

Robert Middleton Interviews Jason Alba

**Robert:** Hi. This is Robert Middleton of Action Plan Marketing and the Action Plan Marketing Club. Today, I'm interviewing Jason Alba, the CEO and creator of JibberJobber.com. Welcome to the call, Jason. I'm really looking forward to this conversation about LinkedIn, Facebook and social networking.

**Jason:** Thanks, Robert. It's a pleasure to be here.

**Robert:** I found Jason because someone turned me on to a couple of his books, which I read and loved. I had wanted to know more about LinkedIn and Facebook because I was already a member of both. He's the author of *I'm on LinkedIn – Now What???*, which is a great title.

After a corporate downsizing impacted Jason in 2006, he experienced firsthand the difficulties of conducting a job search. Drawing on his extensive computer software and IT experience, Jason analyzed the job-search process and developed [www.JibberJobber.com](http://www.JibberJobber.com), the gold standard in career management technology.

Jason specializes in social media with an emphasis on getting professional or business value out of various social tools. He maintains four blogs, including [www.JibberJobber.com/blog](http://www.JibberJobber.com/blog), and is coauthor of *I'm on Facebook – Now What???*

Jason, what is social networking and why should I be interested?

**Jason:** I define social networking as online technologies that allow me to find other people, expand my network and

basically develop relationships with them. That is social networking as everyone defines it. The funny thing is that all networking is social, but “social networking” specifically has to do with the technologies.

Why should you be interested in it? I’ll tell you why I’m interested. I’m a business owner. I want people to know about my stuff. I want to hawk my wares, but I don’t want to do it in an intrusive way. I want to do it based on relationships.

There are many social environments that give me the opportunity to find prospects, interact with clients and share my brand with people, whether they know me or not. I can introduce or reinforce my brand. Networking and brand management are two of the main reasons why I participate in these social environments.

**Robert:** That’s the main purpose. There are many people, and I’m one of them, who are on LinkedIn and Facebook, and perhaps other things, but are not getting a lot of great results from doing them. The problem is that they really don’t understand how to use them, how much time to put into it or where to focus. It’s easy to just have these pages up, but sometimes they don’t do people any good.

**Jason:** In the olden days, you would have developed a website which we called “brochureware.” It was just a static thing. You don’t want your social efforts to turn into brochureware. You want to have interaction and develop relationships.

**Robert:** There are multiple tools. We've mentioned LinkedIn and Facebook, which are the big guns for business networking. We call it "social" networking, but it's more like online business networking. What are the other tools?

**Jason:** I've developed a comprehensive, or complementary, model of tools that I use. It includes things like LinkedIn, Facebook, my blogs, Twitter, which is microblogging, newsletters, articles and article distribution and things like that. I'm a huge advocate of blogging because it allows you to develop relationships in a way that I have never heard of before.

These are a number of different places online. One of my favorites is to find an appropriate Yahoo or Google group. I'm a member of a number of Yahoo groups. It doesn't take much of my time, but I get my brand in front of a lot of people on a constant basis. These things all have their discrete audiences. There is a little bit of crossover, but they're all very complementary.

For example, I post something on my blog with a certain message and have people comment on it. I turn right around and post it on Twitter by putting the subject and the link. That automatically goes into Facebook as my status. It didn't just go out to my blog audience, but it went out to about 1,500 people who follow me on Twitter and about 1,500 people who are my friends on Facebook.

**Robert:** The starting point was simply a blog entry.

**Jason:** Absolutely. In that example, the beginning point was a blog entry.

**Robert:** In Twitter, you can only put in 140 characters, so what did you put in for a blog entry?

**Jason:** I put the title, unless it's not catchy enough. Yesterday, my title was "LinkedIn! LinkedIn! LinkedIn!" and I had some announcements about LinkedIn Education. In my Twitter tweet, instead of putting that very same thing, I put something like "Here are some important LinkedIn announcements," followed by an arrow and a TinyURL for the link.

**Robert:** Can they see the whole URL and click on it?

**Jason:** Exactly. When you put a URL in Twitter, it is one click. You're making it easy for your Twitter followers to go somewhere. That example was a blog post, but it could just as easily have been a Facebook event.

You want to take information you're putting in front of one of your audiences in this medium and share it to other audiences within other networks.

**Robert:** Let me look at this from a practical view of what I'm doing. One thing I do really well is send out a weekly ezine to a lot of people.

**Jason:** I'm one of those people.

**Robert:** It generates a lot of business, online sales and long-term relationships for me. It really does work.

Instead of doing a daily blog, I decided to put my newsletter on my blog, so I really only blog once a week, and it is my newsletter. Some people discover that.

From what you're saying, the additional thing I could do is re-craft the blog title, put it in Twitter and/or Facebook, and then put a link back to that blog.

Let's explain this in case people aren't familiar with it. There's a nifty little tool called TinyURL, at [www.TinyURL.com](http://www.TinyURL.com). You take a long URL, such as the URL of that blog post, stick it into TinyURL and press a button. It creates a compacted URL so it will fit in the space for Twitter or Facebook.

That will go to anyone in your first level in Facebook or Twitter. They'll see it and perhaps click on it, then go back to your blog and read it.

**Jason:** That's a great example of how the tools are complementary.

**Robert:** The great thing about it is that I'm not doing a whole lot of extra writing or anything. This is something I could simply do weekly, my ezine, the blog, Twitter and/or Facebook all at one time, and it would only take me about two extra minutes to get it out to a lot more people.

**Jason:** Exactly. The interface between Twitter and Facebook is automated. You can add an application on Facebook for Twitter. It basically makes your Facebook status whatever your latest tweet is on Twitter. Once you get that set up, which only takes a few minutes of hunting around (on

Facebook), it takes no time to get your Twitter messages over to Facebook.

Here's the beauty of this. You have X number of people who subscribe to your newsletter. You have a smaller number of people who come to your blog, because getting it via email is so much more convenient than going once a week to your blog.

**Robert:** There's a link from my newsletter. If people want to see it online, they just click, and there it is. Sometimes, they just like looking at it that way.

**Jason:** Then you have whoever follows you on Twitter. I'm always surprised by who's on Twitter. For the most part, and this is one of the secrets of Twitter which I love, a lot of the people on Twitter are either bloggers or social media enthusiasts. They like to share news.

If you go out and say, "Here's my latest newsletter," and have a big announcement with the TinyURL, it's likely that some of your Twitter followers are going to share it with their audiences. You get that viral benefit, which is really cool.

The flipside of that is Facebook. A lot of the people I'm connected with on Facebook aren't anywhere else. They aren't on my newsletter, they don't follow my blog and they don't follow me on Twitter, but they love Facebook, and Facebook is their home. I get different demographics with one message, and it's a very quick process.

**Robert:** That makes sense. Let's go back to the blog itself. We did a whole interview last year with someone who used blogging, but it's good to revisit the topic. How often do you blog?

**Jason:** That's a great question, and the answer depends on what you want to accomplish. Your once-a-week newsletter is just fine. There's nothing wrong with that.

With JibberJobber, I want people who are interested in relationship management to know about it. Some of them are going to be professionals and executives in transition. Others are going to be small-business owners.

JibberJobber is basically a CRM (customer relationship management), so if you're interested in relationship management, I want you to know about it.

Instead of just doing a once-a-week newsletter, I want to create a community. I want these people to come to my blog on a regular basis, add comments, communicate and learn. I want my blog to be the must-read place. If I blogged once a month, you'd get bored. You'd come back daily, and then weekly, and not see any updates. You'd wonder, "What the heck happened to Jason?"

I've decided to blog once a day, except weekends and holidays. I want you to know that, every day, I'm going to be that one morsel you have to come and learn from. That's what I do on my JibberJobber blog without fail.

**Robert:** Give me a few more details. How long is your blog post in terms of number of words?

**Jason:** I don't count the words because it's just one more thing for me to have to remember to do. I try to keep my blog posts between four and six paragraphs.

This is not something where I'm doing a ton of research. I'll go to bed at night thinking, "What am I going to write about tomorrow? There was this thing that happened in the grocery store that had to do with relationships, or careers, or selling. I'll write about that." Then I sleep on it. The next morning, I wake up and freehand four to six paragraphs.

I try not to make it longer because the longer you go, the more people think, "I'll read this when I have time." I want people to read my stuff right then, so I make it something they can read within five minutes.

**Robert:** You can read four to six paragraphs in about two minutes.

**Jason:** If it does go really long, I break it up and have multiple posts.

**Robert:** What time of day do you tend to blog?

**Jason:** I'm freshest in the morning, so I usually blog first thing in the morning. I'll come in, check my email, make sure there are no fires to put out and then get my blog post out of the way.

In the last month and a half, I've started to write five blog posts at a time so that I can get on to my other business. Writing five at a time sounds like a lot of work, but if you can carve out an hour or hour and a half, have your topics



ready and crank them out, then you're done blogging for the rest of the week.

**Robert:** Not that a blog necessarily replaces a newsletter, but a blog is a lot easier to write than a newsletter. It's more informal. It doesn't have to be thought out quite as much. Since it doesn't have to be as long, it also doesn't have to be as well-structured. It can be random ideas about something, although it shouldn't be junk.

You also don't have to worry about formatting because it's handled for you in the blog. When I do the newsletter, I do it in a text editor and then copy and paste it. I have to format it myself, so it takes a lot longer to do that. A blog is a lot easier and faster.

**Jason:** I agree. My newsletters are a pain for that simple reason.

**Robert:** The average person listening to this call is an independent or self-employed professional such as a consultant, coach, trainer, writer, designer or financial planner. They have their own business, which is usually a home business, and work with clients. They may not be on the Internet a lot yet. They have a website, but in many cases it needs a lot of work.

Where do they start with all of this? Is LinkedIn or Facebook a good place to start? What's important first?

**Jason:** It depends a little bit on who your audience is. My best prospect for JibberJobber is somebody who's already online. If you're online, it makes it a lot easier for me to help you understand what my product is. If you sell

garage doors, that's not necessarily true. I can't imagine that people are going to become passionate about a garage-door community and follow your blog posts.

**Robert:** All the people are definitely online to some degree because they get my newsletter. They do other networking as well. While they are all online, most aren't leveraging it to the degree they could. That's the issue.

**Jason:** Here's what I would do. The first thing to do is also the easiest and almost a one-shot deal. Go into LinkedIn and get your profile set up. Make sure your profile is appropriate for your audience so when they find your profile and read it, they understand who you are and what your value proposition is. Make sure your summary reads well.

If you don't do anything else, simply do that. That is the most important first step, and there's no major time commitment and no long-term commitment.

**Robert:** When you have a very *thin* profile that doesn't say a lot and people have to guess what you're about, nothing will happen.

**Jason:** Exactly. People don't want to guess, and they're not going to go to Google to do searches on your name. Make sure your profile is fleshed out enough so when I read it, I understand your value proposition.

**Robert:** I recommend that everyone go to [www.Linkedin.com](http://www.Linkedin.com) and put in "Jason Alba." See what the expert does. He has a summary and overview. He tells you how to contact him,

his background, how he got started, etc. You get a sense of what he's about.

You can also get more information about his current things, his past, education, recommendations and the number of connections he has. You can see that 58 people recommended him.

In just a few minutes, you get a good sense of someone. You should try to do it at least as well as Jason. It's a good start.

**Jason:** That's a lot of pressure! The biggest issue people come up against, which I think will be an issue for the people listening also, is how to develop a profile that speaks about you as a professional and also speaks about your business.

The first answer people come up with is to create multiple profiles. This is *not* the answer. Do not create multiple profiles. Have just one profile. The key is in your summary. You get 2,000 characters where you can freehand a number of paragraphs that talk about your value proposition.

Make sure you put in as much about you as you do about what your company is. It can't be a total pitch for your company. You have to craft your summary in such a way that it speaks about you and your company or offerings.

**Robert:** Also, don't just look at Jason's profile, but look at a lot of different profiles. As you look around, you'll start to

recognize what looks good, what style you like and what fits what you do. I'm big on not copying, but emulating,

I noticed that Jason's profile is longer than mine, so I could probably put a little more into mine. There are always ways to update it.

Once you have a LinkedIn profile, then what do you do?

**Jason:** First, I'd like to speak about *your* specific profile. Your profile is good, but there are a number of things I'd advise you to do. These are specific things that are not very intuitive, so let's go over your profile really quickly.

You have your headshot, which is great. Everyone should include their picture because it helps their profile become more personable. Right below your name, you have your tagline which says, "Owner at Action Plan Marketing." That tells me that you're into marketing and you probably specialize in helping me understand actionable things I should do.

What could you put there instead of "Owner at Action Plan Marketing?" You want something that's more of a hook, a catchphrase or a real tagline about what you help people do.

**Robert:** I thought in that part you were required to have just a label, but I should know better. If we look at yours, it says, "Helping people achieve income security by practicing personal career management with JibberJobber.com." I should be a little better at it!

**Jason:** That's exactly why I wanted to bring this up. Even though you know the right answer, it's not very intuitive that you can go in and change it. A lot of people look at their LinkedIn profile as a dry, boring resume, but there are actually a number of places throughout the profile where you can make it a little catchier.

For example, scroll down just a little bit where it says "Websites," you do what most people do. You have a link that says "My Company" and a link that says "My Blog." When I mouse over "My Company," I can see that it will take me to [www.ActionPlan.com](http://www.ActionPlan.com). When I mouse over "My Blog," I see that it will take me to [www.ActionPlan.Blogs.com](http://www.ActionPlan.Blogs.com).

I recommend that instead of saying "My Company," you have it say something like "How to attract more clients." For your blog, it would also say something more descriptive. Make it something that creates desire for them to do something actionable, which is click on it.

Let me tell you how to do this. (By the way, if you go to LinkedIn and follow along this will be much clearer.)

When you go into your profile, right next to the websites, there is a little Edit link. When you click on Edit, it gives you a dropdown where you can choose My Company, My Portfolio, My Blog, My RSS, etc. The very bottom option says "Other." If you click on that, you can freehand the actionable statement in, instead of choosing a default from the dropdown.

**Robert:** Guess what, Jason? I just did it. Now, in Websites, I have “How to attract more clients” and “Strategies for attracting more clients.” The latter one got cut off, so I’ll have to work with it a bit more. You want to make sure it’s not too long or else it gets cut off because it only will take so many characters. Immediately, I have a marketing message in there instead of just a label. That’s brilliant.

**Jason:** Exactly. Now, right below that is your public profile. You did this right. I call this a “vanity URL.” You have [www.Linkedin.com/in/ActionPlanMarketing](http://www.Linkedin.com/in/ActionPlanMarketing). I like that because, if you ever send it to me in an email or if you put it in your email signature, on your blog or on a business card, I’ll know where I’m going.

The default is [www.Linkedin.com/o/](http://www.Linkedin.com/o/), followed by some numbers and letters. I recommend you go in and pick a vanity URL. It’s free and will take about 10 seconds to do, but it makes your profile look more on-purpose.

**Robert:** Excellent. In fact, you could take that URL and put it in the signature line of all your emails.

**Jason:** Absolutely. I don’t because I want people to go to my JibberJobber, book or speakers websites. I don’t care if they come to my LinkedIn profile as much as I want them to go somewhere else.

**Robert:** You have to decide from what you have available.

**Jason:** The last thing I’m going to talk about on your profile is a comment you made about my summary being longer than yours. As you develop your summary, making it bigger

and taking advantage of those 2,000 characters, you get an opportunity to put keywords.

Think about your audience and what they might search for. If I search for the phrase “marketing expert” in quotes, am I going to find your profile? If I don’t, then you need to go through your summary and make sure you include that phrase, “marketing expert,” in your profile.

**Robert:** For instance, one of the keywords that works well is “marketing plan.” Do I even have “marketing plan” in the keywords?

**Jason:** Good question. Everyone on this call should be able to figure out a number of keywords or key phrases that they might be paying for Google Ads right now. Make sure those same things are in your summary.

**Robert:** That might be advanced for some people, but it makes sense. Search terms are essentially words people are searching for. They not only search for them on Google, but also in LinkedIn and other places as well.

Someone might come to LinkedIn looking for me specifically, and they’ll find me. That’s not an issue. However, for people who don’t know me, that is the issue, right?

**Jason:** That’s right. On LinkedIn, I want to attract people who are not going to search for me by name but by topic.

**Robert:** Is that it on the profile?

**Jason:** Setting up your profile and things like that are what I refer to as “having a passive strategy.” If you don’t do anything else, go in and spruce up your profile so that if and when you are found, it looks good and people are compelled to contact you and develop a relationship.

**Robert:** They look at it and think, “I’d like to link with this person.” They can then click the buttons to do that.

**Jason:** Even better is when they think, “I would like to contact Robert about a speaking engagement or consulting gig.” Whether or not we connect on LinkedIn, getting business out of it is pretty cool.

**Robert:** Absolutely. How much does that happen? How often do people find your LinkedIn profile just like they would find a website and then connect with you? What can people expect as far as this goes?

They put up the world’s greatest profile with great keywords, links to the website, etc. It’s 100%. What kind of results can they really expect, at least to begin with?

**Jason:** To begin with, don’t go to the bank and take out a loan to buy a new boat! It probably won’t be anything spectacular. However, with LinkedIn growing by a million people a month, and more people participating in group discussions, the more likely it is that the professionals who are looking for you and your business are going to be able to find you.

It’s almost like asking, “If I put an ad in the yellow pages, am I going to get any business?” I personally don’t like the



yellow pages, but I'll use the analogy. If people are looking in the yellow pages for service providers like you and you're not in there, they're not going to find you at all.

If nothing else, spend a couple of hours to get your profile up and running. I call that the passive strategy, but there are definitely things you can do that are more aggressive or proactive that can increase your chance of being found by the right people.

**Robert:** Let's get into some of those proactive strategies.

**Jason:** I'll tell you my favorite thing, but I'll have to give you a caveat. One of my favorite things to do is participate in "Answers." This is where you can ask a question in front of the audience of your network, and even up to the entire 30 million-plus people who are on LinkedIn.

For example, you might ask, "I'm developing a marketing presentation for small-business owners. I need to make sure I have enough current actionable things they can do. What are some actionable things you've done this last year that have resulted well?"

What you're doing is putting your brand in front of a lot of people, not only your first-degree contacts, but your second and third-degree contacts, and possibly beyond. It's a beautiful thing. You're branding yourself as an expert because you're saying that you're doing a presentation on this. You're soliciting information, and you'll get great information.

What if you posed that question and had 50 responses? Now, not only are you an expert because you're doing a presentation, and not only are you getting great input for your presentation, but just having 50 responses makes you look like you're the man.

**Robert:** Everyone else sees that I got 50 responses.

**Jason:** Exactly. I love Answers. It's a great way to put your brand out there. It's also a great way to grow your network. I've answered questions, and just because I answered in an intelligent, and not spammy, way, I've actually had people connect with me. I can't recall if it's resulted in business, but it's helped me grow my network, which is a good thing in LinkedIn.

**Robert:** With Answers, you're actually asking a question, and then you get answers. You have to put it into a certain category of question, like marketing. It can't be to just everybody, right? What's the best way to categorize your question so it gets to more people?

**Jason:** There are two aspects to your question. First, you do categorize your question. You can put each question into two different categories. I categorize them in whatever is most logical or appropriate. I don't game it and try to figure out the best category, numbers-wise.

Let's step back. How do you get your question in front of the greatest number of people? In LinkedIn, when you ask your question, it gives you the opportunity to email up to 200 of your first-degree contacts. If you don't email them,

you're wasting your time, and you might as well not even post the question.

You need to be brave enough to say, "Yes, I want 200 of my first-degree contacts to get an email of my question." Let's say I send out a question in LinkedIn and you're one of my contacts. You get the question and go in and answer it.

Here is some of the viral beauty. All of your contacts who then log into LinkedIn will see on their homepage, "Robert Middleton just answered this question," and it will say what the question is. If it looks interesting to them or if you're a big enough authority in their mind, they're going to click over and see what the heck was interesting enough that you took your time to answer on LinkedIn.

That's one of the beauties of getting your question out to as many people as possible.

**Robert:** Let's say you put a question out and choose 200 of your contacts to send it to. If you do a question the next day, will it go out to a random sampling of those 200 people, or will it use a different 200 and then rotate?

**Jason:** Every single time, you choose each of the 200. If you want to have an aggressive LinkedIn strategy, I would suggest asking one question no more than once a week. Your network has more than 500 connections, and so does mine.

**Robert:** It's over 1,000 now.

**Jason:** I'll go into LinkedIn and ask my question. This week, I'll select A-F, and that will give me 200 contacts that get the email. Next week, I'll go to the next block of my contacts and send the email to them. This way, any given contact is only going to get one email a month from me, which is not too much.

**Robert:** That makes sense. You have to keep it organized, which isn't too hard. Then do you have to click each of the 200 names to send your email?

**Jason:** The way they organize it is by letters. I just click one checkbox that says "All the A's." It'll say, "That's 67. You have 133 left."

**Robert:** I didn't know that. They do prevent you from sending the email to everybody at once. They've put some controls on it so it doesn't get overly spammish.

**Jason:** It's your responsibility to not make your network feel like you're spamming them. Make sure the question is good and not overly promotional, and that you're really soliciting intellectual conversation and not doing it too often.

**Robert:** Are there any other ways you can send messages to your list, other than through Answers?

**Jason:** This is one of the four 'must-do things' in LinkedIn. Go into Contacts, which is where you view all your contacts. Below your contacts is a link that says "Export Connections." I absolutely recommend you export your connections on a regular basis.

You'll get them in a CSV file which opens in Excel. I then import them into my CRM, which for me is JibberJobber. You can also import them into SalesForce, ACT!, GoldMine or whatever you use.

I pull my contacts out of LinkedIn on a regular basis and put them into my JibberJobber account. Then, I'll go to JibberJobber and say, "I want to send a newsletter to all my LinkedIn contacts." Note that I'm on the free LinkedIn account. I'm not paying for an upgrade.

**Robert:** If you pay for an upgrade, what are you able to do that you can't do otherwise?

**Jason:** The main gist behind the upgrade is that you have more communication functionality. For example, on the free account, I can request five introductions at a time, but if I pay \$20 a month, I can get 15 introductions at a time. I have not found enough compelling value to do the upgrade, although I know some people who have.

If you're in sales, recruiting or something like that, and you use LinkedIn a lot as a tool, it makes a lot of sense to do the upgrade. For me, it just hasn't made enough sense yet.

**Robert:** Let's go back to exporting connections and sending things out. You're sending those out like an ezine?

**Jason:** Absolutely. In my profile summary, it says, "If you connect with me, I will add you to my business newsletter. I send it out once a month, and it lets you know what's

going on in my life and business. If you don't want to get it, don't connect with me." Since I hardly invite anyone and most people invite me, this seems fair.

**Robert:** You've gotten permission to send stuff to them. You don't want to abuse that privilege, of course, but at least they've agreed to do that by becoming a LinkedIn connection.

**Jason:** It's a very soft form of permission and not really opt-in. It's the very first paragraph of my summary. A lot of times, I'll get invitations from people saying, "I'd like to add you to my network. Yes, please add me to your newsletter." Right then, I know that this is somebody who has at least read that far down my profile. That starts the relationship off on the right foot.

**Robert:** Excellent. What kinds of things do you send out to that list, and how often do you send them?

**Jason:** I call it a monthly newsletter, but I'm actually a number of months behind. (laughter) These newsletters are hard, as you well know. Basically, if you want to learn about me and my stuff, you can go read any of my five blogs.

My newsletter is stuff I send out which is business. It includes what we're doing with JibberJobber, business strategy stuff, upcoming speaking engagements, new partner introductions, etc. It's more of an answer to "Jason, how are things going with JibberJobber, and what's new?"

The second edition of my books just came out. That's definitely a newsletter topic. I don't include things I would

blog about, like how to find a job, network or develop relationships. It's not informational on that kind of stuff. It's informational on what's going on in my world.

**Robert:** It's an update-type thing. This probably wouldn't be the best use of heavily promotional email, correct?

**Jason:** Every time I send my email out, I get business, whether it's a new partner or something like that. I do it because I want to have a strong relationship and put my brand in front of people who are in my network, not because I want them to sign up, upgrade, buy my book, and engage me as a speaker or any of that.

I just want my brand to be reinforced in front of them because any of those thousands and thousands of people who are on my newsletter might be influencers in a different organization, which can then turn into a paying client.

**Robert:** I assume that at the top of this newsletter you mention you're sending it to your LinkedIn contacts so they know where it's coming from.

**Jason:** Actually, I merge all my LinkedIn contacts into the rest of my JibberJobber contacts. It goes out to about 4,500 people. Sometimes, I'll say, "You may have gotten on my newsletter because you connected with me on LinkedIn. Here's how you can get off my newsletter."

**Robert:** Can independent professionals go to JibberJobber and do this same thing?

**Jason:** Absolutely. Initially, JibberJobber was designed for people who are in transition and job search. Very quickly, it became a long-term relationship management tool.

I've even had people switch from SalesForce to JibberJobber. Not that I'm better than SalesForce, but those people didn't need the focus on sales processes as much as they needed a focus on relationship management. That's what my tool is all about.

**Robert:** Everyone, check that out.

The interesting thing is that it's sort of like a mind map. We have something in the middle, branches out, things connecting, and it's all interconnected. If you're doing a lot of these things in different places, it's like you're all over the place. "I've heard of this person here and there." Then they remember you, and stuff starts to happen.

**Jason:** The more you can put your brand in front of someone in a non-pitchy way, the better. I've sent newsletters out on a regular basis and after the eighth one, I've had somebody say, "I've wanted to talk to you." They just needed to see my brand in a soft way, eight times.

**Robert:** If you're doing a program, you might say, "By the way, we're launching a new program and thought you might be interested. The link is here to the website." It doesn't have to be a heavy-duty pitch in the email itself.

A lot of Internet marketing people abuse email. You start getting two and three emails a day from some of these



people, and you really wonder. For most independent professionals, that will backfire on you.

**Jason:** I totally agree.

**Robert:** You have to be somewhat conservative in your use. People make the mistake both ways. Either they do too much or they hardly do anything. You have to find that balance so you are getting your name, brand, message and ideas out there.

Another side of the Answers is a nifty thing on Google where you can go in for LinkedIn Answers and choose the answers you want. Every day I look at this. I have marketing and sales answers. It posts three of them every day.

**Jason:** Are you talking about your Google RSS reader?

**Robert:** No. This is iGoogle, where you customize your homepage for Google. I don't just use the plain Google anymore. I have my top news stories, a link for Facebook, a financial summary, a Wikipedia link, date and time, movies and weather. The one at the top right is the LinkedIn Answers.

The ones that are there right now are "Where would you find a virtual seminar manager coordinator?" "What are your favorite new books on marketing?" and "If your company were to sponsor the most-outstanding young person award, what would you look for in return?"

There are all kinds of interesting things. You can just click on that, and it will take you to that question on LinkedIn

where you can answer it. If you have a particular area of expertise, you can choose it in iGoogle.

**Jason:** I don't usually talk about this because I consider it a little more advanced. What you're doing is absolutely right-on brilliant. You've gone in and said, "I'm interested in the most current Answers in this particular category."

If you go to LinkedIn, click on Answers on the right side and scroll down, you'll see a section that says, "Browse." Those are all the categories. There are about 10 or so, including Law and Legal, Management, Marketing and Sales, Personal Finance, and Product Management.

With what you're doing, you're finding just the most current Answers in the category you're an expert in, which then gives you an opportunity to contribute to a conversation and put your brand in front of people.

The reason I don't talk about it very often is because, while it's not hard to set up, most people don't understand what RSS is or anything like that. iGoogle is awesome. If there's any reason to use iGoogle, it might just be that. That's a brilliant use of iGoogle and LinkedIn together, Robert.

**Robert:** I'll check it out and, once in a while, answer a question. Often when I answer a question, I get an email back from the questioner saying, "Thanks. I appreciate your input."

If you do put up a question in the Answers section and people give you answers, it maintains the relationship if you thank them for the input they gave. You don't usually

get 500 answers. It's more often a dozen or so, so it's something you can handle pretty quickly.

All of that maintains your relationship. It's the exchange of ideas that's the power of the Answers section. There's a place that lists the top answerers. I don't know who these people are, but some of them have answered 600 or 7,000 Answers, or something ridiculous, in a month. It must be *all* they do. Maybe that's their only marketing strategy. It sure would get you some visibility. But it's a lot of work.

**Jason:** If you click on the Answers page and scroll down a little bit, it's there. They show the top five people from the week. That's never really been a strategy I've advocated, although I'm sure some people get business out of it. I choose to participate in different networks and environments, not solely in LinkedIn. To answer that many questions would just take too much time.

**Robert:** In one of the other interviews I did on networking, Diane Darling said that one of her main uses for LinkedIn was prospecting. If she's looking for a particular person in a company, she puts in the company name and then finds people who know people in that company, connects with them and tries to make a connection. Have you ever done something like that?

**Jason:** Absolutely. Let me give you a concrete example using a recruiter to show how this would work. A lot of people think LinkedIn is a recruiter's playground, and it is, although there are a ton of people who are not recruiters on here.

Let's say that you want me to hire someone for a high-tech firm that's well funded and can pay engineers well. The first place I would go, as a recruiter, is to your competition or the major players who are out there. I would start by looking at Sun, Google, Yahoo and Microsoft. I'm going to try to find people who have ever worked in those companies with certain job titles.

I'm not just looking at job titles, but I'm also looking at companies. Let's transfer that over to a business prospect. Let's say that I want to develop a relationship with, or sell something to, [www.Monster.com](http://www.Monster.com). Not only am I going to look for anyone who's ever worked at Monster.com or who has certain titles, but I'm also going to look at Monster's competitors.

People who are high up enough at CareerBuilder, Dice, Indeed and some of these other major job boards are going to know people in the industry and are all people I should start developing relationships with. Where else can you find the right people to develop relationships with other than LinkedIn?

When you think about your perfect prospect or what company you're trying to get in, expand it a little and look at their competition and other players in the industry.

**Robert:**

I suppose there are a lot of strategies. Diane said she just gets on the phone and calls the people because sometimes there's a phone number in the profile somewhere. There's also usually a way to send an email. Where do you actually go to do that? Is it under the people or contacts?

**Jason:** Once you find the person who you're interested in communicating with....

**Robert:** How do you find that person in the first place?

**Jason:** Let's do a quick search. On the top, right-hand side, there's a search box. On the dropdown, it says, "Search People." If you don't put that, it might search whatever you're in, which for me had been Answers, but now I've switched it over to Search People. I'm going to type "marketing plan" in quotes. I hit search, and it's going to come back with people who have "marketing plan" in their profile.

One of the things I usually do for my results, because I don't like the first set of results it sends to me, is click on the link that says "Refine Search Results."

**Robert:** I did "marketing plan" and I'm number two. That's interesting!

**Jason:** Not for me. My number two is a third-degree contact, my third result is a third-degree contact, and my fourth result is a second-degree contact. I usually refine the search results. There's a dropdown that says, "Sorted by." It defaults to "Keyword relevance," but I change it to "Degrees Away From Me."

When I search again, it will show me all the people who have "marketing plan" in their profile sorted by my relationship with them. Now I see just my first-degree contacts on my first page.

Now that I see all these people just in the first set of search results, I can see their tagline and some of the general stuff about their summary. A lot of people will put names of their clients in their summary or as keywords. Even though they don't work there and never have, they will still show up in search results for that company name.

Once I've found that person, the first thing I look at, on the right-hand side of the screen, is what my connection is, first, second or third degree, how many recommendations they have and how big their network is.

If they only have one connection, I'll try to figure out how to communicate with them outside of LinkedIn. With just one connection, they're tire kickers and will assume that anything coming from LinkedIn is spam.

If they have hundreds of connections and some recommendations, I'll look at this and say, "These guys *get* LinkedIn. If I send them a message through the LinkedIn system, they probably won't be skeptical of it."

The very first link for me has an icon that says, "Featured." That means this person is paying at least \$20 a month to have added features. One of the added benefits of paying \$20 a month is that you show up higher in the search results.

Let's click on a name and go to their profile. The first place I look here is at the very top, in their name field, for a phone number or email. If there isn't, I scroll down the page to the very bottom, where there's a box that says, "Contact so-and-so," with a link to send them a message

through LinkedIn. Sometimes, they'll also put their email address and/or phone number here too.

**Robert:** I'm on someone's profile. She has a profile and specialties, but I don't see any place to contact her. Where would I find that?

**Jason:** Did you scroll down to the very bottom of the entire page?

**Robert:** I see. It says, "Send a message," and there's an email there.

**Jason:** Mine also has a gmail email address. When you contact the person, you need to say, "I found your profile on LinkedIn. Here's why I would like to connect." Let them know where you found them.

**Robert:** This might be a first-level connection who already knows you, but you realize they have a second-level connection that's connected to somewhere else. How do you find that? Let's say I'm looking for someone in Apple Computer. How can I find some of my first levels who don't work at Apple Computer but know people who are on the second level at Apple Computer? Can you do that?

**Jason:** I would go into the Advanced People Search, which is one of the coolest things in LinkedIn. The search functionality they provide is really cool and where I wish Facebook would go.

At the very top, right by the Search box, there's a link that says, "Advanced." Click on Advanced, which takes you to the Advanced form. In that form, you'll see a box that

says, “Company.” I would put in “Apple” and uncheck the box that says, “Current Companies Only.” That means it should search on anyone who works or has ever worked at Apple.

**Robert:** It looks for current and past employees.

**Jason:** Exactly. I’ll also change my “Sort By,” on the bottom right of the form, to be “Degrees Away From Me.” That will first show me my first-degree contacts, followed by my second and then my third.

**Robert:** I don’t see this. Am I on the right form? I clicked on the “People” link at the very top of the page. Then it says, “Advanced Search.” My choices are “People Search” and “Reference Search.”

**Jason:** Are you on the Advanced People Search page?

**Robert:** It says, “Advanced Search” on it.

**Jason:** There should be two columns. On the left-hand side, you should have “Keywords,” “Name,” “Title” and “Company.”

**Robert:** I have “Keywords,” “Location,” “Title,” “Company” and “School.”

**Jason:** This is funny. LinkedIn is actually in the process of changing their Advanced Search form. I see a link that says, “Try LinkedIn’s new People Search,” and you might already be there. Let me click on that link and see if I end up where you are.



Yes. You're on the new view. I was on the old view. If this doesn't make sense to anyone, just realize there are two different views right now.

On this new form, where it says, "Title," "Company," "School," you want to scroll down to the next section. You'll see a "Sort By" with a big dropdown box next to it.

**Robert:** Ah, there it is. The default is "Relationship."

**Jason:** Exactly. Relationship would be first degree, second degree and third degree. On this new form, I'll put in "Apple" for the Company. What had been a checkbox for "Current Companies Only" is now a dropdown with "Current and Past." Now I can hit "Search."

My network and yours are large enough that we'll both probably see a whole bunch of first-degree contacts. Just for the sake of having fun, I'll scroll down to someone who is a second-degree contact.

**Robert:** For instance, I found a second-degree contact who's the web and e-marketing production manager at Apple Computer.

**Jason:** Click on that person's profile. Here's the cool thing. You have an opportunity to get a warm introduction from your first-degree contact to that second-degree contact. You can try to figure out how to contact the person yourself, like picking up the phone and calling. There's nothing wrong with that.

However, if the person between you and that second-degree contact is someone you know, trust and have a relationship with, and you think they might be able to facilitate an introduction, I recommend you ask for the warm introduction, as opposed to doing the cold call.

**Robert:** How can I find the first-person contact who's connected to this person?

**Jason:** When you go to the second or third-degree contact's profile page, scroll down a little bit. On the right-hand side, there should be a little box with a grey header that says, "How you're connected to" and the person's name. I clicked on someone who only has one other person in common with me.

To do the introduction, go back to the top of the page. Just to the right of the person's name are a number of options. The second one says, "Get introduced through a connection." You would click on that and write a message to your contact who you want to communicate with.

If there's more than one person who you're connected with, you can say, "Which one of your connections do you want to send the introduction through?"

You'll write a message to both people. One says, "Hey, John. This is Jason. I found you on LinkedIn. Here's why I'd like to talk with you." The other message says, "Hey, Bill. Would you please forward this on to John? You can see why I want to connect with him in my message to him below."

**Robert:** Does that email go to the person in Apple or to your first-level connection?

**Jason:** The first-level connection gets an email from you which contains an email for the person in Apple. Your connection can choose to forward the introduction to the person in Apple or not.

**Robert:** Right. Alternately, you could pick up the phone, call your first-level connection and say, “Hey, I’m trying to connect with this person at Apple. You seem to know him.”

There are a number of ways you can do it, but at least you’re finding that connection. Before LinkedIn, you weren’t able to do this. You’d have to network and talk to people. With LinkedIn, you can find someone who would know this person, and you can make a connection with them in seconds.

**Jason:** There are a couple of really cool things about that. First, when you do the introduction to John through Bill, you’re reminding Bill what your brand is. You’re giving Bill an opportunity to serve you and develop more of a relationship with you. Asking for introductions is a beautiful thing.

Second, we never used to be able to do this. If I was in a room of 30 of my connections and said, “Who in here has a connection to anyone at Apple Computer?” I might get a few people who raise their hands because they can remember their connections.

However, if I go into LinkedIn and do the search on the same group of people, I guarantee I'll get a lot more knowledge and intelligence about my networking opportunities into Apple just based on people they're connected to but who they might not know they're connected to.

**Robert:** It's a powerful tool. Is there any other major thing we should know about LinkedIn before we move to Facebook?

**Jason:** The last thing I'll talk about with LinkedIn is "Groups." Groups actually came out with some new functionality in the last few months which is "Groups Discussions." It combines the ability to have a network with the ability to ask questions to your network through Answers to your network.

I can find a group that is topical, like marketing experts or people who are passionate about marketing. In Groups, you can post "Discussions," which is very similar to posting a question in "Answers." The first difference is that it goes out to all the group members. Second, because it's topical, you have an audience that your message is directly targeted toward.

It's not just your broad network of first-degree contacts, some of whom may or may not care about marketing. In your group, it's topical. Groups and Groups Discussions are definitely things to explore.

**Robert:** For instance, I had previously joined the Guerilla Marketing Tips for Small Business. If I click on that

group, there are 170 different discussions, spanning many pages.

The first discussion concerns teleclasses and online coaching. If I go to that, there's a question that says, "Help! I'm considering offering teleclasses and online coaching. Has anyone used PayPal for online payment?" and there are two comments from two different people.

It's whole little community in and of itself. There may be thousands of people who belong to the Guerilla Marketing Tips. You can be active, especially if this is a community that might need your services. You can get known by asking questions, posting threads and answering.

**Jason:**

Let me caution you. I am not a fan of groups that have a ton of members and discussions because your one little discussion might get lost in all the noise. If you want to have a Groups Discussions strategy, it's better to find five or 10 smaller groups with a few hundred or couple of thousand members.

When you post a discussion or news item to the group, it's much more likely that people will see it and read it than if it were one of hundreds in a huge group.

**Robert:**

Like everything, you have to discriminate, test things, check it and see if you can find communities that will help you in some way.

Hopefully, everyone is not completely overwhelmed by this point. This is one reason we record these. I hope people actually go into LinkedIn, look through it and do

these kinds of things. That's why I want to be very exacting about the different places to go, so you understand how it works, what there is and the different possibilities.

Why don't we get into Facebook next?

**Jason:** "Discrimination" is a great word. You have to determine if Facebook is the right place for you to be. For some people, it makes sense. For others, it just doesn't make sense.

A lot of people think Facebook is a place to socialize. They can message their family, put pictures up and things like that. All that is true, and there's nothing wrong with that.

For everyone on the call, let me throw out the idea that whatever you put on your Facebook account becomes part of your brand in Facebook. That includes things you put in your summary, pictures, whatever groups you join, events you say you're going to, and everything else.

I try to be very careful that I'm communicating my business and value proposition in a fun and personable way and not doing anything that people might see as offensive or too silly. I try to keep my noise level down on Facebook.

Everything I'm talking about has to do with your profile. When you go into Facebook, look at your profile from someone else's perspective and ask yourself, "Is it noisy? Is it offensive? Can I really tell what Robert Middleton does and why I want to have a relationship with him?"

**Robert:** Interestingly, I just looked up your name. There's a nice professional picture. Then there's another Jason Alba who is a guy with a bare chest and a six pack. We'd all like to be that guy! I don't know who he is, but it's sort of funny.

**Jason:** That's not me. I guarantee that!

**Robert:** You don't want inappropriate things on your profile. On Facebook, I've found that you can get roped into a whole bunch of silly things. You might get a notification that says, "So-and-so has sent you a Mai Tai to drink," or something funny like that. I tend to ignore those. They don't seem to be very relevant.

**Jason:** I do a lot of ignoring. It's a big part of my Facebook strategy because there is so much junk and noise. Let's go one step further. Let's say you love the show "House," (on Fox) and someone invites you to the "House" fan page.

It's okay to join it, but realize that you're putting it as part of your brand. There's nothing wrong with that, but it could be noise. If you don't want to distract people from your marketing message, try to keep the noise factor down.

**Robert:** So who do you invite as a friend? I might have made a mistake in some of this because I invited people on my ezine list. A lot responded, and I'm close to 1,000 members in Facebook now. These are all people who were subscribers. Now, people are finding me who are friends of friends who have 20, 30 or 40 connections to me, and they ask to join as well.

What I definitely have in Facebook is a lot of “friends,” but I haven’t done much more than that. I’ve joined a couple of other discussion groups, but I’m underutilizing Facebook. Who do you invite as a friend? What do you do to make things happen on Facebook that will really serve your business?

**Jason:** What is the purpose of being on Facebook? For me, it’s to grow my network, develop relationships and put my brand in front of people. I have a friending strategy on Facebook which is very open.

In January, I will be in Arkansas speaking at a number of places. I can create a Facebook event that says, “Meet Jason in Little Rock,” and my 1,500 “friends,” many of whom I have never met and have not had any communication with, will get that event notification. Let’s say there are 10 of them in Little Rock who say, “Yes, I’m going to Jason’s event.”

Those people have networks. Their friends will see my event, so there is a viral effect. I actually want to grow my Facebook friends more than I want to grow my LinkedIn connections because I have groups, pages and events which can help share my message and brand. As people subscribe to those things, they share it with their friends, and my message goes to a bigger audience.

**Robert:** I’m on my Facebook homepage now. Sometimes, it’s a little confusing because there are so many different things, but I can’t even find the thing for events. Where is that, and how do I set up an event?



**Jason:** On my page, on the right-hand side, there is a box that says, “Requests.” This contains all the friend requests and silly stuff. Below that, I have a box that says, “Applications,” which has “Photos,” “Groups,” “Ads,” “Pages,” “Events” and “Marketplace.” Events is one of those things that I can do from the right-hand side on the front page of Facebook.

**Robert:** There it is!

**Jason:** Just in the last week, I’ve hired two virtual assistants. One of the things I’m going to have them do is take my entire calendar, which includes webinars, teleseminars and onsite presentations, and create individual Facebook events. That’s one more way to share who and what Jason Alba is to this audience.

**Robert:** When I create an event, how does it get onto Facebook? Does everybody see it when they come to my page, or is there a way to broadcast that event to all my friends?

**Jason:** I recommend you create an event and broadcast it through a “Page,” so let’s talk about what a Page is. You have your profile, which is your personal thing. It’s the Robert Middleton on Facebook. It shows your friends, and so forth. Your Page would be something like “Fans of Action Plan Marketing.”

This is basically a profile for your business, product or service. I have a Page for JibberJobber, a Page for my LinkedIn book and a Page for my Facebook book. There is one Jason Alba profile, but I have three individual Pages

which are profiles or landing pages for things that are of specific interest.

**Robert:** I have a page called “Action Plan Marketing,” which I created by accident because I have no idea how to create Pages. How can people find my Action Plan Marketing Page from my Robert Middleton Page?

**Jason:** You can edit your profile and put in the link to the Action Plan Marketing Page. In Facebook, the profile, page, event and group URLs are typically nasty URLs, so you should talk to your webmaster and say, “Would you please set up a URL that would be something like ‘www.Facebook.ActionPlan.com’ and have it redirect to the Facebook page?”

Then, you can easily put something in your newsletters that says, “To join my page, click on [www.Facebook.ActionPlan.com](http://www.Facebook.ActionPlan.com).”

**Robert:** Let’s go back to events. For instance, I’m doing a workshop in a couple of months, and I want to create an event for it. I’d go into Events and create an event. Then what happens?

**Jason:** Then you have the opportunity to share that event with your friends. As your friends sign up and say they’ll be attending, it shows up on the News Feed for their friends when they log in. You also have the opportunity to share the event with your page members.

Beyond that, I recommend you share the event everywhere else, like on your blog, in Twitter, in your

Robert Middleton Interviews Jason Alba

newsletter and even on LinkedIn. I consider this a little guerilla, but I would go to LinkedIn and say, “I have an event. I just posted it on Facebook. Here’s what I’m doing. Does anyone have any recommendations?”

Once again, you’re soliciting intellectual comments. At the same time, you’re subtly saying, “Here’s a link if you want to go sign up for it.”

In Facebook, when people say that they’re coming to an event on the event page, it actually shows who’s coming. If you can show that you have hundreds of people who sign up for your event, it makes you an authority or perceived subject matter expert in your space and gives you more credibility.

**Robert:** That makes sense. It’s a great marketing tool for all kinds of events, whether they’re teleclasses, live workshops, you name it.

**Jason:** Absolutely. And even if people don’t come, you’re still putting your brand out in front of people. I have people who don’t know that I speak. When I have my virtual assistant put all my speaking events online, it will remind people.

I recently connected with someone I knew in high school who was a grade younger than I. We hadn’t talked for over 10 years, and then found each other on Facebook. It turns out that he’s a vice president at a very well known Internet company, and he has a budget. Now that he knows I’m a speaker, he might be able to bring me in or give me opportunities in his organization.

**Robert:** Events can be a big thing. I like the idea of having your virtual assistant take your calendar and create events, if you have a lot of events. If you have only a few events, it's not too hard to do yourself.

After I've created this event, then I can press a button, and it goes out to everybody who's on my list, right?

**Jason:** Yes. If I remember correctly from the last time I did it, you can only send it out in batches. You can't send it to an entire list of a thousand-plus. That's a hassle and is one of the reasons I haven't done it very much.

**Robert:** You can also put that link in Twitter, which can lead to the page. You can link all these things together.

**Jason:** Exactly. I would recommend you do that. In Facebook, on the Events page, you actually get to build your credibility as someone who is somewhat popular and knowledgeable as others see that people are signing up for your event.

LinkedIn recently announced its own Events section. I think it will be cool and important. Even though I haven't played with it, I really like it because my Facebook friend network and my LinkedIn connections don't have a lot of crossover. I would actually have my virtual assistant put events in both places so word can get out to both of those networks.

**Robert:** That sounds like a very powerful way to promote things within Facebook. It's very direct-marketing oriented. You say, "Here's what we have," and then they can check it

out. What are some other ways we can use Facebook to market?

**Jason:** Facebook also has a thing called Groups, but it's very different from LinkedIn's Groups in that it's much more social. You should look for groups where your target audience will be and where you can become perceived as a subject matter expert.

For example, you would find groups for small businesses, marketing professionals, meeting planners, etc. Just start participating in the conversation in the group.

I will caution you though. Do not post comments in groups too regularly. I've had people contact me and say, "I started participating and posting comments. I did it 10 times a day and got kicked out completely of Facebook." Facebook doesn't want you to spam their system. Make sure you're communicating and participating, but don't do it too frequently or you might lose access to your account. Not good!

**Robert:** What other things can you do in Facebook? You can do very individual things, like posting on people's walls, and giving and asking for recommendations. It seems like you could spend your whole life in Facebook.

The thing that overwhelms me is knowing where to start. What's going to give me the biggest bang for my buck? Is it the groups or posting current activities through Twitter or directly into Facebook?

**Jason:** For me, it's more of the comprehensive social strategy, of which Facebook is a part. I've had a very light Facebook strategy, but now that I've brought my virtual assistants on, I'm going to get more involved.

Make sure your profile is good. Grow your friends so when things happen, when you have announcements, a lot of people can hear about it. Participate in Events and Groups. That's the gist of it for me.

If you're clever and have a good idea of something functional, you can create what Facebook calls an "Application." Some of these applications have grown like wildfire, made people wealthy and expanded brands in a big, clever way. It's not appropriate for a lot of companies, but it could be a homerun for some.

One of the most important things I've done in Facebook is to have my Twitter tweets become my Facebook status. I tweet on Twitter about five times a day. I get about as many replies on Facebook, because people see my Facebook status changing, as I do on Twitter.

It's been interesting to see that people are indeed following me. They're interested in what my status is and in engaging in some kind of conversation.

There's a lot more you can do, and we talk about other tactical things in my book, *I'm on Facebook – Now What???*, but my business has been more geared toward having a comprehensive social strategy in various platforms, as opposed to being in one or two completely.

**Robert:** Let's wrap this up by talking briefly about Twitter. I have a Twitter confession. I belonged to Twitter for a couple of months and just didn't see the point of it, so I discontinued my participation. I want you to convince me... You've given me some interesting ideas about how it can update things in Facebook. What are the real reasons for me to use Twitter, and where do I start with it? What's going to help my business?

**Jason:** Twitter is really hard to understand. Just like you, a lot of people look at it and say, "I don't care that Jason Alba is going to the post office. I don't care that so-and-so's cat walked across their bed." It's a very intimate setting.

I try to put out enough personal stuff so that you can get to know me on a personal level. A few weeks ago, my 7-year-old son fell down the stairs. I work in my basement. On Twitter, I wrote something like, "Put that boy next to gravity, and it's going to suck him down."

It had nothing to do with my business, but it made Jason Alba more personable, and I had a number of people who replied back with their own stories. Twitter helps me nurture relationships with people. On the flipside, when I have a blog post or something to announce, I put it out on Twitter.

For example, yesterday, I said, "I just bought my tickets to Arkansas. I can't wait. This will be my first time out there." Someone who has been following me on Twitter for a while said, "I can't believe it! You're going to be in Arkansas? We have to get together!" These are

opportunities for people to find out who I am and what I'm doing.

I've been mentioned on "FOX News" several times, which I thought was really cool. I've been given opportunities to write articles and guest blog posts. All these things happened because there are decision makers on the other end of Twitter who follow me and get to know who Jason Alba is as a person. They get to like me. They also get to understand what my brand and expertise are.

That's a very powerful thing. Twitter is so simple; all you get is 140 characters. It's so simple that it's confusing as to what the value is, but I've seen a significant amount of value for myself.

**Robert:** What would you recommend I do to get restarted? I quit my membership, so I don't get anything anymore. I'd have to sign up again. How do I get people to start following me? It's a funny concept to have people following you. It's like they're stalking you, in a certain sense. Of course, you put out the information you want them to know. It's not as if you put a webcam in your office!

**Jason:** Before I post something on Twitter, I think, "How is this going to affect my brand? Is it going to make me more personable? Is it going to help people understand my business more? Is it just going to add to the noise?" I don't want to add to the noise. I have a certain sense of humor, so I like to throw out funny stuff every once in a while. Once again, that helps people understand who I am.



I recommend that you definitely put it out in your newsletter. “I’m on Twitter. Here’s my URL. Click here to follow me.” If someone follows you, you then have to decide if you’re going to follow them back. That is kind of tricky.

**Robert:** They’ll know if you follow them back. Will they take it personally? “I’m following this person, but he’s not following me!”

**Jason:** It depends. Seth Godin doesn’t follow anyone, but he has tens of thousands of people following him. If you don’t follow anyone, then people won’t take it personally if you don’t follow them. If you follow 500 people and I’m not one of them, I might take it personally. Some people will be offended, no matter what you do.

I haven’t worried about it. I get a lot of people who find me from my talks, presentations, Twitter activity, etc. I just gauge whether they’re interesting or not and whether I want to add them to my following list. If they take it personally, it’s their problem, not mine. I don’t want to sound harsh, but I have to draw the line on noise somewhere, and that’s it for me.

**Robert:** You only need to follow people who are going to give you some useful information and direct you to some useful places so that there’s really something happening, as opposed to the 15 irrelevant things I did today.

The other challenge, it seems, is that Twitter doesn’t really work unless you’re posting on a regular basis. I found I had gone five days without putting a post on Twitter,

which was missing the point. You have to get in the habit of doing this. You said you put up about five things a day.

**Jason:** That's a very interesting point. I think it is okay to take a hiatus. I don't tweet on weekends, and there's a whole different set of people who do. They'll tweet about their personal weekend excursions and stuff like that.

If I were to go a week or two without tweeting, I don't think it would hurt me at all, but I wouldn't actually go more than a week. Even if I tweet just once a day or once a week, I'm still able to put an interesting message out there.

For a lot of people in the service business who have tweets like "I have an announcement" and "I have a special," I don't think it's a bad strategy to be on Twitter. For me, it's been great.

**Robert:** What might be five typical posts you give? Can you give us a quick outline?

**Jason:** I always give a post about my blog posts. Since I have so many blog posts, they might be my five tweets a day right there. I try to do something funny and personal, like sharing something cool I've seen online, such as a link, a video or a blog post.

A couple of days ago, there was tragic news about the plane that crashed into a couple of houses in San Diego. On Twitter, I posted something like "I feel sick to my stomach right now" and included a link to CNN. Nobody else had seen it yet.

I'll put current events stuff like that and anything to help people understand who Jason Alba is beyond JibberJobber or my books, like my kids falling down the stairs. Every once in a while, I might put something about being hungry, but if I do, I try to put a funny twist on it because nobody wants to read "Jason Alba is hungry."

A few days ago, I said, "Does hot chocolate qualify as a lunch?" I had about five or 10 replies on both Twitter and Facebook. That was my tweet. It basically said that I was running late, I was busy and I didn't have time to make or buy lunch. It said a lot about Jason Alba, and it was sort of humorous and something I got a lot of replies to.

**Robert:** That's really funny! This is stimulating my mind about the kinds of things I could do. For instance, I saw this great show on Thanksgiving Day about the CNN heroes that did all these amazing things. They acknowledged and awarded them.

**Jason:** I read that in your newsletter.

**Robert:** Exactly. I talked about it. I could tweet about that. After the show, or the next day, I could say, "I just saw this great program on CNN, the 'CNN Heroes.' Go to CNN and check it out. It's very inspiring."

**Jason:** Exactly.

**Robert:** If I'm adding some information to my Marketing Club, I could let people know, which would get them more

interested in it. That would be a very good way to let people know about that stuff.

**Jason:** Absolutely. Imagine you had 2,000 people following you on Twitter and you had a new announcement. Not only are you going to announce your offerings to people who might not know about them, but also your diehard fans are going to re-tweet it to their contacts. That's an endorsement you can't buy. It's powerful.

**Robert:** If I had some musings about marketing, I could say, "A thought about marketing: listening is more important than speaking. Pass it on." There are endless ideas.

It's funny that it's easy for me to come up with a 750-word article every week, but it was hard for me to figure out the best thing to put on Twitter.

I need to give it another chance. The opportunity to get information out about what I'm doing could be quite good. I'll put it on my ezine, get a bunch of Twitter subscribers and see what happens.

**Jason:** Awesome. It sounds like I did a good job convincing you!

**Robert:** Very much so. We've covered a lot and went deeply into a lot of the things about LinkedIn and Facebook, and a little bit about Twitter and blogging. All of these things interconnect and intertwine. You have to find your own strategy and the time you can put into it.

The thing you kept coming back to that's so important, Jason, is, "Does what I'm putting out represent my brand,

what I'm about, who I'm about and what I offer, all the time in every single space?" That's an important reminder to people. If you do that, it strengthens your brand.

**Jason:** That's right. Those people can then share your brand because they understand it better.

**Robert:** Are there any words of wisdom to leave us with?

**Jason:** I'll throw a little twist out there because I am in the career space. Nobody cares about your career or your business as much as you do. In the two and a half years I've been running my business and managing my career more on-purpose, I've learned I have to do these things and take them seriously.

Whatever you do, online or off, be sure to work on your relationships and propagating your brand. Both of those things are going to help in whatever you choose to do in the future.

**Robert:** Great. Thank you so much for taking the time to do this, Jason. I really appreciate it. It was really valuable and a lot of fun. I can't wait to get in there, update and change some things, add some events and improve my profile. I got a lot out of this. I hope everyone else in the Club did as well. Thank you very much.

**Jason:** Thanks for the opportunity, Robert.