.* For example, if a social platform releases a new API, a good growth hacker would think of using it to gain new users before the very API is closed. System weaknesses allow growth and growth hackers are always on the lookout.

Now that we have understood a growth hacker's profile, let's understand why there is so much hype around this phrase in silicon valley and why everyone wants a bite of the action.

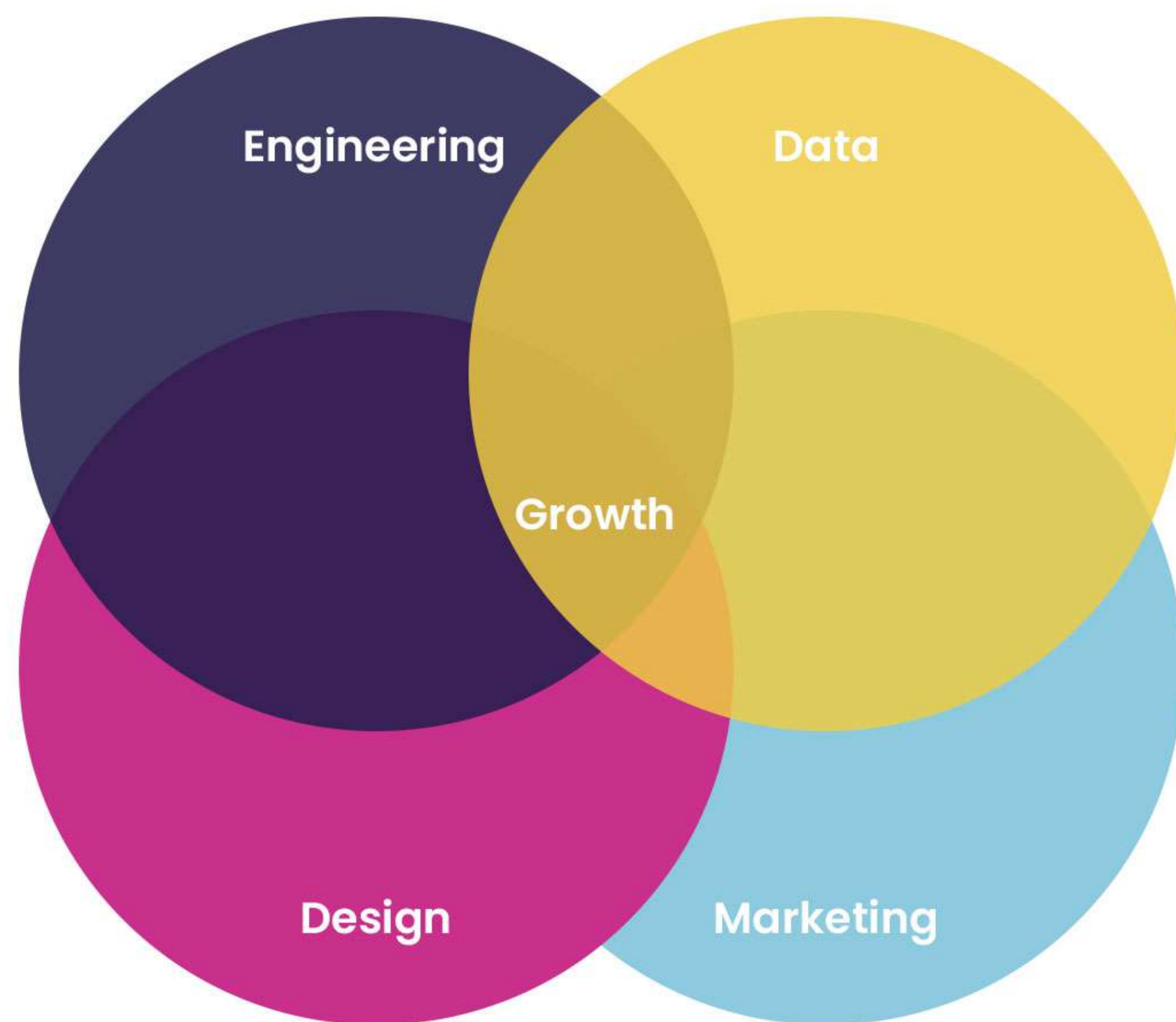*Growth Hacking isn't one of sudden fortune. Each tiny step towards growth has a cumulative result in the explosive growth you yearn for. So stick with the process, because today's experiments will deliver tomorrows results.*

– Rajiv Pratap Singh

WHY IS EVERYONE TALKING ABOUT GROWTH HACKING?

Engineering

Data

Growth

Design

Marketing

Creating brand awareness is the sole focus of traditional marketing. They find different channels to achieve this. It uses a much more qualitative approach to measure success. On the other hand, growth hacking is different from traditional marketing as it uses a comprehensive approach of experimentation to measure both qualitative and

quantitative metrics. Most of the traditional marketing efforts aren't put through the microscope of measuring growth as much as other metrics like impressions and reach. In growth hacking, however, the approach is to follow what data tells us and so, it is much more reliant. Also, because we are looking at data, we know exactly which area needs improvement, and one can quickly make the necessary changes.

Therefore, as a startup owner, it is beneficial for you to focus on growth hacking methodologies. You anyways have to identify your niche to get them excited about your product at the earliest. With the cut-throat competition in this industry, it is much more efficient to focus your efforts on a data-driven approach.

Growth hacking will bridge the gap between marketing and your product by fulfilling the promise that your product creates to your niche. The reason for you to launch your product was to solve a problem within the marketplace. If you don't focus on growth, your efforts sadly lack the impact you set out to create. *Product + Growth = Impact*

Sean Ellis famously said once that the biggest differentiator between companies that grow and those that don't is that they're willing to run experiments. When you have a growth mindset, all you can think about is *"what can I change to optimize my funnels?"* This is the very mindset that allows you to constantly keep testing more and more changes that would eventually show you where to focus more of your efforts on. This mindset will allow you to finally bring on those $0 methods we were talking about initially.

Now that I have shown you how invaluable growth hacking is to your business, let's look at a few famous growth hacking examples. I envision to inspire you as you go through these examples. I share these examples to show you that just like the brands mentioned here, you too can apply certain techniques to grow your business. Also, I hope you ignite your

creativity within when you go through these examples and hopefully you are able to bring forth a unique growth strategy for your brand.

"

When it comes to Growth Hacking, follow the 80-20 rule: 80% of your time should be invested in amplifying the results of what already works for you; 20% of your time should be invested in experimenting on new avenues for growth.

- Rajiv Pratap Singh

WHAT ARE SOME FAMOUS EXAMPLES OF GROWTH HACKING

If we look at the first time we could unofficially trace back to growth hacking methods used, McDonald's comes to mind. Sure, they're an offline example of the process. And they definitely wouldn't have thought of the strategy as one of growth hacking.

McDonald's' sole focus was on expansion. All they envisioned was burgers to be synonymous with their brand. This is the same mindset that inspired them to have a McDonald's outlet at every exit of the highway.

What this essentially meant was that everyone passing through the highway would at the very least have a look at the golden arches, and that would not just create brand awareness but also brand positioning. Once you have positioned your brand in your customers' minds, the rest is just basic math: *people seek you out!* And Voila! An ingenious idea was born.

This was just an idea to introduce you to the mindset of a growth hacker in disguise. Now, let's have a look at some famous brands that rose to fame despite the odds because they dared to implement a few smart moves that changed the entire game.

1. AIRBNB

Airbnb and Craigslist's story is an acclaimed example of growth hacking and one I couldn't ignore for this E-book. So the tale goes as follows:

A few years ago, Airbnb realized that even though they had better listings of properties (better photos, better descriptions and real listings), they weren't getting the desired
traffic. They decided to look into Craigslist's database because even though the listed properties were not as rigorously checked as Airbnb in terms of quality, they certainly had a greater user base.

To try and integrate the two websites meant that Airbnb had to specifically create a bot that would allow for seamless integration with Craigslist's user base.

Basically what this meant was, if a user wanted to list their property on Airbnb, they now also had the option to show their listing on Craigslist at just the click of a button. Now, this wasn't an easy task to do, especially with the regional

differences on the listings of Craigslist. But this was what Airbnb tackled by creating a bot that not just auto-filled the forms in Craigslist while creating the listing; it also returned the unique URI to the host.

Not only did this hack generate a humongous amount of traffic to Airbnb's website but also with the poaching of Craigslist customers, they grew exponentially and thereby got the world singing their praises even after a decade of implementing this hack.

Post to Craigslist

Reach thousands of people, instantly by re-posting your Airbnb listing (photos, reviews, description) to Craigslist. Travelers will be redirected back to Airbnb to contact & book with you. For help, click here.

1. Select Listing — Queen Airbed in Central, Modern Apt

2. Customize title for Craigslist — Stay at 'Queen Airbed in Central, Modern Apt' by the

3. E-mail (will be hidden) — lukeemily@googlegroups.com

4. Craigslist Category — Vacation Rentals

5. Craigslist Market — SF bay area – sfc

☑ Remind me when it is time to re-post

Post to Craigslist

2. DROPBOX

When you transfer files on your mail, it has integrated plugins that allow for sending even large files. But this wasn't the case back in the day when dropbox started.

Dropbox is yet another distinguished example that comes to mind when we talk about growth hacking. DropBox played it smart; in that, whenever you would send a mail with an attachment to someone, the receiver would have to create a dropbox account to download/ access the attachment. Since the details for creating the attachment were all done on email, it wasn't even tedious for the user, and they wouldn't mind.

This way, they generated a large database quickly. Not only this, they cleverly thought of giving free storage space to anyone who referred DropBox to their friends. One could potentially get upto 16 GB of free storage if they referred the tool to their friends. And the rest is history! They took off after reaching escape velocity!

Refer friends to Dropbox Spread the love to your friends, family, and coworkers	16 GB 500 MB per friend	
Get started with Dropbox Take a tour of the basics of Dropbox	250 MB	
Connect your Facebook account Share folders with your friends and family in a snap	125 MB	
Connect your Twitter account Invite your friends to Dropbox with a tweet	125 MB	
Follow Dropbox on Twitter Stay up to date with the latest Dropbox tweets	125 MB	
Tell us why you love Dropbox We'd love to hear your feedback	125 MB	

3. INSTAGRAM

If you remember the early days of Instagram, you would have noticed how easily it integrated with other social apps. Especially with Facebook.

In those days when there was the excitement that facebook created, Instagram leveraged this by adding a link to the images that Instagram users shared to Facebook.

This link would seamlessly allow users to download the Instagram app. As you can imagine, IG's database grew by millions as soon as they rolled out this feature.

This is yet another example of how you don't need to have fancy rollouts for growing, just a simple, yet efficient idea would help.

4. PAYPAL

The example of PayPal is yet another smart one. PayPal knew that it was the best match for eBay during the days when there were lots of riffs between the buyers and sellers around cash sent through emails and cheques.

PayPal created a bot that sent an email to all the eBay sellers who bid on low-value auctions, that said, "I only want to use eBay if you use PayPal". This email entailed all the benefits users would gain when they switched to PayPal.

This made the sellers switch to PayPal from the early cash/cheque systems, which eventually forced buyers to create more PayPal signups. This brilliant idea grew its user base by multitudes!

The reason I wanted to share these examples is to show you that more often than not, it's the simplest of ideas that generate a J curve growth for your business.

Granted, these ideas were risky since these weren't the norms of those days. But these ideas gave the above -mentioned businesses a competitive edge. Now with everyone following these famous examples, it almost seems growth hacks are a dime a dozen. But if you were to look closely, not all those businesses succeed in growing because they're so focused on copy-pasting these ideas blindly.

As you can see with our examples mentioned above; the ideas were closely related to each other in one way or another, yet they were intricately customized to suit the brands' needs. *Each brand knew exactly what their target audience needed from them and they "hacked" their way into growth;* risky-ly if I may add.
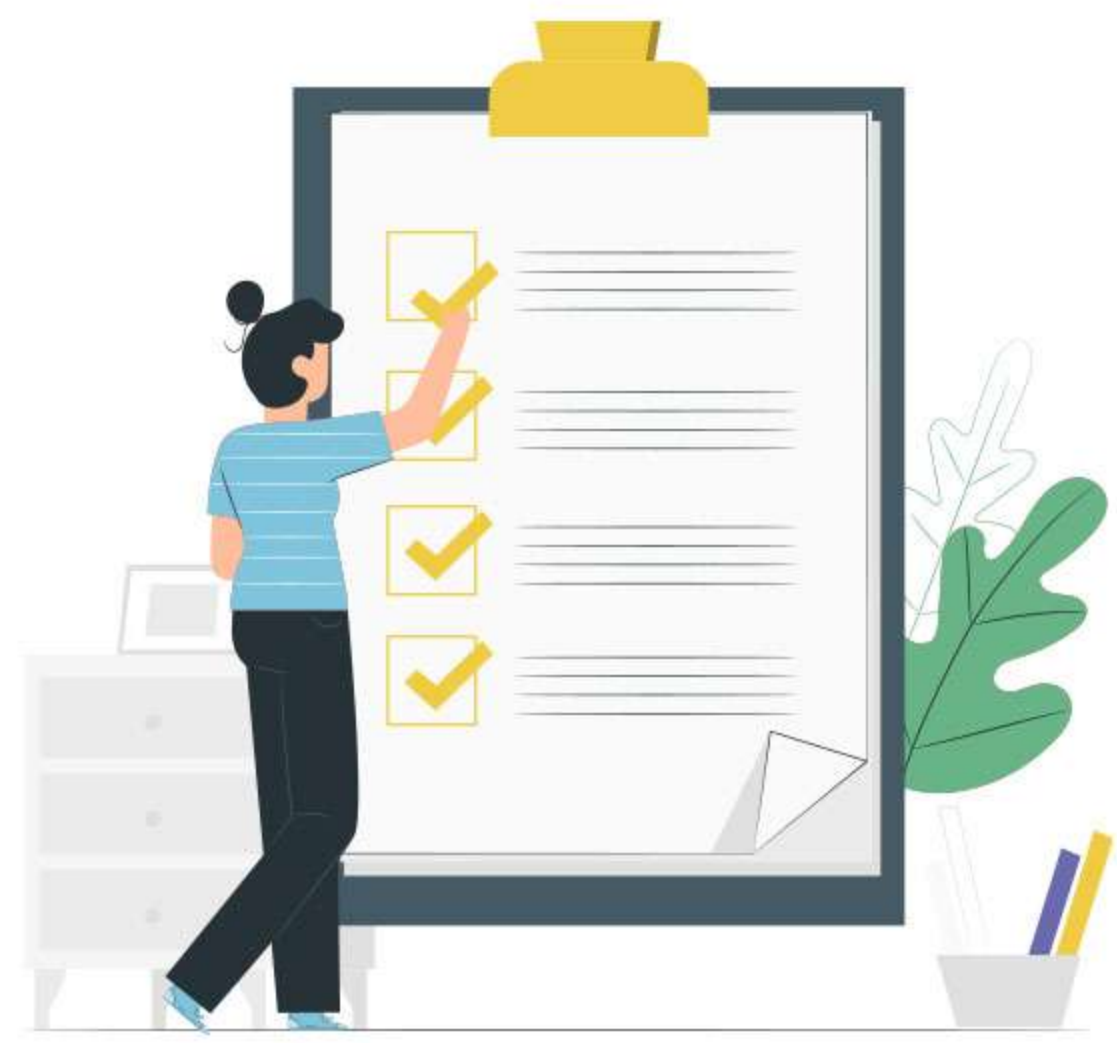
The crux of Growth Hacking:
Run Smart Experiments!

– Rajiv Pratap Singh

IS THERE A CHECKLIST FOR ME TO FOLLOW?

Growth Hacking Process

Before I share a definitive formula for hacking your growth, I suggest looking at this 5 step checklist on Growth Hacking that even famous growth hackers like Neil Patel follow. Now don't jump to conclusions regarding how redundant a checklist would be if you already are getting the fool-proof formula. *A checklist is the most revered resource of surgeons and pilots, and for a good reason!*

A checklist would allow you to keep in mind simple steps that would save you the costly mistakes of "overlooking" steps. Silly mistakes happen. In retrospect, it is easy to pinpoint them. Still, while going through the motions of growth hacking, you need to keep a checklist handy, so you can check off steps that very often slip the mind. Let's look at the five steps here:

1. DEFINE ACTIONABLE GOALS

You must have heard time and time again of how *you must never have a vague and really broad goal.* They're just too hard to achieve because, well, how would you measure them? The more measurable your goal, the more efficient and focused you become at achieving it.

Similarly, with growth hacking, if you have a really broad goal like: I want my business to grow. It's not measurable. You haven't set actionable targets to check off. I mean, even a .0005% growth is growth after all. Therefore you need to *bring it down to its atomic level.* To its most measurable level that you can test and execute your aims. To a level that allows you to progress further in a much more tangible sense.

Let me share with you an actionable example:

Let's say you start with the goal of expanding your business. Now, this is too broad a goal to measure success. So you break it down further. Let's say you decide you want to increase your Daily Active Users (DAU). As you have already noticed, this too is a vague goal to have.

Now you decide, what if you focused your efforts on retaining your existing users. But if you think about it, customer retention in itself is a broad topic and, therefore, a broad goal. So now you decide to allow your current users to create more content because your data shows that when someone creates content for your product, their activity on your site is much better. Now with this information, you can finally make the goal *to double your content creation.*

Too vague: Increasing your DAU
Apt: Increasing the content creation 2X

When you start with something new, it's bound to have you make a few mistakes or run into confusion in certain areas. So I want to reassure you that you need not worry. However,

a tip for when you feel confused about whether or not you have set yourself a broad goal, a rule of thumb would be to consider your goals as a mind map. Until you can reach the very end or unique task in that map, where things can be checked off as a singular task that can be completed once and for all, you're not narrow/ streamlined enough.

As you can see from this example, you're able to measure whether or not you have educated your members through email about content creation instead of something as vague as "grow my business" or "increase my DAU."
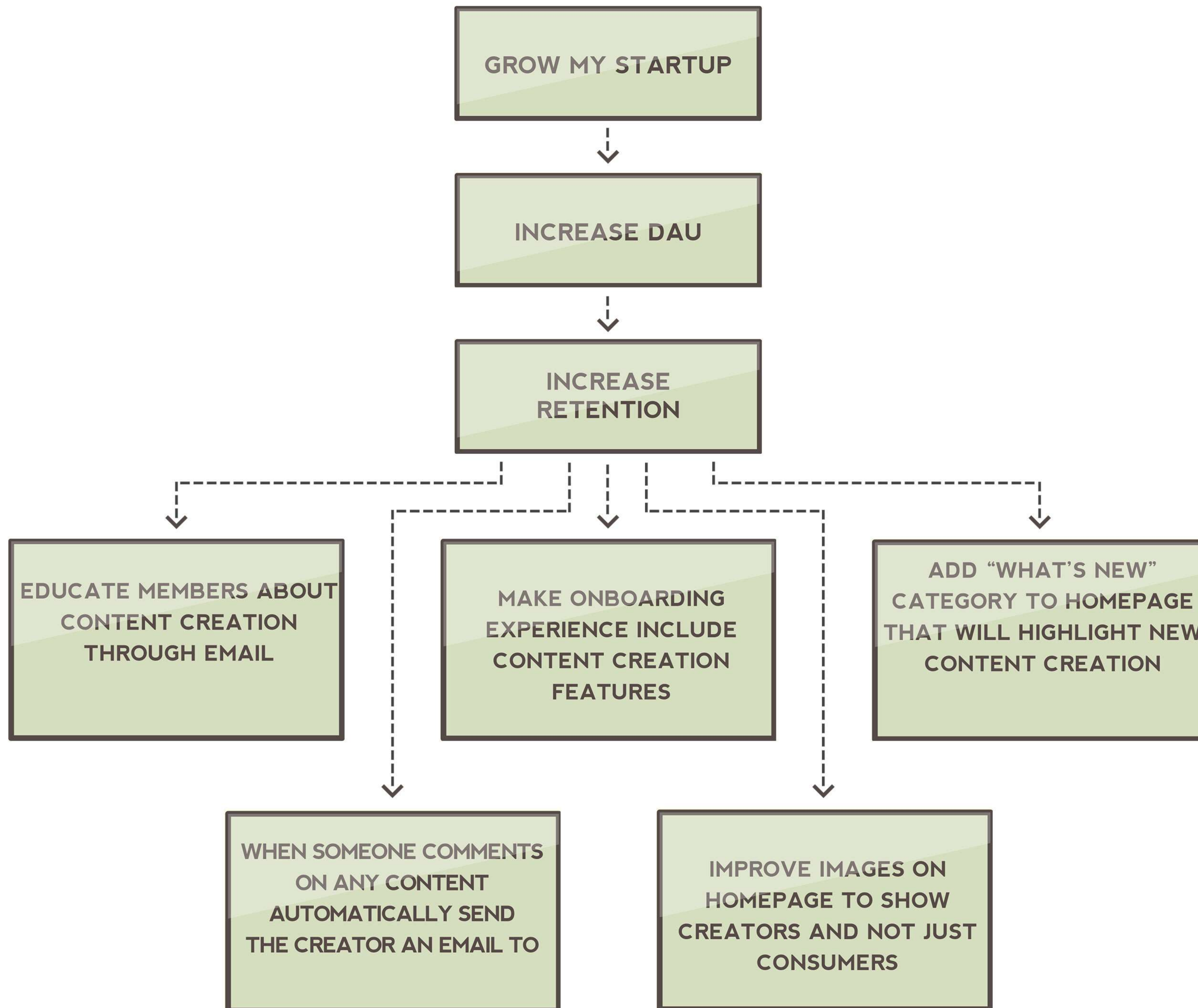
2. USE ANALYTICS TO TRACK YOUR GOALS

You've finally narrowed down your goal to "increasing your content creation by 2X". Now, moving forward, you need to know whether or not this goal of yours is attainable. Do you have the right analytics ready to track and measure your efforts? Let me list a few questions you can ask yourself:

- Are you presently tracking your content creation metrics?

- How do you track your content creation: as single pieces or aggregates?

- Are metrics within your content tracked (size of file, length, views, shares, etc.)?

- Are you tracking the devices that you use while creating and consuming your content?

- Are you tracking the referring URLs?

As you can imagine, *No analytics= Hollow Goals.* If you're not able to pinpoint when your goal was reached, you haven't essentially completed the requirements before moving forward. You must already know the importance of analytics when gathering and showing priceless data, which

can tell you if your goals need tweaking. Your goals and analytics create what's known as a reflexive equilibrium, and these interact and inform, refine and shape each other.

For example, to expand on the above point, let's look at an example: imagine your "increase content creation 2X" goal. Now, when you're noticing that there's something that's even more essential than content creation concerning users' retention, then you would know that your goal needs tweaking. Whereas on the other hand, if content that's a 3-minute read gets more read time and retention, then your goal would change accordingly.

The best thing about having data tracked over the years is that it becomes that much more precious. When you keep tracking the progress you've made with your goals, and as this data accumulates, you begin to notice patterns that spring out about what worked and what didn't, and now you have a much more powerful source of information.

Neil Patel once said that all growth hackers would begin with a dull axe. But with the passage of time, the edges get sharper. *Just Don't Lose Hope; Don't Give Up*

3. LEVERAGE YOUR EXISTING STRENGTHS

Archimedes is famously quoted for saying, "Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world." This isn't just a philosophical quote. Think about it through the lens of physics and suddenly you'll notice that with a really long lever, even a massive object can be lifted with the slightest of force.
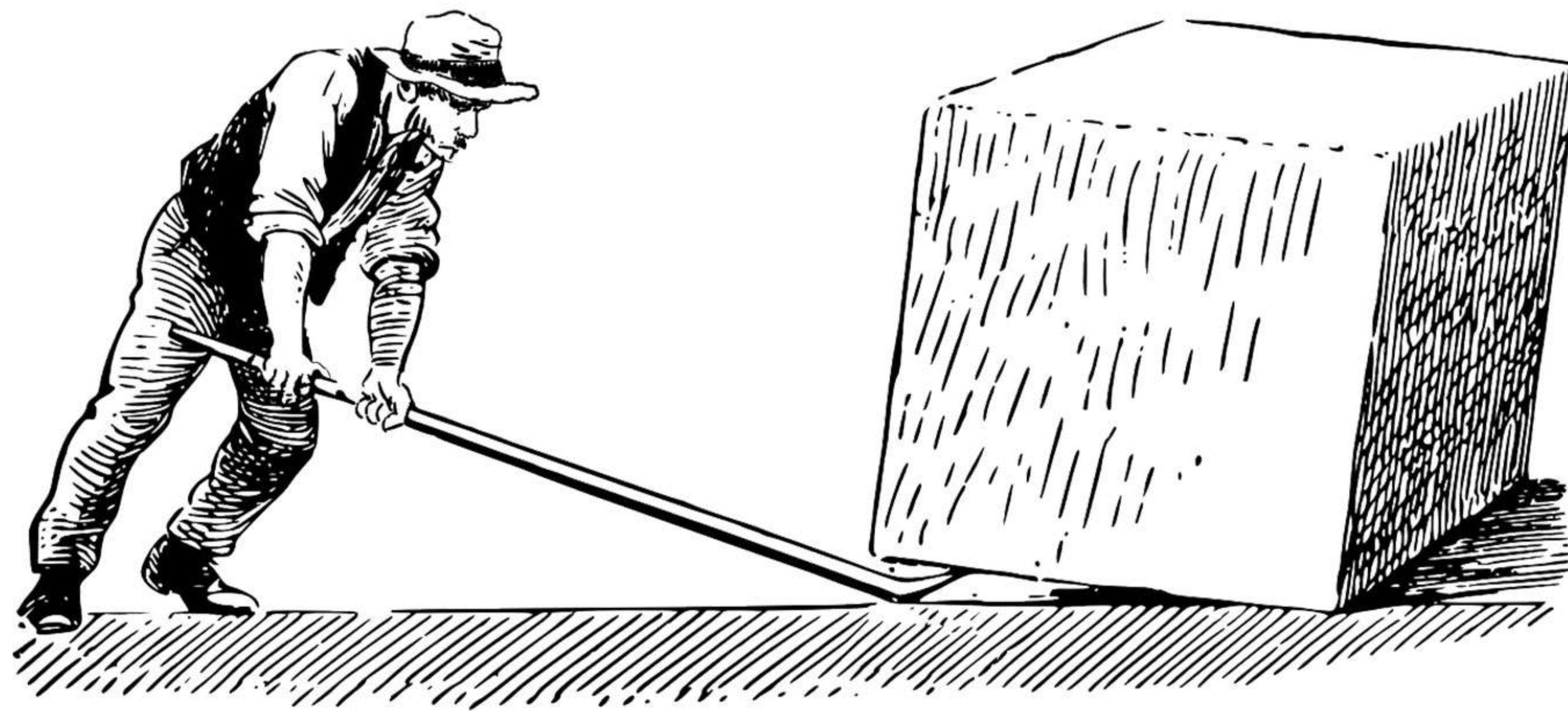
No matter the industry you're in, every start-up has its own strengths and assets which it can use as leverage. The competency you have over a certain area (your lever) is the one where there is something at your disposal that requires really low amounts of your energy.

If we were to look at our above-mentioned example, if you were debating between sending a new educational email or adding a "what's new" category on your website, the answer depends on what resources you currently possess. If you already have 3,00,000 email addresses on your database and you already have an unfailing distribution system, then you could easily create an email within a day and notify everyone: then this becomes your lever.

Whereas, if you go through the "what's new" route, and you would take a few days to plan then another couple of days to get the mockups done and then spend a couple more days to get the programmers to execute this, it would seem like an inefficient way to move forward.

Now you can see how the law of leverages is practically making the decision for you. *Base the decision on what works for you and your brand.* Something that works efficiently for you might not be the right fit for another brand.

4. EXECUTE YOUR EXPERIMENT

With step one complete, you have your eyes set on increasing your content creation 2X. With step two complete, you're gathering all the data that will show you whether or not you're successful in your goal. With step 3 complete, you will be using your leverage and blasting an email to everyone and educating them of your plan. Now it's finally time to execute your plan. Let's look at a few things you need to keep in mind while executing your plan:

• **Note your hypothesis before executing your experiment**
Before you begin running your experiment, it's a good hygiene check to write down your hypotheses about what you anticipate will be your experiment's outcome. For instance, in the example mentioned above, do you think the email you send will have a higher or lower click-through rate than your normal emails? Why do you hypothesise so? How much growth do you expect your content creation to increase over the next month? Would you achieve your 2X goal through just this email or do you need to run a campaign to get there?

It may sound trivial to you to write these down, especially since you can just hit send and see the results for yourself. But you'd be wrong to assume so because you aren't getting the point of this: These hypotheses are reflections of your assumptions. And so before you begin to change the historical way of doing things, you need to see how far off along your predictions you are. These hypotheses keep you honest. They keep you accountable. You are also less likely to take things personally (w.r.t growth or failures) if you can test things out.

You start by hypothesising and then begin your experiment. Slowly but surely you will begin to notice that even though you might have started off being on different planes about things, the gaps would start to close in as time progresses.

• **Be aware of the resources needed for your experiment**
Anytime you begin running a new experiment, it's surely going to rattle the normal flow of things. First off, you need to get the entire team aware of the experiment so that they too can prepare for any setbacks. Secondly, be aware of your resources, especially if they're constrained. Be cognizant of this while you plan your experiment.

For example, if Mondays are when you already know there

are server failures, don't end up sending a 40% increase in traffic to your website on that day, especially if you can avoid it. Thirdly and frankly most importantly, never ignore the time that is needed to finish working out the minor tweaks within your experiment before running it. Remember Hofstadter's law? *"It always takes longer than expected. Even when you take into account Hofstadter's law."*

- **Don't get disheartened looking at the initial results**
  Time and time again, I come across clients who set unrealistic expectations. They feel that just because they invest their time and resources into a new experiment, this one would certainly help them reach escape velocity! That everything will be fixed the moment they run this first experiment.

  I brought this point forward to show you that it might not always be the case and that sometimes it takes constant tweaking and different experiments run over time to see which one produces the most results. Growth is not always linear until one day it is. So, take it easy on yourself during the early days, gather data, and remember what Thomas Edison said, *"I haven't failed 1000 times, I have successfully discovered 1000 new ways in which not to make a light bulb"*.

- **Learn from both success and failure**
  Ever heard of the saying," there's no such thing as bad press"? Well, I'm here to say that there's no such thing as bad data. Even if your experiment has failed you right now, you also have to look at how you now know your product/ service. You can integrate this very information into your future experiments, and you will have some amazing results then. Consider it as you would an investment. *You can learn from your successes, and you can certainly learn from your mistakes, but you know when you stunt your growth? When you choose to give up!*

5. OPTIMIZE THE EXPERIMENT

The very definition of the word "Experiments" means that it is a test or a tentative procedure to discover something unknown. In this fast-paced world, life can't be served in a ready to eat 2-minute fashion. You need to realize that experiments involve the concept of optimization. They're to be considered fluid like water, so you can't expect to do an experiment once and move on, it needs to be worked on

repeatedly till it starts showing results. Don't give up on an experiment just because you grew tired of them, rather only get done with it when it's appropriate to do so. Keep these three points in mind to help you:

- **Leverage the power of a control group**

  Having a control group while testing your experiments is considered good hygiene. It helps you keep an account for changes in the environment that are hard to track otherwise. Suppose with our above example; you decide to send the email to only 80% of your users, then you can realistically track the progress because you now have a group to compare the results with. It may be that due to some unanticipated reason, beyond your brand's control, it has led to a decrease in content creation. If you didn't have a control group, you'd have gotten disheartened looking at the results of your email. Also, you'd have probably charted this off to your experiment not working.

	GROUP A (TEST GROUP)	GROUP B (CONTROL GROUP)
CONTENT CREATION +/- (AFTER EXPERIMENT)	-10%	-15%

- **Adopt A/B testing**

  Growth Hackers can't get enough of singing the praises of "A/B testing" and for a good reason. It is one of the greatest tools when it comes to running an experiment. A/B tests can give you the answers you were looking for. They can also tell you how far off you are in your projections you were.

  Let's look back at our example; you might be expecting that the subject line for the email is really important and might focus your efforts there. But perhaps an A/B test would tell you otherwise. Or maybe you think a certain landing page is linked to the email would cause your people to write more content there, but an A/B test will tell you the truth.

  Now you need to keep in mind that if you decide to run A/B tests, you need to think about that before starting your experiment. Else, in our example, you'd have emailed everyone, and no one would be there to benefit from your A/B test.

• **Know when to cut your losses**

Usually, I wouldn't give up on my experiment unless it becomes evident that I overestimated my leverage or can't see the experiment producing better results without dedicating many resources to it.

6. REPEAT

If you have been keeping pace with this checklist up until now, then you have successfully reached the stage where it's time to select a new experiment. You can also decide to optimize your current experiment and repeat these steps. If you follow the steps enlisted in this cycle, success would be more a byproduct of your diligence and determination than that of "sheer luck".

> Growth Hacking 101:
> Get it right for the right users,
> then grow from there

—Anonymous

IS THERE A DEFINITIVE GROWTH HACKING FORMULA?

1. USE THE PIRATE METRICS

AARRR Metrics is also famously known as pirate metrics. This is the same metrics that will serve as the foundation for the growth data that you will want to gather and improve on.

This covers the entire customer journey from a visitor to an apostle. Pirate metrics will keep you from whiling away your time on vanity metrics and instead converge your attention to the data that can provide value for scaling your brand.

• **Acquisition**

This is the ToFu (Top of the Funnel) where your sole focus is on getting more people to your website. Other lead generation resources of yours like your blog, emails, etc.

would also be included here. Think: *How do your potential patrons know about your business/ product/ service? What are the channels you're currently using to promote your said business/ product/ service?*

• **Activation**

That "hallelujah" moment when your patron really understands your product/ service and really gets to experience your brand's core value. This is the step where you are able to convert your visitors into true users of your product.

• **Retention**

This step is just like the name suggests where you have gained the trust of your customer so much so that they keep coming back to you.

- **Revenue**

  This stage is where you are able to monetize from your customers. Now that you have given enough value to your customers, you can finally reap the benefits.

- **Referral**

  This is the stage where your patron practically becomes your apostle and it becomes a patron-get-patron cycle. There will be a feedback loop built that cycles back to the top of your funnel: the acquisition stage.

2. KEEP MEASURING EVERYTHING

This is where all the advice from your management text-books comes into play. As Peter Drucker famously said, " If you can't measure it, you can't manage it". All your Google Analytics data and data from other analytics tools (social media analytics, email analytics etc. comes into play).

Your data on all the pirate metrics stages will tell you the current state of your business in these areas. You will then be able to grow your business further and understand which area to optimize on. You will have a clearer understanding of how exactly your funnel is working. You will soon begin to

see where there are bottlenecks within your funnel, and you can work on improving them. Another important factor for checking your growth optimization would be to optimize the conversion rates between each stage of your funnel. This is what will get you that escape velocity you envisioned for your business' growth. Let's look at this chart as an example:

Example Conversion Metrics
*(note: *not* actuals; your mileage may vary…)*

Category	User Status	Conv %	Est. Value
Acquisition	Visit Site (or landing page, or external widget)	100%	$.01
Acquisition	Doesn't Abandon (views 2+ pages, stays 10+ sec, 2+ clicks)	70%	$.05
Activation	Happy 1st Visit (views X pages, stays Y sec, Z clicks)	30%	$.25
Activation	Email/Blog/RSS/Widget Signup (anything that could lead to repeat visit)	5%	$1
Activation	Acct Signup (includes profile data)	2%	$3
Retention	Email Open / RSS view -> Clickthru	3%	$2
Retention	Repeat Visitor (3+ visits in first 30 days)	2%	$5
Referral	Refer 1+ users who visit site	2%	$3
Referral	Refer 1+ users who activate	1%	$10
Revenue	User generates minimum revenue	2%	$5
Revenue	User generates break-even revenue	1%	$25

3. EXPERIMENT, EXPERIMENT AND EXPERIMENT MORE

When someone talks about growth hacking, probably this is the stage that comes to mind. This is exactly the stage where you collect all the growth tactics you need to increase the above mentioned Pirate Metrics for your brand.

Let's go back to the first example of Airbnb and how they cross-posted their room listings to Craigslist. Here is where the first stage of the AARRR funnel was targeted. They were able to short circuit their customer acquisition stage by just that ingenious idea.

Your experiments need not always be so fancy. It may be as tiny as highlighting the price you recommend in your plan, or it might be slightly bigger, like designing an onboarding process for your mobile app.

It would help if you looked at executing each experiment scientifically. Also, each experiment should be able to improve a specific AARRR metric. That's when you begin to see growth. Let's look at how you can execute each experiment

scientifically:

- Create your hypothesis for what you anticipate the result to be.

- What metric do you think would improve?

- How much do you think it would improve?

- Now set a timeframe for your experiment to run.

Now that you have let the clock run out on the experiment go back to the hypothesis you wrote and now check. You will find out if the experiment was a success or a failure and you can accordingly decide if you want to keep it running or roll it back. Whatever the conclusion, do spend time analyzing the results. These insights will give you the topics for discussion in your weekly meetings, more of which we will be talking about in the following point.

4. CONDUCT WEEKLY GROWTH MEETINGS

If you have followed all the above steps, you are now aware of which functions of your product/ service fit within the

pirate's metrics, what kind of metrics to collect, how you need to be collecting them, or how all these pieces are moving ahead.

The way you progress forward lies in holding weekly growth meetings. The way these meetings are held is very similar to your scrum meetings. Just have a gathering of all the team members involved would discuss the following:

- Share the results from all the experiments conducted.

- Share insights from the metrics gathered.

- Create a knowledge base.

- Agree on which experiments to run next.

- Assign the new experiments to individuals.

These growth meetings would be held and managed by the growth master: he who drives this process of growth. He gathers insight, moderates the debates, and has his vision fixed on continuing growth. He ensures that the deadlines are met and that all issues are resolved. He also monitors the progress of each individual experiment owner.

Here is an example for the structure of your next growth meeting:

5. KEEP THE TEMPO GOING

The father of growth hacking, Sean Ellis, has seen that the number of experiments a company runs weekly is a direct indicator of its growth. This translates to that it is much more important to keep running experiments continuously than waiting for that silver bullet. This is why it is no secret that the more tweets you send out, the more Instagram posts you post, etc., will all end up adding new followers, and also, your content keeps improving as you keep sending it out.

As and how you progress further, you will create a flow state, and when this happens, you can amplify it by hiring new team members while expanding your reach.

> Content is king,
> but distribution is queen,
> and she wears the pants.
>
> — *Anonymous*

WHAT ARE THE TOOLS I NEED FOR GROWTH HACKING?

You must be wondering why I kept this section of the book towards the end. I mean, after all, you were searching for tools to hack your growth, and probably "tools" would have attracted you to download the book in the first place.

However, the reason I kept it towards the end is that if you are given the tools without a basic understanding of what growth hacking mindset is, or without really understanding the doctrine of growth hacking, or without getting a true sense of the profile of a growth hacker; you'd probably rely too much on just the numbers. And numbers without a true sense of direction is data in the hands of an ingrate. You'd be a dead duck with no guidance on what to do with all this data.

Now that you have understood what it means to hack your growth, I'm sure you'd have thought about creative ways to utilize that knowledge and customize it for your business when you were reading about all these examples. Well, here are a few tools and terminologies that could help you with the same:

1. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI'S)

Each business has a KPI that is unique to them. A KPI is a number that shows you first hand what's happening within your company. For example, if you were selling subscriptions to your tool, your KPI would tell you how many subscriptions you sold. It's like a digital thermometer. A thermometer

reading will tell you immediately what the health of a person is. Similarly, your KPI will tell you what the health of your company is. A few best practices would be:

- Have a daily, weekly, monthly KPI report. You can automate this email.

- Have charts on your dashboard that can show how your KPIs are progressing with time. This will help you look at the data at a glance, and also visual cues help you track and act on the data sooner.

- Dont save the KPI metrics to just the C-suite level of your company or just to managers and above; share the data with everyone in your firm, and they too will be making it their mission to add to the growth of your firm.

2. VIRAL COEFFICIENT (K)

This is the metric that will tell you how viral you are. It means that how many of your users share your product with new people, thereby onboarding them to your brand. For example, if 50 of your users would bring 100 new people to buy your product, then K in your case becomes 2. Any number above 1 is a sign of you having viral growth. So look to grow

your digits.

3. COHORTS

This metric shows the portion of your users that signed up for your product or offer on a particular month. As an illustration, all the visitors that signed up in March would be your March Cohort. The data from your cohorts would help in clarifying other metrics like your KPI. If you see that your KPI chart is growing steadily, you are gaining new cohorts every month, which is what you want. If, on the other hand, you are looking at your data since the beginning of time through a single metric, then you are averaging your data by looking at good and bad cohorts. This is a skewed way to look at things; moreover, you're not getting a clear picture of what's happening in the present.

4. SEGMENTS

Similar to cohorts, your segments are also groups. What differentiates segments from cohorts, though, is that you decide to choose a segment (you create buckets of groups you want) instead of categorizing people into groups based on the time they joined. For example, you can choose to

segment your audience based on gender to see how the male and female segments behave concerning your product.

5. MULTIVARIATE TESTING

We have already talked about the importance of A/B testing above in the growth hacking checklist under the portion dedicated to optimizing your experiments. But just a small recap, you divide your pool of users into two test groups and check an experiment in one and use the other group as a control group to see how your experiment fares.

6. CUSTOMER ACQUISITION COST (CAC)

The amount it costs you to gain a new customer will show your CAC for your brand. For example, if you are spending $500 on Ads (Google) and gain two new customers through them, your CAC will be $250. It would help if you kept tabs on what your CAC is across each individual channel because it can change significantly. This data will show you exactly how much you are spending on each channel and whether

or not you can optimize it in any way.

7. LIFETIME VALUE OF A CUSTOMER (LTV)

The LTV will show you roughly how much money you'll make on your customers' interaction with your product through its entire lifecycle. Suppose your product costs $300 and your customer stays with your brand for two years, then your LTV will be $7,200 ($300x24 months).

Segments are really useful when you calculate your LTV as you may find that specific segments have better LTV than others, and that would then show you how to optimize your CAC for that customer segment.

It would be best if you had a strong understanding of your LTV And CAC because otherwise, you will have a massive challenge in trying to use the right push tactics for improving your traffic. This will further affect your forecast data, and thus your financials would be affected.

Now that we have come to speed with the most important terminologies within growth hacking, let's look at a few tools used by Growth Hackers that can help you grow exponen-

1. GENERAL ANALYTICS

There's a reason for the popularity of Google Analytics. When it comes to collecting general data, it's very powerful, and best of all, it's free. Before you criticize this sentence, let me clarify something; yes, it's not our first choice when we want to gather granular data too, and for a good reason. The tool wasn't built to gather information, like if people are converting after watching a demo video you created. The tool was built to get you the information on bounce rate, geographical data, device data, and other such common metrics. When you want to look at certain specific seg-ments, you can use other tools, but to give you an overview of your brand's major functionings, Google Analytics is a great tool.
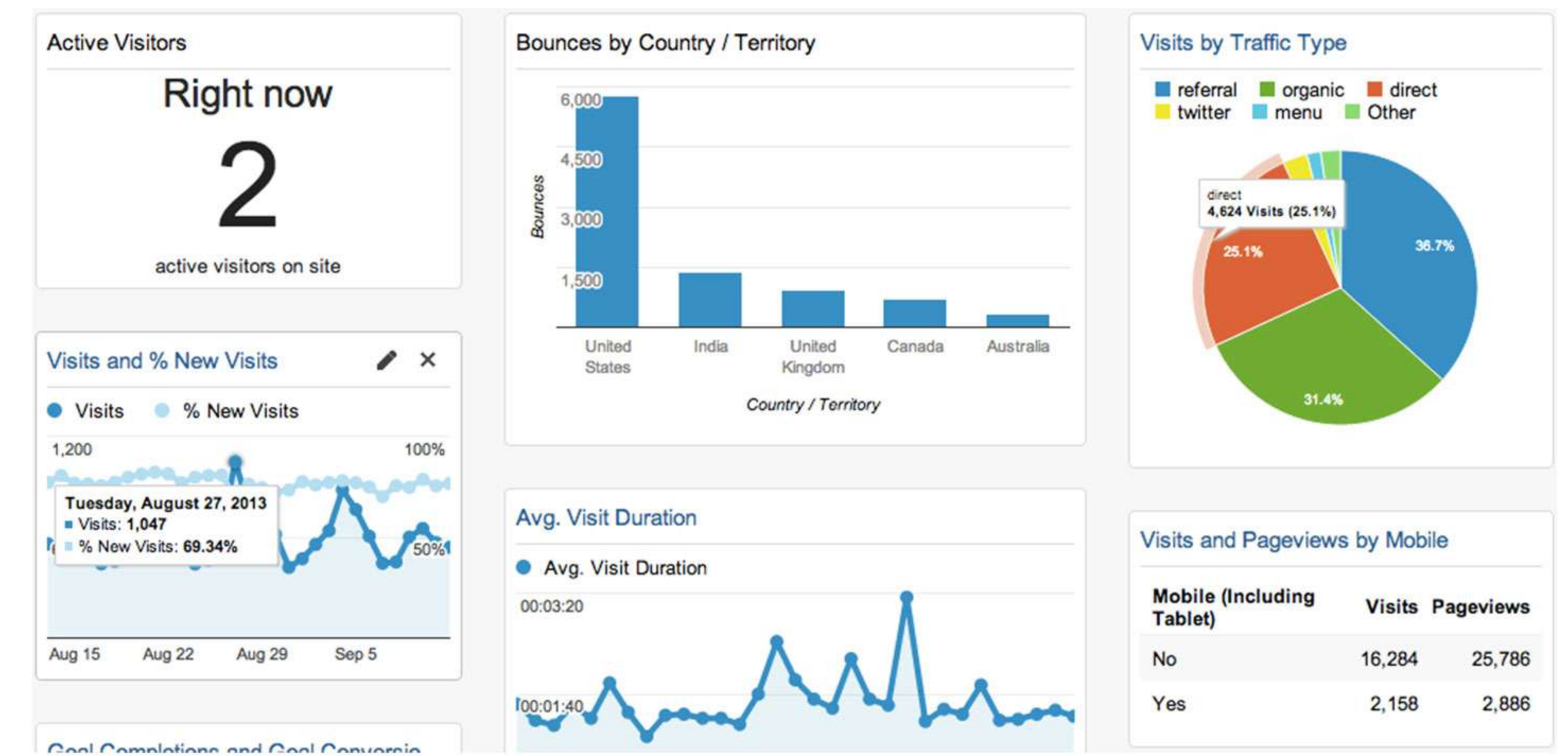
2. EVENT/ PEOPLE BASED ANALYTICS

It almost seems like there has been a revival of sorts within the growth hackers' tools. Because of many limitations from Google Analytics, new software products have come up that can be better integrated with Google Analytics while also gathering the kind of data that growth hackers seek.

While installing Google Analytics, you place a single javas-cript code on each page of your website. On the other hand, when you use tools built to give you analytics on events/people, you're placing a script to each event on your site, unlike attaching a code to the whole page. This opens many

doors for you with regards to the information you can gather:

- People using the X feature, do they have a higher LTV?

- Do people in the Y segment bring in higher engagement rates than those in segment Z?

- Dream of anything else? Bring it on! You can gather the data through event/ people-based analytics.

See how we are now tracking specific events or people from specific segments? If you were to rely on Google Analytics solely, you wouldn't get this kind of data, and you would literally be stuck in the success of your campaigns. *Our recommendations for these kinds of tools are KISSmetrics and Mixpanel.*
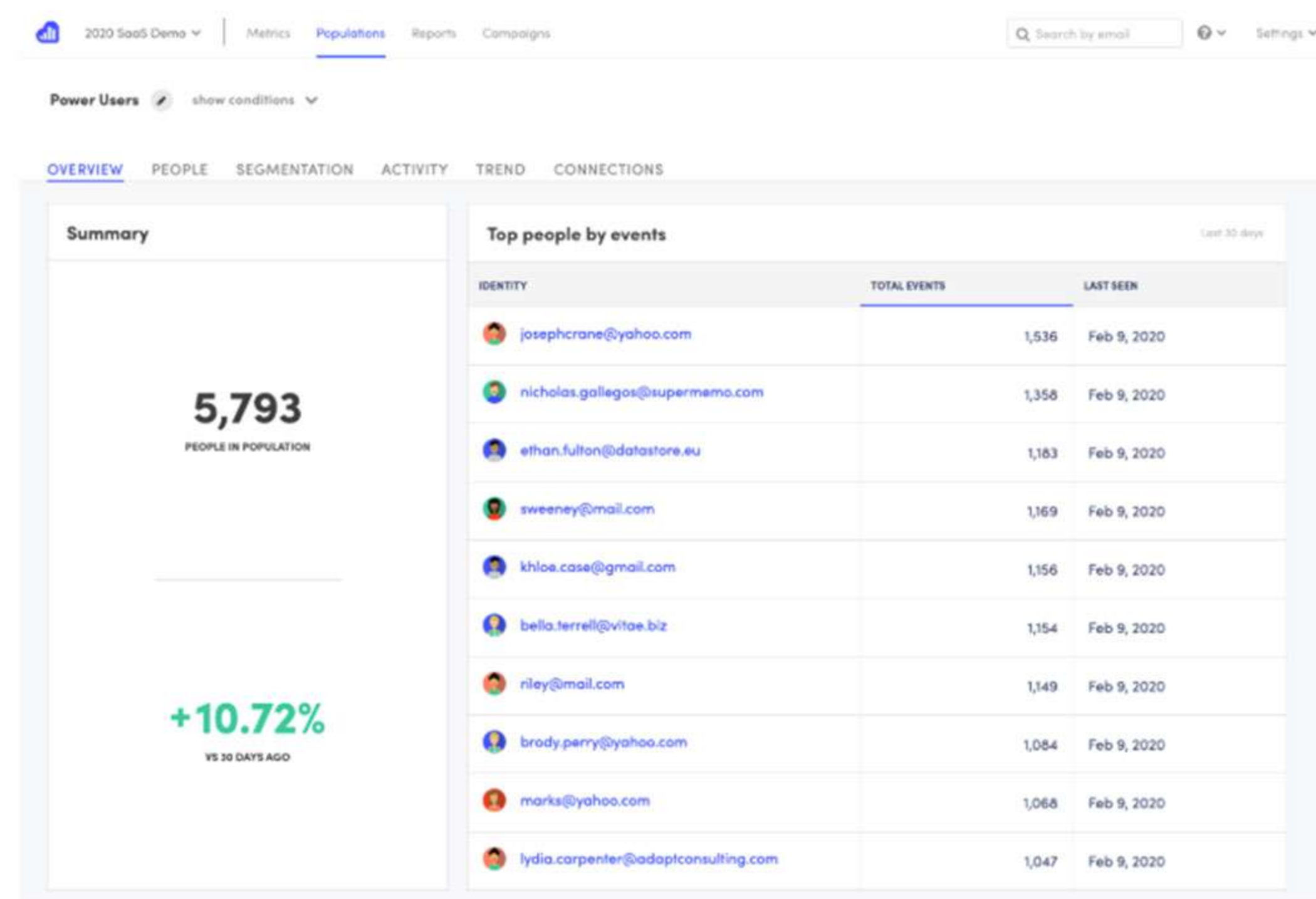
3. NICHE ANALYTICS

If you have been attending regular digital marketing conferences and virtual summits, or even branding in general, you wouldn't be alien to the idea of niche marketing. The only way to grow in today's day and age is if you're hyper-focused on streamlining your business idea and product to the very niche target market that is actively seeking you out. You would be wasting precious dollar bills if you were to continue with the age-old marketing where people just spent advertising dollars blindly and hoped for the results.

Now we have great tools that can help you gather the data pertaining to certain verticals you're looking for. If you want to focus on mobile marketing, or are a lean startup, or just in eCommerce, you have tools that can best benefit your brand because they have specific features that would help you get the most bang for your buck. There are so many niches that I wouldn't be able to list all the tools here, but a quick google search for your niche and the highly recommended tools are ready for your utilization.

4. CUSTOM ANALYTICS

Software solutions used by growth hackers are; you guessed it- rampant! But also keep in mind that they build custom solutions that target their specific requirements. Similarly, if you have the resources to create a custom dashboard to do the things you need to do and collect the data that is specifically helpful to you, you will have so much data tailored to your exact requirements. You then don't have to rely on some off the shelf product where you need to adjust your requirements to what the tool can do for you. If you build your own, you can get the tool to work for you the way you want it. Now imagine the dent you can create in the universe!

So to recap, having Google analytics along with some event/ people-based analytics tool streamlined to your niche will significantly get you the data you seek. Adding to that, if you have the resources to create your own tool which can collect the data you need to grow your business, you can have all the data possible! After all, it's much much better to have all the data in the world than miss out on it by not having enough.
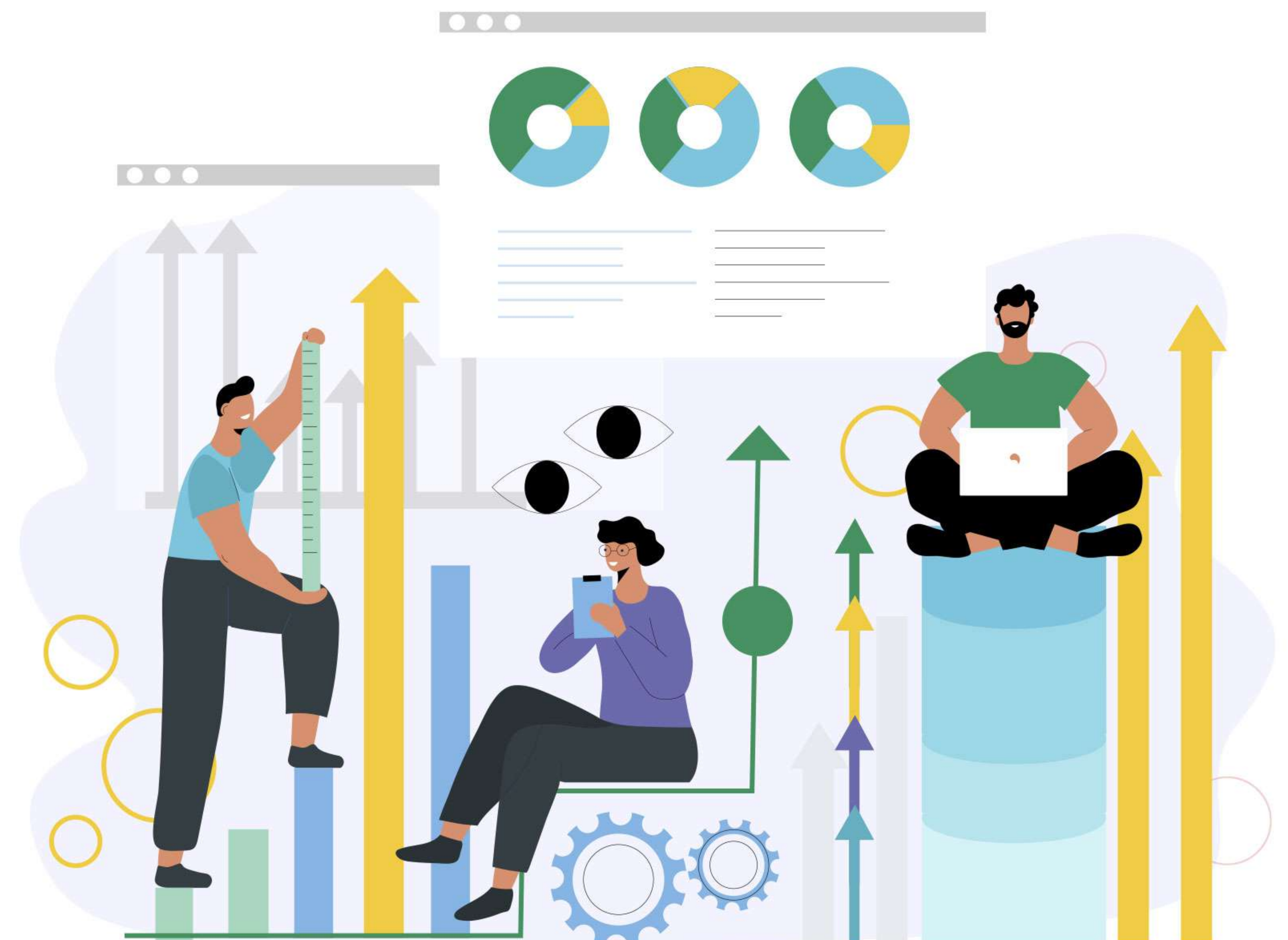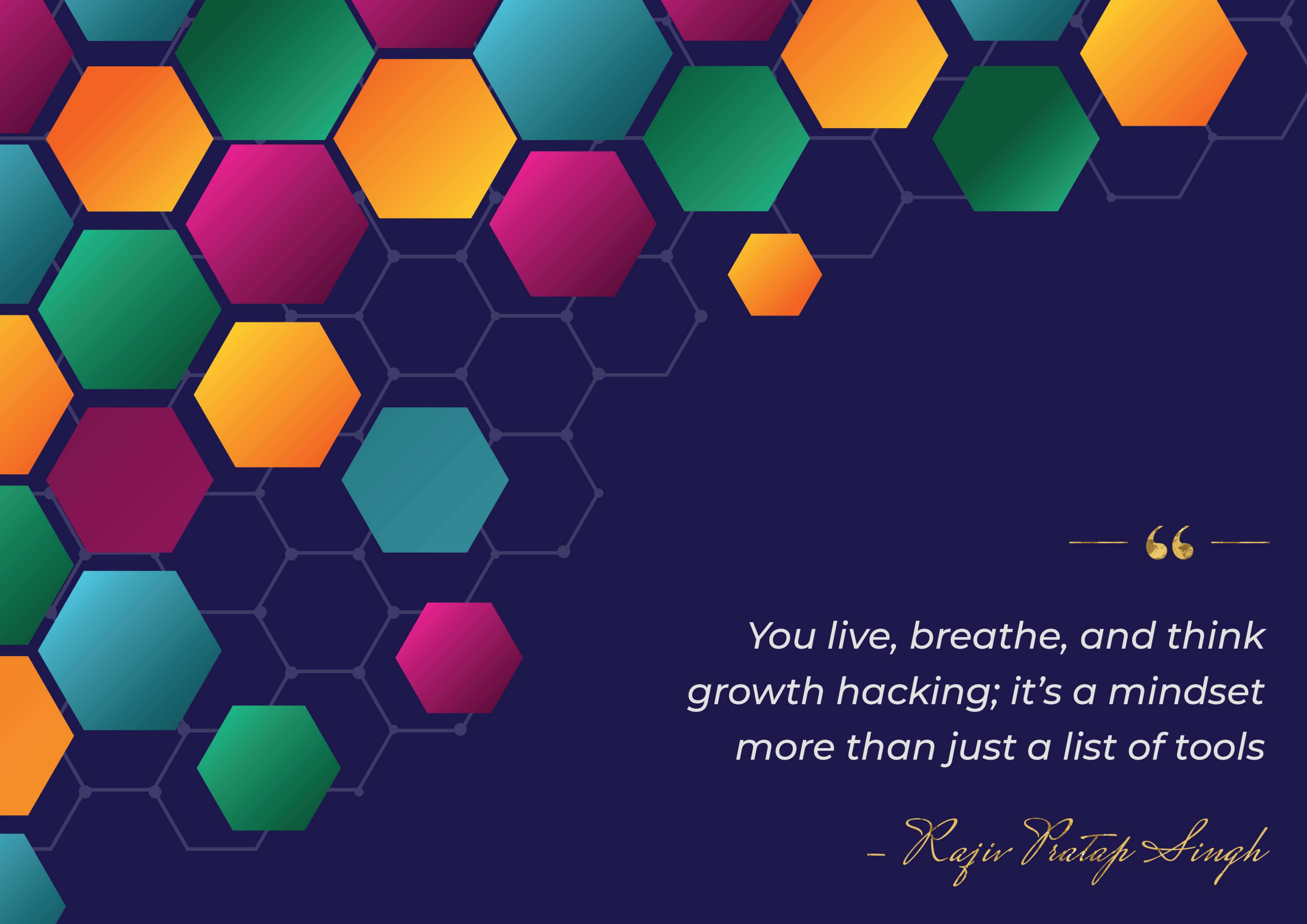
You live, breathe, and think growth hacking; it's a mindset more than just a list of tools

— Rajiv Pratap Singh

ARE THERE SOME HACKS I CAN FOLLOW?

1. NEWSJACKING

Also known as newsjacking is a technique where you "hack" any breaking news and use that to create a social media post or a blog article highlighting the company and a specific event. Always be aware of the trending hashtags on Twitter. Also, tools like Buzzsumo would help you become aware of the trending topics.

Newshacking only works when you are quick to leverage what's happening.

I mean, once a piece of news expires, there's no point in using it. People forget things quickly too. So be quick when creating content around trending topics.

2. CONTENT CREATION

You need to find out exactly what it is the value your customers gain from your business. Leverage this information and create as much content around this as possible. The more the variety of content, the better. There are 11 forms of content:

- Blog Articles
- How-to Guides
- White Papers
- Interviews
- Templates
- Webinars
- Ebooks
- Movies/ Videos
- Tutorials
- Podcasts
- Slide Presentations
- Conferences

When you create content that is relevant to your audience, they will come seeking you out. Plus, you establish yourself as the authority within your niche. Win-Win!

3. GUEST BLOGGING

This goes both ways: write guest posts for notable websites. Sure, you will have to work your way up the ladder when it comes to writing content for big names, but it's a strategy to keep in mind nonetheless.

On the other hand, if you have been working hard on increasing your followers on social media, a better suggestion would be to get notable names writing guest posts for you! This will not only establish your credibility immediately but also bring in more traffic to you.

As you begin reaching out to businesses to write content for you, you may offer them a free product or tag them on your social media account, so it's a symbiotic relationship for the both of you.

4. SOCIAL PROOF

Social proof has always been important to humans; now, with social media allowing easy access to reviews, etc., social proof has become all the more important.

Think about it yourself, would you go to a restaurant with a couple of hundred reviews on social media or one that has a couple thousand? Imagine how much more your customers want to know about your expertise.

How can you increase your social proof? Get your social media game to the best foot it can have! There are enumerate strategies to do so for each social media platform, which you will find online. It is best to understand each social media platform's algorithm and follow the best practices based on that algorithm. This means you need to be up to speed with the latest updates.

Create engaging content for your followers. *Create content that they would either share or save. That is the future of most platforms.* When you create engaging content, your followers share that content, everyone wants a bite of the action, and then you grow even more.

5. CREATE ONLINE COMMUNITIES

In today's day and age, where information is free for all, everyone reverts to the old ways of feeling exclusive. Exclusivity is what made online communities the big hit that it is today. Also, the fact that online groups are a great place for people to join in on conversations that interest them.

Create a Facebook/ Linkedin group (base the decision on which social account you have more followers on who actively engage with your content). Share interesting topics of discussion and find creative ways for people to join in on the conversation. The more engagement you receive, the better your chances of getting picked up by the tool and shown to new people searching for your topic.

With Facebook's tools on adding fan badges to your follower's profiles, the whole thing becomes much more interesting to both parties involved. Leverage these to hack your growth.

Since you have come this far along in this Ebook, I'm taking it for granted that you are curious about growth hacking. As a parting gift, let me offer you some advice. Growth hacking is a mindset and a skill set that can be constantly developed. As you begin working on one area, other areas start falling in line too. Think of it like the domino effect. Also, the more hours you spend experimenting, the more of an expert you become. So keep at it.

I know it is frustrating waiting for your experiments to show results. Also, many times, you might feel like wanting to give up on the process entirely; I urge you to fight that thought and continue learning and expanding on your knowledge.

Check out talks given by Sean Ellis as well as Neil Patel, both of whom have excellent resources on the subject. If you want to get your hands on a book that can help you understand the process better, I suggest reading the book by Sean Ellis, Hacking Growth. After all, he is the father of the entire concept. Ryan Holiday has an excellent book titled Growth Hacker Marketing which is more streamlined to help you understand technical concepts better too.

I would love to know how you liked the Ebook. What were the parts that challenged your perspective? What was something new you derived from this Ebook? Please write to me at **rajiv@webspero.com** and share your feedback. Meanwhile, I encourage you to check out our **LinkedIn profile.**

If this content piques your curiosity, I encourage you to follow us on LinkedIn, where we share such digital marketing content every weekday. We have helped hundreds of clients reach escape velocity in their business, and if you want to let the experts take over your growth hacking plans, I highly recommend scheduling a call with us **here.**

I look forward to hearing from you soon.