



THE POWER OF INFLUENCE

The easy way to
MAKE MONEY ONLINE

SARAH
PROUT

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Foreword

The existence of this book itself demonstrates its power.

Twenty years ago, this story would not have been possible. Sarah Prout is a young, single mother who has, using the very tactics outlined in this book, catapulted herself to media stardom.

She was then able to parlay that stardom into a book deal with one of the largest publishers in the world — the fruits of which you're about to read. And she achieved all this in the span of three short years.

Would that have been possible pre-internet? I think not.

Today, stories such as Sarah's are almost commonplace. I don't tell you this to downplay the importance of Sarah's accomplishments, but to allow you to open this book with a renewed sense of the possible.

See, that's the cool thing about today's new media stars. Many of them understand that there is more money to be made in sharing their secrets with you than in locking them away. They don't care that you can become their competitor — because the online world is just too big to care anymore.

As I write this foreword the world population is 6.8 billion. Only 1.8 billion of those people are online — and around 150 000 new people are coming online every day. Barring bandwidth costs, you could contact each and every one of those 1.8 billion people for free. Converting a tiny fraction of them into your customers could set you up for life.

Sit down and think about that for a minute. When the reality sinks in, turn the page and get started.

Mark Joyner
Founder and Chairman
Construct Zero
<www.ConstructZero.org>

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To my children (Thomas and Olivia) — I love you so much.

To my parents (Tony and Louise) — thanks for having me! I adore you both beyond time and space. My sister and brothers — Henrietta, David and Reuben, you are a lovely bunch of people and living proof that creativity is a strong genetic force.

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To Mr Paul Widmer, who made me a ladder and showed me that nothing is out of reach. Your friendship and support has meant the world to me during the writing of this book.

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I'd also like to thank Katherine Drew from John Wiley & Sons for the conception of such a strong book title. To my editor, Stefanie Di Trocchio — your amazing gift for unravelling information is extremely impressive.

And last but not least *you*. If you are a fan or a follower on Twitter, then I express my most sincere gratitude to you for your support.

xoxo

Introduction

I'm sitting on a beautiful sub-tropical beach on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia. The water is the clearest blue you could imagine. My children are happily digging holes in the soft white sand and I'm lounging on a towel reading the latest copy of Vogue under the shade of my beach hat. While marvelling at how nice it is to have the afternoon away from my laptop my mobile phone rings. It's a journalist in Sydney wanting to interview me for the Australian Financial Review. She is writing an article about the growing popularity of Twitter and my name ranks with the top media agencies in the country.

In just a few short years I have gradually built my reputation and influence online via social media. My life seems to have expanded at an accelerated pace. I moved from cosmopolitan Melbourne to a place called Noosa, which I define as paradise on Earth. Sir Richard Branson owns an island here and Brad Pitt has been spotted walking incognito down Hastings Street (the main esplanade) on numerous occasions. You see, the beauty of online business is that you can work from anywhere in the world. With a laptop and access to a café with wifi you could be selling eBooks about ice to the Eskimos from a beachside location. It's all about entrepreneurial lifestyle design and making sure that you're living life on your terms.

My driving force (above all else) is gratitude. As an online entrepreneur you need to live and breathe appreciation. It's about striking the balance between work and play. This book will explain the precise steps that I took to get to where I am today, and show you how you can experience the same success for your business and lifestyle. I want to share with you all of the juicy details of my entrepreneurial journey so far. As a business coach and a social media strategist, I think I have quite a unique perspective on the new rules of marketing. The model I teach my students is based on authenticity. The number one key in this new age of business interaction is to *be yourself*. It might sound extremely simple, but it's highly effective to give your audience a behind-the-scenes viewpoint on your personality.

When I wrote this book I wanted to be as authentic as possible and relate personal stories of my business

adventures that would resonate with you. I wanted the chapters to be in my own voice, almost as if I'm conducting a coaching session with you via Skype. Please bear in mind that I can be a little quirky when illustrating certain points. I also have a tendency to share a little bit too much information and get slightly metaphysical, which is a really interesting method to approach business psychology. The reason for this is to give you a glimpse into my personality, which embodies the central philosophy surrounding the social web. I guess we're all on a very similar journey—we're all seeking to fill our lives with more freedom and more joy. My number one passion is the psychology behind entrepreneurialism. It's always been such a strong fascination, and with the emergence of social media my level of curiosity has only intensified.

The format of this book is based on the questions that flood my inbox from clients and people I have connected with online. It is the culmination of travelling an intense journey on the internet and thousands of hours of trial and error. As the book title suggests it's my ultimate intention to show you how to translate the power of your personal influence into making cash online.

This book will cover the practical elements associated with building online influence and will give you **power tasks** throughout the pages that will help to reinforce your brand on the internet. If you complete all of the tasks, it will improve your search engine optimisation and be in total alignment with the fundamental elements of using social media effectively.



About power tasks

I adore lists; especially hand-written shopping lists and even the 'to-do' application on my mobile phone. Nothing makes me feel more satisfied or organised and in control than writing a list. Yes, I'm a nerd.

Many **power tasks** throughout this book will be list-based. Record them methodically to gain a clearer focus on the direction you're heading in. Breaking down your action plan into easy-to-execute steps will mean you cleverly avoid getting overwhelmed and progress faster with your business plans.

I suggest that you create a special file on your computer or invest in a beautifully designed journal in which to record your responses. Whatever method you choose, recording your progress, ambitions and mind maps is a really vital and rewarding way to document your entrepreneurial adventures.

Please feel free to connect with me personally via Twitter (my platform of choice) — <www.twitter.com/sarahprout> — or via my business website <www.sproutempire.com>.

Yours, with entrepreneurial sparkle,

Sarah Prout
Noosa Heads, Australia
June 2010

Chapter 1

My entrepreneurial adventures so far

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

Lao Tzu

The entrepreneurial mindset is truly unique.

It takes a very strong sense of determination and a whole lot of creative vision to turn a simple idea into a profitable business model. There seems to be a common thread that binds the likeness of most entrepreneurs. It's a tangible sparkle that gets ignited by new and exciting projects, ideas and strategies. Their pure enthusiasm and drive tends to push conceptual boundaries and make way for amazing success to take place and allow for the entrepreneurial lifestyle to unfold. It's a lifestyle based on freedom.

As I mentioned, at the time I'm writing this I live in a sub-tropical paradise. There's a palm tree on my doorstep and a fragrant frangipani tree in my courtyard. The beauty of my work is that I can take my laptop to a beachside café and look out at the ocean while I tweet, write blog posts or connect with my various coaching clients located around the globe. I love the internet because of the wondrous world of possibilities that it has opened up for me. I believed in what I wanted to do, I took action and I worked hard. That's all it really takes to create success in your life.

I want to share my story with you for three main reasons:

- 1 I think my story will resonate with and inspire you.
- 2 I want to show you what you can achieve if you put your mind to it.
- 3 Because you need to know that I'm walking the talk. You need to know that I have spent thousands upon thousands of hours researching and riding the waves of extremely steep learning curves to get to where I am today. In truth, business is an evolutionary process and there's not a single person on the planet who has it all figured out.

The way I present the examples in this book are from a personal and authentic perspective. This methodology is based on the secret behind social media. It's all about personality and a behind-the-scenes approach to business. I'm going to be reinforcing this point over and over again because it's the fastest way to gain influence online.

In the beginning

I was born in New Zealand on 1 November 1979 into a family of serial entrepreneurs. Both sides of my family

tree feature creative and eccentric characters that were or are self-employed. As the daughter of two artists, I grew up in studios and galleries and was surrounded by vibrant creativity. My father's exhibitions were always illustrious cocktail parties where people would splurge on paintings to add to their collections. These events were flamboyantly decadent, with a continuous flow of champagne, a string quartet and giant floral arrangements to add to the ambience. You see, purchasing art is an obvious luxury. My family was reliant on people with relatively high disposable incomes to fall in love with dad's paintings and buy them on impulse.

My first steps as an entrepreneur

I had unlimited access to all of the art materials my heart desired, so I would always be drawing, painting, writing and concocting micro-business concepts. At 14 I submitted a selection of designs to Hallmark and they commissioned me to create four wrapping paper concepts for international distribution. I received local media attention and was thrilled to walk into large department stores and see my designs reproduced on such a massive scale. From that point I was labelled 'Hallmark's Youngest Designer Worldwide'. This experience gave me my first real taste of the benefits of entrepreneurialism — fabulous pocket money for a kid my age, not to mention the satisfaction of seeing how hard work can pay off.

Even as a kid I understood the power of leverage for business. I remember writing in my cover letter to Hallmark that I had sent my designs to other companies to generate interest. This created a subtle sense of urgency, which is the oldest marketing trick in the book. And it worked!

How does a 14 year old attract amazing business opportunities, anyway?

At any age, the principles of positioning yourself to attract lucrative business opportunities remain the same. As a successful entrepreneur, you need to have:

- ☞ talent, a little skill and a whole lot of passion for what you do
- ☞ self-belief that you can expand your horizons and take your ideas to market
- ☞ drive to take positive action to open doors to opportunities, and to get out there and make sure people know you exist
- ☞ strength to ignore the fear of rejection. I'm not saying that it won't be there—it will—but carry on regardless. People tend to fear rejection so much that it holds them back from putting themselves out there. The key is to make sure you're having fun and building momentum towards your desired outcome.

At 19 I held my first solo art exhibition in an exclusive Melbourne-based gallery. I was definitely following in my father's footsteps as I had a good understanding of the complexities of organising an event. I painted the 30 pieces of art, framed them, designed the invitations, contacted the media, did all the PR and advertising, arranged the catering and compiled an exclusive guest list. The gallery was full of people who were greeted with a crisp flute of champagne on arrival. And then, one by one, I noticed

the red dots being added to the catalogue to indicate each piece of work that had sold. The show sold two-thirds of the work in four days. As you could imagine, I was over the moon!



Power tip

When the going gets tough, it pays to remember that as an entrepreneur you have to wear many hats and tackle many roles, but seeing the results of your labour materialise before your eyes can be such a buzz.

At 21 I was married and gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. I found myself loving being a mother, but felt that entrepreneurial drive surging within me. I'll explore this subject a little more in detail in the following chapters. Entrepreneurialism is like an unstoppable force. Your brain is constantly ticking over ways to be nourished by new ventures.

When I was 22 I wanted to take my artistic skills and merge them with my love of business, so I started my own greeting card company and won a prestigious award for business planning in the Shell LiveWire competition. The prize money funded the first print run of Sprout products—greeting cards. This was the first emergence of the Sprout brand. ('Sprout' had been my nickname growing up and seemed the most logical name for my business.) The venture did really well, but my heart just wasn't in it. Shortly afterwards, the opportunity arose to move to Scandinavia temporarily with my husband's company, and I saw it as a great chance to re-evaluate my business's direction.

Reflection and resurgence

During that time I reignited my passion for writing. I would sit at my desk and stare out the window of our inner-city Gothenburg apartment into the crisp sub-zero snow. There was a great sense of peace and clarity during this time and I felt sure that my future would incorporate business, design and the written word on the internet somehow. I also wanted to figure out a way to combine all of my passions in life in order to inspire people. Living in a non-English-speaking country made me crave the sound of my own language and prompted a desire to read more than I usually would. I began collecting self-help books, non-fiction business books and researched as much as possible online about internet marketing and info-product design.

Seven months later, I returned home to Australia and within a year I started a degree in journalism. (As it happened, my daughter was born that very same week.) I figured that I should hone my writing skills to a more professional level in order to gain more credibility. I also managed to land a job as the editor-in-chief of an online university magazine and helped to govern a cohort of 40 000 students. Assisting in running this multi-million dollar student union gave me an opportunity to learn some very valuable skills.

Launching Sprout

The same year of my role at the student union, I won a competition to have my story published in a book, a compilation called *The Path to Success*, which included chapters written by leaders in personal development such as Dr Wayne Dyer and Jack Canfield (featured in *The*

Secret). During this time I was very passionate about the emergence of Sprout as an online boutique-publishing brand. As an entrepreneur I wanted to branch out and fully utilise and expand upon my talents as much as possible. I could see the potential for more inspirational products to be created, and decided that I should make the leap from publishing greeting cards to attempt to self-publish my own compilation book.

Success: the compilation book model

Compilation books can be hugely effective vehicles for business because every contributor will promote the product. It's like multiplying the number of people on your database by thousands. I figured out that my first compilation book had access to more than half a million people based on the subscriber lists of the contributing authors combined. This is why it's beneficial to get celebrities involved in your project because it boosts your level of credibility. I managed to get various best-selling authors and high-profile businesswomen on board with my book *Sprout the Life you Love: Tales and Secrets from Female Entrepreneurs*, which set the wheels in motion for many miraculous opportunities to unfold.

You've probably started to get a clearer picture now not only about all the different business ideas and models that I've pursued, but also what motivates and drives me. The plight of the entrepreneur is to try out many different ideas until one really works and creates success. There's a whole bunch of other crazy hare-brained ideas that I've

neglected to mention, but the ones I've listed represent turning points in my direction.

I was fortunate that my business was just starting to gain momentum around the same time as Twitter and Facebook were in the initial stages of building popularity. My true passion and platform that has helped to build my business and influence online is Twitter. The sense of community is truly amazing. In a very short space of time, I have leveraged social networking strategies to gain global media attention and build a strong brand online. I've worked with celebrities, best-selling authors, an Emmy-award winner, people who have appeared on *Oprah* and many high-profile inspirational entrepreneurs. *Doesn't it sound glamorous?*

Behind the glamour

The truth is that it has all been achieved through the magic of the internet. I can be dressed in my pyjamas tweeting with Ashton Kutcher and all he sees is my little profile picture (thank goodness). The web is the most convenient way to project any image you desire out there in the online world. You can gain international recognition and influence without ever leaving your house.

Behind the scenes the picture is a tiny bit more chaotic for me. I'm juggling two small children, a busy household, friends, family and a business that is operated in stolen moments and the late hours of the night. If you're a parent and a business owner, then I'm sure you can relate to this. There are days when you want everything to run like clockwork, but it just doesn't seem to work out that way. However, I have moments when I am filled with so