

START UP POKER

Four eCommerce experts deal into a competition between a dozen aspiring online entrepreneurs

Each of the four experts antes up \$25,000—but only one stands to profit in the end.



THE SET UP: We meet the 12 contenders and hear their pitches for a new product ready for sale on the web.

Then we meet the four investors, who lead the contestants through a series of challenges until a winner is declared in the final episode.

Like “The Apprentice,” the challenges are all business related—but here they’ve been updated to reflect the new frontier of online sales.

Unlike “The Apprentice,” no one is striving for a corner office in a high-rise. No one wants to wear pinstripes and put in 80-hour workweeks. Instead, the show emphasizes the strategies made popular by books like “The 4-Hour Workweek” and the stream of magazine articles offering advice about how to make a killing in online sales without sacrificing your personal life.

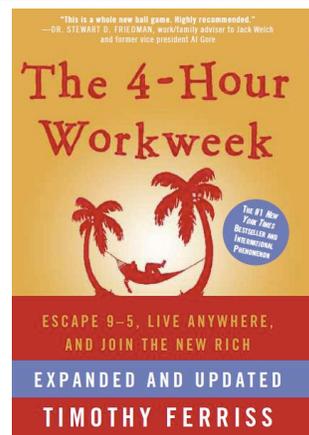
The show’s four experts all speak from experience about how they found a way to create a thriving business, and maintain a lifestyle full of free time for interesting passions like cliff diving and Tough Mudders.

START UP POKER bets on the allure of characters who embody lives well-lived—people like our four experts. At the open and close of each episode, they assemble in a warehouse in Bozeman, Montana’s hip industrial zone, arriving on mountain bikes, skateboards, in electric cars and rusted pickups.

Bozeman continues to emerge as a hub for eCommerce types drawn by easy access to skiing and fly-fishing. The warehouse setting plays into the “backroom poker” theme of the show, and offers a realistic glimpse of what the offices of start up companies often look like.



THE EXPERTS:



Each episode kicks off with one of the experts introducing a new challenge, while interviews with the other experts explain the significance of these contests. One by one, episode by episode, the field of 12 contestants is whittled down to one winner—who in the last episode gets to turn the tables and choose one of the four investor-experts he or she wants to partner with in a dramatic winner-take-all finale.

Andrew Youderian: Worn out from his life-consuming job in finance, Andrew started a business selling—of all things—CB radios online with just \$1,500. In less than three years, his company was on-track to do more than \$1 million in sales and he left to spend seven months traveling the world while his business ran seamlessly in the background. ([Video link featuring Andrew](#)).



Ezra Firestone: Ezra learned a lot about life—and how to bet—playing in high-stakes New York City poker games in his teens and early twenties. His experience and savvy betting skills paid dividends as he went on to start numerous successful online businesses in subsequent years, which made him into a well-known name in the eCommerce world. ([Video link featuring Ezra](#)).

Katrina McKinnon: Meet a true eCommerce mogul. She's an Australian entrepreneur who has focused her strategy on building multiple stores by leveraging the power of remote teams. Katrina is a sought after expert when it comes to choosing the right ideas and the right people to team up with to create a new and successful online business.



Eric Bandholz: Eric built his fledgling company BeardBrand—which sells beard care products—from nothing to over \$120,000 in revenue in less than a year. The only thing wilder than his story and 12" beard is his crazy personality. ([Video link featuring Eric](#)).

THE COMPETITION:

Viewers get to know the 12 contestants, hear their quick pitch for a hit new online business and watch them battle through different challenges. They work in teams, and as individuals, knowing their next decision could be their last on the show.



To win, the best and brightest contestants must:

- 1) Find a factory and produce a prototype for their dream product in one week.
- 2) Validate a business idea by getting 15 strangers to pre-purchase the product sight unseen.
- 3) Generate as much publicity as possible for a product in just five days using only \$500.
- 4) Secure a 15-minute phone call or meeting with a high-profile business leader in the industry.
- 5) Get a business website up that accepts orders in 24 hours.
- 6) Produce a web video for a product and see how many views it generates in three days.
- 7) Find a joint venture partner in the industry who could help market/sell their product—all in a single wild weekend.
- 8) Put together the elements of the brand in 24 hours (logo, packaging, slogan).



9) “Work the Room” challenge—Get dropped into a business event knowing no one, and see how many friends/contacts/connections each contestant can make.

10) Defusing Angry Customers—Have contestants deal with real-world irate customers to see how well they can calm them, then turn them back into company fans.

These challenges generate drama, and every one presents an opportunity to send the wanna-be masters of eCommerce on interesting missions—a flight to Seattle to meet with a prototype producer, or up a mountain outside Bozeman to find inspiration for just the right marketing slogan. The challengers also get behind-the-scenes access to cool online companies like Zappos and Amazon, where they look for ways to win the challenge at hand.

Amid the straight business talk driving every episode of START UP POKER, there are side trips into lifestyle segments that underline the “work less, play more” promise of eCommerce. It all leads to a final judgment by the four experts. They critique every interesting detail from the episode, then select who gets to advance and who must pack their bags.

Along the way, the experts are also auditioning for the contestants because they want to be the one selected as the winner’s final business partner who gets a stake in the \$100,000 pot of prize/start up money.

WHY VIEWERS WILL CARE:

Many fans of financial television crave two things: High stakes drama and intelligent info takeaways that stoke their personal dreams about scoring big online with the next hit eCommerce product.

And like great stories passed around a poker table, the action in START UP POKER delivers surprising nuggets of eBusiness wisdom. The series does this by setting up challenges that force the contestants to explore the real, brick and mortar world of startups and cool products like Dodo Case (Check out their story at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=us8tl_ooM9g).

There will be no static scenes with workers hovered over laptops. Instead, the aspiring contestants and experts open up windows into the cool worlds eEntrepreneurs inhabit—ski villas at Big Sky, lofts in Missoula and mountain bike trails outside Yellowstone National Park. New seasons of START UP POKER will be set in different emerging eCommerce hot spots: Austin, Knoxville, Santa Fe, Boise and other interesting locations where lifestyle perks trump the workaholic corporate culture.

We learn that to succeed, a start up wannabe must find a way to uniquely fill a void that’s not already served online. But more than that, they must also find success without letting the work take over their lives.