



A STRATEGIC WORKSHOP:

identifying your niche:

how to stop trying to be everything to everybody and start getting more of the clients you really want

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radical business
September, 2006



IDENTIFYING YOUR NICHE: a 25 page "Virtual Workshop"

The goal of this Virtual Workshop is to:
help you craft an effective target market into a single, clear
and compelling sentence

You'll learn:

- why trying to appeal to everybody makes you **appealing to no one**
- why identifying your ideal client can help you **make your business more attractive to them**, help you **word your marketing materials**, help you know exactly **where to invest** your marketing efforts, get you **better referrals** than you've ever had before, and help you figure out **where they hang out**.
- the **distinction between**: Target market/niche and ideal client
- why trying to target based on demographics is a waste of time (and what you should use instead)
- why it's important to **take your time** when ideal client
- the **nine characteristics of a good niche**.
- **10 ways to identify your target market**
- **how to phrase your niche in a single compelling sentence** that will pre-qualify everyone you talk to and help open up referral generating conversations
- the relationship between your **niche and your nature**
- **39 questions** you can ask to understand your niche with more clarity than you may have ever had before

The whole goal of this virtual workshop is to help you write out a single sentence. It will probably take you at least 2-3 hours. Now, that might seem like a lot of work for single sentence.

But, of course, the sentence itself, while interesting and useful, is hardly the point. The point is the clarity it embodies and the process you have to go through to get there. To achieve such a simple sentence that meets all of the criteria of a good niche your understanding of that niche (and yourself) must be complex. The niche statement is the Haiku of marketing.

One of the classic blunders in marketing is: Not clearly identifying your niche.

But most businesses have never really answered the question, “*Who is my niche?*” in any meaningful way. And it’s probably one of the most important question you’ll ever answer for your business.

They say, “We help everybody . . .”

“Who are you trying to reach? Who’s your target market? Who’s your niche?”

There is likely no decision in business more central or profound than this one.

And no question that meets with more resistance.

After all, that question asks you to make a decision. Once you decide who you’re trying to reach you have also, by necessity, made a decision about who you are no longer trying to reach.

You are asking yourself, “who am I best able to help?” And this brings up a lot of very personal issues about what you’re passionate about, why you’re here on Earth, what your talents are - questions that are often dealt with by ignoring them.

I’ve found that many people sort of “short circuit” when asked to address this question directly. Their eyes glaze over and they go into a deep haze.

But it must be addressed. And yet, most entrepreneurs aren’t even aware that they have a problem.

Consultant Mark LeBlanc puts it this way when he describes The Greatest Single Obstacle:

“Your inability to communicate effectively what you do and who you do it with best.”

My friend Dominic Canterbury - a word of mouth marketing specialist - came up with this list:

You know your targeting sucks when:

1. Your marketing strategy consists of "just getting your name out there".
2. Your target is, "People who can afford me."
3. Your Unique Selling Proposition is a lame platitude such as, "I work to truly understand my client's needs."
4. You wish you didn't look just like the competition.
5. You define it by age, income and geography.
6. Your word-of-mouth strategy is based on lines like, "The highest compliment you can pay us is the referral of a friend."
7. You blew your marketing budget on advertising that did nothing for you.
8. You don't like your clients.
9. You can't easily give five specific answers to this question, "Where do your clients already spend their time, money and attention?"
10. You are having trouble crafting an irresistible offer that your clients and prospects go crazy for. Your offers seem 'good' but not 'irresistible.'
11. Or, you've run plumb out of fresh marketing ideas.
12. You have no idea how to answer the question, "Where does your niche hang out? Where do they already spend their time and money? Who do they already trust?"

Owch.

Hard but true.

Why is identifying your niche important?

In a word - relevance.

In three words - relevance, credibility and value.

Everyone knows that you can't be an expert in everything. They know that you can't be the best at everything. When you pretend to be by saying, "Oh, our product is for anyone." it smacks of insincerity and hype. How can it work for everyone? Everyone has different needs, after all.

They want to know: can you help me. Or they want to know: can you help people I know and care about? That's it.

This is the first hoop you will forever need to jump through - "is what you're offering relevant to my life? Does it matter to me? Should I be paying attention?"

If they see that you specialize in working with other folks just like them - they will give you the benefit of the doubt and assume that what you're doing may just have some relevance.

Then they will ask, "Okay, so it's relevant - but is it valuable? Is it any good? Is it a good deal? What's in it for me? How do I benefit?"

Again - your targeting comes to the rescue. If they see that you work with people just like them - they will think, "Hmm. Well she must have had a lot of experience with people like me. She must have figured some stuff out."

Then they will ask, "Sounds valuable, but can this person deliver the goods? Do I trust them?" And again - your targeting comes to the rescue. Your focus on a target gives you credibility.

Relevance. Credibility. Value.

These are the hardest things to achieve in marketing.

And targeting gives them all to you with very little effort..

Dominic Canterbury (www.dc-strategic.com) told me once that, whenever he feels stuck or cloudy about what to do next in his marketing work with a client he takes that as a sign that he's lost sight of the niche. So, he'll stop, review who the target market is and instantly, ideas will start to flow.

Why is that?

Your niche is the very center of all of your marketing efforts.

You must identify a niche. Until and unless you do that:

1. How can you possibly make your business attractive to them (or yourself)? And why would you market? You will be irresistibly attracted to your ideal client - and this will, in the long term, make you irresistibly attractive to them. Having a client you're excited to attract & serve gives you energy.

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE:

You have 24 hours to find the perfect gift for my friend or else you will never

see your family again. (. . . "Does that include my in-laws?" you ask.) BUT! The catch is that I won't tell you anything about them. This is, of course, impossible.

2. How do you know how to word your marketing materials? The more that people feel you are speaking right to them, and nobody else, the more likely they are to buy. You want them saying, "that's me!" not "so what." The better you know them, the more you will know what to say and what to avoid saying. It's about knowing *exactly* the right thing to say to them to get them to act.
3. How do you know where to invest your marketing efforts?
4. How can you possibly expect to receive any quality referrals from your existing clients? If you can't tell them the kind of people you want them to send you - how will they know?
5. How can you know where to find them if you don't know who they are? You'd be surprised how often people miss this obvious point. People ask me all the time, "Where can I find more clients?" and I ask them, "Well, what kind of clients? Who are you looking for?" Most folks can't really answer that except in vague notions of "people who are open to change". That's likely too vague. Different sorts of folks hang out in different places. Some people may already have your ideal client as their clients. You target market is already spending their money somewhere. They're likely already hanging out somewhere.

For most businesses I know, finding a niche is one of the most important steps. If you can't be everything to everyone, then who are you *best* able you serve? What are you *best* at?

DAN KENNEDY SAYS:

Most experts agree that list selection has a 30% to 50% impact on the overall effectiveness of direct marketing. In **selecting a list** you want to target people most likely to have an existent interest in what you have to offer as well as some things in common with your present good customers.

These commonalities might be found in age, sex, occupation, income level, neighborhood or geographic area, credit card ownership, family size, magazine subscribed to, or any number of other demographics. These factors are called demographics. The professional sources you might rent a mailing list from can be incredibly sophisticated in finding

or compiling a mailing list of people who conform to your set of desired demographics.

In business-to-business marketing the same sophistication is available. Lists of companies can be obtained by size, sales volume, asset value, number of employees, type of business, geographic area, magazines subscribed to, credit rating and other factors. Lists of executives, owners, sales managers, personnel managers, purchasing agents, stockholders, or secretaries are also readily available.

List selection can be as simple or sophisticated as you need or want to make it. The owner of an upper class restaurant might want to obtain a mailing list of homeowners within a 50- mile radius of his restaurant who have at least one bank credit card.

A private aircraft manufacturer might want the list of corporate officers and business owners with net worth's in excess of a half million dollars all across the country.

As a rule, the more demographic factors you can use in controlling the list, the costlier the list. To a great degree extra money spent in narrowing down the list to fit your desired factors is money well spent.

To find mailing lists you can locate list brokers and sources in your own area by looking in the yellow pages under such categories as mailing lists, mailing services and advertising consultants. There are also many national sources. For a thorough education in the kind of services and lists available go to the main public library in your area and review a copy of a directory called SRDS, Standard Rate and Data Service.

Also a good trade magazine to look at is Direct Marketing. We also have a preferred list supplier that we use frequently, Best Mailing List in New York City. You can call them toll free by dialing 1-800-NYC-BEST.

Small business people should also compile their own mailing lists. For one thing you should maintain an up-to-date mailing list of all your customers and clients. Direct mail to this list can stimulate additional business, introduce new products and services or promote sales or special offers.

Successful Offer Examples

In your previous Success Marketing Strategy I revealed to you the real secret to creating a successful offer which is... don't create the offer until you have found out as much as possible about the people who will be receiving the offer.

So let's consider a couple simple examples to give you an idea of how this might apply to you.

You operate some dry cleaning stores. You are going to advertise in two community weekly newspapers. One goes to a high income neighborhood. The other goes to a more middle class neighborhood. Will you run the same ad in both papers?

Most merchants would and they're wrong to do so. These two different groups of people have different needs and interest. They deserve different offers. To the high income neighborhood I might write an ad that stressed the importance of looking your best for upward mobility in your career, convenience and quality. Then I might offer one suit cleaned and pressed free with another suit at full price or one tie done free with each jacket or suit.

But in the middle class market I might write an ad that stressed quality cleaning at modest affordable prices. How dry cleaning can help certain clothes last longer and offer an across the board introductory discount.

Let's try another example. I operate two restaurants and bars. One is just north of downtown on the main traffic pattern people travel from the downtown offices to their homes in the suburbs. The other is in that same middle class residential area. I'm going to do direct mail. Do I mail the same offer for both restaurants?

The mistake most restaurant owners would make is to decide on an offer first, then decide who to mail it to, then mail the same offer to everybody for both places.

Here's what I would do:

For my downtown restaurant I'd get a list of the executives and managers who worked in the office buildings downtown. I'd send them a package consisting of a brief cover letter, a brochure stressing that my restaurant was the perfect place to stop after work for happy hour, a place to meet, greet, network and relax.

I'd enclose coupons for free hors d'oeuvre' trays for one, two, three or four people and for a two for one executive lunch. I'd also enclose a sealed envelope maybe printed in pink to give to the secretary. Inside would be a different cover letter, different brochure and half price lunch coupon.

For my neighborhood restaurant I'd get a list of area homeowners with families. I'd mail them a letter, a completely different brochure and a little booklet of coupons, maybe one for half price, early bird dinners for two or one for an all-you-can-eat family fish fry on Friday night, one for a Saturday afternoon baseball party with free hot dogs with beer and one for a ladies day luncheon special. That's how you tailor your offers to your specified market and I promise you much better results than with general offers.

Beyond that here are some additional tips to help your offer which I will reveal in your next Success Marketing Strategy in just a couple of days

Dedicated To Multiplying Your 1 income

Dan Kennedy

See the profit producing, wealth attraction resources at <http://www.dankennedy.com/products.html>

Important Distinctions:

- **ideal client:** your ideal client is sort of a subset of your target market or chosen community. While most folks in the community your choosing to serve would likely make fine clients - would they all be your ideal clients? Probably not. Your ideal clients are the ones you wish every client was like. A niche is a community. An ideal client is an individual. When we look at your target market we are, by nature, looking at a group of people sharing a common set of values, lifestyle, language, passions etc. When we look at the criteria for an ideal client - we're looking at your wish list of qualities you'd love your clients to have (e.g. pays on time. shows up on time, refers other people, is appreciative etc).
- **explicit vs. implied niche:** your product might only be used for a very specific purpose (e.g. menstrual pads). Your product might come with a predefined niche. This is an implied niche - you don't even need to say who you're targeting - it's implied in the type of product. Even so, you can often afford to narrow the niche down even further or at least come up with other ways to differentiate your product or service (e.g. organic cotton, chemical free menstrual pads). And differentiating your product may actually change the niche. Sometimes it can be very powerful to pick your niche indirectly like this. There's a chain of boutique hotels that each have their own very distinct flavour (each on modeled after a different popular magazine). The vibe and aesthetic each hotel has is so strong that the niche is implied - instead of overtly selecting their niche - their niche sort of selects them. But most products could be used by a variety of people in a variety of contexts. For example: who is massage good for? Who needs a realtor? Who could use a car? A blender? Lots of people - there's no one implied niche. In these cases, it's recommended to select one or two that you will focus on.
- **geography vs. affinity:** there are two central dynamics in picking a niche these days. In the old days you had to work in your community of geography. You did business where you lived. We lived in communities defined by geography. But, now, with the internet, ubiquitous travel and postal service we are living increasingly in 'communities of affinity.' In fact, as the internet becomes more well defined, we are seeing the rise of what is known as the Micro-Niche - this is a group of people who are obsessed with the most bizarre and minor of things (e.g. a certain movie or even a certain scene of a movie). The point is this - the narrower your geography - the wider you will have to cast your net in terms of affinity. The wider a geography you work in - the more narrowly you can likely afford to focus. In other words - when working locally you need to be more of a jack of all trades. When working globally you can afford to be an uber nerd.
- **Direct vs. Indirect Community:** Some communities of people know each other and hang out and others never meet each other - but are only connected by hubs. For example: when I worked with student councils in Alberta - the student council advisors knew me - but they didn't know each other. Most of them only worked in their own schools and had never met or hung out with another Student Council advisor from another school. They were *indirectly* connected through me. Other communities, such as skaters, hang out with each other all of the time. They're directly connected to each other.
- **targeting individuals vs. groups:** one of the core premises here is that it's much easier to find clients if you can find the places they already hang out together than to try to find them and sell them one on one. So, when we refer to a 'target' - we're referring to a group of people not an individual. A target is a group. What kind of group? You know it's a good target when people in the group all share similar situations and experiences. You know it's a group when membership to that group means something to them.
- **the target vs. the problem:** identifying your niche is really a two part equation. You must first identify your target - your target will be some subset of 'everybody'. See the end of this workshop for an extensive (but by no means exhaustive) list of potential targets. Secondly, you must identify a problem that they are currently experiencing that you can help them with. Target + problem = niche.
- **a bad target vs. a good target:** how do you know if you have a good target? You should be able to describe an average day for them with relative accuracy. You should be able to tell me about their life and the struggles they have. With a good target, this is easy to do. A good target will share common needs, values, experiences and situations. They would be able to relate and empathize with each other if they met. You'd hear them saying things like, "Me too! I totally know what you mean. I'm dealing with the same thing." This shared experience is the bottom line of a target - without it, you have no target.
- **a good target vs. a great target:** a great target will not only share a common set of needs that you can help them with - but they will also share two other critical characteristics. First, they have already established communication hubs - meaning: you can find them. They have common places they spend their time, money and attention. Second, there are enough of them.
- **a great target vs. a perfect target:** a perfect target will meet all the criteria of a great target - plus about 6 others (see: Niche Criteria below).
- **a niche vs. an elevator speech:** let me start by saying that I don't believe in 'elevator speeches'. I

think that it's contrived (and not very effective) to launch into a pre-scripted pitch about what you do, how you do it and why you're so great when someone asks "what do you do?" I think it's more effective and more natural to simply have a conversation. And where should that conversation start? Well, for a service provider, it should start with you describing who it is your work with and what problems they're dealing with. About your clients - not about you. The focus should be helping them determine whether or not what you do is even relevant to them and their friends. Why would you launch into a pitch when it's irrelevant to the person you're talking to?

- a "niche" vs. a "tag line": At it's worst a tag line is mostly just a generic platitude that is meaningful only to the entrepreneur that speaks vaguely to the mission and essence of the company (e.g. "changing the world one person at a time" or "One Team. Infinite Solutions." . . . what??). At its best it's a touchstone that sums up the core irresistible offer of the company (e.g. hot fresh pizza to your door in 30 minutes or it's free). The niche, as I'm using the term anyhow, is two things: the target market + the problem this target market is dealing with that you can help them with. the niche statement is all about THEM while a tagline is all about YOU.

Deepak Chopra and Wayne Didn't Niche ... So Why Should I?

by Suzanne Falter Barns
www.getknownnow.com

I recently got this excellent question from a student in my Extraordinary Business Builder's program. And it gave me pause for thought.

For an entire hour I'd been beating the bandwagon about how you can't thrive on the Net without a niche that's 'an inch wide and a mile deep' as the saying goes. And I do believe that to my core.

But then came this very interesting question ... what about all those oh-so-successful self-help generalists? They didn't have much in the way of a niche to their work? The mind boggles when you consider how many there are: Cheryl Richardson, Wayne Dyer, Deepak Chopra, Byron Katie, and Marianne Williamson (well, OK, she's kind of in that Course in Miracles niche). And that's just for starters. If I had an hour that list could get pretty long.

So what about these folks? Why didn't THEY have to crank up the niche just like the rest of us? What helped them break out and become international stars?

The fact is that all of these people burst onto the scene in the bad old pre-Internet days, when book publishers and TV producers still decided who was in and who was out.

Think about it. All of them were firmly established by about 1995 if not much sooner. And most of US didn't start really hooking into the Web to find our experts until well after 2000.

Back in the Eighties and Nineties, it was TV, newspapers, magazines and books that made stars. Today, however, the entire equation has changed. Redoubtable strongholds like The New York Times have seen ad rates tank by as much as 6% as the Net takes hold, and Time Inc., the nation's largest magazine publisher has laid off 800 employees and put 18 titles up for sale. The Television Bureau of Advertising reports steady losses to ad revenue, with some quarters losing as much as 12% since 2005.

Why? Advertising Age sites consumer-created content as "rapidly rising as ... transformative a force as the initial emergence of the internet itself." And this from Orville Schell, dean of the University of California at Berkeley's journalism school, "The Roman Empire that was mass media is breaking up, and we are entering an almost-feudal period where there will be many more centers of power and influence."

Convinced yet? And what does this mean for you, personally?

The Net really IS your new center of influence. So you want to mine that for all it's worth. Now it's all gloriously up to you. You get to blog and be discovered by the media. Or perhaps they'll find your viral video on YouTube. Or maybe you just won't mess with the media at all and go straight to the people with your viral manifesto. Or Google Adwords. Or your podcast. Or your ezine ... or ... well, you get the idea.

(Note: The viral video 'The Evolution of Dance' is up to 49 million + views on youtube.com, which is bigger than the average American Idol audience – which, itself, attracts the biggest TV audience of all time.)

BUT ... take note ... getting known on the Net is not even remotely possible if you don't have a clearly defined niche. Because that is how Google, Yahoo and your new Net buddies find you. And that, dear friends, is why you, unlike Deepak and Wayne, need a really hard, tight niche.

Happy digging!

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How Nixed is Nixed? How Small Should Yours Be?

Recently I was coaching a client and the pungent question came up of just how much a platform needs to be nixed.

By now the niching pundits have hit the drum hard enough that everyone knows what niching is and why it matters - the Web requires everyone to pick a specialty so they can be found.

If you're a marketing expert, say, you'll get lost among other marketing experts ... UNLESS you are a marketing expert to lawyers, say, or mompreneurs, or recently retired academics who want to start a web business.

But the question remains - just when do you stop tightening your niche? Often when I suggest to a consulting client that they need to go tighter, a certain common fear arises. What if I draw the niche too small? Won't my market be too small?

The answer is yes and no, because it all depends on just which niche you're plunging into ... and just where you want to land.

First of all, you have to survey the landscape and see who else is out there doing what you do. If you Google 'Marketing consultants', for instance, you get 5,560,000 entries. That's a lot. Look at the entries on the first page or two, and yep - there are many marketing consultants out there.

But if you Google 'Marketing consultants for lawyers' you get 365,000. Better. And yep, they are still mostly marketing consultancies working specifically for lawyers.

But then Google 'Marketing consultants for women lawyers' ... well, then it all goes kaphloey. The listings (and we're talking about organic listings here, not those ads to the right) are mostly around an article or two that was written on the topic by an academic. Or really unrelated sites linked to women lawyers.

That would be a case, then, of over-niching.

Now I'm not recommending that you put all of your niching eggs in the Google basket. That needs to be only one of a few different considerations here.

If you're working with me, I believe we have to go much deeper into that competition, learn more, and refine your offer more so you really stand out.

One way to do that is to consider what will bring you joy. What, in your gut, is a stand apart quality that defines

you? What's unique to your life that makes you you - that can also be applied to your business?

Note: No connection is too tenuous! The wilder the better because it's ownable and memorable in a crowded niche.

Example: one of my clients wanted to create a coaching business in a very crowded corner of the field. We cast about a bit, looking for his unique hook, when he happened to mention casually he's a world champion in his age group for a particular sport. World champion! That's the stuff great platforms thrive on! We dug in and determined a way to fit that championship message into his overall philosophy and marketing message.

Another example would be Tuck Self, The Rebel Belle, who I love to talk about in my presentations. Tuck came to me with a desire to do motivational creativity coaching for clients -- yet another crowded field. But all she had to do was hang on the phone a bit with her lovely South Carolina accent, and the answer was obvious - create a creativity coaching site that is a 'Southern voice for bold self expression.' We named her the Rebel Belle, and she's done gloriously with it.

It's critical that your niche contain indelible pieces of you that no one can touch. Then you can niche within your niche - and still stand apart even in a crowded field.

Go forth and niche - and celebrate your full potential!

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Developing a Niche Market

<http://juliettaustin.com/articles/nichemarket.html>

Often when I suggest to Counselors and healing professionals that they might want to market to a specific niche audience when starting a private practice, they are resistant. Although there are many reasons for their resistance, the most common reason is fear. They are afraid that they will never get enough clients if they narrow in and focus on marketing to one group of people.

While this is a natural reaction if you don't understand the benefits of niche marketing, rather than limiting the number of clients that will be drawn to you, marketing to a specific niche can actually bring you more clients. This article discusses the logic behind developing a niche and how to go about selecting one.

What is a Niche Market?

A niche market is a group of people with something in common. It could be similar interests, hobbies, age group, gender, social background, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, educational background, values, etc. Those within a niche market have similar desires and needs and therefore a product or service is marketed specifically to serve them.

Why is a Niche Market Important for Counselors and Healing Professionals?

Large businesses usually do blanket marketing where they target everyone. They have big budgets that allow them to do this, and are often already known to the mass population and therefore achieve at least some success with this method. However, for healing professionals and others in smaller businesses who can't possibly market to, or meet the needs of the masses, niche marketing is much more effective as it provides a manageable sized market to focus your marketing on.

Niche marketing allows you to market to your ideal clients and helps you to find these ideal clients. For example, if you were a Homeopathic doctor targeting young children, you would market your services in places where parents are likely to find out about you. You might advertise or write articles in parent magazines, or join organizations geared towards parents.

In addition, when you have a niche market, potential clients will more easily be able to decide whether your services will meet their needs and desires or not. If you are coach who targets women in mid-life who are seeking a career change, any woman who fits these criteria will easily be able to determine if she is likely a suitable client.

Furthermore, people prefer specialists as opposed to generalists when seeking a service professional. If you were looking for a Counselor for help with problems you were having with your intimate partner, wouldn't you rather see one who specializes in couples counseling as opposed to one who seems to serve everyone? You would likely believe that a Counselor who specializes in work with couples is going to be able to provide you with a better service than a generalist would.

Another benefit of having a focused niche market is that it is much easier to get known in your field when you are seen as an expert. Because you are well known for your expertise, when someone needs that expertise, they will think of you.

Marketing a practice on the web is also much easier when you have a niche market. Many healers don't understand why their site never shows up in search engines, and while there are many aspects involved in getting your site found in search engines, having a narrow niche can really help.

In today's crowded marketplace, it is becoming more and more essential to have a niche if you want to be successful in marketing a counseling, healing or holistic health practice. You must find a way to make yourself stand out from the crowd and a niche helps you do that.

Having More Than One Niche Area

Many wonder if it is possible to market to more than one niche population. The answer is yes, but you will have to be clear in making the distinctions between your target areas, as you don't want them to become blurred together so that your niche becomes watered down. In addition, it often takes more time and effort to market to more than one niche area and longer to get known for each. However, there are some healing professionals who are successful with more than one niche market just like there are those who are successful marketing themselves as generalists.

Selecting a niche can be a challenging aspect of starting and marketing a practice because you have to overcome your fears about focusing on a particular market and then make a commitment to serve that particular population. You have to be willing to let some areas go and realize that you can't serve everyone as well as you can serve a specific population.

There is also much to learn about marketing within any niche area. As with everything in marketing a practice, knowledge, persistence and patience do pay off for those who make the commitment to succeed.

Attracting Perfect Customers Are You A Searchlight or A Lighthouse?

www.perfectcustomers.com

by Stacey Hall and Jan Brogniez

How many times have you thought "I need more customers!"?

If you find that you often feel that you need more customers, then consider this...

85% of new businesses fail within the first five years of operation, and, of those that survive, another 85% will fail within the next five years? The major contributing factor for these failures is that these businesses have focused their resources on finding or "targeting" customers to serve.

There is a common belief held by most business owners that all of their business problems would be solved if they could just figure out the secret to "finding and getting more customers."

And, that is their biggest mistake!

The never-ending search for more customers requires an abundance of people, time, and money... resources which are usually in short supply in most businesses. In such an environment, the effort put forth to "find" customers is actually depleting the business of its energy, creativity, and enthusiasm... commodities required to serve these customers in a satisfying way. And, since dissatisfied customers do not return, the business must keep finding more customers to replace those they have lost.

So, with each repetition of the cycle, the business has less and less ability to provide the level of service that would satisfy the types of customers it originally intended to serve. So, the number of complaints the business receives continues to increase...and eventually, the complaints outweigh the compliments. The word spreads throughout the community. It becomes harder to find customers to serve. Debts then exceed profits. The business fails.

Conversely, those 15% that succeed have structured their business in a way that "attracts" only perfect customers and clients.

I invite you now to replace the thought "I need more customers" with the conviction that "I now attract only perfect customers."

What's the difference?

It's the difference between a successful business and one that struggles to survive. It's the difference between a profitable business and one that pinches pennies. It's the difference between a thriving business and one that is hanging on by a thread.

The Lighthouse Test

How can we tell if our business is structured to "attract" customers to serve?

There is a simple test. We call it the Lighthouse Test.

Imagine a lighthouse standing strong and erect on the rocky shores of a beautiful ocean. On this particular day, the water is calm, the sky is blue, and there are many boats out to sea. Yet, out in the distance, there is a storm cloud forming on the horizon. It is coming closer to shore very quickly. The sky is getting darker, the waves are getting rougher, and many of the boats are being tossed about on the water. As the rains and the winds pick up strength, so does the power of the beam of light emanating from the lighthouse. Some of the boats, anxious to move quickly to a quiet and protective harbor, are relying on this beam of light to guide them safely to the spot. The darker the skies become, the brighter the light shines.

Please also notice that not all of the boats are in need of this beam of light to guide them to safety.

Some have more confident captains and crew, while other boats have equipment that can handle the storm effectively.

Now, imagine that the lighthouse gets upset because some of the boats are choosing not to come to its harbor. Because it wants to protect and serve all of the boats in the sea, it sprouts arms and legs and begins running up and down the beach, waving its arms, doing its best to catch the attention of all the boats. What would be the result?

Most likely, the boats that were depending on the light to guide them would by now have been destroyed in the chaos and confusion caused by the light moving up and down the beach. Other boats, led by their curiosity, may come closer to shore to get a better look at the spectacle of a lighthouse running up and down the shore, and then head back out to deeper waters. While others would be perfectly content to stay where they are...out at sea. The end result, very few boats are served safely and securely.

The test lies in asking ourselves when, as business owners and managers, how often are we the lighthouse standing securely on the shore attracting the boats (customers) to us with our light and how often are we running up and down the beach looking for boats (customers) to serve?

WHEN WE ARE LOOKING FOR CUSTOMERS TO SERVE, WE FIND "CUSTOMERS FROM HELL"

When we are looking for people to serve, we must expend a lot of energy. First, we have to figure out where we are most likely to find the greatest number of customers. And, then we must spend more time and money experimenting with the right way to catch their attention. And, once we've caught their attention, we then must convince them that we have what they want. By the time we have actually found someone who is willing to try what we have to give them, we are exhausted!

So, when this customer tells us that they are not completely satisfied with our products, our policies, or our pricing, we are more than willing to make compromises to satisfy them ... truth be known, we are simply too tired to put up a fight. Thinking that we have won the war, we feel we can afford to let them win these smaller conflicts...especially in light of what it would cost us to go out and hunt down another customer to replace this one.

Yet, if we had more strength and solvency, we might be more willing to listen to the tiny inner voice that says, "Be careful...this one could be more trouble than their worth. This is a customer from hell."

Yet, we ignore the voice because we need to make back the money we spent on our marketing and sales program. Or, we convince ourselves that these customers must be perfect for us because they responded to our advertising or clicked on our hyperlink, or we are afraid that the competition will serve them if we don't. Inevitably, though, the voice turns out to be right. By the time we end our tortured relationship with this customer, we feel that no amount of money in the world would have been enough to compensate us for the cost of the experience. We blame the customer for the poor quality of the interaction, but the truth is that, as business owners and managers, we are solely responsible for who we chose to serve.

And, when we create advertising campaigns or promotional strategies that fail to clearly convey the bright light of our unique business distinctions, we find customers that other businesses should be serving.

As soon as we hear that tiny inner voice warning us that we have found a "less-than-perfect" customer, it's a signal that our own distinctive light has gone out. It no longer has the power and brilliance to attract only perfect customers and clients.

Take a moment to picture one of your most perfect clients -- the one person with whom you most enjoy working. If you're like the majority of business people, the client you describe as perfect is the one who respects and values your time, trusts you to have his or her best interests at heart, comes to you with realistic expectations, happily pays what your product or service is worth, is intelligent, trustworthy, and sincere, and refers your business to their friends and family. Perfect customers make you feel needed, appreciated, respected, and understood. Even more, they reconnect you with the passion and purpose that puts joy in your work--the very reason you got into your business in the first place. And, when you think about it, these perfect clients often come to you easily; there was an immediate spark of attraction and connection with this client as if synchronicity brought you together at the perfect time and place.

So...are all of your clients or customers perfect? If your answer is "no," then consider a new marketing model... one that transforms your approach, attitudes and behavior to create the synchronicity that easily attracts perfect clients and customers to your business.

The Strategic Synchronicity process works for every business, just as successfully as it has for Dan Krohn, attorney, dankrohn@krohnlaw.com...

"After working with the Strategic Synchronicity process to identify my perfect client, I became convinced that there are indeed more than enough such perfect clients to keep me busy. The work started to flow in, and it's been coming in at an increasing rate ever since. What's more, I have the extraordinary pleasure of working almost exclusively

with clients whom I like -- a luxury few attorneys ever experience!"

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Niche Marketing vs Mass Marketing

From [Ivan Delman](#)

HOW DO YOU WANT TO BURN UP YOUR MONEY?

Visualize the mass marketing person as standing smack in the middle of a major league park. On the ground, in front of this person, is a large pile of various denominations of currency. The mass marketing person just set this pile of currency on fire. He wants to attract the attention of the seated spectators using the smoke from the burning currency. He has put out the word that smoke from burning currency will clear all eight sinus cavities.

Since the ballpark is so huge, by the time the smoke reaches the park's perimeter, it will be severely diluted by the size of the park and the distance from the fire to the spectators. Although the spectators might know about its benefits, the area is so spread out that they'll hardly smell the smoke. The end result will be minimal unless a tremendous amount of currency is set on fire to produce much more smoke.

On the other hand, I see a niche marketing person as someone who takes the same pile of dollar bills, goes over to a pre-determined section of the bleachers then sets his pile on fire.

He knows, from prior research, that the crowds in that section of the bleachers are interested in clearing their sinuses. Because of the smaller area, they will also be able to strongly smell the burning currency. The niche marketer will have better results using the same amount of money because it's impact is targeted.

Whether it's a baseball field, the printed media or the Internet the results will be the same. That is, it's much easier to attract the attention of a smaller crowd that you've identified as being interested in what you have to offer.

BEFORE YOU LIGHT THE PILE...PLAN THE BURN

So, why would you want to advertise your services to a niche market over a mass market? In other words, why would you want to target a smaller segment of your community over the entire community? Simple...It's more effective, less costly and produces better results.

However, before you start burning up your cash for marketing efforts that might or might not work for you, it's imperative you plan your marketing strategy. The first thing that should be listed in your plan is the type and size niche you'll want to market.

[Part 2: Three Steps to Finding Your Niche](#)

By using logical planning and execution of the above steps, you'll succeed in positively affecting the well being of your customers in your chosen niches. You'll also be amply rewarded both financially and emotionally for your efforts.

First off, it's too expensive and usually a very difficult task to try and develop your own niche. It's better to identify and plan on addressing an existing niche that has good potential for using your unique product or services.

For example, let's assume you've invented a fantastic sports drink and want to develop the market for your product.

Here are the first three steps you must take to find your niche:

1. **Assess yourself** and determine what areas of life you are most interested in and how it will interface with your product.
2. **Assess your potential market** to determine if there is an area that could use your services. An easy way to make this determination is just talk to the people in your targeted community. Another is to join groups of people who have similar interests such as health clubs, little league boosters, soccer clubs or at car racing activities.
3. Once you find a promising niche, then determine if you can be **comfortable with the anticipated income** from it.

For example, if you decide to target sporting events, consider aligning yourself with local gyms or sports teams.

Try to sponsor a series of community sporting events. Of course, an ample amount of samples should be available for your product's promotion.

Since my area of interest is car racing, I started out by being an associate sponsor for one then finally three different venues of car racing. Later, when I started driving

my own racecar, my services were prominently displayed on the car.

To avoid putting all your hopes into one basket, I recommend developing several niches rather than having to depend on one. Aside from the racing connection, I focused on several departments of our city's government such as police department, city management and public works personnel.

I just didn't randomly choose those departments; I assessed my interests (See step one) and that was on the list. I was a reserve cop for 6 years and had an understanding of the problems encountered by cops in the field.

Picture this...You're wearing a belt full of equipment such as a gun, radio, cuffs, extra ammo, speedy loaders, mace, etc. While you're lugging all that weight around your middle, get in and out of a police car many times during the day. If you're not entering and exiting the car, you're sitting on seats that are broken down from the overuse of multiple shifts.

The above doesn't even address the injuries from jumping over fences, short races to nab an uncooperative detainee plus occasional wrestling matches with uncooperative citizens.

The people in our city management worked long hours at the computers plus were under many timeline stresses. Further, at night, they were required to sit for long periods of time at council or committee meetings. The chairs were not always cushy and usually were made of the hardest wood possible. In my opinion, I believe medieval inquisitors designed them. Therefore, along with my services, I was able to discuss ergonomic and stress-related considerations with those city employees.

The same type of thinking would apply to your sports drink. You should not only be able to offer a fantastic drink, in addition, you should be able to offer your expert advice on how its use relates to their performance, health or comfort levels. Your expert advice will differentiate you from the other drink manufacturers who are just selling drinks...Period!

About the Author

Dr Delman has degrees in both business and chiropractic accompanied by 38 years of practical experience in product and services management. Since 1995 he has written two books plus numerous published articles on the business of managing a health care practice. The principles he advocates are applicable and essential for the successful management of any small business. His website is [www. BusinessofChiropractic.com](http://www.BusinessofChiropractic.com)

Eight Important Premises About Identifying Your Niche:

Yes. People often freak out when they are asked to identify a niche. Of course, the reason that most people freak out is because they assume they have to change everything about their business *right now*. They are terrified that they will have to change their logo, their font choice, they'll have to dump most of their current clients, reword all of their marketing materials and website, and divorce their spouse etc.

So, as you go through this virtual workshop let's build on these assumptions . . .

FIRST: You can be explicit without being exclusive. just because you've picked a niche doesn't mean that you can't work with people outside of it. Let's say you're a massage therapist who focuses on pregnant women. That doesn't mean you can't also massage men or elderly women - it just means that you aren't *targeting* them. It means that the bulk of the people you attract will be *within* your niche, but you will still attract other folks who don't fit your niche - just because they like you, happened to hear about you first, or were recommended by someone they trust. That's fine. There's no need to turn them away.

A corollary of this is that you may have multiple niches. Or you might have on main niche and a bunch of sub-niches. You may be a vegan restaurant that attracts health conscious and politically savvy customers overall - but you'll likely have some sub-niches such as: activists, doctors, athletes, yoga moms etc.

Sometimes people make the mistake of trying to cram all of their targets into one single target. So, they end up with a very vague and broad niche that's impossible to work with - the statement is confusing and generic. They try to come up with some niche statement that encompasses all of their clients and it makes their heads explode. If your statement feels impossibly plain - you have two choices: first - you can pick a central niche that works best for your business or second - you can pick a series of sub-niches.

SECOND: A niche can be phased in. You don't need to try to turn everything around overnight. In fact, that's likely a bad idea. Better is to adopt an attitude of 'playing' with some niches. You can identify a few niches that you think might be a fit and attempt different promotions to each. When you find a niche that feels really wonderful (and meets the criteria I'm about to show you), you can try more promotions and those promotions can expand to become the bulk of your business. Of course, the more you focus and commit to a niche - the more it will expand.

THIRD: A niche may take a while to identify (and that's okay). Think of clarifying your ideal client as a long-term process rather than an *event*. You'll be able to answer some of the questions in this virtual workshop easily. Others you'll need to sit with; some for a few weeks and

some for a few years. That's the truth. Most people tell me that when they stumble across their niche - and stumble is really a good word - it's like a light bulb going off and they think, "Why didn't I see that before?" Because they couldn't. It's a process.

Since the niche is so connected to our nature - to who we are as people - it lifts up all of the places we're not clear on our nature, not clear about our passions and our purpose. It can feel like such a huge decision. The reality is that we humans *aren't* so narrowly specialized or defined as we are asking our businesses to be sometimes - we fear giving up on parts of ourselves. But remember, that your business is not who you are. It will, by necessity, be more narrowly focused than you are as an individual. That's okay.

Before you even begin to look at any of these materials, please take 3 minutes and go read the following article by Robert Middleton . . .

<http://radicalbusiness.blogspot.com/2006/09/finding-your-niche-robert-middleton.html>

FOURTH: You're *already* losing people: perhaps the greatest fear that comes up for people when asked to identify a specific niche is that they will lose potential clients. This is true. But consider this. You already are. You will never, ever, ever, ever, EVER be attractive to everyone. Impossible. If you try to be everything to everybody you'll just become nothing to everybody. You'll become generic and thus invisible. No matter what strategy you're using right now, you're already losing people. Some people love it and others are turned off by it. That's not a problem. The real question is: who do you *want* to attract? And are you doing everything you could be attractive to them?

FIFTH: Starting specific is better than starting general. Imagine a funnel. At the top is the whole marketplace. Everybody. At the bottom is a single person. Now obviously, trying to reach everyone at the top won't work, but a single person at the bottom can't sustain you either. What to do. Most people come from the orientation of, "*okay, let's start general and only go as specific as we have to.*" I'm suggesting an opposite orientation - starting at the very specific, targeted bottom and only going up as far as you absolutely have to. Start with a very defined target and only widen as much as you need to.

SIXTH: Don't underestimate the size of your niche. Most entrepreneurs do. You don't just have to appeal to the hardcore, 'true believers'. Sure, that's who you might be *most* attractive to, but you can also reach those who are 'on the road'. Plus, as you grow, you may need to tinker your marketing to reach a slightly broader niche. Now, if there's enough hardcore folks to meet your needs then that's fine, but sometimes people make the mistake of thinking, "*oh there's not enough people who are into _____.*" Well, maybe not as a full time lifestyle, but there's probably a bunch who are interested. The weekend warriors of camping for example - they're not

'hardcore campers' - but maybe you don't need them to be.

SEVENTH: It's up to you. It's your damned decision. Don't let any marketing or business consultant tell you otherwise. Yes, there are things you can do to pick a winning niche - and, a bit later - I'll show you some criteria that I think you'll love that might make your decision making process much easier - but, hey, this is your life right? All sorts of people will have all sorts of ideas about what's best for you and your business. And, who knows, some of them are probably right (the bastards). But some are wrong. Your life and your business = your decisions. You'll make some mistakes, but at least let them be your mistakes, not someone else's.

EIGHTH: A niche is unnatural. A healthy life is not meant to be so narrowly focused as a business is. Businesses thrive on a tight, targeted focus. Our personal lives might enjoy that for a season - but then it costs us. This is important to remember - you aren't your business. What it takes for your business to succeed is likely not what it will take for you to be happy and healthy. Don't confuse the needs of your business with your own needs. Your business might thrive on being a relative monoculture - your life might not. A niche is a relatively arbitrary choice. Most businesses could address multiple niches. Even if it grows out of your own life experiences - your businesses niche is slightly unnatural in that you chose it. So, if it feels unnatural for you to focus so narrowly - you're right. It is unnatural - for your personal life. But it's actually just what most businesses need.

Inner vs. Outer Realities:

In his book, *Buzz Marketing*, Mark Hughes says, *"Ultimately, customers come in one person at a time, and your approach needs to speak to people not in terms of demographic profiles but as individuals . . . targeting become important only if you've got nothing buzzworthy."*

And I strongly disagree. Targeting is the basis of creating buzz and word of mouth? Why? Because targeting allows you to create something truly extraordinary and remarkable for a community. He's right that we shouldn't be targeting demographics, but he's wrong in saying we should just focus on individuals. We need to target communities of people.

So, how do you know if a niche you're thinking of is a good one?

Well, your niche may be defined by what you do. You make a particular widget that has only one use and there's only three buyers of it in the market. Your service is helping to turn breach babies naturally - the nature of your service may define the target market.

But that's a rare thing.

Your product and service likely gives what you're offering some definition. If you do eco-friendly lawn care there's likely going to be some folks that are more into that than others.

At the heart of it, you're only going to be helping folks who have a problem you can help them solve. But what if there's a lot of people who have that problem? What if a lot of people could technically benefit from the use of your product or service?

In many cases, I will ask people who their niche is and they'll say, "everybody!". That is, of course, the wrong answer. When I explain that they can't reach everyone, they look glum, pout and say, "but my product or service could help anyone!"

And that may or may not be true.

But it's a tempting line of logic - after all look at the following list and ask yourself, "Who could these products and services be used by?"

- massage
- marketing consulting
- accounting
- recycled paper
- recycled journals and notebooks
- a health food bar
- life coaching
- interior design
- real estate agent

etc.

Couldn't a lot of people use each of those? Sure, each of them vaguely suggests a target market, but only vaguely. Yes, a marketing consultant will work with businesses - but what kind of businesses? An interior designer will work with people who live somewhere or have an office - but what kinds of people? A real estate agent will work with people looking to buy or sell a home - but what kinds of people?

Do you follow?

The implied niche is, almost always, too wide.

There's a tonne of food bars - and sure they implied niche is 'people interested in their health'. But what *kind* of people? "People" is not a target. Luna Bar was the first to target active women specifically.

There's lots of companies that make journals and notebooks - and the implied niche is obviously - people who like to write and need something to take notes in . . . but what kinds of people? Recover Journals out of Halifax, Nova Scotia was one of the first to target to eco, funky, retro crowd.

Most of us could help a lot of people with what we do. But if we try to reach everyone - if we don't pick a niche - we make our marketing jobs 100 times harder. It's just easier and more effective to pick a niche. What *kinds* of people do we want to target?

There's nine specific qualities that you will want to look at - but I'll get to that a bit later. For now there's a 'meta-distinction' - a big and overarching idea that is really important to 'get'.

It's about the difference between people's inner and outer realities.

This is a critical question - I've asked many people who their niche is and gotten answers that were profoundly off base.

And there's two kinds "off base". The first kind sounds like this.

- my niche is that I sell organic produce
- my niche is that I make my products using only fair trade products
- my niche is that I teach this particular style of Karate (and I'm the only one in town who does it)

What's the problem here?

They're defining their niche by what they do, instead of who they're targeting with it. Again, in some cases, what you do will determine your niche - but that's rare. If you've got that situation you don't need to read another word. You're set.

If that's not you.

It's not that the above list aren't fine selling features. They are. But they are not a niche. They might be part of what's called your USP or your Irresistible Offer - but they're not a niche.

A niche is your target market. They're not what you do. They're who you're trying to reach.

But how are we describing 'who' we're trying to reach?

That's where we run into the second - and more common - mistake.

People often say things like:

- my niche is women ages 25-35 living in Calgary
- my niche is people who make over \$65,000 per year
- my niche is black men ages 20-30
- our niche is the asian community

Those look like good targets, don't they? They seem to be well thought out and really specific.

But we need to be aware of the difference between demographics and psychographics. Many people think

that a niche is defined by the external appearances (e.g. age, ethnic background, gender, income). But this is the worst way to identify your niche.

Why?

Well, just because people share external appearances doesn't mean that they talk to each other. It doesn't mean they share the same values or hang out in the same clubs.

Not all women, ages 25-35 living in your community talk with each other. They don't give each other a 'knowing wink' as they pass each other on the street.

And that knowing wink is key. It means that they recognize and know each other when they see each other. It means that they recognize each other as "they're one of us." or "they're just like me!" You can see the burst of recognition, "Ohmygodyou'reintoAniDiFrancometoo!!!!" They're a part of a similar subculture that shares certain habits, values, passions, obsessions, tastes, aesthetics and hobbies.

Anything that is a priority for them - anything they organize their life and time around could be the basis of a niche - if enough people share it and if . . . I'm getting ahead of myself.

Here's a simple equation:

Niche = target market = subculture = community = lifestyle.

When you see punks walking down the street - they notice each other when they pass by. In certain communities in San Francisco you could see the gay community give each other these looks - even if they didn't know each other (strong gaydar) - to the total cluelessness of the straight people around them. People who are hardcore into Dungeon's and Dragons might notice a book someone's reading. Dog owners notice other dog owners when going on walks. Single mothers notice other single mothers. Etc.

More importantly, these folks all tend to hang out in groups - and that will become very important as we progress.

Inner realities not outer realities.

Not all black men ages 40-50 living in the same neighbourhood talk with one another. They don't all think alike. They don't have the same problems - we just delude ourselves into thinking that they do.

In the modern world, we live more in communities of affinity than communities of geography. A sad fact, but a true one none the less.

The point is this: when you identify your niche, you must be predominantly aware of people's *inner* reality more than their *outer* reality. This doesn't mean you *ignore* demographics. It means that they aren't primary.

“American marketing has historically been based upon customer demographics - what we look like on the outside. But in the past few years, psychographics - what we look like on the inside - have become a far better means of capturing the hearts and minds of customers. Demographics tend to be more tangible and are primarily focused on age, race, or income. Psychographics focus more on intangible - passions, beliefs, or values. Demographics are often defined by how the world sees us while psychographics are defined by how we see ourselves.” (Marketing That Matters, p,67)

But simply shifting to acknowledge people’s inner realities isn’t enough. It’s easy to do that in a vague - and totally meaningless - way.

- my niche is people who can afford me
- my niche is people who like me
- my niche is people who are fundamentally open to change
- people who are positive and optimistic

When looking at our niche we need to be specific - a vague niche is as much an oxymoron as ‘military intelligence’.

None of this is to say that you don’t ever use demographics in picking your niche - you just don’t *only* pick demographics. There must be a psychographic element that is strong as well.

Think of it like this: demographics are like a two dimensional drawing but the psychographics add depth. They add the third dimension.

A bit later, we’re going to look at how to boil your niche down into a single, easy to say sentence that people will ‘get’ right away.

But for now, it’s enough to understand that a niche is more than appearances and bank balances.

So, next let’s look at eight criteria that I believe your niche must pass to be attention-worthy.

How to pick your perfect niche:

So, we know that having a clear niche or target market is essential, but, how do you know if you’ve got a good niche?

It’s one of the biggest fears people have - “what if I pick the *wrong* niche?”

And the fear is justifiable. After all, if you pick the wrong niche and spend a lot of time, money and energy in trying to reach it . . . and it doesn’t work out. Well, you’d probably rather not go through that.

The truth is, you could pick a perfect niche and still fail. A strong niche isn’t a guarantee of success, it just makes it a lot more likely is all.

So, what constitutes a good niche?

Luckily for you, it’s extremely easy to tell whether your niche is a good choice or not. There’s eight specific pieces of criteria you can use to judge any niche by.

And let me make a few predictions.

First: I predict these will all make a ton of sense to you.

Second: I predict you will agree with and really like these criteria.

Third: I predict that these criteria will give you some ‘aha’ moments of why past marketing efforts of yours have failed.

Dominic Canterbury’s “Three Critical Elements of a Great Target”:

First of all - we want to remind ourselves that we’re targeting communities of people - not just random assortments of demographics.

It could look like a lot of things . . .

- “users of _____”
- professions
- lifestyle based
- hobbies
- religious affiliations
- time of life

Etc.

There are two important reasons you want to target communities of people rather than individuals. **First off: They’re more likely to have a lot in common from their lifestyle, affiliations, friends, values, life experiences etc.** Birds of a feather tend to flock together. Your ideal target market is a community of people that share common desires, passions, values, interests, hobbies, a common bond that you can cater to. Some problems are so specific that only a narrow niche of people will suffer from them (e.g. a particular problem with a highly specialized computer application). But some problems (e.g. back pain) are really generic. So, some problems have a sort of implied niche to them. Others don’t. If the problems that you solve are widely held - then you should likely consider selecting a particular community to work with and develop packages for. A couple examples: a massage therapist who works with the BDSM community in Seattle. Sure, lots of people need massage - but when she caters her business to this community - she can cater

to their particular needs, values and vibe. I saw an ad once that just said, "Rad Dyke Plumber" - a lesbian plumber. Now, it's not like she's dealing with different piping issues in any technical sense - but she is dealing with a different subculture with its own sense of esthetic. If the problem is widely held - pick a particular community to serve. For example, if you're tennis player and a massage therapist, you might consider becoming a massage therapist that caters to tennis players. A good niche shares a certain lifestyle. Maybe they're clubbers, maybe they're weekend warriors who love to go camping each weekend, Maybe they're all theatre buffs. Maybe they love to read comic books and play Dungeons and Dragons. They're dog owners. They're parents. They're grandparents. You know you've got a good target when you can insert the target in the following sentence and it makes sense: "I work with people in the _____ community/scene/crowd." Another way of saying this is that people in your niche are all experiencing a common situation. They're all the same kind of character in the same kind of story. If they were to sit down and talk with each other they would be able to relate to each others experience, finish each others sentences. They would a similar kind of average day or average week. You'd hear a lot of things like, "Oh wow! Me too! No kidding. I deal with the same thing. I know exactly what you mean!"

The second reason that marketing to communities is better than individuals is The Law of Group Adoption:

This may be the most compelling reason to think in terms of selling to and through hubs vs. individuals. If an individual buys from you, it's pretty easy for him to buy from someone else the next week. But if all of his friends are also buying from you - if doing business with you becomes a part of their culture it's much less likely they'll ever switch - because you're one of them. There's a self-reinforcing effect that goes on. Consider how Birkenstocks were adopted by the hippie scene. Now wearing Birkenstocks is a political statement. Imagine if your hub adopted you.

Having said that . . .

What makes a great niche? Probably a lot of things. But there are three factors that are - hands down - the most important.

Whenever someone describes a possible target market to me - these are the first three filters that I use to see if it's any good.

FIRST - They're a Thirsty Crowd.

SECOND: There's Hubs.

THIRD: There's Enough of Them.

Let's explore those each in a bit more detail . . .

1. **A Thirsty Crowd: they are experiencing a common set of easily identifiable needs you can fulfill** or problems that you can help them with (and they are, at least, open to the notion that these problems can be solved and ideally they are passionately committed to solving it *now* - it's a 'must' for them, not a 'should' that they'll get to someday). If they don't have a common problem - it's not a target market. And if you can't help them with the problem - there's simply no basis for any conversation. The problem or need is the basis of all your marketing. Most people make the mistake of thinking that people are buying their products or services - but that's not true. People couldn't care less about your products or services (owch. the truth smarts) they just want a solution to their problems, they want relief from pain, they want to meet a need of theirs. Your products and services are merely a means to an ends. So many entrepreneurs I know can talk for hours about the features and benefits of their products but if I say, "why do people need this? What are they buying it for?" they totally blank. They don't know how to answer it. The 'problem' is not only the basis of your marketing message - it's the white hot center of your niche.

TIP: You know it's a good target market when people hear the name of the target market and instantly know whether they're in it or not.

Tad's Three Critical Elements of a Well Articulated Problem:

- o It must be something they're experiencing right *now*. It is the symptom - not the 'sign'.
- o It must not only speak to the situation they're in but also how they *feel* about it.
- o A problem is, by definition, something they *don't* want. It's not a result they're after - it's what's preventing them from getting that result. And it is 100% dependent on what the niche is. Different targets will experience different shades of the same problem.

I've heard it said before that a profitable market can be compared to a lake with thousands of starving fish. All you need to do is throw in the bait and it turns into a feeding frenzy.

2. **There's Hubs:** Secondly: **They already have established, high quality hubs, communication networks etc.** Basically, this means that you can find them and reach them easily. What is a hub? Think of it like the hub of a wheel. It's the only point on the wheel where all of the spokes come together and meet. A hub is any place where you can find your niche. It might be an association they belong to, an

event they tend to go to. I can't tell you how many times I hear people get excited about a niche they have little hope of reaching. Before you commit a dime to any niche ask yourself: Do they tend to hang out in the same places? Do they read the same magazines? Do they spend money in the same places? Are they a part of the same groups? There are seven main categories of hubs (e.g. events, businesses, groups, publications, individuals, support systems, and websearch related). The more hubs that your niche has, the easier they will be to reach. The fewer hubs there are, the harder it will be. Why do you want to find hubs? Why do they matter so much? Well, consider this - you can spend all of your time trying to find your clients individually, or you can just go to where they *already* are. You can spend all of your days trying to win the trust of the individuals in your niche one at a time . . . or you can secure the endorsement of someone they already trust and win over all of their trust at once. The latter is far easier in the long term. When I go to a new town I could spend hundreds of dollars posting the city about my workshops, or I could just call up the local progressive, local business network and get their endorsement. Much easier.

3. **There's enough of them to meet your needs.** While most people don't niche narrowly enough, you can make your niche too narrow. If there's only three people in town who fit your description you may need to broaden your reach. You need to be really honest with yourself here. And challenge yourself: if you think there's enough people - what are you basing that on? Hope? Or have you actually done some research? What you're looking for is areas with good demand but low supply.

Six more qualities of a perfect target:

1. they're **fun to work with** and in alignment with your nature (these are likely the kinds of clients you most easily and naturally attract and the ones to whom you feel the most attracted - it's a niche or community that you want to see thrive). Who would *really* excite you to work with? Is there a particular niche or community of folks that you just naturally seem to love working? I'll tell you something I've noticed: there is a deep connection between your ideal niche and your nature as a person. I can't tell you how many times I've heard people in my workshops say, "well, basically, my niche is people just like me!" And that's not a crazy response. It makes sense.
2. they are **underserved**: the niche is often based on what your competitors aren't doing. If they have a need but are being ignored by your competition, that can be a goldmine. If they're already being courted for their business by dozens of other businesses then that niche is less than ideal ****unless**** you are able to offer something so unique and so clearly more valuable that it will blow the competition out of the water. If you're able to do that then you're in a good place. If they are over-served - if they are inundated with options then you need to do one of three things: be the only option that focuses just on that niche exclusively (e.g. the only massage therapist in town who works only with mothers). If there's already a lot of other businesses focusing exclusively on that niche then you might consider picking a sub-niche - focusing on one particular sub-group of people in that niche (e.g. be the only massage practitioner in town that works exclusively with new mothers). Or third - you will also need to distinguish yourself in some other way. You can differentiate yourself by: what you do, how you do it. how much you charge, who you offer it to, when you offer it and where you offer it.
3. they **can afford to pay** you full price for your products and services. It's important that they are able to pay you an amount that feels good and meets your needs. That may be a small amount or a large amount. That's up to you - but if it's less than you really want and need you will begin to resent them. It will drain your energy. And you won't have enough money to sustain yourself. It will start out as a gesture of goodwill, but will end in bitterness. NOTE: If the niche you are really into can't afford you, all is not lost. You have a few options. One is just to let go of making more money and enjoy working with them. Second is to pick another niche that can afford you and work with them enough to meet your needs and work with your niche the rest of the time.
4. they are **in alignment with your long-term business goals** - if you know where your business is headed long term, it's just smart to pick clients that will fit with that (e.g. if you do eco-lawn care and want to work with "Golf Courses" eventually, but now need to do residential, it might be wise to focus on people who golf for now so that you can bridge into that later).
5. **You're a native not a tourist.** This one isn't a must - but boy is it helpful. If you have a lot of experience with the community you're trying to reach (better yet you're a part of them) - if you're an expert in their experiences - you're going to do better. If you know their world inside and out, if you know the trends and troubles, the key players, the politics, the hope and dreams etc. of your niche - you're bound to have an easier time of it. It's possible to randomly pick a niche and work it. You can do that. It's just harder is all. This one really ties back to #1. The better you understand their world - the more able you will be to help them with their needs. Why? You'll understand them. Consider this: which is more appealing to you - someone who is committed to learning about and understanding your needs and taking as much time as they need to really make sure they understand you before they sell you anything - or somebody who

already understands you and has designed something perfect for you. When you're a native (vs. a tourist) in your niche, you're going to be far ahead.

Says Dominic Canterbury: *"Let me give you an example: In my recent weekend seminar one of the attendees was an in-home physical trainer. His target: affluent middle-aged Eastside women. He was flummoxed. He'd tried all the traditional forms of marketing but nothing was working.*

So wielding my magic wand of marketing I says to him, "How about targeting affluent new moms. That way you can develop a set of services to meet their specific needs and you can cross promote with OBGYNs, Dulas and baby stores, and you can get them to pay attention to you by holding informative events or writing an article for local parenting magazines. You might even consider a blog."

He loved the idea and immediately started coming up with excellent ideas on his own.

So, what makes this a good target and what makes the other suck? I'll tell ya.

The new target market passes my patented tripartite Target Market Test:

1. They have shared needs you can meet through your business
2. They have hubs of communication
3. There's enough of them to make it worth your time

The original target passed only #3, and I'm sorry folks, but you have to score high on all of them for it to work."

11 Questions to ask Yourself to Identify Your Perfect Target Market:

So, we know that having a niche is important. And now we know how to identify a good one.

So, this is all great in theory - but how about in practice? What about in your *particular* situation.

So, where do you even start?

This is the hardest part. Identifying your niche(s). After all, you could choose any one of hundreds of possibilities. How do you choose?

The following ten questions are based on the assumption that you don't already have a strong implicit niche for what you do - that there's the possibility to choose a more narrow niche.

They're also based on the idea that you want to choose a niche that is a natural fit for you - a niche that's an extension of you somehow. You want the niche to be fun.

In truth - it doesn't need to be for the success of your business - but it likely does for your own fulfillment. So, these questions are often about you - getting to know yourself.

First of all, if you feel uptight about making the choice - relax. You're not crazy. It's a tricky question. And you're not alone. A lot of people feel this way. And also relax because - you don't have to figure this out over night. It's okay - and often important - to take your time.

When I teach workshops - this is where people get stuck. All the theory I covered before is fine. It's logical. It makes sense. They love it. And then I invite them to pick a niche to focus on for the weekend - and they freeze up or freak out.

I'd suggest that there's at least ten primary ways that I've seen people use to pick a niche that fits the eight key criteria.

Now, not all of these will make sense or be a fit for your situation - but I invite you to sit with each question for three minutes - take 30 minutes with this - and see what comes up. You might just be surprised. Come up with your answers and then let yourself steep in them. Write the answers down and then schedule to revisit them in a month. Actually schedule it.

Here's the ten themes and questions.

1. **personal tragedy and defining moments:** if you've been through breast cancer and you're a holistic practitioner, you might feel passionate about helping other women going through that process. If you've been through a painful divorce and you're a life coach - you might feel inspired about coaching women who are going through one themselves. Some people find that helping others through painful events that they've gone through is actually very healing for them. Personal tragedies can often be a source of immense passion and purpose. The defining moment might also have been a very positive thing. Maybe you climbed Mt. Everest. I worked with one coach who did a lot of personal growth workshops - but she was having a dickens of a time identifying any niches. I asked her to describe who was *already* coming (see question #10). She told me that many of them were women who'd gone through a painful divorce. I asked her if this might be a potential niche. Turns out it was. She had been through a painful divorce herself and loved the thought of helping other women through that.

THE QUESTION: What have been the five most significant and defining moments of your life?

2. **community you're a part of or want to serve:** if you're a part of the reiki community and you're a massage therapist, why not serve the community you're already a part of? Maybe you love the green business community and want to focus your

accounting skills there. The point is that sometimes your niche is staring you right in the face.

THE QUESTION: What groups, networks or subcultures are you already a part of?

3. **time of life (e.g. retirement):** most people will go through certain events - transitioning from one career to another, becoming a parent, retiring, divorcing etc. You might decide that your niche is based around one of these transitions. You might be a "retirement coach". You might have a boutique furniture store and do some promotions for new parents - or parents whose kids are "finally" leaving home. Remember: a niche can be for your whole business or just a simple promotion.

THE QUESTION: What life transitions do you think are the most natural fit for what you do?

4. **profession & industry:** Perhaps your niche is based on working with a particular industry. Maybe you've decided to work specifically with Ice Cream shops or maybe you're going to sell your products and services to doctors and hospitals. You might decide that you're going to do a fitness package for accountants. Sounds weird - but it can work.

THE QUESTION: What professions or industries are you a part of or think might be the most natural fit for what you have to offer?

5. **hobby/lifestyle:** Maybe you're a realtor who focuses on dog lovers. I know one life coach who is a tea geek - he has a socially unacceptable knowledge of tea. But he's building a whole online business with himself as a tea sommelier.

THE QUESTION: What hobbies, interest or bizarre fascinations do you have? Is there anywhere that you have a 'socially unacceptable level of knowledge' about something?

6. **specific unsolved problem:** maybe your niche is based around a particular, very specific problem that people face. It could be a specific issue people have with their kidneys, it could be 'how do i get my videos online?', it could be 'how do i get my website to sell more products?' The key is to look at a problem that a group of people are frustrated with.

THE QUESTION: Is there a very particular problem that your product or service solves particularly well?

7. **your strengths:** all of us are strong in some area. We have certain qualities that make us who we are. Maybe our strength is that we're really sensitive. Maybe it's that we're really good at diffusing conflict. Maybe we're naturally entertaining or a great problem solver. I noticed years ago that I was really good at leading workshops and was entertaining - and that I was good at coaching people. So, I asked myself,

"What kind of work could allow me to do that?" That was a big part of Radical Business starting.

THE QUESTION: what are you really, really good at?

8. **your passions:** I think that the best niches are built around some passion that you have. For me, I'm passionate about alternatives - but even more so I'm passionate about helping friends of mine get over their marketing hurdles and frustrations. I really love doing that. I'm passionate about leading workshops. I'm passionate about tinkering and improving the workshops.

THE QUESTION: if you could do anything with your life what would it be? what topics, activities etc. are you most passionate about?

9. **the underserved:** In almost any marketplace - there's some folks who are getting ignored who would immensely benefit from your product and service. When I used to do workshops for Student Councils in High Schools across Alberta I found that the rural schools were massively underserved - and yet were most willing to spend the most money.

THE QUESTION: Who aren't your competitors serving? Who could benefit immensely from your product or service that isn't being actively courted?

10. **the one's you already got:** If you've been in business for a few years or more - you might notice that you seem to attract and retain a certain kind of person. It can be interesting to look at what niche or community you seem to be attracting most easily. It's interesting to notice who you enjoy most from the people you're attracting.

THE QUESTION: Who do you seem to be already, naturally and effortlessly attracting? Who seems to be showing up?

11. **Your Life History:** This one can be surprisingly effective. Simply write out a list of everything you've done for work or volunteering since as early as you can remember. I often hear saying that their niche is basically . . . well . . . them. But we are, very often, far too close to our own lives to see the patterns as possibilities. One coach I spoke to had no idea about what kind of clients she wanted. Turns out she used to work in the soul crushing corporate world. And when I proposed to her working with that niche - specifically closet mystics and progressive women working in the corporate world - she lit up like a candle.

Passionate Affiliations

- Robert Middleton

www.actionplan.com

I was speaking with someone today about marketing niches.

She had just given a presentation at a real estate office on creating a marketing niche, and told me how she encouraged people in attendance to market to a niche that they were familiar with or even passionate about.

She gave the following example:

One of the real estate people in the audience was into classic cars. She asked if he spent any time doing business networking with other classic car collectors. She suggested that this would be an ideal marketing niche.

Ideal Niche = Passionate Affiliation

Your very first marketing step is to create affiliations, and then get attention and build familiarity within that affiliation. Because you have that affiliation, you're no longer a stranger.

We often think of the obvious affiliations, such as the chamber of commerce, a leads group or professional associations. But in today's eZine, let's look at less obvious (and more passionate) affiliations.

Start by making an inventory of the following things:

- What are your hobbies?
- What are you already involved in?
- What are you truly passionate about?
- What are you an expert at (outside of business)?
- What charity do you support?
- What would you spend your time doing if you retired?

Now do a little research and make a list of clubs, organizations, activities, etc. that are associated with your top interest

Say you're the guy who collects classic cars.

Is there a club in your area? Do they have shows or special events? Do they do any charity work? Do they feature these cars in parades? What about suppliers for these kind of cars?

Before too long you've tracked down several possible affiliations.

Once you've found an affiliation, joined a group, spent some time and gotten involved, an amazing thing happens: You start to develop relationships. People become familiar with you. They feel comfortable with you. They like and trust you. You're one of them. And this paves the way to market yourself.

People will always ask you what you do.

Now if our car nut says what most real estate people say when people ask them what they do, he'll say, "I sell real

estate" or "I help you find the home of your dreams." Yawn.

No, you need to tie-in and leverage your affiliation/passion.

Let's start again: What do you do? "I specialize in real estate for people who don't have enough space for their classic car collection."

Now that's interesting.

It's interesting because you have something special to offer people who collect classic cars. After all, they have special needs for real estate. And since you're also into classic cars, you understand those needs.

You can find a way to do this with any affiliation, with any business. Identify what you're interested in or even passionate about, and then customize a service for just these kind of people.

If you're a financial planner and you're involved in the local food bank, say that, "I specialize in financial plans for people who are committed to giving back to the community."

If you're a results coach and are into local jazz events, say that, "I work with people to increase their income so that they can spend more time visiting jazz festivals." (I'm waiting for someone to say that to me!)

Yes, it may take a little while to find the right groups and affiliations to fit both your passion and business, but these kind of efforts can yield big returns. I promise you, it's better than spending time at generic networking events where everyone is using the same old tired messages.

Find your passion and plug it into your business.

The More Clients bottom line: Creating affiliations (that you have a passion about) is the starting point for every marketing plan. If you can creatively tie that affiliation into your business, you'll not only get more business, you'll have more fun doing it.

The "Niche Statement" - Your Niche in a Single Sentence:

I used to be really confused about how to tell people who my niche was. It used to take me a whole page to do it.

Now I can do it in a sentence.

The goal of this sentence is simple (but profoundly important) - you should be able to say it and instantly have people know whether or not what you offer is relevant to them or any of their friends. They should instantly know if it's a fit.

When you have a clearly crafted niche the rest of your work falls into place with so little effort. It becomes immediately evident what the perfect irresistible offer is. The hubs also become apparent. A well crafted niche statement is the beginning of all your marketing.

So, how does it work?

There are two parts to any niche or niche statement (at least as I am choosing to define them):

- 1) The Target
- 2) The Problem

a target + a problem = a niche

Pretty simple. You'll see a lot of examples of this in a minute.

But let's break this all down a little further.

1) The Target: The target determines where you will find your prospects *physically*. If your target is moving companies - well that's pretty easy to find them. You just open up the yellow pages and voila. If your target is dog owners - then you can find them through vets, pet stores, dog parks, dog magazines, groomers, kennels and dog trainers. The target helps you find them. The better the target is - the easier a job you'll have finding them. This is why picking a good target is central to the success of your marketing. To me it's about 90% of the job.

2) The Problem: The problem is how you reach your clients *emotionally*. Your ability to articulate the pain, needs, problems and desires of your prospects and clients is the center piece to how much they trust you, your ability to come up with irresistible offers and whether or not you can even get their attention in the first place. Techniques and tactics are not the heart of great marketing - empathy is. For more on this - check out The Deeper Need Workshop I created.
So, again:

a target + a problem = a niche

If you can put these two pieces together into a single statement it's very powerful.

If someone asks what you do, you can start off that conversation with your niche statement.

How do you know if your niche statement works? It should immediately let people know whether or not they in that group or not. If they are they should hear it and say, "Wow! That is sooo me." or at least, "Wow. I have a friend who really needs this."

Here's a shorthand way of expressing your niche that many of my clients have found to be *profoundly* useful. In fact, I would go so far as to say that, until you can do this exercise, you don't really have a niche.

It's deceptively simple, you just need to complete the following sentence . . .

"I work with _____ kinds of people who are dealing with _____ kinds of problems."

Ahh. It looks so simple. But the key here is that you don't go into the RESULTS you offer people right away. At this point, all you're doing is telling people two things: who you help and what problems you help them with.

Mark Joyner has something he calls "The Great Formula" which is probably worth mentioning here.

1. Create an Irresistible Offer
2. Bring it to a thirsty crowd
3. Offer them a second glass

Let's talk about that second one: the thirsty crowd. What's the point of offering water to someone who isn't thirsty? Is that the best use of your time and money? Developing marketing campaigns in which you attempt to convince them that they are, in fact, thirsty? You could spend your days trying to sell ice to Eskimos or a double bed to the Pope and well . . .

That's one approach.

Here's another: identify upfront which sorts of people are likely to *already* need and want what you're offering. The thirsty crowd.

This is the formula:

an underserved or ignored group + an unsolved problem = a thirsty crowd.

You want to find a thirsty crowd. It's much easier to sell water to them.

NOTE: The niche is all about THEM. It's not about YOU. At this stage you do not talk about the results you produce for them. You don't talk about the methods and techniques you use (they don't care yet). You name who they are and what their problem is. Period. Later you will need to articulate the results, solutions and benefits you offer. But not now. For now, stay 100% focused on the pain, problem or need they are experiencing.

NOTE: I think it's okay to ramble a bit. As long as it's focused rambling. I don't think you need to script this word for word and repeat it like a robot whenever anyone asks you what you do.

NOTE: Your niche statement is not your 'tagline'. Most of us eventually come up with some pithy phrase that kind of captures what we do that's funny. For example, when people ask me what I do I often joke, "Marketing consulting for hippies." This usually gets their attention. What do I follow with? My niche statement. Your tagline is likely a good attention getter - but follow it by making sure they know what kinds of people you work with.

NOTE: These statements don't only have to relate to new prospects; they can also speak to current clients who you're wanting to encourage to buy more often or spend more money.

A niche is not defined by what you have to offer them, but by what they are needing; not by your solution, but by their problem; not by the relief you have to offer but by their pain.

40 REAL LIFE EXAMPLES:

"I decided that I wanted to be that bridge. As a coach, I wanted to help people that were still in a corporate job and had some fears and anxieties about leaving. I would navigate that transition of figuring out what they wanted to do, how they could leave, how they could work it out financially and everything that comes up with that. I would get them to that point where they were ready to really launch their business and then pass them off to other folks who could help them to grow, put the infrastructure in place, etc... I really did a lot of thinking about the specific kind of work that I wanted to do and the kinds of people I wanted to work with. It was a very careful and thoughtful definition of my target market." - Pamela Slim - <http://www.escapefromcubiclenation.com/>

1. **Radical Business:** We help green, community-minded, conscious, holistic and locally owned businesses that are struggling with their cashflow, not attracting enough clients and keep 'meaning' to handle their marketing - but end up putting it off. www.tadhargrave.com
2. **Massage Therapist:** I work with people in the Seattle BDSM community who feel embarrassed when they go to a massage therapist because they have to explain the bite marks and bruises on their body.
3. **Graphic Designer:** I work with independent natural health clinics who are frustrated or bored with their current logo, website or marketing materials because they know it doesn't really capture who they are anymore.
4. **Realtor #1: Phoenix Rudner** - I work with dog owning families in Seattle who are struggling to find a house that meets their needs and the needs of their dog but feel confused as to how to even start looking for a good fit. www.seattlehousehound.com
5. **Realtor #2: Dolores Carney** - I work with adults with disabilities in the Seattle area who struggle to find a home that they like and can afford and who feel overwhelmed and confused about where to even start in applying for financing. goddess_dolores@yahoo.com
6. **Printing Company:** We work with the traveling business man who shows up in Calgary hotels freak out because they realize that they need a lot of last minute printing work done for their conference or visit and they have no idea where to go or who to trust.
7. www.lowimpactliving.com: We work with homeowners who want to become more green and energy efficient in their homes but feel totally lost and overwhelmed with where to even start.
8. www.unlockthegame.com: We help salespeople who are in tremendous pain when it comes to selling. They hate doing it. They are secretly scared to pick up the phone. They hate being rejected but also hate using the manipulative sales techniques they were taught. They feel trapped because they need to make a living but they can't find a way to sell that doesn't feel like they're also selling out their integrity.
9. **Rapid Fire Theatre (an improv comedy company):**
Main Niche for our weekly shows: high school, college and university students. **Niche for Gigs:** event organizers for corporate events who need a show that is guaranteed to be entertaining and tailored to the client. www.rapidfiretheatre.com
10. **D-Tox Salon:** We work with chemically sensitive individuals who can't go into a regular salon due to the amount of chemicals used. And they feel so frustrated because they'd really love to get a salon treatment but they can't. They've got nowhere to go. www.dtox.ca
11. **New Leaf Paper:** We work with graphic designers who are frustrated by the amount of paper-waste in their industry and who are looking for something special they can offer to their clients to set them apart as a graphic designer. (one of their many niches).
12. **Rad Dyke Plumber:** I work with women in the lesbian community who are having trouble with their pipes.
13. **Joie de Vivre Hotels** designs each of their hotels on a particular niche. They do this by picking a magazine

(e.g. Rolling Stone) and then picking five adjectives that describe that magazine (e.g. funky, cool, young-at-heart, adventurous and irreverent). And so, people who love Rolling Stone magazine will love this hotel. They called this particular hotel "The Phoenix". Each hotel was individually branded.

14. **Conscious Brands:** I help private owners of organic food and beverage related companies who feel concerned about their environmental impact and are facing stakeholder pressure to reduce it. www.consciousbrands.com
15. **Natural Hair Regrowth:** I work with men worldwide who are suffering from hair loss. They are frustrated, they lack self-confidence, and have low self-esteem. They would like to grow hair, but many have tried other products/services, without results. Others are in denial, and refuse to look at themselves. www.luftek.com, www.luftekhairgrowth.com
16. **Highly Sensitive People:** I work with highly sensitive people in Kitchener, Ontario feel totally overwhelmed by sounds, smells, emotions and pain in their life - but are confused as to why and don't know what to do to cope. They've hit a wall and are no longer willing to put up with "things" as they stand. <http://www.autisticspectrumconsulting.com/>
17. **Divorced Women's Empowerment:** I work with women in the Edmonton area that have gone thru or are going thru a painful divorce and are feeling a lot of pain and anger and are challenged about letting go. A lot of these women feel like they've lost touch with who they are. They're feeling insecure, unattractive and have low self esteem. They often feel immobilized because they're so unsure about what to do next or what their best next step forward might even be. Marge Aloisi - maloisi@shaw.ca
18. **Laser Hair Treatment:** I work with women and men in Calgary who are frustrated with their excess, dark hair growth and who are too embarrassed to go to a large, public salon with such a personal issue. www.laserlady.ca
19. **Graham Robertson:** I help acreage owners who have the means and the desire to purchase original artwork. These people are frustrated and disillusioned by the lack of beauty and creative skill on display in modern art galleries. They look at the paintings and sculpture on display and think "What the hell is that?!". rockyartist@hotmail.com
20. **Graphic Designer/Tech Support:** I work with holistic small business owners who feel frustrated because their sales aren't where they'd like them to be, who are constantly annoyed with computer issues they end up ignoring and who are uninspired with their current website.
21. **Therapist:** I work with entrepreneurs in the Calgary area who are feeling stuck, frustrated and confused in their intimate relationships and can't seem to get their needs met.
22. **Graphic Designer:** I work with small business owners in the Calgary area who are embarrassed by, tired of or bored with the look of their current marketing/business materials. They notice that they aren't excited to give them out and that their materials don't really reflect who they are anymore. www.mandaleaf.com
23. **New Parents:** I work with expectant and new parents who are committed to doing their best to help their children grow into the unique beings they are, but who are unsure of how to best meet their family's needs or who are having difficulties translating their love into action. They may be having problems with the pregnancy, recovering from a difficult birth experience, or simply wanting to form a more enjoyable, secure connection with their baby. Alice Stroud alices@efn.org
24. **Interior Designer:** I work with home or condo owners in the Calgary area who are struggling with environmental illnesses, chemical sensitivities or allergies, or who are simply concerned about the ecological and health impact of their home environment. www.innerspacecalgary.com
25. **ESL Tutor:** I help adult ESL learners in Halifax who are struggling to improve their speaking. They are intermediate and advanced non-native speakers of English who want to speak English more fluently and accurately, but who don't have enough chances to practice. They need someone to correct their English and tell them what they need to do to improve their spoken English in general. www.esltutor.wordpress.com
26. **Naturopath:** I work with young women (and a few men) - ages 22-35 - who are struggling with infertility or hormonal issues who feel uneasy with conventional medical approaches, and may even have had bad experiences there also. They're usually educated professionals who are familiar with a holistic lifestyle but may not be 100% committed (i.e. anywhere from testing the waters to having seen other NDs, acupuncturists, etc.). www.hannahalbertnd.com
27. **Breast Massage:** I work with women in Edmonton who have some concerns about their breast health - maybe they're having discomfort while pregnant, tenderness from breastfeeding, PMSing or menopause, or maybe have had a breast reduction/augmentation surgeries and are experiencing complications due to the scar tissue, or there's been some trauma from seatbelt injuries sustained during motor vehicle accidents or woman

who have had a cancer "scare".
btflypower@hotmail.com

28. **Job Retention** - I work with small business owners in Western Canada who are dealing with job retention and absenteeism problems.
legallyspeaking@albertacom.com
29. **The Urban Farmer** works with environmentally conscious homeowners and community groups in the Edmonton area who have the desire to live more sustainably in their own backyards but are overwhelmed by a lack of knowledge, skills, or time to achieve this on their own. What to do? How to do it? And when to start? They've often been meaning to do this for years - but feel frustrated that they haven't made it happen given how important it is to them.
<http://www.theurbanfarmer.ca>
30. **Goddess Groove:** I work with working or business women in the Calgary area who are feeling unfeminine, unsexy, out of touch with their sensuality or with their bodies and feel strapped for time or stressed out because of the daily pressures of being in the work world and taking care of their home lives and feel frustrated, overwhelmed or unhappy because of it. sensualitycoach@yahoo.ca
31. **Healthy Sex Products:** We work with eco and health conscious lovers who enjoy using products to enhance their sex but feel frustrated because all of the products they can find are toxic, chemical laden and bad for them. www.goodcleanlove.com
32. **Mompreneur Magazine:** A magazine for mother's who are entrepreneurs and struggling to how to meet the needs of both their business and their children.
<http://www.themompreneur.com/>
33. **Pet Supplements:** I work with pet owners who have pets suffering from allergies, diabetes and other chronic diseases.
www.WilVitalCanada.com, MoBi2@telus.net
34. **Retail:** I work with Calgary based, small business owners, entrepreneurs, artisans and home based business owners who feel frustrated because they have a great product (that they're really proud of) but they just don't know how to get it 'out there' to the general public.
<http://www.janedoemarketplaceandcafe.com>

NOTE: If you find your description of the kind of person you want too vague - you might consider adding 2-3 more adjectives to describe them further - or you might reevaluate whether or not your niche is that strong.

A FEW MORE:

Robert Middleton of www.actionplan.com recently sent out an email in which he shared what some of his clients had

come up with. Robert is the person I got this notion of the niche being a combination of the Target + Problem from in the first place. Check his stuff out.

35. **Healthcare Consultant:** We work with healthcare organizations, who struggle with hiring and keeping really good people.
36. **Financial Planner:** I work with people with a six figure incomes who are getting clobbered by taxes, staring at college and retirement and wondering how in the world they're going to pay for it all.
37. **Management Consultant:** I work with CEOs of small to medium sized businesses who are experiencing a steady decline in productivity with their management teams and employees and are finding training programs ineffective. Lack of personal accountability and self- management skills has led to something that looks like procrastination and productivity loss.
38. **Life and Relationship Coach:** I work with individuals who have been unsuccessful in finding their ideal partner and with couples who struggle to keep their marriage intact.
39. **Retail Consultant:** I work with independent retailers who are frustrated with trying to get shoppers to buy.
40. **Management Consultant:** We work with busy entrepreneurs and business owners of successful small and medium companies who are frustrated because they are leaving money on the table because they are not getting important backburner projects completed.

If/Then/Why

How To Define What You've Really Got To Sell (And Who To Sell It To) In 2 Easy Steps

An old friend popped by today wondering how the hell he can figure out the perfect market for his product and cut to the core what the heck he's actually selling.

I gave him some advice that made his eyes light up and his teeth to shine all bright and scary.

It's phenomenally, almost-stupidly simple advice, and I'm going to share it with you right now.

Here's what I told him to do:

If you've spent any time reading **great** sales letters and marketing copy, then you've probably noticed that one particular open tends to pop up again and again and again. In fact, this is kind of the "fall back"

opening sentence that greets like John Carlton, Gary Halbert, Brian Keith Voiles, David Garfinkel and a raft of others call on when they're first cracking into a letter and putting their magic "moneyfingers" to work.

What is it?

The classic "If (problem or desire) then this is going to be the most important letter you ever read."

For instance:

- o "If you've ever wanted to drive a golf ball with the explosive force of a howitzer cannon . . ."
- o "If you have any interest at all in putting the real power of online video to tremendously profitable use for your business. . ."
- o "If you have high blood pressure and are sick of the drugs, the pain and the fear . . ."

It's an amazingly versatile way to get your letter going and to mark out to your prospects that what you're selling is really for them.

But if you turn it on its head, the old "If, Then" open is a phenomenal way to help you figure out what you're really selling and who you really should be selling it to.

Here's what I told my ski bum buddy (and what I'm going to tell you too).

If you're having trouble figuring out your market, your offer or what's really unique about what you've got to sell, just play a little fill in the blank.

"If you're a (BLANK) who wants to (BLANK), then this will be the most important message you ever read."

Don't over think it. Don't try to get fancy. Just very calmly fill in the blanks.

Fill up a whole page with possibilities. Have fun with it.

And, as you go, be as **specific** as you can.

Who is this **really** for?

Who is this **really** important to?

So saying "If you want to make more money, this will be the most important message you ever read." won't get you anywhere. It's too broad, weak and limp and applies to everybody.

But saying "If you're a mom who's sick of leaving your kids with a stranger every morning and wants to make

\$3,000.00 a month like clockwork while working from home and having plenty of time to give your kids the love and attention they deserve, this will be the most important message you will ever read." is a heck of a lot better.

The key is to be specific to the point that you come up with something that calls out to your market in a way where they almost **have to** raise their hands.

Something so powerful that it makes them feel like you walked into a crowded room and just shouted their name.

And now here's the fun part. Once you've got your If/Then statement, write down the **why**.

Why is this message going to be so important? What amazing result are you going to deliver to them? What does your product do that will make just learning about it so darned valuable to your prospects?

Now, this post really isn't about writing copy. It's about getting your product, your target and your position super clear in your mind.

And it's a little trick that you can use **right now** to drastically cut down the time it takes to define your market, figure out what your product does and come up with an almost-stupidly powerful message that your target market just can't resist.

* * *

A Niche Targeted Promotion:

The Edmonton Cultural Capital Program presents:

Taxes for the Freelance Artist: **Tips from Peter Messaline "The TaxXman"**

This FREE workshop explores the realities of dealing with your income tax as a freelance artist.

In this highly interactive workshop Peter Messaline will use his long experience of tax preparation, and his long, long experience as an arts entrepreneur, to feed and lead a discussion of the tax system. He will take you from theory to street level practice, and from paying the rent to financial control and investment. You will come away from this dynamic workshop confident that you understand your tax return, and equipped with resources for tax planning in the future.

Workshop Topics

How does the tax system work?
It's simpler than you thought.

What can you deduct?
It's easy to predict.

GST registration?
It's easy to decide.

Audit?
Minimize the pain.

Am I an artist or a business?
You're both.

Friday, February 15 or Saturday, February 16, 2008
2pm – 5pm, Sutton Place Hotel, Northcote Room,
10235 – 101 Street.

Registration is limited to 20 people per session.
Please register early!

Call Chrystal at 497-2336 or email:
chrystal@edmontonculturalcapital.com

Peter Messaline has published extensively. He writes for Canadian arts entrepreneurs and is especially known for **Tax Kit 2000+** and **The Actor's Survival Kit** (with Miriam Newhouse).

He is a performer, whose credits include: Dr Who's Dalek voices, the Royal Shakespeare Company, Shaw and Stratford Festivals, other stage work across four continents, and endless TV bad guys. He prepares artists' tax returns, and teaches Arts Career Management to artists in many disciplines, at York University and elsewhere.

With Miriam Newhouse, he runs **The Advisors**, every artist's friend in need. This business focuses on artists from all walks of life who want to start driving their own careers.

* * *

How You Know You've Got It Right:

Two things:

First of all, it should meet the niche criteria provided above.

Second of all, people should know immediately whether or not they fit into the group. There should be no question in their mind about whether they fit into your target. They should know if they know anyone who fits in that target. If

someone asks you what you do and you say this niche and they look confused you may need more work.

Your Target is Always the Person Who Hires or Pays You:

"Many businesses have no direct contact with their final buyers. If you use representatives (reps) or sell through distributors and retailers, you will probably want to direct most of your marketing activity at the people who actually buy from you." - Marketing Without Advertising

This is a really important thing to get. A friend of mine does a lot of speaking at New Thought Churches. She also sells books and CD's etc. But she mostly sells them at the back of the room when she is speaking at these Churches. If she doesn't speak at a Church she doesn't sell many of them. She felt stuck in trying to articulate her niche. "You know," she'd say. "These people are open, they're into new age stuff." but she couldn't refine it anymore. And she was getting really frustrated. I pointed out that she was actually totally clear but just wasn't realizing it. I told her, "Your audience is the congregations at these new thought churches. There's nothing to figure out. You don't need to focus on marketing to the Church goers. You need to focus on marketing to the people who could bring you in to speak at the Church."

Another example comes from a client of mine who sent me this as her first crack at her niche statement:

"I work with the elderly in nursing homes and as individuals in their homes doing a one-on-one painting procedure resulting in a beautiful painting which they can be proud of."

I pointed out that this talked to the results but not the problem. And that it was almost certainly not the elderly folks themselves who were bringing her in. She agreed. So, she thought about it and sent me these two textbook perfect statements.

"I work with assisted living facility administrators who are feeling frustrated and wanting to find uplifting, stimulating and enjoyable activities that they can offer to their residents."

Also:

"I work with people who are agonizing over their parents lack of interest in participation in life. They try everything but just feel totally confused and have no idea where to start."

If you're a massage therapist who massages only infants - the infant is not your target - the parent is. If you're a therapist that works with teens - the parents are the primary target - and so you must identify and speak to their own problems (not the problems their teen is facing but how those problems affect the parent).

Stinky Ice Skate Cleaners: A friend of mine was working with an ice skate cleaning business. Guess who had to clean the ice skates? The team coaches? Nope. The teenage hockey players? Nope. The Hockey Moms. Guess how incredibly bad skates smell. Pretty nasty. One hockey player almost lost his foot because of how bacteria rich his skates were when and he had a cut on his foot. This company had figured out a way to clean the skates and remove the odour. Guess who their target market was? Hockey moms. All of their ads needed to speak directly to them.

Fed Ex realized early on that their ideal client was not the CEO but the harried secretary who needed to look like a hero to her boss. They were the actual decision maker. They were the ones who decided which courier service to use.

Stress Relief CD for Bridezillas: A friend of mine - a really good copy-writer - was trying to market a CD his wife had come up with. It was a series of relaxation meditations for stressed out brides. But it wasn't selling. He rewrote the sales letter a zillion times and had his copywriting friends look at it too. Nothing. My take? It's not something that brides would buy for themselves - but their mothers and fathers? The bridesmaids? I bet they would. Know who you're selling to.

So, if you're stuck, ask yourself, "Who's paying my bills?"

Common Blunders & Red Flags In Writing Out Your Niche:

No Target: The surest sign that someone hasn't picked a clear target is that they use the words "people" or "individuals" or "folks" - as in: "I work with people/individuals/folks who are . . ." Is this word in your sentence? If so, try rewriting it without using those words. Use any word that's more specific and actually names a target. Maybe it's just "adults" or "men". But "people" is not a target. You must pick some subset of 'people'. Sometimes a problem or result is so specific that it can almost substitute a good target (e.g. "lower back pain," or "gallstones" or "getting video online" etc). But consider how much more relevant and credible you'd sound if you added a target (e.g. "I work with construction workers suffering from lower back pain." or "I work with new agers dealing with gallstone issues," or "I work with law firms who want to get videos online."). If you add a target to a problem - it almost always gets better.

No People: A target must, ultimately, be a *person*. A 'company' isn't a good target. A 'couple' is not a target. There eventually needs to be a human being you talk to. This is why targeting the wives (or husbands) specifically is likely to work better. A 'company' doesn't have feelings - but the CEO does. A 'couple' doesn't have feelings - but the wife does. A 'company' won't hire you - but a CEO

might. Some person ultimately makes the decision or initiates the conversation. Target people - not institutions.

No Community: This may seem to contradict the above but it doesn't. A target is not an individual. It's a group, a community, a network or cluster of individuals that have some common bond. Your target must describe a group of people with common hubs. Yes, eventually you will need to speak to a particular person - but the niche statement should simply identify a particular *type* of person. You should be able to attach many, many names to the statement and still have it be true - but not *everybody's* name.

"In order to compete, companies must understand that they are selling not to individual customers but rather to networks of customers."

- Emmanuel Rosen

Personal Qualities Are Not Targets: Building on this, if you say, "*My target is people who are conscious, mature, caring, down to earth and sensitive.*" You're in trouble. Why? Well, there's no target. 'People' is not a target - even with three personal qualities. And because there's no target - there's no common needs, no hubs and no way to tell if there's enough of them. Personal qualities (however delightful) are not targets. They come into play once we've defined the niche and we're starting to think about who our ideal clients are. Remember the point of the target is to help us physically locate them - but people do not hang out together because they share personal qualities like being: committed, generous, open to change, willing to look at their deeper issues etc. People gather around common situations, hobbies etc. You must define your target based on things around which folks come together. But that's not the only problem - consider also that most people would identify as mature, honest, down to earth, open to change etc. Who wouldn't? People tend to believe the best about themselves. Personal qualities can be fine - but they don't get used until we're defining our 'ideal clients'. And even when we do this - we're better off by being a lot more specific about the qualities we're wanting and the behaviours that demonstrate them. Being vague is not useful in marketing.

Being Generic - Universal Problems That Seem

Personal: At a recent training, a few people said they were targeting, 'people in transition'. There's a few problems with that. First off, "People". That's everyone. The second problem, "transition". That's also everyone. *Everyone* is in some kind of transition. As sham psychics, cold readers and con-artists will tell you - everyone is dealing with "health issues", "money issues" and "relationship issues". Everyone. Everyone is dealing with "stress". So, they *sound* personal - but they're really universal and are - thus - bad problems to focus on. You must go beyond the platitude of the problem to articulate how it manifests for them in particular. You must speak to the *symptoms* that they are experiencing not merely come

up with a label or diagnosis for their affliction. Consider the following from a poster for a workshop I recently saw.

Do you feel that your life is out of balance?

Are you on a quest for personal growth?

Are you facing times of transition? Are you wondering: "Who am I?" "Where am I going?" "What is my purpose?"

Develop tools for achieving balance, inner harmony, creativity and unblock pathways to your full potential. Come explore and celebrate the Marvelous, Divine Being that YOU are!

It's so generic. This could mean anyone. Your ad should have them raising their hand saying, "That's me! This is relevant!"

Why is it so generic? There's no niche. It's trying to speak to everyone. And so it speaks to no one. Consider how strange it would be to hear someone say, "I work with people in the looking for balance and open to change scene." That could be anyone.

Helping With vs. Helping To: Most people define their niche by what they do for them (results) vs. what they are needing (the problem). We go into a bigger conversation about this in the Deeper Need workshop but let me just lift this up - does your sentence say, "I help TARGET **with** PROBLEM" or does it say, "I help TARGET **to** RESULT." Is it 'with' or 'to'?

Helping vs. Working: Not sure why this is the case, but I notice that if someone starts their niche statement with "I help . . ." it usually ends up talking about a result whereas if they say, "I work with . . ." it more often speaks to the problem. I think there's an unconscious syntax of "I help people to (insert result here)." whereas when you say, "I work with . . ." the set up is to describe the people - not how you help them. Remember a niche is about them, not about how you help them. I know. I'm a nerd.

The Result vs. The Problem: Sometimes the niche will need to include a result - but it will always be in the context of "and they feel clueless about how to achieve it." or something. It must always include the problem - that they lack the skills, time or money to achieve the result on their own (as well as how they feel about this situation). Here's a challenge - try writing it out without using the words: want, need, desire, would like etc. Try to speak directly about the problem. If you need to out the result in there, it's fine - just make sure that you also add the problem behind it, "they want _____ but _____ prevents them from having it." or "They need _____ but the lack the _____ to create it."

Conversations vs. Pitches: part of what I value in these kinds of statements is a conversational, colloquial tone - so it doesn't start sounding like a scripted elevator speech.

And I think that's key. When you ask somebody "what do you do?" and their eyes roll back into their head and they go into the spiel - it feels very strange. The point, I think, isn't to give them a pitch but to let them know "here's who I target and here are the kinds of problems they're dealing with." The point is to open up a conversation, not go into a monologue. I've seen some people craft 30-60 elevator pitches and . . . I think it's better to just have a human conversation instead. If you open with your niche you end up finding out if there's any basis for a conversation anyway. I think it's okay to ramble on a bit - as long as you're rambling on about the experiences your clients go through and not about your business and how wonderful you are. Your presentation doesn't need to be slick, polished and scripted - it just needs to be human, clear and compelling.

What's Preventing Them: Okay - so I've softened a bit over the past few months on this issue. I think that in most cases you really only want to talk about the problem. But sometimes you will need to acknowledge what they're wanting and then what's preventing them from getting it, like: "I work with _____ kinds of people who want _____ thing but lack the (energy, time, money, resources, know-how) to make it happen." It's like a headline I saw recently, "Thinking of buying a digital camera - but don't have the foggiest clue of where to start?" or "I work with people who want to start an organic garden in their backyard but feel overwhelmed at the idea and don't have the foggiest clue of where to start." or "I work with farmers who are frustrated with how much they're paying electricity and would love to get off the grid but don't know what other options they might have." or "I work with people who are frustrated and annoyed with the look of their homes but lack the time or eye for design to make it how they want it to be." But what's key here is that you don't just say "I help _____ kind of people to get _____ result." and skip the problem all together. You must still speak to the problem and how they feel about the problem.

No Feelings: Speaking of feelings . . . Often I will read out niche statements that sound very academic, dry and clinical. They lack any human warmth and empathy. This is actually a really subtle but powerful point. People don't just have problems - they feel a certain way about those problems. It might be that they feel sad, ashamed, frustrated, devastated, annoyed, embarrassed etc. When we talk about the problems people feel I think it's important to avoid sounding too clinical. We want to stay human in our marketing - and that means acknowledging how people *feel* about the problems they are experiencing. So in reality the formula of a niche to me is: target + problem + feelings = niche.

Problems vs. Diagnoses: Here's a sneaky phrase that sounds like a problem but isn't. "I work with _____ kinds of people who need to . . ." This isn't a description of their problem - rather it's your interpretation and evaluation of what they "need to" do about it. Instead of articulating your understanding of their current situation and problems - you're already diagnosing and giving advice. So, if you

see this step back and reconnect with their problems as they experience them.

Specific Target vs. Specific Offer:

Here's a chicken or egg question. Do you first come up with a cool, unique product that's an authentic expression of you? Or do you find a hungry crowd and build the offer around them and their needs? The reality is that both can work. Sometimes people create something so new, cool and unique with no target market in mind - and they get adopted by a community, the word spreads and their target market finds *them*. By genuinely expressing yourself and making something cool - you may end up attracting people anyway (who are likely the same people you would have attempted to target). Or sometimes you'll target one group - only to be shocked that another community is even more passionate about it. So, you can start with no target market - but again, most highly unique products and services carry an 'implied' target market. It's not a bad idea to spend some time thinking about who that might be.

Your Niche as Your Nature:

Here's a significant addendum. Time and time again, I've heard people tell me that, "well, my niche is basically people like me."

There's a reason for that. The ultimate niche you pick is going to be an expression of who you are - your nature. You are going to be most qualified to help people who are going through situations you have gone through as well.

One of the reasons groups like Alcoholics Anonymous is so successful is because it's alcoholics helping other alcoholics. You can't con a con man, as the saying goes. They're already gone through it.

You're going to be effective to the extent that you really understand the people you're trying to help.

You're going to be far more effective when you love what you're doing and the clients you're serving.

If you are having to pretend to be someone you aren't, it will eat at you. If you're pretending to be an expert when you aren't - there's a heavy cost to your soul there. If you feel like you're wearing a mask, that will make you lose attractive. It will throw you off rhythm. Pick a business and a niche that allows your nature to express itself as fully as possible.

Consider the previous example: **Realtor #2:** I work with people with disabilities-- who struggle to find a home that they like and can afford and who feel overwhelmed and confused about where to even start in applying for financing.

When I asked Dolores - the realtor - how she'd come across this, she told me, "*It's a natural for me-- I've been a teacher, and I've worked a lot with people with disabilities.*"

The Most Important Marketing Idea

- Robert Middleton

www.actionplan.com

Several times people have asked me what the most important marketing principle was. What is the one thing you absolutely have to know in order to attract more clients?

Is it your marketing message or powerful marketing materials? Is it the ability to persuasively speak about your services? Perhaps it's a killer marketing tactic that I keep under wraps. Or is it more a matter of persistence and commitment?

Well, all of those are very important. But there is one marketing idea that **is** the most important of all.

It might be exemplified best in this story I heard years ago.

Two friends were talking about another friend who was a great fisherman. They related stories about how he always caught more fish than everyone else, yet he didn't really do anything different than other fishermen did.

He used a similar boat, the same fishing rods and lures. He fished in the same places and at the same times of day. So why in the heck did he always catch more fish? What was his secret?

Well, his secret was pretty simple: He loved fishing. If you love what you do, you'll always be better at it. You'll find subtle ways to do things that others wouldn't even think of. You'll read more about it. You'll put your heart and soul into it.

So when it comes to marketing your services, I promise that you'll get better results if you love marketing yourself. But how do you do that? What if you don't like marketing at all?

Let me tell you another story. I once worked with a writer who needed to market herself. But the first time we met, she told me she hated networking and wouldn't call people she didn't know.

So I asked her what she did love. She told me that she loved her Siberian Husky, Mutombo. She was nuts about that dog and talked my ear off for about half an hour. Then she said, rather sheepishly, "I've been thinking of sending out mailings to prospects with pictures of Mutombo on them. What do you think?"

Well, on the surface, it didn't seem like a great idea. But what was clear was the love she had for that dog and the enthusiasm she had for the idea. So I said, "Why not?"

She worked with her husband, who was a photographer, to create a series of very innovative mailing pieces that

featured Mutombo. She then tied the pictures into themes about corporate writing.

Yes, it sounds like a stretch, but the mailings were an amazing success. They were fun, attention-getting and different. People started calling her. And she generated some very big clients with this wacky idea of putting her dog on her mailings.

She was doing what she loved. She found a marketing approach that she could really get into. And it was a huge success.

So what do you love? What would you enjoy doing? What could you put your heart and soul into?

In my Fast Track Marketing Model, I point out that there are essentially three effective marketing tactics or vehicles for Independent Professionals: Networking, Publishing and Speaking. But there are infinite variations on these three. My client used a form of publishing through direct mail.

When I started my business, I started with networking. But my style is to be an initiator, not just a participant. So I started my own networking groups. I met a lot of people and I loved bringing people together. So this was very successful.

Only a month or two after buying my first Macintosh, I created a monthly newsletter. I also happened to love design and project-oriented things. So I had a lot of fun with this, and also had very good results. The newsletter also pulled people into the networking events.

Finally, at these events, I had the opportunity to make presentations and discovered that I loved to be in the front of a group. (I think I'm a frustrated stand-up comedian at heart.) It turned out that speaking was the most effective marketing tactic of all for me.

I was lucky. I found three areas of marketing that I loved. But the key was that I found my particular way of doing these marketing activities that fit with my style and personality. Over the years I've adapted these tactics to the online world through this eZine and introductory teleclasses.

And you can do this as well. Don't worry about three tactics to start. Find one. And don't fall for some hyped-up marketing strategy that you read about on the Internet that promises to make you kazillions of dollars. Trust me. It won't. (Unless you love it.) Find some aspect of networking, publishing or speaking that you can make your own, where you can express your authentic self, that you can have fun at, and you'll get better results than you could possibly imagine.

Niche Marketing: How to Define a Unique E-Business Niche

The key to your online marketing strategy will be recognizing and defining an unfilled or partially filled niche. Here's how to train your eyes.

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

If your company doesn't have the mammoth clout of a Fortune 500 corporation, then you must find a niche between the immense players and adapt yourself to thrive there. The English word "niche" comes from a French word that means "to nest." And that's what small companies can learn to do very successfully, filling small voids left by the big players.

Thriving in a Tiny Niche

How can small businesses thrive if the niches seem pretty narrow indeed? You can purchase kitchen knives at Safeway and Kmart, at Macy's and a restaurant supply outlet, as well as in a gourmet cooking store. But a shop that specializes in kitchen cutlery? It would take a major metropolitan area of one or two million people to support such a store, and still it might struggle. But so long as you can deliver your goods or services across distances, on the Internet your marketplace is the nation -- and, if you have the vision for it, the world.

A kitchen cutlery shop might die in a town of 10,000 or city of 100,000. But on the Internet, the market is so huge that even a small slice of the market provides a large number of shoppers. According to the Computer Industry Almanac for 2004, Internet users in Ireland number 2 million (53% of the population), in the United States number 186 million (64% of the population), in South Korea 30 million (71%).

Where travel time once prevented shoppers from getting to downtown Seoul's specialty shops, on the Internet the nation is like one very accessible city. With South Korea's 30 million Internet users, even a very narrowly defined specialty business can thrive because of the huge number of potential shoppers. Think of the market there as 30 cities of a million people each. That many potential shoppers can support nearly any specialty business.

After nearly 10 years of intimate involvement with the Internet, I am still awed by its vast potential. To succeed you must be able to see the Internet's hugeness as a market, and at the same time comprehend that even the narrowest kind of business can find enough customers to thrive. The wall is so big that the niches between the huge corporate blocks are quite adequate to support a lively small business marketplace.

Differentiating Niches from Blocks

The phone rang and the caller wanted to set up an online store. "I want to sell something on the Internet," he told me.

"What do you plan to sell?" I asked.

"Books," he said, "and consumer electronics."

I can see him competing head-to-head with Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Good Guys, and Best Buy. With his puny resources, he doesn't stand a chance against the big players. None. Nada. Zip.

I've been asked dozens of times, "What would it cost to build a book store just like Amazon.com?" I grind my teeth. With all the opportunities begging to be explored, why would you want to challenge the top dog? I answer that question by saying, "It would cost you the millions and millions of dollars Amazon spent to build its store." Look instead to the niches.

The Elusive Holy Grail of the "Ideal" Product

I'm sometimes asked, "What is the best product to sell on the Web?" The answer is pretty straightforward; here are the characteristics:

- Enables a high profit margin
- Offers exclusive sales rights
- Delivers by digital download
- Offers customers more value via Internet sale than through traditional channels
- Fills a universal need
- Must be purchased regularly

If you can score with a majority of those parameters, you probably have a winning product or service. But, frankly, few fit. I strongly recommend that you don't let your mind wander aimlessly looking for the perfect product.

A better way is to look to yourself or to your company. What are you good at? What do you enjoy? On what subject are you considered the "local world's authority"? What are you strong in? What do you have to offer that is fairly unique? How can you leverage your present strengths? Instead of fantasizing about the "perfect," take what you know and let it empower your vision to see clearly the niches out there.

Unfilled Niches

These days it's hard to find a niche that nobody is filling, but occasionally I run across one. The classic path to success is "Find a need and fill it." So look to the customers you know best. What are they asking for? What

would they like? What keeps them from fully realizing their own success? Since you're probably an "expert" in some field, you may have some key insights. You may be able to develop a new or improved product, service, or business process that, coupled with the Internet, can make a big difference. It's your interest and training that give you the vision to see these opportunities. Look closely at the niches.

Poorly Filled Niches

While unfilled niches are rare, poorly filled niches are exceedingly common. I've come to expect so much from the Internet, that I'm often frustrated by what is not available online.

Recently I was in the market for a camcorder. I knew practically nothing about them, and I found that the average salesperson at my local stores didn't know much either. I had lots of unanswered questions. I needed information and opinions from people who really knew something about the trade-offs between one recording format and another, but I couldn't find what I was looking for.

There have to be other people like me. What kind of site would make this selection an easier task? One site was very good, but called on me to make decisions about which I didn't have enough knowledge. Nor did it provide expert opinion or consumer feedback on questions of format, pros and cons, answers to my stupid questions, and so on. Another had a camcorder buying guide, but no individual comments except at the product level. And nothing offered a chart that showed the differences between the models available from a single manufacturer. I was also ready to buy an extra battery pack and a carrying bag, as well as a supply of recording tape, but none of these sites made it easy. Other camcorder sites turned out to be only a department in a larger consumer electronics enterprise.

Camcordia.com

I concluded there is no single "greatest place" online to buy camcorders. Maybe I ought to build it myself, I thought. In addition to an excellent shopping cart system and checkout procedure, these are the elements I would include:

- Buying guides
- FAQs (frequently asked questions)
- Honest reviews of each manufacturer's product line contrasted with other manufacturers' offerings
- Easy comparisons within a manufacturer's product line
- Live chat that allows shoppers to ask questions from a knowledgeable person 8 to 10 hours per day

- Competitive prices, if not the very lowest
- Carrying all major manufacturers' products
- Inventory of best sellers, drop-ship arrangements for less common requests
- Shipping at a variety of speeds and costs
- A no-quibble guarantee
- Links to product support sections of manufacturers' web sites
- Addresses, phone numbers, and URLs of repair stations
- A full line of accessories
- A full line of recording media
- Information and cables to connect camcorders to TVs, VCRs, and computers
- Online forums where camcorder aficionados discuss detailed questions
- An affiliate relationship with camcorder dealers in regions of the world where I don't want to risk shipping a \$250 to \$1,500 item.
- A monthly newsletter, The Camcorder Comrade.

And I'm sure once I got immersed in the process of building, I'd find more to do. We could call it camcordia.com or camcording.net or cambug.com. Isn't this a lot of work? You bet. (Note: When I first wrote about niches, all my proposed domain names were available. Since then two of the three have been purchased, and one has developed a tiny camcorder store, but nothing like the broad vision outlined above.)

Of course, you could build a "good" camcorder store fairly easily, but not an excellent one. Excellence takes high standards, sacrifice, passion, great effort, and a drive to achieve the best you can possibly do. If the project isn't worth doing with excellence, my friends, it probably isn't worth even beginning. Life is too short.

It would probably take six months of work and several thousand dollars to get it fully ready, and a year or two to get it functioning at full potential. Is it possible? Of course! Would it succeed? I have no doubt! Am I going to build it? No. This one needs someone who lives and breathes camcorders. But when I looked last, camcorders were a poorly filled niche just begging to be filled with excellence.

Partly Filled Niches

I've often toyed with the idea of setting up a firm that helps small businesses market their web sites. One that considers each company's needs carefully and recommends a marketing plan tailored to each company's needs and budget. One that offers exceptional value and a personal touch. One that doesn't rest until the customer's need has been fully addressed. Aren't there plenty of firms that specialize in online marketing already? Yes, indeed. But I believe I could make one succeed, since there are hundreds of thousands of small business web site entrepreneurs out there, and only ten or twenty thousand

true marketing companies, many of which aren't very effective at all with small businesses. Many excellent businesses exist, but there is a tremendous need still. Do I plan to do this? No, but it could be done quite profitably. This is a partly filled niche longing to be filled more completely.

Creating New Niches

We haven't nearly exhausted the subject of niches yet. How about creating a new niche where one didn't exist before? I love what JustBalls.com (www.justballs.com) did when they began in 1998. They didn't pump themselves up to think they could tackle the whole sporting goods sector. They weren't a Big 5 or a FogDog. So they sliced sporting goods in a way that it had never been sliced before -- balls only. They didn't sell bats and first-baseman's mitts. They sold balls. Baseballs, basketballs, footballs, golf balls. If it's a sports ball of any kind, they would have it. Now they offer laser-engraved sports balls for gifts and presentations. Several years later they are still in business because they created a brand-new niche, found a catchy, memorable name, developed a customer-centered approach, and opened their doors.

Brick-and-Mortar versus Internet Niches

I need to say a word to you who already have an existing brick-and-mortar business. Should you put your business on the Web? By all means, do so! (These days people even search for local businesses on the Web.) The stability of your traditional business will give you the time to find your way online. But don't put your entire business offerings online, only those that are unique and especially adaptable to the Internet.

Several years ago, Jeff Greene called me for help setting up an online store. Jeff is the longtime owner of The Office Market, a traditional office and art supplies store in Conway, New Hampshire, an area of about 20,000 people in the White Mountains. This was before OfficeDepot.com, OfficeMax.com, and Staples.com had developed a strong presence online. He asked me if he should sell both office supplies and art supplies. I pointed him toward the niche market and away from the mass market, and he has since done well with Discount Art Supplies (www.discountart.com) offering a full line of top brand, high-quality brushes, paints, and other supplies. If Jeff had tried to put his whole office supply inventory online, the e-business would have lost focus and he wouldn't have been able to carry a full enough line to compete with the big companies (though in his local region, The Office Market is the leader). By putting all his energy into the art supplies part of his business, he has succeeded admirably on the Web and he can compete nationally with others in this field.

Determine what aspect of your current business is best for the Internet and put that online; don't load your web site with generic products and services that diffuse your focus.

Finding and Filling Your Niche

The promise of the huge Internet market is there for you, too. While it is intensely competitive, the size and lack of geographical barriers are especially suited to small businesspeople who are blessed with niche vision and a dose of creativity and determination. Look closely, now -- not at the massive blocks but at the niches between them -- and find a niche with your name on it.

How to avoid being trapped in a niche

Mark Silver

<http://www.heartofbusiness.com>

You picked your niche but your creativity has died. And now you're stuck there for the rest of your days, unable to escape. It's not a niche you're wanting, it's a problem.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The hammer comes down again and again, nailing those wooden planks in place. Finally, it's done: you're trapped. No windows, and the only door nailed shut.

Those business gurus told you to pick a niche, and so you did. And now you're stuck there, for the rest of your days. G'bye creativity. G'bye freedom. G'bye.

Does a niche really give your creativity a death sentence?

Well, sure, a -niche- can kill your creativity. But, you might've mis-heard. 'Cause it's not a niche you're wanting, it's a problem.

A niche is a "specialized but profitable corner of the market." For instance, providing valves for industrial manufacturing is a niche. A niche is also an ecological term: "A position or role taken by a kind of organism within its community."

The thing about a business niche is that the ecology of the market can change, and your niche can go away. Not to mention feeling stuck just pumping out those valves (so to speak.)

The difference between a niche and a problem.

A niche is aimed at something that exists, a physical manifestation of the market. A problem is something that continues to exist, even when the market changes.

For instance, if you are in the bookkeeping business, you can feel stuck and bored. And, beyond that, if some fancy-

dancy computer program comes out that makes it easy to keep one's books, you suddenly lose business.

However, if you are in the business of solving a problem: "Helping small businesses have a healthy relationship with their cashflow" suddenly, all kinds of creativity comes in. You've gone beyond data entry, to working in a creative capacity, and you can start teaching, consulting and doing all kinds of things.

You could even, if you were of the mind, bring in the healing arts, to help support business owners around their emotional issues with money. Plus the bookkeeping.

Now you are no longer in a niche, you are no longer hemmed by a lack of creativity. Suddenly your horizons are much further off.

Pretty cool, eh?

The problem is only a doorway.

Notice how slyly our bookkeeper friend went from data entry, to healing arts? If you do the same thing, you don't need to limit yourself to any particular issue. Except at the doorway.

The doorway your clients walk through will be the problem you identify. Once they are in the door, who knows what you'll be working on? If our bookkeeper friend likes to support people with family issues, I'm going to guarantee (after having taught 20+ iterations of our Heart of Money course) that those family issues will be available to be worked on.

Are you getting the difference? Please don't feel you need to be stuck in just doing one thing for the rest of your natural born days. Your clients, your business, and your heart need your creativity in order to thrive.

You don't have to have a niche, however you must have a problem to focus on, so that people know how and if they should enter your business.

Who let the dogs out?

Now you're free. You can let your creativity, impulses, and guidance take you anywhere you're led. You can learn Reiki, how to play the fiddle, plus managerial AND financial accounting. You can learn whatever you need to learn in order to be of service to your clients.

If your clients need it, you can bring it in, without worrying about breaking your niche. Just don't abandon that doorway. Because without a clear problem, your business becomes invisible. And then you might as well nail up some boards.

So... how can you tell you've got a good problem? Let's take a look at some pointers, eh?

Keys to Freedom from Niche Tyranny.

- **A good problem is an area you're interested in.**

I happen to like small business, and small business owners. I stay engaged, interested, curious and learning. It keeps my creativity alive simply because I enjoy it.

Do you enjoy/curious about/impassioned by...?

- chronic illness?
- physical ability?
- parenting?
- love relationships?

Where do you have enough interest, that you naturally bring your curiosity and desire to learn?

- **Can you name four to six ways to approach the problem?**

If there are many different ways to get at the problem, then you know you aren't marrying a single modality, and aren't getting stuck in a niche.

For instance, with parenting, I can think of five modalities off the top of my head that can help:

- psychological counseling
- nonviolent communication training
- spiritual healing (Sufi, Reiki, or otherwise)
- Systemic constellation from Bert Hellinger
- The Work of Byron Katie

When you can begin to see many different ways of approaching the issue, then you're free to extend that list as far as you like, engaging your creativity as much as you care to.

- **Don't be tempted to widen the doorway (too much.)**

Heart of Business would get mighty sloppy-looking indeed, if we started marketing ourselves to deal with relationship problems, physical healing, family issues, etc, etc. We don't stray away from our doorway. When you walk in our doorway, you can be clear what you will find: business help, from the heart.

The creativity and expansion is inside the business, where you stretch out the breadth of what you offer and can work with, without widening the doorway.

The only reason a business exists is to help people solve some problem. Don't think you have to stay inside the narrow confines of a niche. Let your creativity and heart help you choose a problem to solve, and then let your creativity go hog-wild.

10 Ways to Identify Your Target Market:

Here's the ten themes and questions.

1. **personal tragedy and defining moments.** **THE QUESTION:** What have been the five most defining moments or personal tragedies of your life?
2. **community you're a part of or want to serve.** **THE QUESTION:** What groups, networks or subcultures are you already a part of?
3. **time of life (e.g. retirement).** **THE QUESTION:** What life transitions do you think are the most natural fit for what you do?
4. **profession & industry.** **THE QUESTION:** What professions or industries are you a part of or think might be the most natural fit for what you have to offer?

5. **hobby/lifestyle. THE QUESTION:** What hobbies, interest or bizarre fascinations do you have?

Complete the sentence:

“I help _____ people with _____ problems.”

6. **specific unsolved problem. THE QUESTION:** Is there a very particular problem that your product or service solves particularly well?

Run your niche though the Eight Qualities of a Good Niche to see how it measures up:

7. **your strengths. THE QUESTION:** what are you really, really good at?

1. **Are they are experiencing a common set of easily identifiable needs you can fulfill or problems that you can help them with?**

2. **Do they have already established, high quality hubs**, communication networks etc? Will it be easy to find and reach them?

3. Are there **enough** of them to meet your needs?

4. Will they be **fun to work with** and in alignment with your values and nature?

5. **Do they share a common lifestyle:** desires, passions, values, interests, hobbies, a common bond that you can cater to?

8. **your passions. THE QUESTION:** if you could do anything with your life what would it be? what topics, activities etc. are you most passionate about?

6. Are they are **underserved by your competition?**

9. **the underserved. THE QUESTION:** Who **aren't** your competitors serving? Who could benefit immensely from your product or service that isn't being actively courted?

7. Can they **can afford to pay** you full price for your products and services?

8. Are they are **in alignment with your long-term business goals?**

10. **the one's you already got. THE QUESTION:** Who do you seem to be already, naturally and effortlessly attracting? Who seems to be showing up?

Deepening Your Understanding and Empathy of Your Niche

What do you value? What's most important to you in life is. . .

Basic Demographic Statistics:

Age Range:

Gender:

What are you most deeply committed to?

Location:

Ethnic Background:

Profession/Industry:

What is an average day/week for you?

Education:

Marital Status:

Parental Status:

Annual Personal Income

You're the kind of person who loves . . .

Annual Household Income:

Imagine you're interviewing your niche. What would they answer?

Your friends often tell you you're . . .

What kinds of problems are you most aggravated by _____ (list the top five):

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What are you most deeply concerned with?

What would happen if these if these problems were solved?:

What's holding you back from having more of what you want?

What keeps you awake at night, indigestion boiling up in your esophagus, eyes open, staring at the ceiling?

Who are the people who you most look up to and respect as role models globally?

What are you most afraid of?

Who are the people who you most look up to and respect as role models locally?

What are you angry about? . . . Who are you angry at?

Who are the people who you most detest globally?

Who are the people who you most detest locally?

What are your top three daily frustrations . . .

1)

Are there any **painful consolidations**, shifts or changes within your industry/profession (that my products or service can or do address?)

2)

3)

What is the thing you secretly, ardently desire most?

Are there any **profitable trends**, developments or opportunities within your industry/profession (that my products or service can help them maximize)?

Is there a built in bias to the way you make decisions? (e.g. engineers = exceptionally analytical, Hippies value = honesty, openness and eco-friendliness)

Are you **well served** by my competitors within this industry/profession?

Preferences:

Hobbies:

Toys:

Interests:

Kinds of music they like:

Exercise/Activities:

Menu of Possible Target Markets:

This list is not meant to be exhaustive or complete. It's just meant to get you thinking.

A few key points here:

1. many of these target markets can be combined.
2. these are only half of the equation. To be a really complete niche, you also need to add a 'problem' or 'need' to whatever combination of these you come up with (i.e. not just single mothers but 'single mothers who *struggle to stay in shape*')

WOMEN:

single women
new mothers
single mothers
expecting mothers
bride to be
women entrepreneurs
mompreneurs
women corporate jobs
women executives

MEN:

single men
single fathers
new fathers
expecting fathers
groom to be
men in corporate jobs
male executives

SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

(LGBTQ)
Lesbian/Gay/Bi/Transgender/ &
Questioning
BDSM

STAGE OF LIFE:

teenagers
high school students
college students
newly weds
new homeowners
renters
condo owners
recently divorced
widowed
retiring
grandparents

seniors

ETHNIC:

blacks
hispanics
asians
indians

TASTES:

tea lovers
wine lovers

LIFESTYLE

travelers
outdoorsy folks/back packers
exercise nuts/health conscious
acreage owners
triathletes
gamers
bikers (Harleys)
ravers
hackers
4x4 enthusiasts
personal growth junkies
fisherpeople
boat owners

PETS:

dog lovers
cat lovers

DIET:

vegetarians
vegans
raw fooders
macrobiotics

SPIRITUALITY:

Yoga
tai chi
buddhist
christian
moslem
hindu
shamanism
new age
pagan

VALUES:

environmental
traditional "american"
yoga moms

COMMUNITIES:

immigrant
indigenous
LGBTQ
club scene
rave scene
electronic music scene

INDUSTRY & POSITION:

business owner
financial advisors
techies
lawyers
accountants
holistic practitioners
secretarial
doctors
dentists
nurses
doulas
midwives
naturopaths
aromatherapists
salespeople
esthetician
teachers
entrepreneurs
CEO's, CFO's etc.
publishers
writers
printer
consultant
banker
architect
chiropractor
designer
stockbroker
realtor
financial planner
speaker
engineer
hair stylist
freelancer
plumber
retail
office furniture stores
professors
janitors

PRODUCTS THEY USE:

cell phone users
iPod users
tampon users
birth control pill users
mac users
Dreamweaver users
digital camera users

HANDICAPS & SITUATIONS:

chemically sensitive
non-english speakers in english
speaking areas
physically handicapped
blind or seeing impaired
deaf or hearing impaired
autism
highly sensitive people
caregivers to the ill or elders

