

The ONE Thing Podcast Companion: 16½ Lessons & Resources on Building an Audience

Getting Started

Thank you for downloading this resource guide! Over 137 consecutive weeks, I built The TwentyPercenter newsletter from 89 subscribers to over 12,000 readers without spending a dollar on advertising. This document contains every tool, strategy, and resource mentioned in the podcast to help you build your own audience.

Whether you're starting a newsletter, podcast, YouTube channel, or social media presence, these principles will help you create consistent, valuable content that resonates with your ideal audience.

Line up your dominoes,

Jay Papasan

Essential Tools

1. Read-O-Meter

What it does: Shows exactly how long your content takes to read

Why it matters: When I started putting reading times in subject lines, engagement increased dramatically. People appreciate knowing the time commitment before they click.

Link: [Read-O-Meter](#)

2. Hemingway App

What it does: Analyzes your writing for complexity and gives you a grade-level score

Why it matters: When I simplified my newsletter to match, engagement soared. Even Hemingway wrote at a 4th-grade level!

Link: [Hemingway Editor](#)

3. Google Docs for Idea Collection

What I use: Two separate Google Docs:

- One for quotes and questions I encounter
- One for article ideas and concepts (started with 50, now have 240+)

Why it matters: David Allen said, "You should never have to think twice about buying cat food." The same applies to content ideas – capture them when they appear, organize them later.

Must-Read Articles

1. Kevin Kelly's "1,000 True Fans"

Core concept: You don't need millions of followers – just 1,000 people who truly value what you create

Why it matters: Build for quality first, quantity second. Our newsletter averages 60-65% open rates because we focus on serving our ideal readers, not growing at any cost.

Link: [1,000 True Fans](#)

2. TwentyPercenter Articles

Step Into The Room – How vulnerability creates engagement

Flywheels and Siphons – Identifying activities that generate more creativity versus those that drain it

Link: [TwentyPercenter Archive](#)

Books Worth Reading

1. Humor, Seriously by Jennifer Aiker and Naomi Bagdonas

Core concept: Humor builds trust and leadership effectiveness

Why it matters: As George Bernard Shaw said, "If you're going to tell people the truth, you better make them laugh or they will kill you."

2. Getting Things Done by David Allen

Core concept: Create trusted systems to capture ideas and tasks

Why it matters: Having a reliable place to store content ideas frees your mind to focus on creating rather than remembering.

Key Strategies from Experts

Justin Welsh's LinkedIn Strategy

The approach: Post daily at 7am, spend 15 minutes engaging with comments, rotate through 90 core messages

The insight: "People want to hear your greatest hits, not your new album." You don't need endless ideas – just different ways to communicate your core message.

James Clear's Note-Taking System

The approach: Google Sheets with tabs for quotes, questions, stories, and research

The insight: Your best ideas are downstream of consuming other people's best ideas. Create a system to capture what inspires you.

The 16½ Lessons

1. **Patience is Required** – Building an audience takes time (we averaged 88 new readers per week for 137 weeks)
2. **Vulnerability Equals Engagement** – The articles you're most afraid to publish often get the most response
3. **Creativity Snowballs** – Creative work generates more ideas, not fewer
4. **Quality Over Quantity** – Focus on the right readers, not just more readers
5. **Less Is More** – Shorter content (2-5 minute reads) consistently outperforms longer pieces
6. **Deposits Before Withdrawals** – Make at least 5 value deposits before asking anything of your audience
7. **Play Your Greatest Hits** – You don't need 1,000 messages, just 1,000 ways to say your core ideas

8. **Make Them Laugh** – Humor builds connection and memorability
 9. **Questions, Quotes, and Stories** – Your "Tex-Mex ingredients" for any piece of content
 10. **Track Opens and Clicks** – Keep open rates above 40% and click rates at 3-5%
 11. **Inputs Determine Outputs** – Read widely to generate better ideas
 12. **Be Predictable** – Publish on a consistent schedule (we've published at 7am CT every Friday for 137 weeks)
 13. **Systems Beat Memory** – Create a reliable capture system for ideas
 14. **Reduce Friction to Subscribe** – Make signing up the only option on your subscription page
 15. **Keep It Simple** – Write at a 5th-6th grade level for maximum impact
 16. **Listen to Your Readers** – They'll tell you exactly what they want if you pay attention
 - 16½. **Just Start** – Less "just in case" preparation, more "just in time" action
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Your Next Step

The most important lesson is the half one: just start. Whatever audience-building platform you choose, the sooner you begin, the sooner you'll learn what works for your specific audience.

Want to see these principles in action? Subscribe to The TwentyPercenter [HERE](#) and watch how we apply these lessons every Friday morning.