



[How To Prevent Competitors From Copying Your System](#)

Three Month Vacation Podcast

Sean D'Souza:

Ever since I was a kid, I always liked to draw. I'd sit in the corner and I'd draw. I wouldn't speak much to people, but I'd draw. As you can imagine, I got very, very good at drawing, but I wouldn't sign my work. I wouldn't put my name on the work, and my mother would always tell me, "Sean, you have to sign your work. People will copy it. They'll copy it and they'll claim it as their work." Now when I was 10, I didn't see the irony of it, that the reason that I could draw in the first place was because I was copying stuff. As human beings, that's what we do. We learn to copy; we learn to trace. The more we can copy and the more we can trace, the better we become at any skill.

The problem arises when we grow up and we start to write books and we start to do other things like paintings and then other people start to copy us. Suddenly, when you look out there in the marketplace, there seem to be people there ripping you off and you don't know how to stop it, but there is a way to stop it. The wrong way to stop it is to go after them. The wrong way to stop it is to get so upset, so angry that you want to destroy that competitor. This takes up all your energy. All that frustration comes to the fore and it's completely useless because the other person will continue to copy. How do we stop them? We stop them with our own ingenuity.

There are 3 ways that you can actually slow down your competition. How do you slow them down? You can never stop them. You slow them down with updates, with branding, and finally with personality. It doesn't take a lot of effort to do this, so how do we go about it? Let's start off with the first one, which is updates. Yesterday, while I was on my walk I was listening to a TED talk, and this TED talk was by Johanna Blakley. She was talking about the fashion industry and how in the fashion industry it is routine to just copy other people's stuff. You don't even have to think about it; you just copy it.



She talked about a shoe designer, and this shoe designer's name is Stu Weitzman. He was very frustrated because he would design these amazing shoes and people would go out there and copy it, and there were no laws to stop them from copying it. Johanna goes on; she went on to describe how Stu upped his game. What he started to do was create these Bowden-Wedged shoes. It was very difficult to copy them because they were made of titanium, and if you didn't make them of titanium, they would crack. What he did was create an update that was almost too difficult to copy.

You're probably not making shoes. You probably have a consulting service. Maybe you have a book or a product, you sell information and there your competitors are copying you. How do we deal with this? Let me tell you the issues that we have at [Psychotactics](#). You can have copying where someone just copies your stuff, kind of similar, and then there are other issues like where they rip off your stuff. If you look at several courses that we have, we have the article writing course, the copywriting course, the uniqueness course.

We've been going since 2002. I guess we're reasonably popular on the Internet because if you look at some of the sites where they pirate stuff, where they resell other people's stuff, well, that's exactly what's happening to us. There are these pirates that take our stuff just like they do with Microsoft Word and Photoshop and then they resell it and they make money off it. We can get angry; we can start chasing them down. There are websites that do just this, and it's a complete waste of time.

The way to beat this system is to create updates. When we do an article writing course, we change about 20% of the course. If you did an article writing course live with us, not through some pirate, you would find that it has changed 20% since last time. It has got more efficient, it has got better. If you bought the course off some pirate, you're probably struggling 20% or 40% or 60% more. Yes, you're getting the information probably cheaper, but the problem is that the updates are so powerful that it is very, very difficult for them to keep up. Now they may buy the original product, but as long as we keep updating it, as long as we keep refining it, it becomes extremely difficult to copy.



If you look at our book *The Brain Audit*, it started out at [Brain Audit Version 1](#) and then went to Version 2 and Version 3 and Version 3.2, and it has stayed there. Now what if your book just stays there? What you've got are updates. What we've done is we've had updates on target profile and we've had updates on uniqueness. The book is changing about 10 to 20%, but internally. If you're on our list and if you bought it from us, that's where you get all the information from, but if you don't, you don't. This is how you stay ahead of both your competitors and your pirates. You keep updating. Change 15%, change 20%, and they'll never, ever catch up.

Now this takes us to the second part, which is the concept of branding. Now branding might just seem like this big multilevel exercise that you have to do that costs a lot of money, and you don't have to do anything like that. At the very core, branding is naming something in a way that makes it difficult to copy. For instance, in *The Brain Audit* we have something called reverse testimonials. Now you've heard of testimonials, but you've probably not heard of reverse testimonials. That is branding. When a person reads that and they go out there and they learn about reverse testimonials, immediately they think of you. Branding makes it extremely difficult to copy.

I'm writing a book right now. I could have called it [Pricing](#); I did start to call it Pricing. It's very difficult to hang onto a brand name like Pricing, so I changed it. The concept was about pricing being this crazy thing, so we called it Dartboard Pricing. Now immediately, it gets your curiosity as a customer, but it also brands it. It brands it in a way that makes it extremely difficult to copy. When you think of branding, you probably just think of the name of the product or the service and you know it's top level. What you can do is you can also create branding at many sublevels. Dartboard Pricing, that's the top level; that's the name of the book. Within Dartboard Pricing there are already other terms; there are other forms of branding.

For instance, we have a method called a [Yes-and-Yes system](#). Now the Yes-and-Yes system is a way to increase your prices and not lose customers. It shows you a systematic way of going about this whole pricing exercise. What's interesting is the brand name. Once I have the Yes-and-Yes system, whenever someone else sees it, it becomes difficult for them to copy it. What they can do is refer back to you.



When you look at, say, someone like Jim Collins and he wrote his book Good to Great, and in that he talked about the Hedgehog Principle, but he doesn't just talk about the Hedgehog Principle. He also talks about Level 5 leadership.

As you keep reading that book, you run into other concepts like the Flywheel and the Doom Loop. This is what you've got to do. You've got to have this top level, which is probably the name of your product or your service. Then within that, you've got to have multilevel branding, names that you come up with that only make sense to you and to your customers, but they follow a pattern, they follow a system, and then it becomes very, very difficult. If you have generic names like, okay, we're going to deal with target audience, well, that's great, but it doesn't become yours, it doesn't become your own. Then it becomes very, very easy to copy.

How do you come up with these names? As you are creating your product or your service, you are describing it. You're probably describing it in words or you're describing it as someone else or they're describing it back to you. You want to pay attention, because sometimes they will use a word, they will use a term, or you will use a word or a term, and that's when it comes about. When I write a book or I create a system or a seminar or a workshop, that's what I'm looking for. I'm always looking for that moment when I can create a term that no one else can copy. I'm not doing that consciously, but just by having that term, it sticks in someone's head and it also makes it very difficult to copy.

This takes us to the third element, which is personality. Now all of us have a personality. Some of us are very quiet and some of us are louder and some of us are bubblier. Developing this personality makes it very, very difficult to copy. If you listen to the podcast that I did back in 2009, I was a different person. I was more loud, I would say. I was more energetic. I was trying to get my point across like this, but now I don't. This is the kind of personality that people tune into. When you're writing your book, you have a certain style that develops over time, and when you're speaking on a podcast, there is a certain style that develops over time. Your job is, ironically, to copy.



How do you develop this style, this personality? Most people think that the personality is inbuilt. Your personality is inbuilt. When you grow up as a kid, you have a certain personality and that is inbuilt. Your style, your drawing style, your writing style, your creation style, that comes from copying. To develop that style, you have to copy many people. Let's say you want to become a great watercolorist. You could copy 1 watercolorist, and after awhile what happens is you become a replica of that person. You start doing the houses the same way, the people the same way, the colors the same way, and when people look at your stuff, that's what they say. That's what they said about me.

When I started out, I started copying a cartoonist called Mario Miranda. Mario was a very, very, very good cartoonist back in India, and his work is still outstanding. I was copying his stuff so much as I was growing up that when I drew a bunch of cartoons and we put them on coffee mugs ... These coffee mugs were sold; there were hundreds of thousands being sold. People used to call them the Mario mugs. Now, obviously, Mario was infuriated and so was I because that's not the way I wanted to represent my stuff.

You have to understand that today my work is completely different from Mario's work. The reason for that is I went on to look at other styles and copied those styles. Then over time, you just get your own style, and that style doesn't stay still; it changes. Just like in this podcast, the style that I had in 2009 is totally different from this year. It's the same thing with drawing and writing and everything else. When someone tries to copy you, you don't need to be infuriated because that's exactly what you've been doing.

If you are any good at what you do today, it's because you have been copying, but not copying from one person but from many people. This goes on and on and on until you stop doing whatever it is you're doing. To become great, you have to get influenced by other people, and invariably, that leads to copying. Whether you like it or not, your brain is taking snapshots. Ironically, that is personality. Ironically, that is what people call your drawing personality, your writing personality, your speaking personality. It comes from copying all of these people.



The funny thing is it also becomes a uniqueness; it becomes you completely different from everybody else. If you constantly dive into this pool of influence, of influences of different people and different style and different cultures and different everything, then you become extremely unique, extremely different from everybody else. I know I use the word irony, but the irony just sits there, that you have to become great by copying, and it's copying that infuriates us the most.

Let's summarize what we've just covered, 3 things that we covered. The first thing was the update. When you have updates in your system, it becomes very, very difficult for someone else to copy you. As I said, with the [article writing course](#), with the [uniqueness course](#), with all our courses, with all our [workshops](#), things change. You want to do this because it excites you. Imagine giving the same course over and over again. Imagine having the same book that you wrote 10 years ago and you haven't made any updates. This is a challenge for you; this is interesting for you. Making those updates keeps you ahead of the competition, but it also keeps you ahead of those pirates. If someone were to go out there and buy your stuff from a pirate, they would be worse off. That's what you need to know. That would make you very happy, wouldn't it?

The second element is one of branding. When you start to give terms to anything ... You'll find this right through the Psychotactics system where we have the [Bikini Principle](#), the Yes-and-Yes system, the target profile, all of these things that are not common out there. Now that you're aware of that, you can create your own. When you have a book on pricing, well, you can't call it Dartboard Pricing anymore, can you? Which takes us to the third factor, which is the personality, and this is the personality of writing, of drawing, of creating stuff. While we are born with our own personality and that personality develops, all of it is about copying, but not copying 1 person because otherwise we become a replica. It's about copying several people. When you copy several people, you develop a style, and the irony sits on you and you think, "Goodness, what a trip."



How is all of this relevant to the Three Month Vacation? It's relevant because you want to get better prices. You want customers to come to you, and the way to do that is to stand out from the competition. If you were just me-too in your branding, in your personality, and you have no updates, you become exactly like the competition. You become someone who doesn't really change anything. When you do that, it becomes more difficult to get better customers and better-paying customers. As a result, you have to work longer and harder and there's no vacation in sight. This is very critical to creating that uniqueness factor so that people can't copy.

What is the one thing that you can do today? The one thing can be to look at your branding. For instance, we have a course like the article writing course, it's very generic, it's boring. I should go back and I should look at it and say, "How can I make this like the pricing book? Instead of just calling it Pricing, how do I call it Dartboard Pricing?" You and I, we both have to go back and we have to look at our existing product or existing services and say, "How can we brand this in a way that is interesting?" Not just at the top level, but at all other levels as well. When you do that, automatically it's going to stand out. That's what we both have to do.

This brings us to the end of this episode. It's 4:35 a.m. here in Auckland City, quiet. Right after recording this episode, I'm going to be sitting down to complete my book on pricing. That's due out on the 13th of April, so if you get it by then, you get it at a better price and then the prices go up. They always go up at Psychotactics, so get your copy. Go to psychotactics.com and search for [Trust the Chef](#). When you get that Trust the Chef, that's the Trust the Chef offer. Go and get it today.

In a few weeks from now, we're headed to Washington, D.C., to the [Information Product Workshop](#). If you're joining us there, you're going to have a blast. Then we're going to Denver to speak at the Copyblogger Conference, and then it's one of those months of vacation. We'll be back and then we're going to be doing the headline course and the brain audit trainer, where you actually learn to become very, very good at reading your customers' minds. More about that later.



To get all the details on this podcast, just go to psychotactics.com/33. That's the episode; this is episode number 33. You can get all the episodes except episode 18. For some reason, we can't do 18, so you can never find psychotactics.com/18, but you can find all the rest of them from 1 to right now, which is 33.

That's me, Sean D'Souza, saying bye for now. Bye-bye.

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Resources Mentioned In This Episode

[The Brain Audit Ebook: Why Clients Buy \(And Why They Don't\)](#)

[5000bc: Where you go to get information and help—that's specific to your current and future needs of your business. All in one location.](#)

[The Article Writing Course: The Hardest Writing Course in the world.](#)

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