

Selling DisruptionTM Show

With Mark S. A. Smith

*How to Research Prospects to Get Them to
Pay Attention to You*

Sam Richter

Mark S A Smith: Sam Richter is our guest today. He is a keynote speaker, a bestselling author, a technology entrepreneur. You're not going to believe the kind of things this guy can do. He's out of the greater Minneapolis-Saint Paul area. He's a guru on the insider secrets of sales intelligence, social selling and social media, online reputation management, and personal branding. The things you've got to manage if you're going to be selling disruption. Sam helps business people and business professionals make more money by being more relevant, and you know that's one of my key points is relevance.

He delivers motivating and entertaining keynote presentations and workshops, and that's where I first met Sam, and he blew me away. I thought I was a research master, and he showed me tricks that make a huge difference. Sam runs an online learning and resource center called the knowmorecenter.com, K-N-O-W-M-O-R-E-C-E-N-T-E-R dot com, that helps people discover new business opportunities, generate more qualified leads, gain permission to ask more probing questions, that's disruptive, provide more value and win more business.

This guy could write a search engine at the drop of a hat to help you find the information, the people, and the opportunity you need to disrupt your sales. He wrote the book, Take the Cold Out of Cold Calling, and right now it's available in a downloadable PDF form from samrichter.com, that's S-A-M-R-I-C-H-T-E-R dot com. Sam, welcome to Selling Disruption Show.

Sam Richter: Hey, thanks so much Mark. Jeez, I hope I can get a copy of that introduction. That was one of the nicest introductions I've ever had.

Mark S A Smith: You got it, pal. That'll be up on the show resource center.

Sam Richter: Awesome.

Mark S A Smith: You could just download that when you're ready. Thank you. You know, you're really an interesting guy. You have quite an interesting career spanning a lot of different areas. How is it that you've disrupted the markets that you've entered?

Sam Richter: Part of it, honestly Mark, is just through ignorance. You know, in sales ... I'm sure you've done this before, where we've talked about where we sell vaporware. What do I mean by selling vaporware? It's when, for example, I was working at a public relations firm, a very large one, when the internet was first coming out, and one of our clients at the time was Northwest Airlines, now Delta Airlines, but back then Northwest Airlines. We had a meeting with them as

it relates to doing some public relations, and in the meeting they said, "Hey, you know this internet thing, we actually think it's here to stay, and so we'd like to figure out how to create a website, and we'd really like to sell tickets online. Can you guys do that?" Of course ...

Mark S A Smith: Wow, that was early on in the process.

Sam Richter: Very early on, and of course all of us who kind of had AOL dial-up at the time said, "Sure, we could do that." In the car ride back to the office we're like, "I have no clue how to do that, but we're going to figure it out," and we did. That's kind of my answer in terms of being ignorant. Sometimes you just go into things, and if you want to be disruptive ... You know, it's not really something that's proactive, it's just ... You're just willing to take a risk, and you're willing to dive in, you're willing to figure it out, and oftentimes the end result of that is something that is disruptive.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. You certainly were part of that leading edge of the disruption of the world of travel, and I can't imagine anybody that doesn't book their tickets online, or have somebody book their tickets online.

Sam Richter: Sure.

Mark S A Smith: You really disrupted the world with that particular approach.

Sam Richter: Yeah, I was part of a huge team, but again, it's the same thing, is ... That's another part of how do you be disruptive, well you got to make sure you align yourself with people on your team, whether that's employees, whether that's business partners, or even consultants that you hire, that are willing to just look at things a little bit differently. I never want to hear from anybody, "Well that's not how we've done it," because if you have that kind of attitude in life, that, "Well that's not how we've done it here in the past." Well then you're never going to move on from where you were in the past, right?

Mark S A Smith: That's right. That's an excuse to be lazy.

Sam Richter: Yeah, I think so.

Mark S A Smith: You wrote the book *Take the Cold Out of Cold Calling*, which disrupted the way that people approach cold calling.

Sam Richter: Sure.

Mark S A Smith: How did you choose to write that book?

Sam Richter: It wasn't really a choice. It was a choice thrust upon me. The real quick story about it is, I had some personal searches that I need to do, and when Google came out there was no Google manual or anything like that, so I really just immersed myself and learned how to use tools to find information. I was also in an advertising career at that time. I was a copywriter, basically an introvert by nature, and got promoted to become a creative director. As a creative director, and all of a sudden you have to go out and sell, which terrified me.

Now this was well before the internet. If I was going to go meet with you, Mark, I would show up to the meeting 15 minutes early. I would meet with your assistant or your receptionist, just even sitting there, and I would ask the receptionist or the assistant a bunch of questions. Questions about you, questions about your company, your goals, your competitors. Then when I actually got to meet with the famous Mark Smith, I'd walk in the door and I'd start my conversation by asking really good questions based on the information that the receptionist or the assistant had handed me.

I'd love to tell you that I was some guru selling person, but the reality was I was just trying to get information so I could ask really good questions, because I knew if I asked really good questions, then I didn't have to talk, and as an introvert that was my goal.

Mark S A Smith: That was safe.

Sam Richter: It was very safe. But lo and behold, I started to sell a bunch of stuff, and people were saying things like, "Wow you're a really good salesperson, and you're a really good conversationalist." I honestly had no idea what I was doing, but I was just asking really good questions, engaging people in ways that were relevant to them, and they started to buy from me.

Well fast forward a few years, and I become president of a non-profit business research library, where I learned, obviously, a lot more about all the information that's out there in the world. Now we didn't have a marketing budget, so our marketing was me. Was me going out and speaking about the library and about how to find information, and kind of tied it into, if you will, the receptionist meeting. It was like, "Wow, all the information that I was asking the receptionist I can now find online. Therefore I ought to do this stuff before I walk in the room."

As I was going out and making presentations to business groups, people kept saying, "Boy, where's your book? I'd sure buy your book." I was like, "I didn't have a book." I went to a cabin and spent a couple weeks of ... Wrote a book. I mean, it took over two years, but you know, the bulk of it was done in about two weeks. Still didn't have confidence in myself, so every time I spoke I'd go to Kinko's and print off a 300 page book. Cost me ten bucks. Spiral bound it, and ... A hundred people in the room, I'd print up 90, and wow they sold out at 20 bucks a piece. I was like, "Well, this is pretty good. I could double my money." Then I went out and actually wrote a book.

That's the real long story for a very easy question, "How did you write your book?" The reason I wanted to share that, it wasn't really in the plans, it wasn't proactive, but it was just willing to take a risk and I guess be disruptive.

Mark S A Smith: I love it. You were doing selling disruption long before disruptive selling was a cool thing. You did that, of course, by asking relevant questions and doing research. Awesome. One of the things that you blew me away, when I was in your audience a while back in Las Vegas ... You created some search engines to help people find information, to have that relevant conversation. To make that connection. To have people say, "Wow, you really are informed. Wow, you really get me." One of them was yougotthenews.com, another one was yougotblogs.com, another one is yougotassociations.com, and another one is yougotsocial.com. All of which you've written.

Sam Richter: Yeah, it was really ... It's-

Mark S A Smith: Don't say it's easy. It is for you.

Sam Richter: The search engine itself wasn't easy, but the reason for doing it wasn't any grand plan, Mark. Again, you've written a ton of books, and you know how painful it is to have to rewrite a chapter of the book, so in my first edition of Take the Cold Out of Cold Calling, I focused a couple of chapters on the power of local news. Because most of us calling on small companies, and so they're not showing up in CNN or USA Today or the Wall Street Journal or the typical publications that one might find when doing a news search, for example, using Google.

There used to be a couple of really good local news search engines, but they went bankrupts, or for whatever reason went out of business. I had these two chapters in my book focused on local news. This is totally true, Mark, it was way

easier for me to say I'm going to rewrite the technology than rewrite the chapters. That's how yougotthenews came about.

Really, in doing that, I kind of learned not only how to build some really good search engines, but also one of the disruptive factors that is going on right now, that I've got some other technology companies that were really focusing on this, and that is that there's obviously more information than anybody can possibly comprehend, which is great. I think where the ball is moving is, "Okay, I know there's all this stuff out there, but just tell me the stuff that I care about." Which is a lot of the things we're hearing about as it relates to artificial intelligence and tools ... Big data tools that learn on their own.

As I built some other search engines, it's really with that in the back of my mind, that, "Hey I could go teach you how to craft this really long extensive Boolean query in Google using minus signs and quotes and all this stuff, and it'll work. Or I can create a search engine where a lot of that stuff is embedded in the background, and the only thing you have to do in the search engine is type in a job title, or type in an industry, or type in a keyword." The engine does all the rest of the work.

That's kind of where the other search engines have come out as ... They've really been that. It's like, "Well I can teach you to find it on Google, but it's a pain so why don't I get you 90% there by building a tool?"

Mark S A Smith: That's awesome. Because knowledge is power, and it's that relevance that really separates you from everybody else and disrupts your market.

Sam Richter: Sure. That's exactly right.

Mark S A Smith: What advice do you offer an executive who's facing strong competition, and needs to disrupt their market? Since you've managed to do it more than once.

Sam Richter: First of all, having a mindset that, A, you don't know it all. B, that your competition is probably just as smart as you, if not smarter. The first part of having a disruptive mindset is being able to check your ego at the door, and walking in to the office and saying, "Okay, just because this is the way we've been doing it and we're incredibly successful doing it this way, maybe we ought to look at doing it another way." Some tactical or strategic ways to do that.

One of the things that I've found helpful in many industries is putting together a customer advisory board, where you actually get the people who use your stuff

to sit down and be brutally honest, and say, "Here's what works, here's what doesn't work, and here's what I really need." That's hard to listen to sometimes, because you put your passion and your 80 hours a week into something, and to have your actual paying customers sit there and tell you, "Nah, it doesn't work so well," is hard to listen to.

But that's where I think the disruption occurs, is when you put together a customer advisory board, and again, also do things like massive homework on your competition, and hire really smart people who are willing to challenge you on things.

Mark S A Smith: Great advice. Do you have something you'd like to offer to our our listener, to learn how to get more relevant information, to have more relevant conversations, to find customers that are hungry to do business with them?

Sam Richter: Yeah, absolutely. You mentioned it earlier, I built this online university, and basically what it is, I'm taking all the content that I have ... Usually I'm hired to give a one hour keynote or maybe a two hour workshop, but there's probably 30 hours worth of stuff as it relates to sales intelligence. I've created all these videos and resources and guidebooks and ebooks and all those sorts of things, and put it on the Know More University. For your listeners, I'd like to give them 60% off.

Mark S A Smith: Wow, that's generous.

Sam Richter: Yeah, thanks. I just want to get people into the system and using it. We've got about 3,000 users right now, and people are loving it, and we just want more. The way to do it is to go to www.knowmorecenter.com, that's K-N-O-W-M-O-R-E-C-E-N-T-E-R, knowmorecenter.com, and during the process they'll be ... After you create your little account, before you put in your credit card, on that page where you put in your credit card, there's going to be a coupon code, and just put in the word SAVEMORE. S-A-V-E-M-O-R-E. Put that in the coupon code area, you'll instantly get 60% off.

Mark S A Smith: Wow, that's awesome. Your resources are really extraordinary, Sam, and when I saw you at the event, I took pages and pages and pages of notes. Access to that information, those videos, that ongoing information is really very powerful. Without a doubt, knowledge is power for disruption, so thank you for that offer.

Sam Richter: Yeah, and what's cool about it is obviously the world in which I live, technology changes daily. There's always new resources and existing resources are always

going through changes, so that's the other cool thing about the university is I keep everything up to date and when something changes you get an email. "Hey, there's a new video," or, "Hey, LinkedIn is now doing this, you might want to check out a video on how to do it or how to hack it," or those kinds of things.

Mark S A Smith: I love it. I have actually used some of the hacks you've taught me to be able to get information that you may otherwise need to pay for just because of the idiosyncrasies of some of the search engines. You also told me to go get a library card. I hadn't gotten one of those since I was in college, and there's damn good reasons to get one, just because of the access to paid search resources through your library system, so thank you for that.

Sam Richter: Yeah, and talk about disruptive. A lot of people think, "What do I need a library for?" Or, "The only people that go to libraries are people looking for some coffee, and they want to get free internet access." But the reality is, big companies pay hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions of dollars to access databases. You've heard the names. Hoovers, Dun & Bradstreet, Value Line, Morningstar.

Every library in the country subscribes to databases. Many of those same super expensive ones that big companies are paying big dollars for you can access for free at your public library, and what's really cool is, every public library in the country has a website. Once you have your library card, on the back of your card's a number. You can log into your public library website, find that database. Again, it could be Reference USA, it could be Hoovers, Dun & Bradstreet. You type in your library card number, and voila, all of a sudden you're accessing the same databases that big companies are paying big dollars for. You're accessing them for free 24/7 on your home or work computer because you have a library card.

Mark S A Smith: That one idea can save you thousands and thousands and make you tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Sam Richter: Absolutely.

Mark S A Smith: Well worth the subscription to the knowmorecenter.com which Sam shows you exactly how to use those resources to find that information. Awesome, awesome, awesome stuff, Sam.

Sam Richter: Thank you so much, Mark, I really appreciate it.

Mark S A Smith: It's been a delight to have another conversation with you. I always enjoy when we have conversations. I'm always more enlightened after our conversation, which is the reason why I always enjoy the time that we spend together. How can people get ahold of you otherwise if they'd like to talk with you about speaking engagement or direct consulting?

Sam Richter: If I'm worth anything in terms of what I teach, you can just go online and Google me, and if you can't find me, don't hire me, because that means I'm no good. I'm pretty easy to find that way, but obviously my website, samrichter.com, S-A-M-R-I-C-H-T-E-R dot com. I'd be happy to help any of your listeners with any questions they might have.

Mark S A Smith: That's fantastic. Thank you so much, Sam. What a delight. Look forward to chatting with you again, and Sam Richter with the Selling Disruption Podcast. Thanks for listening.