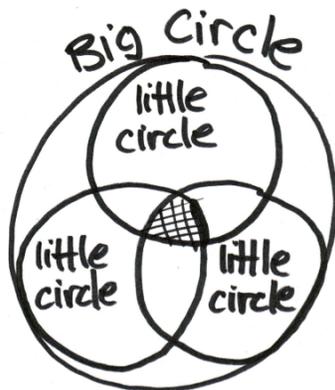


Niching for Hippies

Little Circles



Little Circles Introduction

This notion of Big Circle, Little Circles came to me years ago when I saw how traditional approaches to niching weren't working for people.

There was a need to honour the more vague and general notions that people felt about who they wanted to work with as a part of their Big Circle.

But it also struck me, as it strikes many, that, while the Big Circle is useful and affirming for us it's not that useful in our marketing. Trying to use 'conscious entrepreneurs' (a Big Circle) in marketing is limiting.

The most immediate results will be found in identifying your little circles - the particular target markets you want to focus on. I've found that, until people really hone in on particular little circles - nothing else works. Until a little circle is established marketing seems to remain a struggle (but without the Big Circle to ground it, most people are too scared to even think about a little circle).

I suggest that people identify their top three little circles - but, inevitably, one of those little circles quickly becomes primary. I suggest picking three because, if we try to pick twelve target markets it's overwhelming and picking only one (while strategically astute) can feel a bit scary - like being asked to marry someone you just met.

So, as you explore these little circles, I invite you to:

- build on what you've uncovered in The Seed workbook and The Big Circle workbook
- bring an attitude of experimentation and curiosity vs. commitment

warmest,
tad

Your Eleven Step Niche Checklist

[Bill Baren](#) (a colleague and friend) is a genius at helping service based businesses get more clients. His [Masters of Enrollment](#) program is a powerful and simple program to help you get more of the kinds of clients you're craving.

And his belief is that getting new clients starts with [identifying your niche](#).

Specifically, a group of people who would identify themselves easily. A particular group of people on a particular journey from a particular set of [problems](#) to a particular [result](#) (e.g. new mothers who have trouble adjusting to life after their first baby).

But just because you can articulate a niche in a clever way, doesn't mean it's a good idea. This isn't about word smithing. It's about really figuring out who is and who isn't a perfect fit.

So, one day I heard Bill share his seven point checklist for niches. I thought it was brilliant.

What follows is a mix of his seven plus a few extras from me. 11 core pieces of criteria that all truly successful niches enjoy.

Please note: these are *sequential*. If you can't check off #1 then you stop. You don't keep going to #2. If you can get all eleven you've got a very, very solid niche. You should at least be able to get up to #7 to make this work. If you can't, stop. Step back and reevaluate. Something is off.

NICHE CRITERIA #1: It's Clear Who It Is and the Problem They Have

This is the most important one - and thus first.

There's an old adage in marketing: 'the confused mind says no'. Is the community you're serving clear to people. When someone asks you who you work with and you explain in they should immediately know if they are in that group or not and they should immediately know if they know someone in that group. No fuzziness. They should know, without hesitation, whether your work is relevant to them or not.

A fuzzy example would be: 'I work with people who are stressed' a clear example would be, 'I work with financial planners who need more clients'.

Will they identify with this group you're thinking of working with?

Will they say, "That's me!" If you say 'vegan', people know if they're a vegan or not. If you say, 'single mom' they know if they are a single mom or not. But if you say, "I work with people who have problems and want different results in their life." You get funny looks. Because you've just said you work with every human in existence.

You need to focus narrowly enough to establish some relevance. You need to focus narrowly enough that the needs and problems become obvious. You must think in terms of *communities* of people - not just *qualities* of people. 'Back Packers' is a better target than 'people who are going through transition.'

How do you know if you have a clear 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 clear target, this is easy to do. A clear 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 market - without it, you don't have one.

Stated another way: **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.

NICHE CRITERIA #2: There are enough of them who can afford to pay you full price for your products and services

So, now you have a niche - a small circle - that people get. They understand it. It's clear.

But while most people don't niche narrowly enough, you can make your niche *too* narrow.

If there are 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 are enough people - what are you basing that on? Hope? Or have you actually done some research and poking around?

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.

Third, you could structure it as a non-profit. Which is great. I love non-profits. Just be clear what your business model is. If the community you want to help can't afford your services or products – then you will need to make money through grants, fundraising, sponsorship etc.

But if you're running it as a business, it's important that they are able to pay you an amount that feels good and meets your needs.

NICHE CRITERIA #3: Are there particular places where they congregate and hang out?

In my lingo, the question is – [are there hubs?](#)

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.

As I wrote about in a previous blog – there are [seven major types of hubs](#).

Basically, a hub is anywhere you'd find your small circle target market. Anywhere your community hangs out. Anyone who's really connected and respected in your scene could also be a hub. Websites, blogs, newsletters, events, cafes, associations, churches, professional groups, meet up groups etc.

If there's nowhere that your tribe hangs out then I would probably just let it go.

Because, without hubs, you are going to be left with either needing to create the hub and gather them from the ground up (very hard work) or [approaching people cold](#). And that's the hardest work.

No marketing tactic will work unless you can first find them.

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?

This is why the first Niche Criteria is about the clarity piece. If it's clear, there are more likely to be hubs.

Ideally, your community already has established, high quality hubs, communication networks etc. Basically, this means that you can find them and reach them easily. The more and better quality 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 postering the city about my workshops, or I could just call up the local progressive, local business network or a well connected individual and get them to host it. Much easier.

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.

NICHE CRITERIA #4: Can you honestly say you care for, respect and even love your tribe?

If you don't love them then you'll lose your mojo fast.

You'll run out of steam and inspiration.

You'll start resenting them.

Don't ever pick a niche just because you think they've got lots of money. It seems like a smart move in the short term but, unless money is the core motivator in your life, you won't be as motivated as you need to be to make your business wonderful.

As my friend and colleague [Carrie Klassen](#) says, "Life is both too short and too long to spend time with people you don't love."

The shortest and most authentic road I know to this is to look to our past experiences and [wounds](#).

This must be a community of people you have affection for, a community of people you are passionate about supporting, protecting and serving.

They're fun and easy 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 with whom you just naturally seem to love working?

I recently created my [Niching for Hippies](#) six week virtual coaching program to help people get a handle on their niche. My dear colleague and friend from the UK, Corinna Gordon-Barnes, agreed to share some of her wisdom on niching.

Here's an excerpt from her book . . .

Guest post #3: The 3 elements that make for a profitable niche

by Corinna Gordon-Barnes of <http://youinspireme.co.uk>

At its most basic level, a niche is a group of people who share characteristics and a problem.

So, for example: women (a characteristic) who've tried every diet and can't lose weight (problem).

It's useful to specify further. For example, women in their twenties living in Brighton who've tried every diet and can't lose weight. (This is the niche of a hypnotherapist I worked with.)

But we can go deeper with niche and check in with three elements which make for a dream business. If you feel stuck in the "I want to work with everyone" phase, ask yourself these three questions:

Within a professional context,

Do you love everyone?

Does everyone love you?

Does everyone want to give you money?

I'm guessing you've exclaimed "No!" to all three – especially the third. We find that "I want to work with everyone" isn't that true after all, so let's look at each of these "Love, Love, Money" elements in turn:

#1 – You love them

You're going to be spending a lot of time with your clients. Depending on the nature of your work, you may be getting rather intimate with them, touching their bodies, being energetically connected, hearing their deepest, darkest secrets.

What type of person do you genuinely enjoy spending time with – and in close quarters?

Do you love inspired writers? Busy mums? Expats starting their own businesses? Academics or office workers aiming for promotion? Gay men going through the adoption process? Burnt out environmental activists?

If you've already been working with clients, consider:

Which names appear in your inbox and you feel happy?

If you meet your clients in person, whose faces do you love seeing?

Who lights up your day?

Start noticing the key characteristics of these particular people. These are people you'd help even if they weren't paying. You can't help yourself: your heart goes out to them. (Don't worry, we'll get to the part about them paying!)

This requirement of love for your clients applies even if you never meet them in person, or if it feels like your work isn't particularly intimate. If you're tutoring, catering or designing websites, you might be thinking, "It's not like I ask them about their hopes and dreams, is it really that intimate?"

Yes. When there's an energetic exchange, as there is when you're in business, it's intimate. Money makes relationships intimate. You're looking to those clients for your livelihood. You enter into agreements with them every time they buy from you.

Even if you're selling a pair of earrings, you are in relationship. There's a bond. You're interdependent: they get a particular need met by you, and you get a particular need met by them. Because of this implicit intimacy and connection, love matters.

Extract from the book "Turn Your Passion To Profit: a step-by-step guide to getting your business off the ground" by Corrina Gordon-Barnes. Available from <http://youinspireme.co.uk/passion-to-profit-book>

NICHE CRITERIA #5: Do you know what the result is that your tribe would be willing to pay for?

This is really vital.

People need a lot of things that they do nothing about. They're got lots of low level problems they never bother to solve. They're kind of curious about lots of things too. They're interested in a bunch of stuff.

But, if you're going to engage in right livelihood via business, then you need to sustain yourself. You need to get paid by people.

And how are you going to get paid?

Will you bully people into buying? Will you use such slick and manipulative marketing that you get people to buy something they don't really want?

Those won't work long term.

The only surefire way to succeed is to sell people something that they already really, really want.

And how do you know they really, really want it?

They're willing to pay for it. If they're not willing to pay for it – then it's not a priority. People often tend to find money for the things that are a priority for them (e.g. "How could you buy that new TV when you already owe me \$500?").

This is where niches that are 'interesting' and 'clever' fall down.

Let go of clever. Be simple.

What is it that this group of people are [craving](#)? Offer them help with that.

It's not about what they *need* (or what *you* think they need). It's about what they know they want. In order for them to hire you they need to want what you're offering. The bigger a gap between where they are and what they want the easier it is to get them as a client.

We'll be talking more soon about how to clarify the result you offer. But it should be something simple, something you can say in a few words: better sleep, more sex, more money, less drama, visibly clearer skin etc.

WHICH OF THE FOUR TRACKS?

Another excerpt from Corinna's book . . .

#3 – They want to give you money

You may be able to spot your ideal client a mile off if you look only at those first two elements. These people love working with you, you love working with them, but when it comes to the payment, you encounter a block.

Perhaps they say they love what you offer and they want to exchange with their skills, paying in kind. Maybe you design a book cover for them and they repay you with Shiatsu sessions. There's certainly a beautiful sense of community interdependence with this kind of model, but for this to be a business that lasts, there must be a healthy incoming stream of actual money.

You might be inundated with the reciprocity of massage and yoga classes and home-baked cookies, but if you can't pay your mortgage, your rent or your bills, then your sense of relaxation will fade fast. You'll feel nourished in many ways but you'll have no roof over your head, no insurance and no electricity.

In our current societal set-up, we have to pay for certain elements of our life with hard cash. Your landlord or mortgage provider is unlikely to buy into a skills swap, much as you might like them to.

When you want to turn your passion into a genuine business, people you love and who love you aren't destined to be your clients if they aren't willing and able to pay a fair price for the service or product that meets their need.

But wait, there's more. Not only can your ideal clients afford you but they love to give you money. I don't want you to beg people to pay you. That just feels icky.

I want you to move away from believing that people will begrudgingly say, "Oh okay I'll part with my money if I really have to." That's not going to bolster your sense of self-worth and affirm you're on the right path.

Instead I want you to have the experience where your new clients say, "I desperately want to pay you because you're amazing and I know that you can help me so much." Imagine that. Literally, right now, run that little movie in your mind and notice how it feels.

This experience, and this feeling, is something you'll experience over and over once you nail this definition of your niche.

It'll be an ongoing journey to discover which group of people are ripe for you. You can gain clarity about your niche from so many different angles. For example, in the book, "Turn Your Passion To Profit: a step-by-step guide to getting your business off the ground" you'll receive abundant exercises and real-life examples and case studies, plus two bonus visualizations for helping you get clarity about your niche..

Extract from the book "Turn Your Passion To Profit: a step-by-step guide to getting your business off the ground" by Corrina Gordon-Barnes. Available from <http://youinspireme.co.uk/passion-to-profit-book>

NICHE CRITERIA #6: Are you passionate about *delivering* that result?

Bill Baren spent years struggling to get new clients. He is passionate about helping people figure this out because he doesn't want anyone to have to go through the same struggle.

I spent years using aggressive, high pressure selling tactics that left me feeling gross, not sleeping well and losing friends. Now I'm passionate about helping people figure out a way to sell and market that feels warm, honest and wonderful.

If you look to your past life experience and [places you've struggled](#) the most and overcome things you'll often find the seeds of a powerful niche. Because if you've struggled for years to get a certain result and finally found a way – you may be very excited want to share that with others.

This is why I often spend so much time delving into the wounds piece.

NICHE CRITERIA #7: Do you want to be *known* for delivering that result?

Here's where the rubber meets the road.

Are you willing to let go of being seen as an expert in *everything*?

Imagine you're at a party and you overhear someone talking about you and they say, "That's the guy who does _____?"

Would you be happy?

If Bill was at a party they might say, “That’s the guy who helps service based professionals get more clients.”

Do you want everyone to know that? Does that feel exciting for you?

Can you have other things you’re good at and not need to let everyone know that within 30 seconds of meeting them? Can you let this core result be the entry point for people – knowing you can share the rest of your skills with them further down the road of your relationship?

If you’re resistant to [being known for](#) that result then you’re not ready to have this be your core niche. If you move ahead with, it’s likely that you will sabotage yourself and all of your efforts.

NICHE #8: Do you have the expertise or desire to commit to being the expert in delivering this result?

Here’s a big one.

This is your sacred promise to your tribe.

Are you willing to be the best expert you can be? Are you willing and excited to keep learning about new and better ways to achieve the same result? Are you willing to be honest about when you don’t really know the answer?

Are you proud of standing in this – your place in the world?

Do you love the idea of craftsmanship? Of becoming better and better at what it is you do? Are you curious about other approaches and other people who use other modalities and tactics to help people get the same result?

If you’re not then, in short order, someone else will be. And they’ll be better than you. And you’ll feel less and less integrity about offering this result over time.

Again, this is where the work of exploring our wounds can be so powerful because it connects us to a very deep motivation to serve and to learn. But also because, to overcome our wound, we were often very motivated to learn a lot already.

NICHE CRITERIA #9: Can you identify other players who are creating successful businesses serving this market too?

Lots of people say, ‘oohhhh. there are already others already doing that so I won’t.’

NO!

If there are lots of others doing it that means that there’s lots of interest. Go there! Bring your unique [point of view](#) to that scene. You have something unique to offer. The result you’re offering is only one piece of your [platform](#).

This is another variation of the conversation about [hubs](#).

You can succeed without these type of colleagues and niche partners but it's easy to do it with them.

If you see a result people are craving (e.g. losing weight) and you notice others offering people help to them (e.g. fitness trainers, nutritionists, hypnotherapists etc.) then it's a great sign. It means so many people are craving it. It means that, more than likely, there are enough of them.

It's easy to see these people as competition but you can also see them as complimentary to what you do – niche mates, colleagues.

That's not to say that it's not good to notice communities who are underserved or to notice how a community with lots of choices might lack a perspective or flavour that you bring which they might just be craving.

Your the niche is often inherently 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 they no longer consider you in the same ballpark. 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 two things:

One, 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 second - 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.

NICHE CRITERIA #10 - They are aligned with your why

There's a reason you started your business – something more than just the money. Maybe you're passionate about optimism, women's health, social justice, men's issues, local food etc. Imagine how wonderful it would be if everyone you worked with was also passionate about these things.

Remember, a niche is a community of people with a shared set of needs and experiences. But it can also be a shared cause. Throughout history, people have come together to work towards a bigger cause.

If you are passionate about LGBTQ rights and someone is virulently anti gay marriage ... it's hardly a fit. This seems obvious. But most entrepreneurs have lost touch with their deeper why. The clearer you become about it the clearer it will be who's a perfect fit or not.

NICHE CRITERIA #11: They agree with or are intrigued by your point of view:

You see things in a particular way.

You've got a particular 'take' on your industry, the nature of the problems people face, what it takes for them to get the results they're craving etc.

You've got opinions.

And it's important that people are on the same page or at least open. Because trying to change someone's point of view is a losing battle. If you recommend a more primal diet of raw meat, dairy and eggs and in walks a macrobiotic vegan . . . it doesn't matter if all of the other criteria are a fit – they will never work with you.

Your world views must, in the end, match.

Thirteen Common Blunders & Red Flags In Niching:

Refusing to acknowledge the ‘who’: perhaps the biggest blunder is denial. It’s tempting. But not facing this doesn’t make it go away. At the end of the day, in some way or another, this question will keep coming up, ‘who do you work with?’. Again and again and again – until you have an answer for it.

Trying to reach everyone: When I ask someone, ‘who do you work with?’ and their answer is ‘everybody’ it’s often (though not always) a very good sign that they’re struggling in getting enough clients.

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”

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.

Vague and General Niches: Once people have realized that ‘everyone’ is a bit broad, here are several phrases I end up hearing a lot. “I work with people who are stressed” or “I work with people going through transition” or “I work with people who are fundamentally open to change” or “I work with people who are ready to take responsibility for their lives.” These are all too vague to do much with.

At a recent training I led, a few people said they were targeting, ‘people in transition’. There are 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!

*Do you want to move forward but feel “**stuck**” in your present circumstances?*

*Are you often **sad and/or angry**?*

*Have you stopped trusting yourself and your **intuition**?*

*Do you have great ideas but no **confidence** in them?*

*Do you find yourself in **negative situations and relationships** repeatedly?*

Do you feel like you are living your life through a rear view mirror, always paying more attention to the past than to the future?

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.

Or try this I recently saw on a website . . .

**Are you ready
to release your...?**

- Limiting Beliefs
- Physical Ailments
- Low Self Esteem
- Self-Sabotage
- Phobias or Fears
- Unhealed Trauma
- Chronic Stress

**Join me
as you move into:**

- Inner & Outer Healing
- Self-Empowerment
- Self-Actualization
- Confidence
- Abundance
- Peace
- Forgiveness
- Relief

Again. Vague. These problems speak to a shallow level of relevance. I meant, sure, they're true. But only in a very superficial way. No one will ever read the above and say, "Wow. It's like they're talking right to me!"

With no clear niche one is left to speak of challenges from a very abstract level. Nearly everyone faces challenges in all those areas. You will get agreement but it will be shallow agreement. The relationship pains experienced by a mid forties female are very real - but so different than a 17 year old boy. The career decisions facing an entrepreneur are different than someone in middle management etc. When you can speak to people's experience very directly and specifically, you will get buy in like you never would have thought possible. but to get this we need to go deep - not shallow. They need to look at what you're offering and say, 'this is for ME!'

Niching by Demographics Only: Slightly less vague is when people start adding demographics. They say, "aha! I work with single moms who are stressed." Or "I work with black males ages 40-50 who live in Seattle." Or "I work with men ages 60 – 70 who are going through life transitions." The challenge here is that communities are built around more than demographics. In fact, demographics may be the weakest determiner of community.

Trying to say it in one word (and failing and giving up): People get it into their heads that to have a clear niche they need to pick something there's a word for like doctor, lawyer, vegan etc. But it's often a bit more subtle and complicated than that. So they try to find a word that sums it all up. And fail. And so they give up and go back to 'everyone' so something almost as vague. Sometimes there's no simple name for the community you're trying to serve.

Random Niching: I've seen people pick a target market out of thin air. They realize they need to have one and so they just pick one. Almost like it's from a list. Like, 'hrrmm. Well these people need this service

and they're underserved so I'll pick them.' Fair enough. And it can work. But it's often unsatisfying because there's no real love for those people. It's also trouble because it's likely an area you have no special knowledge about or expertise in.

The strongest niches are more authentic. They are built around core spark, a core inspiration from someone's life. They come from offering something to the world and noticing who responds. The most sustainable and profitable niches never result from just picking from lists. Lists are wonderful to help refine. Lots around wound.

Being a tourist vs. a native: Deciding to serve a community you're not already a part of or connected to in some way is tricky. It's hard work because you're a tourist in that community which means you don't know the people, the language or the customs and they will likely regard you with a bit of suspicion. If they already saw you as part of their community life would be so much easier.

Marrying your niche before dating: Dating is, ostensibly, supposed to be fun and low on the commitment level. It's where you have a chance to get to know people before jumping into anything serious. Prevents bad marriages and drama (ostensibly). But surprisingly few people do this with their target markets. And thus a lot of fear and cold feet. And that's the thing, if you're trying to marry someone you've never even dated ... maybe you *should* have cold feet. It's okay to date a lot of different people before you marry. Sometimes when people hear 'choose a niche' I think that they feel like they are suddenly being taken to the altar and being asked to choose a mate for the rest of their lives. Explore it like dating. You're checking people out, going for coffee, exclusively dating for a while. Fun.

How do you know when it's the right one? You know. It's not about intellectual criteria. You might consider giving up 'figuring out your niche' with your head and just let yourself explore and be curious. Hang out with niches. Get to know them. Sit with what you're looking for in a niche. Maybe you're in a phase where you're just wanting to have fun and date around a lot. Just be clear that that's not a solid business model. It's a hobby. You might want to let yourself have a job so you can explore without pressure and grow your business slowly on the side until you're ready to jump in.

The traditional view of marriage is as something we do forever. The old view of niches is the same. But maybe you don't have to make those kinds of vows. Ever.

There can only be one: This might seem odd to add to this list of blunders. But the truth is that sometimes businesses don't just have one niche. Sometimes they have multiple niches. And yet, so much of the conversation in the 'niching' world is about 'choose your niche'. Niche. Singular. Only one. In truth, if you have just one, everything in your business gets easier. But if you try to force yourself to pick one before you're ready and it feels right, it will never last. You'll invest countless hours into developing a niche only to rebel later or have it not work out. Prematurely picking one target market is rarely the best approach. We talk about this more explicitly in the Big Circle, Little Circles section.

Death by a Hundred Niches: You've seen this – the holistic ad that says, 'our modality has successfully treated...' (and then lists every ailment known to man). Having a hundred niches can be just as challenging as having none. In either case, where do you start. It's overwhelming.

"Jargon Targets": When we talk about our target markets, it's important we use terms that people will actually identify with. We need to use terms they'll hear and say 'that's me!' If I say, 'catholic skateboarders' people know if they're one of those. Or 'vegan raw foodists' – no mystery. But what if I say, 'conscious entrepreneurs'? People aren't so sure anymore. What if I say, "I work with people with chronic illness?" The truth is, almost no one thinks to themselves, 'I have chronic illness'. They think, 'I've got Crohn's disease.' They think of their particular experience not the general category it fits into.

Targeting Institutions: A target must, ultimately, be a *person*. A 'company' isn't a good target. A 'couple' is not a target. A 'non profit' isn't, at the end of the day, 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.

Personal Qualities Are Not Targets: To say, “*My target is people who are conscious, mature, caring, down to earth and sensitive.*” Is an excellent start – but a terrible finish. Still very broad. ‘People’ is not a target - even with three personal qualities. And because there’s no target – there are no common needs, no hubs and no way to tell if there’s enough of them. Personal qualities (however delightful and important) are *not* targets. They matter and they’re related but they’re different.

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, world view, values, causes 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.

The Three Elements of a Solid Niche:

There are three core elements of a solid niche.

I'll list them here in order of importance.

The Journey: Imagine people are on an Island. Let's call it Island A. On this island, they are struggling with problems - symptoms they don't like. They are craving to be on Island B where they will have certain results. Your ability to focus in on a particular journey from Island A to B is the white hot center of your niche.

Psychographics: Once we know the journey that someone is on - we want to know a bit more about what kind of person is making that journey. After all, the journey of losing weight is one that many, many people might take. The psychographics tell us about the inner realities of people - the communities they're a part of, their values, world view

Demographics: Finally, to polish things off, the demographics tell us the outer realities of people. Age, gender, ethnicity, income, profession, where they live etc. all speak to the outer things. Women who are 80 years old will have different issues in their life (fairly predictably) than 20 year old males.

Three things.

Simple!

But most of the niches I come across are lacking - sometimes in all three of these.

Inner vs. Outer Realities:

Fundamentally, there are two ways we can define our target market. The outer things and the inner things. Most people opt for the outer things. 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 only one aspect of your niche. And not necessarily the most effective.

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 are often more powerfully in niching than 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 perhaps, 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 the only thing you focus on. And they may not be the primary thing.

“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 such as . . .

- 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

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.

The demographics speak to the common lifestyles, desires, passions, values, interests, hobbies, the 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.

Island A: The Painful Symptom

“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle”

- Plato

I want to talk about [empathy](#) in marketing.

It might just be the most important part of it.

This is one of the longest posts I’ve ever put together. It likely took me about ten hours.

I spent so much time on this because I really want you to ‘get it’. I don’t just want to show you something new to look at – I want you to have new eyes.

Give me thirty minutes of your time to read this. It could change your business.

*

So many people in life struggle.

Alone.

They never feel like anyone ‘gets’ them. And, truthfully, most people don’t. They saunter in with their big words and importance advice. But, of course, the solutions rarely work. Because it was a cookie cutter, generic piece of advice. Like a suit that was too big it just didn’t ‘fit’.

When people see that we don’t ‘get’ them, they will never trust our solutions.

Translated: if your potential clients don’t feel like you ‘get’ them – they will never hire you; they’ll never buy from you. And, until you understand the real nature of the struggles your clients go through you will never be able to write good sales copy. But, vastly more importantly, you’ll never be able to craft a product or service that is genuinely perfect for them. Your products and services will always be generic.

But let me start by telling you a few stories.

*

I’m in a car driving from Santa Cruz, California with a friend of a friend to a music festival in Santa Rosa.

And she is venting.

Relationship stuff.

The drive is two hours.

And, during the entire drive, I barely say two words. I’m listening. Not that I don’t want to say things. Or feel like I have brilliant things to say. I do. I keep having pithy aphorisms, quotes and inspiring things to say that I’m convinced will help her. But something is telling me to keep my mouth shut and keep

listening. So I do. Five minutes of silence pass as we drive. And then she takes a deep breath and says, 'And another thing! . . .'

It goes like this for the whole drive. Me not saying much. Making sympathetic noises. Her sharing more and more deeply about what's going on. At several points, I have the thought, 'Wow. I'm glad I didn't share that thing I was so excited to share thirty minutes ago.' I keep seeing how off base my insights were. How useless they would have been. I thought the problem was X but it turns out to be Y. And then Z.

I keep listening.

Finally, a deep exhale from her. She seems done.

I say, 'Wow. It seems like you're really struggling with how to meet your needs for sexual expression . . . but also your needs for self respect.'

She grips the steering wheel a little tighter as her eyes widen. She takes a deep breath and looks over at me, 'YES!'

What she was saying was, 'YES! You got it! You articulated that better than I could have myself! Thank you.'

It feels wonderful to be 'gotten'.

*

CARPENTERS RULE:

Measure twice. Cut once.

*

I'm in Toronto. It's mid October. I'm leading a brand new workshop called '[The Hot Box](#)'.

It's an invite only workshop for more seasoned entrepreneurs focused at digging deep into their situations. Only eight people were there (but I realize I should limit it to six by the end of the day).

It's a simple format.

We sit in a circle. People share where they're struggling. We help them. Each person gets 45 minutes of the groups focus and time.

But the details are important. They have five minutes to share what's up for them. Then the group has thirty minutes to make sure they really 'get it'. We diagnose before we subscribe. For that thirty minutes no advice is allowed. Only clarifying question and reflections. Clarity first, resolution second.

And it's amazing how different the advice is that I would give at the end of that thirty minutes than at the beginning.

*

I'm leading a workshop on Non Violent Communication for a housing coop in Edmonton.

We sit in a circle. I invite someone to share something they're struggling with. A fellow named Jim volunteers. "I'm going home to visit soon. And my family and I always fight about politics. I don't know how to deal with it."

I feel everyone in the circle lean in as if to pounce on him with their advice, ideas and commiseration. They want to solve this shit.

I invite everyone to lean back. I invite them to question how clear they are about the real nature of the problem after so little information. Invite three people to reflect back what they heard. I ask Jim if they 'got it'. He nods, but adds some more details. We end up going around the circle. I invite each person to share what they just heard him say and then I ask him, 'did they get it?'

By the end of the circle Jim says, 'I mean . . . do I even need to talk with my parents about this? I'm not even that political anymore.'

And it becomes clear: all of our advice from that first minute would have been useless.

Measure twice, cut once.

*

I'm talking with a friend about foreign aid. He's bemoaning an organization that went in to build wells so people could have clean water – but didn't teach the village how maintain it. "Tens of thousands of wasted dollars . . ." He shakes his head. "These aid organizations . . . They just don't get it."

*

Relevance

It's easy to get lost in our brilliant [point of view](#) in marketing. To want to share our diagnosis of what's really going on under the surface with people before they feel like we really get what it's like to be them. To give all sorts of advice.

So, let me break it down.

People are overwhelmed with information these days. Thousands of marketing messages everyday. People unconsciously filter out 99% of the stimulus coming at them. What they do give their attention to are things they believe are [relevant](#) to them.

[Relevance](#) is the word.

And what is the only thing that is relevant to people? Their experience. Period. That's it.

The more present, visceral and intense the experience – the more relevant it is.

When you're in immense physical or emotional pain nothing else matters. If I were to have you hold your breath as long as you could – the only thing you'd want by the last few seconds is air.

If people can see how our product or service is relevant to them they will pay attention. If they can't they won't. It's really as simple as that.

If you've followed my work at all you know all about my metaphor of the journey from [Island A](#) to [Island B](#). You can watch a video about it [here](#).

I wrote about it in a recent blog post about [figuring out your platform](#).

Imagine a young man on an island (which we'll call Island A). It's not that great a place to be. But, it's all he knows, so he goes about his days. Then he starts hearing that his is not the only island in the world. That there are other islands. At first he doesn't believe it, but the more he visits the docks and meets these visitors the clearer it becomes. It's true. And then, one day, he hears about a particular island (which we'll call Island B). And his heart leaps. He wants to go there.

Of course, he needs to get a boat to go there.

But there are so many boats to hire! Which one to choose?

Your business is a boat. It helps people like this young man get from Island A where they're struggling with some problem (i.e. set of symptoms they don't like) to Island B where they have the result they want (i.e. something they're craving).

People don't get on your boat because they love it. They get on your boat to get off Island A.

And that's the question: what is [Island A](#)?

Island A is the painful set of symptoms they experience in their lives. It's the problem they face. It's why they're looking for a boat in the first place. It's what makes your boat relevant to them. If they have no problem, they have, in their mind, no need for a solution.

I will often ask holistic or permaculture providers what problems they solve for their clients. They'll laugh and say, *"That's the thing! This modality/approach can work on any problem. What can't it do?"*

They're so in love with their boat (what they do and how they do it) and so they talk about their boat all the time. But people only care about your boat if it can help them with their problem.

This seems like it would be a liberating approach or perspective. You're not limiting your options. But it's actually the most limiting thing you can do. Because now there's no [relevance](#) for the boat. Why bother getting on a boat if you don't want to leave the Island?

*

Their Symptoms vs. Your Diagnosis

The famous golfer Jack Nicklaus was suffering from intense pain in his right knee and considering getting surgery.

But his friend begged of him to go see Pete Egoscue, a structural anatomist. Begrudgingly, as a favour to his friend, he went. When Jack walked into the office, Pete looked up and saw him limping.

"I see you're having trouble with your hip."

"Actually," said Jack 'why-did-i-agree-to-see-this-quack?' Nicklaus. "I'm in crippling pain in my right knee." and was about to leave.

"I can see you're in pain in your knee. But that's the source of your pain – it's not the cause. The cause is that your right hip is rotated forward and that's putting pressure on your knee. Get down on the ground and try this . . ."

After thirty minutes of stretching and exercises, Jack stood up. With no pain in his knee.

Pete looked him in the eye, "If you want this pain to stay away, you'll do exactly what I say."

Client for life.

The point I want you to get from this story is the sharp distinction between symptoms and signs.

The **symptom** is what the patient feels. The **sign** is what the doctor or trained practitioner notices. The person may come in with crippling knee pain (symptom). But the practitioner sees that this pain is caused by the hip rotating forward and putting pressure on the knee (sign). Here's the point – in marketing you must speak to the symptoms not to the signs.

“What is my client’s absolute biggest problem? What is their perception of that problem? Their perception is more important than yours. Build your company around your customers biggest perceived problem. Give them your solution, or somebody else will.” Jay Abraham

Imagine a full page ad in a golf magazine: which headline do you thinking would be more effective?

A) “Are you suffering from excruciating knee pain every time you walk?”

B) “Is your left hip rotated forward due to a lack of core muscle strength?”

Duh.

This distinction is critical. In the beginning, you must speak to people’s experiences – not about your brilliant diagnosis of what caused their experience.

Empathy before education.

The truth: Most people don’t see themselves clearly. They could be the biggest asshole in the world – and never notice it. If you try to write an add saying, “Are you an asshole?” You probably won’t have much luck. Most people think of themselves as good people who are victimized by the world.

Is that sad? Maybe – but I’d suggest you get over that and just accept that that’s how it is.

People may not have any sense that they’re jerks – but I will guarantee you that they are noticing some of the consequences of their behaviour (even if they blame everyone else) – and *that* is what you need to speak to. Maybe they notice that they have no friends who they’ve known more than a year. Maybe they notice that they get lied to a lot. Maybe they notice that people break commitments with them a lot. They’re getting stood up for dates a lot. You’d get further in your marketing if you spoke to *that*.

Another example: most people think that they’re great communicators. They really do. So, if you come at someone from the angle of “we work with managers who don’t have the communication skills to motivate their employees” you won’t get very far. It may be true – but it’s a sign, not a symptom.

And all of your marketing must speak 100% to the symptoms that they are experiencing.

If you changed your approach to be, “We work with managers who aren’t getting the kind of buy in they’d like from their employees.” You’ve got to speak to what’s real for them. And what’s real for them is rarely that they are to blame. They probably are feeling hard done by. That doesn’t mean that you can’t help them identify where they are responsible for what’s happening to them – all it means is that you can’t start there.

A million more examples follow . . .

For the past fifteen years, I've worked with a [non-profit](#) in California. One of the ideas that's evolved is to offer some mentorship and consulting to folks running non-profits working for progressive and radical change.

They walk into the office every day trying to keep their organization running and achieving its big vision. That's what got them into it. Wanting to make a big difference.

And what we've seen is that, despite great missions and programs, many organizations are (secretly) suffering from breakdown due to internal conflicts, burnout and lack of alignment. Lots of money and energy are spent in building up an image to the outside world, while inside, things are falling apart for individuals and their relationships.

But if I were to try to get an Executive Director's attention I wouldn't say, 'Is your organization out of alignment?' Instead, I might speak to some of the following . . .

- people aren't really talking to each other in the organization
- your organization is full of cliques
- your organization is trying to work with a diverse coalition but you're all of one gender, race or class – you're a monoculture organization seeking to work on diverse things
- lots of following but not initiative and leadership for people
- you have to generate all the ideas and no one else is contributing
- people are constantly criticizing ideas and putting them down – not very generative
- your group is criticized about diversity/anti-oppression stuff
- want to form alliances with other kinds of groups but not sure how
- frustrated by divisiveness in activist community in your area
- you've done an anti-oppression training but don't know how to integrate it (and secretly have questions or doubts about the whole frame)
- had a blow up around race, class, gender, power issues in your organization
- people are calling you out on your attachment to power – you've become 'the man' to your staff
- the roles and responsibilities are not the right fit. Some people are doing the wrong job and you're not sure how to let them go or find them another position.
- you keep trying to do the right thing to make your organization an embodiment of the culture you want to see in the world – only to have it blow up in your face
- you're feeling alone and isolated with no one to talk to

If I was leading a [Non Violent Communication](#) (NVC) workshop, I wouldn't try to educate people about all the intricacies, elements and premises of NVC in the ad. I'd want to speak to the symptom. Here's an example of some potential content for a generic NVC workshop ad.

do you collapse and crumble inside when you're verbally attacked?

(or do you just lose your shit and say things you later regret?)

There's a *third* option that allows you to retain your spine without closing your heart down.

If you can honestly answer yes to the following 21 questions, you might find this workshop useful . . .

1. have you ever had someone listen to you so deeply and non-defensively when you were in pain and angry with them that the pain went away and you were left feeling wonderful?

2. does the idea of **conflict** secretly scare you?
3. do you have a lot of trouble **saying 'no'** without feeling guilty?
4. do you often feel like your needs are **a burden** on others?
5. is it really important for you to be seen as **'reasonable'** and **'nice'**?
6. do you often not share the truth of what you're feeling and needing with loved ones because **you don't want to hurt their feelings**?
7. do you often feel confused about exactly what it is you are feeling and needing?
8. do you believe that your needs are something you should **transcend** or ignore (vs. just getting them met)?
9. do you have strong belief in right and wrong? (and that people who do 'bad' should be punished while those who do 'good' should be rewarded?)
10. do you find yourself **staying put** and **staying quiet** (smiling sweetly and unable to speak up) in intolerable situations?
11. do you think that if you're nice enough people will love and respect you?
12. do you often feel deep **resentment** and **bitterness** towards people for not listening to you?
13. do you sometimes feel scared that your feelings will overwhelm you or others?
14. do you sometimes lie about how hurt or uncomfortable you feel because **you don't want to be 'rude'**
15. **do you feel guilty** about asking directly for what you want and need?
16. do you secretly fear that humanity is rotten at its core?
17. when someone is in a great deal of emotional pain, do you find yourself initially trying to help them understand **how they manifested this** into their life (and to take responsibility for it)? or do you try to help them understand the spiritual lessons that they're gaining from it . . . instead of just listening and giving them empathy?
18. do you think it's important to 'call people on their shit'?
19. do you think it's important to be blunt and tell people what's wrong with them when you can see it?
20. do you intellectually believe in the idea of finding a win/win solution but **emotionally shut down** and react in ways you wish you didn't when conflict arises?

21. do you wish you could maintain your full presence when people are communicating with you in ways that you don't like?

I hope this is making sense.

Speak to the symptoms, not about your diagnosis.

[Nicole Moen](#) speaks brilliantly to a common human experience, "Have you ever felt the urge to walk out your door and just go? You know, like, simply start walking . . . who knows where?"

[Alex Baisley](#) offers these words in his 'Creating a Sustainable Lifestyle' workshop:

Maybe you have a job or business you really don't care for anymore. You feel there is more to life, that you'd like to work at something meaningful, maybe work for yourself, help others, have a better lifestyle, but you just can't figure out what you should be doing.

You know you are creative, independent, and would prefer to make your living doing your 'own thing' if you could just figure out what...

Have you questioned leaving your job, going back to school, going to a life coach...? All good ideas by the way, but before going through another day frustrated and questioning... maybe come hear me out.

Maybe you are a parent, and you love the idea of having your work fit better with your family – allowing you to spend more time with your kids for instance, maybe even have them be involved in your work somehow a better life / work balance...

Do you ever get that 'PANIC' of feeling time is ticking along, and you still haven't figured out what the heck you're supposed to be doing with your life? This can be a very unpleasant experience – I know first hand what it felt like, and I'm sure glad I don't feel it any more!

[Kristi Beatty](#), a sexual enrichment counselor in Calgary articulates the experience of many women:

- Not knowing their bodies and what truly pleases them.
- Difficulties communicating with their partner about their needs, desires and wants.
- Feeling obligated to have sex and not enjoying it.
- Having difficulties having an orgasm or don't orgasm at all with themselves and/or with a partner.
- Feeling guilty when they self pleasure and/or don't self pleasure at all.
- Craving a deep intimate relationship with their partner but lacking a deep intimate relationship with themselves.
- Avoiding having sex or certain sexual positions because they are self conscious about how their body looks naked.
- Enjoying making love with their partner and giving them pleasure but have a hard time receiving pleasure.
- Thinking they are "dirty" or "bad" because they actually do enjoy sex and want it more than their partners.
- Feeling guilty or shameful about their fantasies and are afraid to express them.

The [Therapy Vault](#) was created out of empathy for the pain of therapists having to carry so many secrets in their hearts and having no one they can talk to about it.

Carrie Klassen has written a wonderful ebook called 'How to Write a Lovable Homepage' and she articulates the experience

How to Write a Lovable Homepage is for entrepreneurs who:

- are doing what they love but aren't quite making a living yet (you're not alone!)
- don't have enough clients, or enough "right" clients
- want to surround themselves with only supportive, enthusiastic and loyal customers
- feel stuck or stressed when it comes to figuring out what to write
- aren't always proud to share their websites

[Mark Silver's homepage](#) does a wonderful job of articulating Island A:

Are you losing your heart trying to make your business work?

You can make a healthy profit *and* a real difference.

You want to make a difference in the world. And there's no job description that lets you do exactly what you most want. Or the freedom that being self-employed gives you. Or the income potential.

So, accidentally or intentionally, you find yourself in business.

But it's hard. Running a business turns out to involve more than you thought. Your vision can easily get lost in the overwhelming whirl of details and the pressure of bringing in cash. It's no surprise you can end up dispirited and burnt-out, losing your confidence, passion and direction.

What's more, the things you think you have to do to make the business work... you just won't betray your heart and ethics like that. You won't do it, no matter how "effective."

Speak to the symptoms, not about your diagnosis.

Another story: A classic example of getting clear about the problem is **FedEx**.

For years, they thought they were targeting the CEO's of the businesses. They thought the problem was helping to facilitate their communication. But then someone stopped and noticed what was going on. They realized that it wasn't the CEO's who were using FedEx. It was the harried secretary. They realized that these secretaries wanted to be heroes to their bosses. They changed their marketing to address that and their sales exploded.

The movie **The Matrix** did this. It powerfully captured a feeling that many people live with. This vague sense that things aren't right; that there's more to the world than what we see. It captured the frustration of feeling like we're just food for the larger machine.

When running for the Presidency in the USA for the 2004 Elections, **Senator John Edwards** used his "Two Americas" stump speech as the core of his messaging. The message was this: *"There's not just one America. There are two Americas. There's an America where you get health care and there's an America where you don't. There's an America where you have opportunity and there's an America where you don't."* People resonated with this powerfully. "Yes," they thought. "It's just like that."

The title of John Gray's best-selling book '**Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus**' struck a chord all over the world. People heard that and said, "Wow. That's true. It's just like that." (NOTE:

Friends of mine also staged a comedy production called ‘Men Are Stupid, Women Are Crazy.’ which also seemed to resonate strongly with both genders . . .)

[Ari Galper](#) realized that most sales people hated cold calling. Hated it. They had a fear of phone. But their jobs depended on it. Here’s what it says on his webpage:

Is Selling Painful For You?

It’s not your fault — and there is a better way

Old “tried and true” sales techniques that were once successful have completely lost their effectiveness over the years. That’s why I developed a sales approach that will quickly and automatically put you ahead of the game and instantly in a league above your competition.

Imagine that you hate your job and you see this ad. Do you think it might speak to you?

“Is your boss a psychopath?”

Want to quit your job, but you’re afraid to?

Tired of your increasing workload without added pay?

80% of employees dislike their work.

DO YOU?

Call us today – we can help.

Speak to the symptoms, not about your diagnosis.

A core question to ask yourself is, “Under what circumstances do your prospects *start* to think about buying what you offer?” (thank to the book [Monopolize Your Marketplace](#) for this gem).

This isn’t what events make people think about buying from *you*. It’s what make them think about buying the product or service you sell in general.

Also – this is just what *starts* them thinking about it. We’re not asking for the things that make them say “*YES! I’ll buy!*” We’re looking for the core problems or triggers that start the process of thinking, researching, talking to friends etc. Only 5% of people are ready to buy right now. Most people are earlier on in the spectrum.

Example #1: What would happen to let you know you were needing a new car?

- o It's breaking down constantly.
- o I've spent more money on repairs than the car is worth. I feel frustrated.
- o I hate the look of my car. I feel embarrassed.
- o I just saw a new car I like.
- o I want to get a more fuel efficient car.
- o My family has grown and I need a larger vehicle.

Example #2: What would happen to let you know you were needing a new fence?

- o Your fence is sagging
- o My fence is eight year's old and it's starting to look run down
- o My family pet is escaping through gaps in the fence.
- o Animals are getting into your garden
- o The fence is sagging
- o The posts are rotting
- o A strong wind is causing one section to lean.
- o I'm building a new swimming pool and the fence is required by law.
- o You have children and you can't leave them alone in the yard because they might run into the street.
- o I'm selling my house and I want to get top dollar.

Example #3: What might happen to let you know you were needing a life coach?

- o I am feeling lost in my life
- o I feel like I'm spinning my wheels.
- o I just got laid off and have no idea what to do. I feel overwhelmed.
- o I've just gone through a painful divorce and am wanting to start fresh but know I need support.
- o I keep meaning to handle important areas of my life but never seem to get around to it. I feel ashamed and embarrassed.
- o I have a very hard time saying 'no' and drawing boundaries without feeling guilty
- o I am not getting my needs met in a relationship but have no idea how to ask for it. I feel helpless and confused.
- o I feel dissatisfied with my life but can't put my finger on why that is.
- o I've read all the damn new age and personal development books and I still feel stuck in the same old patterns. I realize that it's not about more information.
- o I am feeling stuck right now in some unhealthy patterns and I'm just needing someone to hold my hand and walk me through this.

Example #4: Under what circumstances might you start thinking about hiring a web designer?

- o I'm embarrassed about the appearance of my website.
- o I notice that I'm not passing out my website address because I feel so ashamed of its appearance.
- o My materials and website no longer represent me. They don't capture my vibe and personality.
- o I just saw a website or flyer that made you say, "Wow! I wish mine looked that good."

In my workshops, I often have clients practice introducing themselves by saying, "Do you know how (kinds of people) struggle with (kind of problem)?" (e.g. "Do you know how a lot of holistic practitioners struggle with getting enough clients?")

That phrasing of "Do you know . . .?" is important. It's important that they do know. It's important that I'm speaking to the symptoms they're experiencing not the underlying cause (we can and should speak to that later, but not until there's relevance established).

Which of the following headlines do you think is most likely to get people's attention?

- 1) ‘Do you know how people struggle with always dating the same type of person?’
- 2) ‘Do you know how some people’s heart chakra’s are closed down due to past unresolved karma?’

It’s obvious isn’t it?

Shouldn’t our businesses exist to help people with their *real* problems instead of just being a vanity piece where we show off our [boat](#)?

I want to suggest that the heart of your marketing can (and, if I might be so bold, perhaps ought to be) empathy.

Life can be hard sometimes.

We all struggle with things. And we all need help sometimes.

Our business exists to help people with their problems.

Simple enough idea – but the implications are profound and applications often totally overlooked.

Again, the word of the day is: [relevance](#).

Do you remember Aesop’s fable about the lion with the thorn in his paw?

A mouse comes along and sees how much pain the thorn is causing the lion. Even though the lion is roaring loudly, the mouse bravely steps forward and takes it out and wins the lion’s lifelong loyalty. They become the best of friends.

Here’s the point: do you think the lion cared who took it out? Or what particular set of tools the mouse used? What technique? Where he learned it? No. Maybe afterwards. But the first and foremost thing on his mind was ‘get me out of pain.’

“It’s much harder to sell clients on a nice idea than it is to speak to the urgent problems they’re facing now.”

Phila Hoopes

But isn’t this being negative?

The key is to speak to people’s actual experience, not to just talk about our boat.

Sometimes what’s most real for people is Island A (what they don’t want) and sometimes what’s most real is [Island B](#) (what they do want).

But, often, people are more focused on what they don’t want than what they do want.

Is that a disempowering focus? Probably.

Is that a sad statement about where most folks are at? Perhaps.

But you can spend your time railing against reality or you can have empathy for it.

I know some marketers – especially in the new age scene – who never ever want to dwell on the negative or speak to people's problems. They think that this makes those problems more real and that it's manipulative.

While I really respect the integrity of this stance – I also think it's entirely misguided. These people often are failing profoundly in their marketing. What's often happening is that they're in love with talking about how profoundly amazing their boat and [point of view](#) is.

When people are in pain – they need empathy – not advice.

As the old saying goes, “They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Sometimes people are just craving for someone to acknowledge their struggles; to know they're not alone or crazy for feeling how they feel.

For most people, their vision of what they want is far off in the distance but their problems are right in front of their face. And if you want to get their attention you must speak to what's real to them right now.

You can be [arrogant and holier or granolier than thou](#) if you want. You can insist on speaking to what you think they should be focused on. You can ignore how much they're hurting and simply refuse to acknowledge it and then blame them for not responding to it. You can choose to live in some mythical land where everyone is fully empowered and focused solely on what they want – or you can be a human being and admit that sometimes life is hard for folks. Sometimes people feel frustrated and confused and angry.

If you are willing to get off your high horse and really 'be with the people' – if you're willing to take the time to hear and really understand the pain they experience and willing to articulate that in your marketing – an amazing thing happens: first of all, you get their attention. Second of all, people don't feel manipulated – they feel *seen*. If you can artfully articulate their problems well – they feel heard, understood and acknowledged.

And that creates something else – profound trust and connection. If you can give them the [empathy](#) they're seeking by speaking to their experience – they will turn to you like a plant does to sunlight. They will assume that, if you understand their problems that well – your solutions must be equally well thought out.

And, once a relationship developed – you may even be able to help them move their focus away from what they don't want to what they [do want](#) and perhaps even lift their vision to a [new horizon](#) they never knew was possible – and wouldn't that be a wonderful gift to give them?

Ask yourself: What's going on with them that makes what you're offering relevant?

If there's no problem, there's no relevance.

People don't get on your boat because they love it. They get on your boat to get off Island A.

Three Compelling Reasons to Clarify Island A:

REASON #1 – THE OPENING

It will give you a compelling opening for your [homepage](#), sales letter, presentation or [cold call](#).

How do most sales conversations start? It's all about the salesperson, isn't it. "Hi my name is John and I'm calling from Acme Supplies." Though it may not be immediately obvious *how* to do it you can start the conversation with their need, their problems – not your company's pitch. By starting with their problem, with their lived experience, you instantly get their attention and interest.

If your marketing speaks to a significant problem of theirs, you'd be shocked how much they'd be willing to read. A thirty page sales letter? Impossible you say. Not so.

Imagine you were getting divorced and you didn't want it to happen. And then, one day in the mail you get a huge direct mail piece with the headline "Exactly What You Need to Say to Stop Your Painful Divorce – Even If It Feels Hopeless." You'd very likely sit down and read that. If a friend gave to you, even more likely.

When relevance has been established people pay attention. Until it's been established, they ignore you. It's rarely a matter of too much information or too many words. It's almost always an issue of too little relevance.

REASON #2 – IS IT A FIT?

If you are speaking to someone and they are *not* dealing with the problem you solve – that's it. It's over. No need to chase them. No need to try to ask them probing questions. The entire [goal of our marketing](#) should be about helping them to sort out if we're a fit for them or not.

There are so many elements of whether things are a fit or not – but the fastest, clearest and most important one is this: 'can you help me with a problem I'm experiencing?'. If the problem we solve is fuzzy, so will their minds be when trying to figure out if it's a fit. Always remember this: the confused mind says 'no'.

REASON #3 – TRUST

If you can articulate their lived experience and problems even better than they can they will experience a profound amount of trust with you.

They feel profoundly [safe](#) with you because they know that you understand them. Don't underestimate the power of this. In their mind, the logic goes like this: 'if they understand my problems so well, they must understand how to design a solution well too.'

People don't get on your boat because they love it. They get on your boat to get off Island A.

Until they perceives some relevance in what you do to their life – nothing happens. And why should it?

On a personal level they may love you dearly, they might give you polite interest at that cocktail party, but on a business level they could care less about your problems, travails and how hard it is for you. They want to know, 'What can you do for me? Can you get me relief from this pain?'

No, they're coming to you to get something. Your business is just a tool. Your boat is just a boat to them. An ends to a means. It might sound harsh but I think you'll find it's true.

The point is that it isn't about you and your boat.

Three levels of progress in this area. You know you're making progress here when:

- 1) **You realize that they're on Island A and want to go to [Island B](#).** You realize that it's not about *your* boat – it's about *their* journey.
- 2) **You realize that many people are in learned helplessness about their problems.** They think the pain is unavoidable – they've tried so many different times. They don't believe those deeper needs will *ever* be fulfilled. They fear that the problem is permanent. They've learned that they can never get off Island A.
- 3) **You can articulate their problems better than they can.** You can articulate the needs and inklings that they barely even knew they had themselves – you can put words to those vague discomforts, niggling doubts and unclear concerns.

This is a huge sign of progress.

Rich Scheffrenn says in his Maven Matrix report: *“Come up with at least three ways to articulate these problems better than your prospects have. (It's not as hard as it might sound...nobody sits around trying to come up with better ways to describe a problem, so thinking time will give you a huge advantage here.)”* This means that you don't only understand Island A, you know how they *feel* about being Island A.

Your goal is to be able to speak to your ideal clients about their problem, about their daily experience, in such a way that they say, *“Wow! That's me! That's it. She gets it! She understands what I'm dealing with. I've never felt that understood.”*

Most people don't even really know what's wrong. They just know that something feels off.

If you can get that kind of “that's me!” response you instantly gain massive trust. If they trust your diagnosis, they'll trust your prescription.

Nothing builds your credibility faster than this. Nothing.

[Ari Galper](#) shares these words . . .

“The Prospect's World – How Do We Understand It?”

QUESTION: Ari, your e-mail really resonated with me. I have my doubts about one sentence, and I'm not sure if it's because of how it was stated. You say: “...having intimate knowledge of your prospects' problems BEFORE you approach them.” How can you have intimate knowledge of the prospects problem before approaching them? Through lots of research? I strongly believe we can never to understand our prospect's world because we don't live in their world, no matter how much we try.

ARI: Understanding more about your prospects' problems BEFORE you approach them comes from your ability to listen. And when I say listen, I mean, “Listen WITHOUT your mind thinking about how to move the conversation closer to a sale.”

Also, the term “research” is a bit too impersonal. It's more accurate to say that you'll have deep knowledge about your prospects' problems when you can have open, agenda-free conversations with people who are comfortable sharing what's happening from their perspective.

But you can't get these insights if you're always thinking about moving the sale forward. If a voice in your mind is always saying, "How do I move this conversation closer to a sale?," then you're really not "listening." That's why you think you can't "live in their world." Let go of trying to make the sale, and you'll learn more about your prospects than you ever imagined.

Four qualities of a well articulated problem:

- **it's urgent:** if it's the kind of problem they can handle whenever, they will likely put off handling it. If there's no urgency they'll likely regard what you do with fascination and respect, but they won't buy. If it's a mild, dull ache . . . well some people can live with those forever. It's the old story of the city slicker who gets lost in the country and he walks to a farm house. While he's getting directions from the farmer sitting on his porch, the dog next to the farmer on the porch floor is whining something awful. When he asks what's wrong with the dog, the farmer tells him, 'Oh him. He's sittin' on a nail.' But, the city slicker persists, 'why doesn't he move then?' The farmer looks down on the dog, 'well, it doesn't hurt *that* much . . .'
- **it's particular:** yes, 'stress' is a symptom. True. But the stress of a housewife and the stress of a CEO are different. The stress of living your life hiding the fact that you're gay is different than the stress of trying to scrape enough money to pay your bills. The question of [niche](#) becomes tremendously important here. Nothing helps us qualify and refine the nature of the symptoms faster than knowing exactly who we're talking about.
- **it's sensory:** the most effective of these appeal to your five senses. You can easily describe them. You can imagine them clearly. You can visualize them. Taken together, the symptoms paint a picture of someone's life. They [tell a story](#). Your ideal client should read the list you come up with and say, "that's me!"
- **it has feelings:** ideally you not only put in the specific symptoms but also how people *feel* about those symptoms.

Seven ways to identify and clarify the symptoms you help your clients with

- **look to your own wounds:** in so many cases, we end up being able to best serve people who are just like us. We can help people who are going through what we went through. Our [deepest wounds](#) are often our truest niche.
- **interviews and conversations:** sit down with people in your [niche](#) and ask them what it's like to be them. Listen carefully. Take notes. You likely can't do this enough.
- **listen for their metaphors:** when they describe what they live with what images do they use? what is it like for them? what does it seem like to be on Island A? Is it like a prison? Do they feel like they're at the 'end of their rope' or 'up against a wall' or more like they're drowning? Sometimes, this kind of evocative imagery can be used very powerfully in our marketing.
- **look for industry frustrations:** where are they currently frustrated or aggravated with your industry? Knowing this can give you some keen insights into how to design your boat and frame it best.
- **get interviewed:** have a friend interview you and record what you say. The catch: you must answer the question as if you were your own ideal client. So you will answer all questions with "I"

not “they”. Pretend you’re the kind of client you want – step into their shoes. Have them ask you this question again and again, “Under what circumstances do you start to think about buying _____?”

- **research online:** find out where your niche hangs out online. Are there certain forums, blogs, facebook pages etc. Go and research. Read their comments. Participate. Ask questions.
- **consider which of the four tracks it’s a part of:** most of the problems people face in their life will fit into one of the following four ‘tracks’. Which one is primary for you (remember: *their* symptoms, not *your* diagnosis).
 1. **health:** physical health, more energy, being more strong, more flexible, better digestion, better sleep etc.
 2. **money:** this could mean more cash, better money management, ways to save money etc. Can you help them make it or save it? Can you improve their career prospects?
 3. **peace of mind:** a deeper sense of spirituality and meaning etc. Can you help people feel more relaxed, safe and comfortable in their own skin and at home in the world? Can you help them partake in more meaningful work in their life?
 4. **relationships:** dating, marriage, better sex etc.

Thoughts on how to use these symptoms in your marketing:

- **with great respect and sensitivity:** these things are often incredibly painful for people. We don’t want to speak tritely of people’s pain. If they are feeling shame – that is incredibly crippling. It’s very sensitive ground. Tread carefully. You need to acknowledge how hard it is for them.
- **share your own story:** sometimes we don’t have to say the infomercially words like, ‘do you suffer from bad breath?’. Sometimes we can just share our story and they can find themselves in it. And sometimes that’s more powerful.
- **tell the client’s story:** another option is that you can articulate the story of your typical client. You can do a [little one](#) or a [big one](#).
- **be curious about the problems you *already* solve (that you might not even know you’re solving):** Thomas Leonard was one of the founders of the Life Coaching movement. But before he did this, he was a financial advisor. One day he asked a couple who he’d worked with for years, “Why do you work with me? I mean, beyond the technical side.” The husband said, “Thomas, how could we give you up? You’re our marriage counselor!” Thomas was confused and asked them to explain. The wife spoke up and said, “Thomas, you need to understand, before we came to you our marriage was on the rocks. And it was mostly due to fights about money. But then when we saw you, you had this incredibly gentle way of working things out with us. We left that first meeting feeling so at peace. Now we have a rule in our marriage. We don’t talk about money unless Thomas is there. You’ve saved our marriage.”

Case Studies of Island A:

1. **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. “Very early on I saw the need for kink-friendly therapists because people don't want to have to explain themselves or have to plan their massage treatments around their play parties. I also treat repetitive strain injuries that I lovingly refer to as "Flogger's Elbow". :)”
2. **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.
3. **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
4. **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
5. **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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. **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
9. **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
10. **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).
11. **Rad Dyke Plumber:** I work with women in the lesbian community who are having trouble with their pipes.
12. **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.
13. **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

14. **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
15. **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/>
16. **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
17. **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
18. **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
19. **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.
20. **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.
21. **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
22. **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
23. **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
24. **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
25. **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

26. **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". btrflypower@hotmail.com
27. **Job Retention** - I work with small business owners in Western Canada who are dealing with job retention and absenteeism problems. legallyspeaking@albertacom.com
28. **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>
29. **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
30. **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
31. **Momprenuer 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.themomprenuer.com/>
32. **Pet Supplements:** I work with pet owners who have pets suffering from allergies, diabetes and other chronic diseases. www.WilVitalCanada.com, MoBi2@telus.net
33. <http://bartenderforprofit.com/>: I work with bartenders who love the industry but are feeling worn down and not making as much money as they'd like. I help them figure out how to make \$500/night as a Mobile Bartender working Weddings & Private Events.
34. **Business Network:** I work with part time entrepreneurs who want to grow their business at their own pace but the only resources they can find are for full time entrepreneurs who don't understand the reality of their limits of time and money. <http://marketingforhippies.com/iampite/>
35. **Yogi Parents:** women who want to get their kids into yoga and fun things rather than just sitting at home playing video games and watching TV.
36. **Vegetarians & Vegans:** A blog for vegetarians and vegans who don't need any more science or recipes but often struggle with the social side of their lifestyle (e.g. how to navigate thanksgiving dinner with their family. www.thecoolvegetarian.com
37. **Martial Arts Studio Owners:** I lead what might best be called "the Green Party" of the international martial arts community. I teach instructors/school owners how to conduct their business sustainably --with soul, mission, and purpose. <http://www.tomcallos.com>
38. **Insurance Broker:** Ellie Richmond specializes in providing insurance to green and sustainable businesses. She protects them with commercial insurance for their businesses and protect them with mortgage life, disability and critical illness insurance for themselves in a sustainable responsible way. <http://ellierichmond.ca/> -
39. **Nutritionist:** 'Nutrition for Musicians' works with musicians who struggle to eat well when on the road doing gigs (not a real business yet – but an idea that came up at a workshop).
40. <http://www.griefcoachacademy.com/> - works with coaches to help them learn how to guide people through heartbreak and dramatically cut the amount of time their clients spend there.

41. **Backyard bounty:** Guelph homeowners who have backyards they're not using who keep thinking, 'it would be so great to have a garden'.
42. www.thebridesproject.com - a social enterprise where brides can donate leftover things from their wedding that they don't want to throw out but also don't have a need to hold onto to be sold and have the proceeds go to cancer research.
43. www.theallergicchef.ca - The Allergic Chef helps individuals that may be overwhelmed and intimidated, due to food allergies, find new food alternatives as well as point them in the right direction on their new diet journey. For many people this can be a stressful time in their lives. I am a local Chef that has a number of food intolerances. I have come up with my own tips and recipes that have made my life easier as well as my clients by converting family favorite recipes to food allergen free.
44. **Yoga for people who can't sleep.** Nuf said. <http://www.bethmartens.com/>
45. **Lawyer:** I came across a lawyer who worked exclusively with non-profits at risk who were afraid of being sued so he became an expert on this. He sends out an annual, summarized update on nonprofit law. Assessment on how vulnerable you are. He helps them get a place where they were legally safe, secure, bulletproof and protected.
46. **Massage Therapist:** Teresa brings her expertise to an elite and high profile clientele in Los Angeles as well as artists on tour. In the privacy of your own home or location of choice, be it studio or backstage, you will relax and enjoy a highly therapeutic & integrative treatment upon a heated massage table with a tempur-pedic face cradle...music and aromatherapy included, if you like. www.massageformusicians.com/
47. **Coach:** Dana Obleman works with parents who can't get their kid to sleep through the night (or have long, restful naps during the day) without relying on nursing, bottles, soothers, or rocking? <http://www.sleepsense.net/>
48. **Movement Therapist:** A movement therapist I met in Toronto wanted to run a series of workshops for women who'd had an abortion and still carry unresolved grief around it.

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.

Island B – The Results They Crave

People crave things.

Like chocolate. Like love. Like relief. Like security.

And, people aren't buying from you what you might think they're buying.

They're not buying the *thing* you're selling – they're buying what they hope it will *do* for them. They're buying it because there's a result that is self serving to them that they want.

And much of marketing is translating what we're offering (the boat) into a language they can understand (what it might mean for their lives).

Here's another piece about 'the journey'.

Imagine a young man on an island (which we'll call Island A). It's not that great a place to be. But, it's all he knows, so he goes about his days. Then he starts hearing that his is not the only island in the world. That there are other islands. At first he doesn't believe it, but the more he visits the docks and meets these visitors the clearer it becomes. It's true. And then, one day, he hears about a particular island (which we'll call Island B). And his heart leaps. He wants to go there.

Of course, he needs to get a boat to go there.

But there are so many boats to hire! Which one to choose?

Your business is a boat. It helps people like this young man get from Island A where they're struggling with some problem (i.e. set of symptoms they don't like) to Island B where they have the result they want (i.e. something they're craving).

So, they're not buying a ride on your boat because they love boats so much. They're buying a ride on your boat because they believe it will help them get to Island B.

So, our marketing must laser focus on articulating Island B.

They're not buying the boat – they're buying the Island.

Often this result they're wanting is something very simple: better sleep, a raise at work, a new job, to travel more, to be in better shape, to be more accepting etc. You can usually sum it up in three words.

Which isn't always as easy as it sounds. Because we keep trying to sell the boat. After all, what if I offer Non Violent Communication (NVC) classes (which I've done) and people in Edmonton were looking for classes on NVC (which they were). They're looking for the boat! So, shouldn't we just offer up the boat?

In this case, yes. There's no need to convince them of anything.

But . . . it's important to remember that the only reason they want a ride on this NVC boat is because they believe it's going to get them somewhere. In their mind, they have a self serving goal they're trying to achieve and NVC is just a tool or tactic to get there. If one day they found a new workshop that they thought was better, they'd drop NVC in a New York Minute.

They're not buying the boat – they're buying the Island.

But let's go over a bunch of examples where we can start to untangle the boat from Island B.

[Backyard Bounty](#) tried to promote their local ‘**microfarming**’ venture. But it was confusing to figure out what they were selling to people because ‘microfarming’ is a bit of jargon. In short, they were trying to sell the boat (you can read a more in depth version of this [here](#) – look for #5). So, I rewrote what they were offering, focusing on the benefits and results that I thought might actually mean something to the home owner.

Attention Guelph Homeowners:

do you have a backyard you’re not using?

how your backyard can make you the envy of your neighbours, a hero to your community, provide local jobs and get you free delicious food

Marketing is translating.

They’re not buying the boat – they’re buying the Island.

I recall hearing about a **public speaking** course that first put out an ad saying, ‘Public Speaking 101’ or some such thing and got an okay response. Then they tweaked it to say, ‘How to Speak Confidently in Public’ – that moves a bit closer to Island B and away from the boat – and got a much better response. Their final version was, ‘How to Get Enthusiastic Applause (Even a Standing Ovation!) Every Time You Speak.’ That spoke much more clearly to what people were secretly craving.

As I wrote this, sitting at my new favourite cafe in town, [Noorish](#), a rep from an herbal company was educating the staff about their products. The owner mentioned that there were so many herbal tinctures they had but, too many for the staff to be truly educated on. Which meant that they weren’t able to educate their customers about them. Which meant they weren’t selling them.

The owner observed that they were selling more of the tinctures that were mixed and focused on particular results. That if there was a tincture, elixir or potion focused on the brain and mental clarity, boosting libido, reducing stress, or boosting the immune system, it tended to sell better. People don’t have the time or interest to learn about every single herb and come up with the perfect combo to give them what they want. Save them time and hassle and do it for them.

Marketing is translating.

They’re not buying the boat – they’re buying the Island.

I think people who do Feng Shui are particularly screwed. After all, it’s a funny word and most people don’t know what it is. It’s a boat that no one really understands. And, to make matters worse, if they do understand, it seems frivolous. Like, ‘okay, you’re going to rearrange my furniture and I’m going to pay you how much?’ Because they’re trying to sell the boat.

But they’re not buying the boat – they’re buying the Island.

So, what if instead of leading with the boat of Feng Shui you wrapped that modality and practice around a particular result? What if you said it was about attracting the love of your life? Or attracting financial abundance? Improving your health? Or creating a sanctuary to give you more peace of mind? And what if you packaged in some other elements to help them on the journey, maybe some coaching, some herbs

focused on that result, and gave them some daily rituals and maybe even hosted a workshop to help them (perhaps led by someone else). Maybe it was a year long program. You get the idea.

They're not buying the boat – they're buying the Island.

FedEx doesn't bore you trying to educate you on the superiority of their hub system. Instead they make you a solid promise, 'when it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight.'

A colleague of mine, Jennifer Pullin from [Fibres of Life](#) sells fair trade hand crafted goods (which are quite beautiful). We spoke about why people bought them and one of the things she'd noticed is how much people seem to enjoy the 'social currency' they get from having her products. They're quite attractive and fetching to the eye and they have the most wonderful stories behind them. She's found that the people who buy the pieces are very interested in knowing the stories of the artists and craft people who made them.

My good friends at [Crystal Cradle](#) make incredible jewelry. But people don't just want jewelry (the boat). They want what they think jewelry will bring them. When I wear their stuff, I get comments and compliments from people. Total strangers sometimes. If you notice that your product often gets comments. We don't just buy jewelry [for the jewelry](#).

It's the same with the sweet leather bag (pictured here) I bought from [fiveleft.ca](#). I love it and get comments all the time. I wanted a sturdy bag from them. I wanted something that would last forever. I think this one will but I spent \$250 on it because (secretly) I was hoping to get people saying, 'nice bag!' And that has happened. I get compliments all the time. Woot.

To quote from the wonderful book [Start With Why](#):

Shackleton's ad for crew members ... did not say what he was looking for. His ad did not say: "Men needed for expedition. Minimum five years' experience. Must know how to hoist mainsail. Come work for a fantastic captain."

Rather, Shackleton was looking for those with something more. He was looking for a crew that belonged on such an expedition. His actual ad ran like this: "Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe returns doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success."

The only people who applied for the job were those who read the ad and thought it sounded great. They loved insurmountable odds. The only people who applied for the job were survivors. Shackleton hired only people who believed what he believed. Their ability to survive was guaranteed. When employees belong, they will guarantee your success. And they won't be working hard and looking for innovative solutions for you, they will be doing it for themselves.

Clearasil sells skin care things. They are aware that you don't particularly (initially) care about the ingredients. But you do care about the results. And, in seven words, they nail it, 'visibly clearer skin in three days. guaranteed'. I'm not endorsing them but it's a fine example.

The website [RunKeeper](#) makes tracking your workouts fun, social, and easy to understand so that you can improve the quality of your fitness. Simple. Clear.

A website like [CouchSurfing](#) helps people a lot of time and money when finding a place to stay when traveling – and meet cool people locally. The website [AirBnB](#) was created for empty nesters with empty bedrooms in their homes to help them earn a bit of extra income on that empty room they have by renting it out to people visiting town who want something a bit more affordable and homey than a hotel or motel but a bit more private than a hostel.

Victoria Laine does a simple thing that most entrepreneurs could do but never think of. She hosts tours. Now, she does [tours of grocery stores](#). But maybe you could host a tour of strawbale homes. Maybe you

could host a tour of gluten free options in your neighbourhood. A medicinal plant walk. A pub crawl with a theme related to your work. Maybe you could host a tour of all the strawbale homes in your community (even if you're not a strawbale expert yourself). So many businesses could do this easily.

Tours get you away from your computer, connect you with potential clients, help build your credibility and might also help the people or businesses you're taking your tours to.

Natalie Grunberg had [an idea for a business](#). Mail women pretty panties. Once a month. This business is a brilliant example of some many things: [niche marketing](#) (panties are for women), having a [point of view](#) (it's about confidence), having a simple, well crafted [offer](#) (a pretty panty. mailed monthly), doing something provocative that [gets people talking](#) (panties!).

[The Therapy Vault](#) gives therapists and totally secure place to share the stories they can't share anywhere else and get it off their chest. Basically, it's an online forum. But people don't crave to be a part of online forums. No one says, 'Wow. I get to go in this thing called the 'internet' and talk to total strangers about random things for no particular reason!'

Within yoga there are many different styles and types of centers depending on the results people want. Some are all about getting into good shape and getting those yoga buns. Some are more about cultivating a spiritual practice. Some are more about community and social change. Depends what you're into.

Beth Martens offers a [special class focused on caregivers](#) who are so overwhelmed in their lives and are craving some respite, rest, sanctuary and connections with other people who are going through the same things they are.

Another yoga example: [Tiina Veer](#) is a client of mine who's an amazing example of the power of [proper niching](#) in action. Instead of trying to make her yoga class appeal to everyone – she chose a very particular niche.

People who *don't* look like Barbie Dolls.

There's a whole community of people with 'round bodies' who might feel intimidated to go to a typical yoga class. But, with Tiina, they find an incredibly safe and supportive space. And it's called [Yoga for Round Bodies](#).

When I asked her how the response had been she said this,

“The response has been incredible. Even people who aren't in the “round camp” think it's a great idea, that it makes so much sense. And it does. A lot of round women feel judged, or like the third wheel, in “regular” yoga classes. It makes sense to create a safe, non-judgmental space for us to practice together, with a teacher who knows how to modify poses to the unique needs of a rounder body. As women discover these classes, workshops and retreats, I get this comment a lot: “It's so great there's a class JUST FOR ME out there!””

The [Samarya Center](#) is an amazing community centered yoga center in Seattle that decided to buck the system and do it all differently (go watch an [inspiring video](#) about how they've created something entirely different).

Yoga is a boat that can take you to a lot of different islands. But as always . . .

They're not buying the boat – they're buying the Island.

I just heard about a spa in Toronto called [Sunny Mummy](#) at my [“Marketing 101 for Green and Local Businesses”](#) in Toronto last night.

It's a spa. But with a twist.

Take a look at the room pictured on the right. It's not a room you'd associate with a spa.

But *most* spa's don't cater to mom's with young children.

And [Sunny Mummy](#) does – for mom's – with childcare built into the costs.

An acquaintance of mine, [Michael Rosmer](#) had this to say, 'your staffing concerns ended in 90 days. guaranteed.'

I have a three hour [workshop](#) and i say, "learn the marketing secrets of North America's most successful green, holistic, community-minded entrepreneurs attract more of the clients you want (without ever sacrificing your integrity or spending a fortune)."

Even clearer is my colleague Callan Rush who has a workshop called, "How to Fill Your Workshops... With Ease!"

Or Max Simon who had a workshop called, "Sold Out Seminars". Very clear what he's teaching.

Nobody goes to a workshop just to go to a workshop. Nobody I know is just super into workshops. Nobody says, 'I love sitting in chairs and listening to people tell me things while they write them on a flipchart!'

They're not buying the boat – they're buying the Island.

Another Lense: The Four Tracks

Here's something worth considering. Some people would suggest that there are, at the end of the day, only four results people want.

1. **better health:** physical health, more energy, being more strong, more flexible, better digestion, better sleep etc.
2. **more money:** this could mean more cash, better money management, ways to save money etc. Can you help them make it or save it? Can you improve their career prospects?
3. **peace of mind:** a deeper sense of spirituality and meaning etc. Can you help people feel more relaxed, safe and comfortable in their own skin and at home in the world? Can you help them partake in more meaningful work in their life?
4. **better relationships:** dating, marriage, better sex etc.

Which one of those is the primary one you offer? Can you translate what you do into one of those lenses?

Here's another lense to consider . . . how could your product save them

#1 – SAVE THEM TIME: help them understand how you can you save them time? Can you synthesize what's happening in your space and industry for busy people?

Can you act as a filter and curator or relevant and valuable content? If you save them half the time you can often charge them twice as much. What can you do in your process to save them time they might have spent elsewhere? What can you do to make what you offer easier and more **convenient** for people? how many hours did it take you to create the product or service you have? how many hours of training? how long would it take them to get the same result in their lives if they did it on their own?

[Eventbrite](#) is a site that makes it so easy to create an RSVP page for your event. It handles the payments, the reminders and even gives you name tags to print. I could spend the time to figure out how to have an

online shopping cart and set up reminders on my site but, frankly, I'd rather just use their service and pay them the 5% from any money earned.

My colleague [Alex Baisley](#) worked with a woman who was passionate about strawbale but couldn't really make money teaching how to build them. So, instead, she arranged a tour of the strawbale homes in the area for people who were thinking about building their own strawbale home. She made something possible that likely wouldn't have been before and saved people a lot of time in trying to arrange that on their own. And the home owners get to meet nice people and show off their home.

Dee Dussault in Toronto saves time by creating a holistic sampler evening. Once a month, on the Friday nearest the new moon, she hosts her [New Moon Parties](#). She describes it this way . . .

Every month on the Friday nearest the new moon, a group of healing-arts practitioners gather at Follow Your Bliss, and offer 20-minute samples of our services. We've had Reiki, Pranic Healing, Reflexology, Chair Massage, Reconnective Healing, Palmistry, Tarot readings, Yoga Nidra, Shiatsu, Hypnotism, and Thai Yoga Massage (to name a few!)

These parties allow new clients a chance to see how this eco-conscious, community healing home is developing, and enjoy socializing and networking with a conscious community over some wine, cheese, and great conversation!

With Child Care provided (upon request), it is a great chance to mingle, network, and share resources, while sampling amazing and affordable healing arts in between!

Can you help people do something more quickly? Get something more quickly? I think this is the benefit of certain VIP clubs – you know you're being taken care of. That, by being a part of the club, they're going to do the research you don't have time to do and bring you the best they find. Phew. It's a relief. I will glad

#2 – SAVE THEM MONEY: because of the way you've packaged things and how convenient you make it, might it just save them a bit of money? Might they spend more money if they went a different route? Also, by not handling their problem, might it cost them more money than if they handled it (e.g. putting off retrofitting their home, putting off moving to a no interest credit card etc.).

#3 – SAVE THEM ENERGY: how much emotional energy might it cost them to not deal with this or to take another approach? How much will it drain them to be living constantly with their fear of [Island Z](#)?

I had the pleasure seeing [Rochelle Grayson](#) speak at a social media conference a while ago and she spoke brilliantly to the kinds of results that people really want. She broke it down into a bit more detail than these four.

Twelve Additional Things People Might Want Your Product or Service to Do For Them:

PAMPER THEM – Can you do anything to make the experience of working with you more luxurious, beautiful and pampering for them? I just led a workshop at a space where they had lots of huge comfy couches and so, instead of sitting at plastic tables in plastic chairs we all nestled into couches. Comfy! Can you make your physical or virtual space a little more pleasing for their sensibilities? Can you remove clutter? Can you, like the [SlowFood movement](#) give them a bit more space and slowness in their hectic lives?

BOOST THEIR SELF ESTEEM – How can you make people feel special? People like to be recognized for their contributions and what makes them unique. Can you do that for them? If you do permaculture, can you find a way that they could let their neighbours and friends know?

Let them brag about the wonderful thing they've done? Can you take extra special care of your favourite clients?

If you're a nonprofit how can you help them to boast and brag. Can you give them the tools to do it? What if when they donated, you could have the option of sharing on facebook with a click of a button, "Tad just donated \$10 to the David Suzuki foundation!". It might also inspire their friends to give. Can you become such a safe and non judgmental space that people really get to feel wonderful about who they are around you?

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS - Here's a twist: can you not only teach them how to have better relationships but can you actually facilitate new relationships for them? Think dating websites like POF.com, Match.com, meetup.com, okcupid.com, or Flattr.com that are all based on connecting like minded people.

What can you do to help people form or retain meaningful relationships with others? If you're a yoga studio – can you host [social events](#)? If you're a restaurant, can you host parties for your best clients and local food providers? If you're a holistic practitioner, can you host a party for your favourite clients and hubs?

Can you actively play a role in connecting your clients with other people they need? People are deeply grateful for a good connection. [Quirky](#) is a website that was created to support folks with ideas for products to actually make them happen by connecting them with people who can help.

GIVE THEM IMMEDIATE HELP – Can you help them find some relief or something they want right now? Think Netflix. Think Kindle. Think iTunes. Easy to search and find exactly what you want. I try to build my blog like this. Easy to search, lots of cross links. Think a mobile application that let's you know where you can find independent cafes or free wifi. What can you help them get right now.

GIVE THEM A SENSE OF BELONGING - We all want to belong. Can your business foster a sense of community? What a wonderful idea. And, for the clients and hubs your particularly resonate with might you be able to create a circle that has access to things that are just right for them?

In addition to doing things that are free or cheap to foster community (e.g. hosting events, having a free resources page on your site, generally being helpful, having a bulletin board for community events etc.) ask yourself, "What is it that people would pay to have access to?"

Is there an exclusive perspective you have that you only share with certain people? Can you help them get access to things that might be hard to get access to otherwise? And might they be excited to be a part of a group of like minded people who are of a similar calibre to them? I bet they would.

If you want to create this kind of community then you need to get as clear as you can about the [journey](#) you help people on, your [point of view](#) and your [bigger why](#) because that's what communities are most often built around.

BRING FUN – people will pay a lot of money to be entertained. Can you come up with fun content that people might enjoy and share? Can you add more variety and fun to their lives? Can you mix it up every once in a while? So many people are bored – can you lift them from that? If you can make it more fun to work with you people will come back a lot more often and send their friends.

SHOW CASE THEM - What tools or structures are you creating to show case what *they* do? Could you feature your clients? Your students success stories? Could you invite clients to submit blogs, images or videos? Ask yourself, what do your clients want out of your use of social media vs. what do you want? Maybe they'd be really excited to use your page to express themselves and connect with others than receiving constant 'buy from me' messages.

GIVE THEM EASY INSTRUCTIONS - Can you give them precise, step by step 'how to' instructions on how to do things? Can you tell them how to [write their homepage](#), make the perfect cup of coffee, pin back their plants without killing them etc. What can you teach them how to do that you're an expert of? Can you put up free videos, offer paid videos, live classes?

HELP THEM SUCCEED: people will pay you if you can help them increase their chances of success in the world. can you help people do what they do better. Look at the success of a website like [Indiegogo](#) that helps people crowdsource money for their projects. You create a page and put up a video saying, 'We need to raise \$ _____ for this project.' And then people give whatever they can. \$5, \$10, \$100.

HELP THEM CONTRIBUTE: People have an innate need to give and contribute. We don't, ultimately, feel fulfilled unless we're giving to others. And yet, many people walk around feeling like they have no way to make a difference in the world.

So there are two routes here.

First, can you help affirm to people the difference they are already making? Can you remind them of the impact of their current choices? The impact it makes in the world that they've decided to work with you or live the kind of lifestyle they're living?

Second, can you actively give them concrete things that can do to make a difference on an issue they're passionate about? Maybe that's hosting a fundraiser, maybe it's getting a petition going, maybe it's organizing a river valley clean up or a 'random acts of kindness' nice. Maybe you can give a percentage of your profits to a particular cause or community. Maybe you can host an annual party where you connect your restaurant patrons with the growers and producers of their food.

There are so many options.

[Tom's Shoes](#) does this by giving away a pair of shoes to those who really need them for every pair you buy. The contribution is built into the purchase.

HELP THEM GROW: Again, two paths here. First, can you help reflect to the clients all of the ways that they're already growing? Second, can you give clients opportunities to (safely) risk and step outside of their comfort zone? Can you give them chances to have easy wins? Can you help them track and measure their progress and encourage them along the way? Can you do a thirty day challenge? Can you run a contest where people set a goal and work towards it?

HELP THEM FEEL SECURE: Life is uncertain. It can be scary. Can you be a rock for people? Can you provide a consistent point of view that people can rely on? Can you help give people strategies to feel more safe and secure? Can you offer people protection? Can you be the guardian and shield of your community? It feels so wonderful to know that someone has your back. If you've ever been attacked by someone and had another person jump to your defense – you know exactly how incredible it feels. You can do this be reviewing other products and services, by giving people good criteria to make decisions, by giving people heads up on things coming down the pike. Help people feel secure and they will love you forever.

A Few Common Blunders:

BLUNDER #1 -MISTAKING THE CRAVING FOR THE DIAGNOSIS

One of the biggest blunders is to mistake their craving for our diagnosis of their situation.

They're sitting their craving to meet their soul mate and we're trying to sell them on opening their heart chakra.

They're trying to make more money and we're trying to sell them on getting over their limiting beliefs.

They're trying to lose weight and we're trying to sell them on meditation to become mindful of their thoughts.

They're struggling to not be so stressed and anxious and we're trying to tell them about the magic of herbalism.

But they're not buying the boat – they're buying the Island.

Instead of making people wrong for not 'getting' it we need to work hard to translate what we do into their own language and how it's relevant to *them*. Don't lead with your fancy map and diagnosis – lead with their craving. Acknowledge that they want to get to Island B – then they'll be all sorts of curious about seeing your map.

People often think, but I couldn't sum it up in three words. And I'd say, 'No, you can't sum up your point of view in three words (or can you?) but you can often sum up what they're craving in three words (seven at the outside).' Shocking but true.

BLUNDER #2 – JUDGING THEIR CRAVINGS

It's easy to sit there and judge someone who's going to a yoga class to get tight buns and tell ourselves that their motives aren't as spiritual as ours. Or people who buy green things to assuage their guilt about their lifestyle and to be 'seen' as green by their friends.

We can sometimes get a bit precious about it and tell ourselves that they must want to buy what we're offering out of an enlightened space. Good luck with that. Sometimes people get into things for vanity and then open up to more. We're all walking around with all sorts of wounds. Let's make it easy for people to take that first step and honour whatever their motivations might be to begin with (if that's a fit for us).

If we want to reach people, we must at least acknowledge what they want. You might then offer them another point of view on what you think they really need. Once people are in the door, they're often surprisingly open to this. But start with where they are. My colleague [Jessica O'Reilly](#) taught me this with her sex workshops. She found that by leading workshops focused on techniques and 'quick fix' she got a lot of people in the door and, from there, she could take them deeper. But, if she tried to start with deep tantra stuff, they never even got in the door.

When people are in pain, they want relief as soon as possible. It's easy to judge that until you're in pain and desperate yourself.

Where to Use Island B in Your Marketing:

- **Headlines:** the first words on your sales page, the headline, should ideally speak very directly to the result they're craving. Could you sum up the result you're offering into three words? You might be shocked that you can.
- **URL:** Man, if your website name can be a statement of the result they want that's a huge win. Think about the PR consultant whose website is: <http://getknownnow.com/> or the dating coach whose URL is <http://www.doubleyourdating.com/>
- **Redesign Your Boat:** Once you hone in on a particular result there are often plenty of ways to redesigning your boat to give them what they're really after. You can create packages of things. You can redo your office. Reimagine your workshops.

The Shadow Side of Island B:

- **Over Promising and Under Delivering:** If you tell people you can help them lose 50 pounds in a year and your plan doesn't work they're going to be pissed. Don't promise what you can't deliver.
- **Selling a Mirage:** All the commercials that pair beer and hot women are selling you a mirage. Drinking that beer will not get you a date. It's a totally false correlation.

- **Green Washing:** Trying to convince people that your super harmful product is more green than it is to appeal to people's craving to live a more eco-friendly lifestyle is lamesville. Read more about that [here](#).

Is it a fit?

I think it might be the most important notion there is in marketing.

Let me tell you a story.

A few years ago, I went to a marketing workshop. It was all about how to use the Myers-Briggs personality types in marketing.

Brilliant stuff if you're ready for it. But I noticed that very few people at the workshop were ready for it. The woman next to me, a massage therapist, hadn't even thought about the basics of her platform like 'target market' yet. She had so much foundation to lay before she could use what they were talking about.

And yet she was at the workshop.

How on earth, I wondered, did somebody show up to a workshop that wasn't right for them?

To take it even bigger – why is it that so many people end up being sold things that aren't actually a fit for them?

At the heart of marketing, we're always asking, 'who might what I'm offering be a fit for?'

At the heart of a selling conversation, we're really seeking to figure out if what we're offering is actually a useful match for the other person.

We're not trying to push what we have on everyone. We're not assuming it can help everyone. We're just trying to share it with people who might dig it.

The goal shouldn't be, 'how can I get the most possible people into my workshop' it should be, 'how can we fill this workshop with the perfect people for whom it will be the most useful'.

When we try to figure out if it's a fit, we're not trying to be first in the market place, better than our competition or even trying to be different (though that might factor in). It's relevance and resonance. It's like looking at a garden – some plants grow well together and some will hurt each other. When you look at your potential clients – that's the question to ask: do you grow well together? is there alignment? do you share important things with them?

At the heart of it, they need to resonate with your platform. And that means you need to be clear about your platform. Which is where people get stuck and resort to 'trying to sell everyone'. The answer to being pushy in sales and marketing is actually to step back and get crystal clear about who you are and what you're offering. The clearer you are on your platform the easier everything will get.

The Benefits of Orienting Your Marketing Around 'Perfect Fit':

Figuring out who that might be can save us a lot of time and money. Once we know who it is we can know where to find them. We can write lovely marketing materials that speak right to them.

It becomes so easy and fun to share what you have to offer. There's no more trying to convince anyone of anything. No more trying to hype things up. You're just doing your best to share what you have with as much clarity as possible and then letting them decide. It becomes a genuine process of conversation and curiosity rather than a 'sales pitch'. How wonderful.

Your clients will come back and spend more money with you because the first time was so perfect and useful for them. It was such a fit. They will trust you so much more when you say something will be 'just right' for them.

And we can also dissuade people from buying who might regret it later because it wasn't quite perfect for them. If someone insists on coming or buying from you, you can make sure they know where you see it's not a 100% perfect fit so they won't be surprised down the road.

You'll also have outrageously good word of mouth because the people coming to you will be perfectly poised to use what you have to offer.

Real Life Examples:

Here's an okay example from an online public speaking series.

How to know if this Speaker Series is right for you:

- Are you a coach, holistic practitioner, or an entrepreneur who dreams of being a dynamic speaker with such a strong presence that it magnetizes new clients to you without effort?
- Are you ready to get the inside nuts and bolts scoop on how to build your business through speaking? We can show you how to do this while you're 100% authentically *you* on stage. No tricks. No gross tactics. No games. No selling out.
- Are you tired of "experts" telling you that you have to do things a specific way in order to be successful – but it doesn't really feel like you?

Here's another from Carrie Klassen's Pink Elephant Academy (guilt free, do it yourself marketing for nice people).

How to Write a Lovable Homepage is for entrepreneurs who:

- are doing what they love but aren't quite making a living yet (you're not alone!)
- don't have enough clients, or enough "right" clients
- want to surround themselves with only supportive, enthusiastic and loyal customers
- feel stuck or stressed when it comes to figuring out what to write
- aren't always proud to share their websites

My very favourite part of the Academy is the roster of entrepreneurs who have signed up and shown up.

You'll fit right in if:

- You're doing what you love for a living and even when it's scary, wouldn't choose the alternative
- You buy organic when you can and will take your recyclables home with you if you can't find a bin
- You notice the smell of lilacs in spring and love the call of wild geese
- You feel a pretty hum in your heart reading Desiderata, which might just be your credo too

Alison Mark's Six Figure Home Office Series:

This program is right for you if:

- You are a business owner who is committed to growing your business
- You have an important message to get out into the world
- You are serious and ready to take a big leap in your business
- You can make a significant time investment during the program; I'm suggesting participants put aside at least 5 hours a week to work on their product, in addition to coursework and calls (roughly 2 hours per week)

This program will work great for you even if:

- You have already created an information product and want to deepen your learning and get support creating your next one
- You don't know the topic or format you would use to create your information product
- You secretly wonder "Who am I to do this?" (You CAN do it. You SHOULD do it! I SO want to help you get your message and your voice out into the world, even if YOU'RE not clear about it.)
- You're afraid that an information product won't work for YOUR business, because your work is too common (that there are already too many experts in this field saying the same things) (hint: this is actually a good sign!) or too personal (you only know how to work 1-on-1 with people)

My 'How to Create Your Free Gift' Workbook:

"The How to Create Your Free Gift" workbook could be profoundly useful to you if . . .

- You have your own website for your business
- You are excited about growing your email list and, ideally, are using an online service like constantcontact.com or mailchimp.com etc.
- You have a crystal clear idea of who you are trying to reach, the problems they're struggling with that you can help them solve and the results you're excited to help them produce (and you can genuinely help them with those things). You're not trying to reach and please everyone. You have (or are committed to) some level of specialization.
- You are willing to make a one time investment of at least 5 – 10 hours to create something really extraordinary.
- You have know a tech nerd in your life (or can get one or you are one) who can help you with things like: creating ebooks, online quizzes, video, audio or email autoresponders.

NOTE: If all of these five things are *not* true for you – do not buy this workbook.

It might also be a fit if . . .

- You have a newsletter sign up box – but not many people are taking you up on it.

- You have the capacity to update your own website (or are in the process of setting one up). It could also work if you've got a reliable web person who does it for you.
- You think your home page is already pretty swell. It immediately lets people know if they're in the right place by naming who the site is for, the problems you will help them solve and the results you'll offer.
- You have access to a web or graphic designer who can make you a fancy image of your gift.
- You like the idea of being generous with people you've never met.
- You've got so much to say! You feel like you have so many ideas and insights to share.
- People are visiting your website but you never seem to hear from them. They come and go leaving not a whisper of a trace behind them. Lots of traffic but little business.

My daylong workshop: The Hotbox.

This workshop might be a fit for you if:

- you're engaged in work that might be described as holistic, green, sustainable, progressive or radical
- you love pushing the envelope of what you do to make it even more radical, sustainable, socially just etc.
- you've been in business for at least three years
- this isn't just a hobby for you – it's your full time passion and income and you're committed to making it work
- you're the kind of person who loves local food, farmer's markets, supporting local and independent shops and you love the arts.
- you love learning from others and are open to getting some really honest feedback on your situation.
- you're not in a place where you're needing more general, big picture, marketing education but rather more some laser focused, 'here's the next step' coaching.
- you're up to bring your a-game to an unhurried but highly focused day. you're ready to be present for all nine others in the group all day.

An Intriguing Thought:

You might notice this list (once you finish it) is, basically, you. Or has a lot of overlap with who you are. And that's a good thing. It means you're on track. It means you're working with people who are like you – and that makes everything much easier.

Seven Specific Ways to Use What You've Come Up With:

- **the ‘About Me’ page** on your website: this material could also help you see what’s true about you and share that so that people could read it and say, ‘wow. this person sure is a fit for me! they’re just like me!’
- **the ‘About You’ page** on your website: you might not have this kind of page, but having a page that really describes who your perfect fit is as a client can go a long way
- **on your homepage:** you can give people a taste of who you work with here. Carrie Klassen has written a wonderful workbook to help you do just that.
- **piece in sales letters:** you can do this exercise for your clients in general but you can also apply many of the same questions to each product or service you create. You can ask yourself, ‘who is this particular thing just perfect for?’
- **write out the story of your ideal client:** if you can, in story form, tell the story of what it’s like to be your ideal client it makes it so much easier for them to find themselves in your work.
- **use this info to figure out your hubs:** once you get crystal clear on who you’re trying to reach, it’s much easier to find them. Trust me on this. If you could sum this up into a half a page description and share it with people and ask, ‘where do you think these sorts of people hang out?’ you’d start getting answers.
- **when talking about your products and services from the stage:** this is, perhaps, my favourite application of all of this. If you’ve had the misfortune of going to a marketing workshop and been pitched and pushed to sign up for a program with manipulative hype and tactics. It feels gross. So, instead of doing this, you can just say, ‘So, I’ve got this thing. Here’s who it’s a fit for, here’s who it’s not a fit for. Here’s the special offer I want to give you today.’ Be clear. Share it. Let people make their own decisions. Everyone walks away feeling like you respected them vs. trying to ‘sell’ them.

The Implied Niche:

This is one of my very favourite realizations about niching. I call it 'the implied niche'.

Here's what happened: I started to notice that not everyone who was successful had an explicit niche. Not everyone had a spelled out statement of, "I work with _____ kinds of people struggling with _____ kinds of problems." If you asked them they'd say, "Oh, I just work with all kinds of people." But they were still successful and it fried my brain a bit.

Every once in a while I hear about some healer who has no website and never markets but is swamped with clients. You only find out about them through word of mouth. They're likely not rich but they're busy enough.

I'd been taught that you needed a target market. And my perspective on it was fairly simplistic.

The longer I was in marketing, the more I was faced with this 'chicken or egg?' question.

Do you first come up with a cool, unique product that's an authentic expression of you? At its worst this can be the artist that makes things they find beautiful but no one else does and they don't care but demand that everyone support them because they're incapable of taking care of themselves in the real world. But damn are they passionate and self expressed.

Or do you first find a hungry crowd and build the offer around them and their needs? At its worst, this is the cynical businessman who runs a business with no heart or soul. It's all strategies and tactics and manipulating people is a-ok if it increases the numbers. It's contrived, artificial, constructed and lacking any genuine inspiration.

The reality is that we need both. 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.

What I've begun to see is that there is a sort of yin and yang to niching.

- **Yang Niching:** explicit statement of who we're working with. It's all laid out, we develop a strategy, craft offers and we pursue those people. We hustle. We get out there. We go to where they hang out.
- **Yin Niching:** the niche is attracted, charmed and drawn in by something that is such a clear fit. More attention is paid to the product and the packaging becoming an embodiment of the quirk, point of view and deeper cause. This kind of niching is resonant. Like a light house. In this one, we put out what we have and notice who responds and then those people become our target markets. We make guesses, try things and readjust. With Yin niching we take time to know ourselves, we trust what we find beautiful and meaningful and useful, we honor our gifts and our story.

The reclusive artist or scientist is an aspect of Yin niching. Just pattering away and working on making beautiful things. Think of Vincent Van Gogh. The man was poor until he died. His paintings were largely ignored during his lifetime. And yet today they're worth a fortune and he's considered one of the greatest painters of all time. My sense is that this can be what happens when we dive so far into the Yin. A very internal energy. If we want it to sustain us, we need to go out into the world and engage with people too.

Of course, ultimately you need to do both. There's both a need for noticing and action. These are not mutually exclusive. But so much of the work I see out there on niching is 100% focused on the Yang style of niching. And I think that misses out on so much of the richness and possibility.

So, I want to talk about this Yin style 'implied niche' business.

If you do *eco-friendly* lawn care there are 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. Marketing starts with relevance but has resonance as its ultimate possibility.

But, 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!". 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
- a car
- a blender

Couldn't a *lot* of people genuinely 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 niche implied by your boat - but what you do - is, almost always, too wide.

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

There are 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?

Some products have a much clearer implied niche.

For example, 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.

As your product and service more clearly embodies your point of view, deeper cause and your quirks it will inherently have a different implied niche. The implied niche is always, 'people who would be into what I'm offering.'

But who is into what you're offering?

This is where it gets interesting.

If what you're offering is super generic it's hard to even get much of a reaction from people. But when we start putting our own uniqueness into the product and treat it like art – we will start to notice some people respond much more strongly than others.

And it's not always who you think it will be.

I've seen it time and again where a crafter will make something that they think the teens would love but in the end it's the grandmothers. Who knew?

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 one 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. Their niche is 'people who are into this magazine'.

In his brilliant book, *Start with Why*, Simon Sinek shares the example of the ad that Shackleton put out to get a crew for his insanely dangerous journey. *"He did not say what he was looking for. His ad did not say: "Men needed for expedition. Minimum five years' experience. Must know how to hoist mainsail. Come work for a fantastic captain." Rather, Shackleton was looking for those with something more. He was looking for a crew that belonged on such an expedition. His actual ad ran like this: "Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe returns doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success." The only people who applied for the job were those who read the ad and thought it sounded great. They loved insurmountable odds. The only people who applied for the job were survivors. Shackleton hired only people who believed what he believed. Their ability to survive was guaranteed. When employees belong, they will guarantee your success. And they won't be working hard and looking for innovative solutions for you, they will be doing it for themselves."*

Sometimes your niche will just be people who resonate with your nature and your quirks. I had a client who was a hypnotherapist. We had a call scheduled for 10am and I was still rolling out of bed at 9:30am. I turned on my computer at 9:55am to see a two emails from her. The first was at 9am with her expressing frustration at not having a number to call. Then again at 9:45am. Even more frustrated.

I emailed her and we started the call on time. She was able to wind down a bit and we started getting into her marketing situation. And then her phone battery started to die. "Shit!" she said. She was pissed with herself. Minutes later she calls me back. From a payphone outside. Not her day. As we speak, I'm browsing her website and I notice that her website is all about inner peace, relaxation, blue colours and waterfalls etc. But her photo and her personality are so fierce, fiery, passionate, feisty, opinionated etc. I lift this up to her, "I don't get it. Your site is all lalala and you're so grrrr."

She immediately gets shy and her voice softens, "I know! I'm so fierce but that always gets me into trouble."

"I hear that. I get how frustrating that must be. And . . . I want more of it. Bring it. I think it's fucking beautiful. I wonder if you're focusing on the wrong work in helping people to relax. I want to see you

working with women who are shy and collapsed and could use a bit more ferocity in their lives, learn how to set boundaries . . . so many women need what it is that you have!”

This blew her mind a bit. She’d never seen her intensity as anything but a weakness and here I was suggesting it might be the heart of her niche. Who knew?

In Yin niching, we build the container first. You design a boat that expresses you, your point of view, your why and allows you the lifestyle you want *first*. First we build the thing and then we ask “who might be interested in that?” and then proceed to be delighted when those work out or not but some other group mysteriously shows up and loves it unexpectedly and give them really safe and risk free ways to engage with us.

Yin niching is based on the notion of resonance. Yin niching is all about crafting what we have to offer with so much beauty and clarity that it becomes more strongly resonant. Think of it like a lighthouse with weak light and dirty windows vs. clean window and a powerful light. The stronger the light the farther the reach.

"Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

- Dr. Howard Thurman

I post of stuff a lot of facebook. At this point, I’ve reached the limit of 5000 friends but I still have about 700 friend requests waiting. I get people adding me all the time because I post cool shit. What’s interesting is that it’s not even all my own stuff. Most of it isn’t. Most of it are cool videos or images I find. Quotes of other people. But, this kind of sharing creates a mosaic or connect the dots effect. Taken together, it all gives an impression. It creates a halo effect. If someone has excellent taste in music we will tend to be more open to their taste in other things too and trust their recommendations.

One client wrote me about this, “I like this notion--refreshing to hear it. This past weekend I focused in on what I’m offering and how, without thinking so much about who...and got a lot more traction than when I was starting with who. It seems like getting really specific about niche works well for an online business. Although I’d like an online business, I feel like it would be helpful for me to start with local clients. Living in a rural area, I don't feel like I can zoom in on a specific niche because the pool I’m working with is relatively small. My strategy now is to start broad, get experience and find out "who out there would love this."

Another client said, “There is something more meaningful and personal when the work comes from your heart, from your soul, than when it comes from a pure smart biz choice...

So, do you start with yin or yang?

Start where ever you’re clear. Expand on that. Go anywhere.

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. And you can too.

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 Journey

a target + their journey = 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 is the demographics + the psychographics. 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 Journey: The problem is largely about how you reach your clients *emotionally* (although it will also help you reach them physically too). 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.

So, again:

**a target (demographics and psychographics) + a the journey (problem/
result) = 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 . . .

“You know how _____ (kinds of people)
struggle with _____ (problems)
and feel _____ (way about it) ?
Well, what I help them do it do get _____ results.”

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.

Four Examples of Little Circles

Example #1: Canadian Green Living Website

www.raisingspaces.com:

"You **know how** a lot of Canadian homeowners want to become more green and energy efficient in their homes but feel totally lost and overwhelmed with where to even start? And even if they look for information it's almost always American? **Well, what we help them do is** connect them with the best green and energy efficient Canadian products, resources and information in their price range. For example . . . (a case study goes here). **And the way we do that** is through our website."

Example #2: Pressure Free Selling Mentor Ari Galper

www.unlockthegame.com:

"You **know how** a lot of salespeople are in tremendous pain when it comes to selling? They actually 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. **Well, what we do** is we help them drop the old 'pushy' tactics and pitching techniques and learn how to have honest, natural, non-pressuring, authentic conversations with people that often results in a dramatic increase in their own comfort, the vanishing of their fears and an increase in their income."

Example #3: Primitive & Wilderness Skills Teacher Andrew McMartin

www.pineproject.org

"You **know how** many schools do expensive, high travel, high-risk outdoor education experiences? Or, how most schools send kids away from where they live to learn about the environment? Many of these experiences, though active and adventurous, teach little about the environment in which people spend their daily lives. **Well, The P.I.N.E. Project helps teachers** and schools to provide schoolyard and community outdoor and environmental education experiences that increase students ability to apply

learned material on a daily basis, are less expensive and risky than things like ropes courses, reduce carbon footprint, and make learning fun.

Example #4: Body Talk Practitioner Lisa Letwin

www.bodytalksystem.com

“Do **you know how** a lot of women struggle with chronic pain? **Well, what I do** is help them to return to a pain-free state without using any drugs or pharmaceuticals.

Is Yours a Niche ...or a Pigeon-Hole?

by Andy Riegler Andrews of www.enlightenedmarketing.com

A brand – at its core – is a promise that you can solve a specific problem for a specific target audience, and a niche is a specific subsection of that audience. The more clearly the audience and the solution are defined, the easier your brand is to communicate. We all know that a clearly defined brand is at the core of successful marketing. So far, so good. “Now,” I know you’re thinking, “A really specific, well-defined niche is the key to my brand and my business success!” Oops, hold on there just a second.

Not Just Any Niche Will Do

Let me start with an example, a niche that I heard of recently: “weight loss for female entrepreneurs.” At first blush, this sounds great. It targets a select group of people (female entrepreneurs) and a certain problem or desired solution (weight loss). Therein lies the problem, though. Notice, I said that this niche targets a specific group and a specific problem, not a specific group *with* a specific problem.

A Niche for Niche’s Sake

This niche – weight loss for female entrepreneurs – is a niche for niche’s sake. It needlessly tightens the target audience without focusing on solving that audience’s problem any better. There is no real logical connection between female entrepreneurs and the problem of weight loss. Why would a female entrepreneur want a different approach to weight loss than, say, a working mom?

A better niche would be “weight loss for busy women who struggle to find time to take care of themselves.” This niche includes a much larger audience, and it qualifies that audience much better, because it limits the audience based on the problem those in it share, rather than a more or less random demographic.

A Random Niche is the Worst Kind of Niche

When you are discerning your niche, you should of course think about the psychographics and demographics of your perfect clients. However, that information is merely the lens through which you view the problem (that you solve) your clients have in common. Yes, the demographics might inform you more about the problem your audience has. However, it is often a mistake to try to reverse that process and try to extrapolate demographics from the problem. This is because you are not trying to serve a demographic; you are trying to solve a problem.

Focus First on Problems: If you always keep the focus on the problems that you solve for your perfect clients, you can avoid the over-niching trap.

To find your niche effectively, we recommend asking yourself:

1. Who has benefited most from my services in the past?
2. What unique group do I have an affinity with or connection to that makes me the natural choice to help them?
3. Do these past clients fit a demographic group? If I were to describe them all as a type to help someone recognize them (for referrals, maybe), how would I do it?

Top Ten Questions to Identify Your Little Circles

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 are the ten themes and questions.

1. personal struggles 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.

THE QUESTION: What have been the five most defining moments or personal struggles of your life that you've had to overcome to be where you are today?

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?

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?

How To Figure Out If it's a Fit:

The initial instinct is to try to sort this out with demographics (e.g. age, gender, geography, income etc). But, as I wrote about a while ago, demographics are not enough. They're an excellent starting point but we don't want to end there.

Try answering these questions about your clients and filling in the blanks (all related to your platform) and see what you come up with.

Before you get into it, you might want to read this primer on the elements of your platform.

When you can fill this all in with clarity – you'll be amazed at what happens to your marketing.

Little Circles

Clarifying Exercises

Ten Niche Discovery Questions:

What have been the five most defining moments or personal struggles of your life that you've had to overcome to be where you are today?

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

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

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

What hobbies, interest or bizarre fascinations do you have?

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

What are you really, really good at?

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

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

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

Basic Demographic Info:

- Age Range:
- Gender:
- Location:
- Ethnic Background:
- Profession/Industry:
- Education:
- Marital Status:
- Parental Status:
- Annual Personal Income
- Annual Household Income:

Second Step:

Why do you want these demographics? What are the underlying reasons? This can give you a lot of clues to your ideal client and Big Circle

Examples:

- someone only wants to work with women because they're tired of dealing with bossy men. So, it may not really be about gender. It might be more about the quality of bossiness. And, once that's clear you can think about, 'well, if I don't want bossiness in clients, what *do* I want?' And that can help you get to the qualities you most want in your clients (e.g. cooperative, empathic, gentle etc.)
- someone might say, 'I want to target rich people.' If we explore why, they might say, 'because they would be willing to spend more money on my programs. Aha! So, it's really about the willingness to spend more on the programs.'

Their Journey:

- Your perfect clients are _____ kind of person struggling with _____ (Island A) and, more than anything, they're craving _____ (Island B). What is the journey they're on?
- They've already tried the following options _____ to solve their problems (Island A)
- They're secretly ashamed that _____ (Island A)
- What would happen in their lives (Island A) to let you know you were needing what you have to offer (your boat)?
- The moments they really notice that they have a problem are _____ (Island A)
- The perfect moment for me to enter their lives is _____ (Island A)
- The perfect moment for me to leave their lives is _____ (Island B or C).
- They secretly worry about _____ and at 3am they can't sleep because they can't stop thinking about _____ (Island Z)

- They're passionate about _____ (the bigger cause).
- They're deeply committed to _____ (the bigger cause).
- They're intrigued by the notion that _____ (problem) might really be about _____ (point of view).
- They're open to _____ (Island C) even if they don't understand how that might work or be possible.
- Friends often tell them they're _____ (Qualities)
- They tell themselves, "I could be where I want to be if only it weren't for _____" (the gap)
- If they found someone who could help you get _____ result they'd be happy to _____ (expectations).
- If they could wave their magic wand in the air and make one thing change in their personal life it would be _____

Feelings Inventory

Feelings we may experience when our needs are being met. The following are words we use when we want to express a combination of mental states and physical sensations. This list is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

EXERCISE: Circle the Top Ten words that you believe best describe how your clients feel in relationship to the problems you’ve identified. If the pain is a small one you likely wouldn’t circle high intensity words like horrified, but if the issue is a serious one with very powerful implications you likely wouldn’t circle a word like “irked” or “miffed”. Circle words that you believe accurately reflect how they feel on a regular basis about their problems.

AFRAID	ANNOYED	ANGRY	AVERSION	CONFUSED	DISCONNECTED	DISQUIET
apprehensive dread foreboding frightened mistrustful panicked petrified scared suspicious terrified wary worried	aggravated dismayed disgruntled displeased exasperated frustrated impatient irritated irked	angry enraged furious incensed indignant irate livid outraged resentful	animosity appalled contempt disgusted dislike hate horrified hostile repulsed	ambivalent baffled bewildered dazed hesitant lost mystified perplexed puzzled torn	alienated aloof apathetic bored cold detached distant distracted indifferent numb removed withdrawn	agitated alarmed discombobulated disconcerted disturbed perturbed rattled restless shocked startled surprised troubled turbulent turmoil uncomfortable uneasy unnerved unsettled upset
EMBARRASSED	FATIGUE	PAIN	SAD	TENSE	VULNERABLE	YEARNING
ashamed chagrined flustered guilty mortified self-conscious	beat burnt out depleted exhausted lethargic listless sleepy tired weary worn out	agony anguished bereaved devastated grief heartbroken hurt lonely miserable regretful remorseful	depressed dejected despair despondent disappointed discouraged disheartened forlorn gloomy heavy hearted hopeless melancholy unhappy wretched	anxious cranky distressed distraught edgy fidgety frazzled irritable jittery nervous overwhelmed restless stressed out	fragile guarded helpless insecure leery reserved sensitive shaky	envious jealous longing nostalgic pining wistful

Needs Inventory:

We feel bad when our needs aren't met. The following is a list of needs that all humans have to help you articulate the deeper needs your clients have that you're helping to meet.

EXERCISE: Circle the Top Five words that you believe best describe how your clients experience it. Which needs do they feel like are not being met in their life?

CONNECTION	HONESTY	PLAY	PEACE	PHYSICAL WELL-BEING	MEANING	AUTONOMY
Acceptance Affection Appreciation Belonging Cooperation Communication Closeness Community Companionship Compassion Consideration Consistency Empathy Inclusion Intimacy Love Mutuality Nurturing Respect / Self-respect Safety Security Stability Support To know and be known To see and be seen To understand and be understood Trust Warmth	Authenticity Integrity Presence	Joy Humor	Beauty Communion Ease Equality Harmony Inspiration Order	Air Food Movement/ exercise Rest / sleep Sexual expression Safety (protection from life threatening situations) Shelter Touch Water	Awareness Celebration of life Challenge Clarity Competence Consciousness Contribution Creativity Discovery Efficacy Effectiveness Growth Learning Mourning Participation Purpose Self-expression Stimulation Understanding	Choice Freedom Independence Space Spontaneity

Relative to The Journey – Their Psychographics:

- They really value _____ (e.g. the environment, their faith, their family, locally owned businesses, art)
- They really enjoy _____ (e.g. farmer's markets, going to church, potlucks, late night raves, fine wines)
- They're super into _____ (e.g. Doctor Who (don't you judge me), recycling, crafting, gardening, social media etc)
- They're fascinated by _____ (e.g. how shame plays a role in our lives, how to communicate better, be a better lover, raw food diets etc.).
- They're naturally drawn to _____ (e.g. beautiful vintage clothes, old book shops, pubs and taverns, horses etc.)
- They find themselves talking a lot about _____ (eg. how to make more money, marketing, folk music, yoga, dating etc.)
- Someone they really respect is _____ (e.g. Oprah Winfrey, Alex Baisley, Nelson Mandella, Gandhi, John Robbins etc.)
- Someone they really hate/have no respect for is _____ (e.g. Donald Trump, George W. Bush)

- They can't stand _____ (e.g. pretentious holistic healers, people being too salesy, seeing mothers not be allowed to breast feed in public, factory farms, seeing local farmer's struggle)
- They're suspicious and mistrustful of _____
- In their weaker moments, they feel like a victim of _____
- They would never, ever want to be seen as _____
- What drives them crazy is _____
- The person in their life that drives them the most crazy is _____
- They secretly feel guilty about _____
- They're secretly embarrassed that _____

- Something quirky and wonderful about them is _____ (e.g. they love poetry,
- They're the kind of person who _____'s daily (e.g. takes out their recycling, helps a stranger, does yoga, meditates, smokes, over drinks etc.)
- Their favourite books they've read to help them on their journey might be _____
- The movies or documentaries they might resonate with most are _____
- They are users of the following products and services _____
- Their hobbies are _____
- They're a part of the following communities (e.g. the vegetarian, Buddhist, skater, rave, magician communities).

This is *not* a fit for people who:

See if you can list at least five reasons your product or service might not be a fit for someone (e.g. If you have a drug addiction, a criminal record, you smoke, you're a committed vegan, you've only been in business for a year or less etc).

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

Little Circles

Articulating Exercises

Writing Out Your Small Circle:

Who kind of person (demographics and psychographics) are you focusing on?

**Demographics Summary
(Outer Things)**

**Psychographics Summary
(Inner Things)**

What is the specific, pressing **problem** or set of symptoms they're facing?

Which of The Four Tracks is it In?

1. **better health:** physical health, more energy, being more strong, more flexible, better digestion, better sleep etc.
2. **more money:** this could mean more cash, better money management, ways to save money etc. Can you help them make it or save it? Can you improve their career prospects?
3. **peace of mind:** a deeper sense of spirituality and meaning etc. Can you help people feel more relaxed, safe and comfortable in their own skin and at home in the world? Can you help them partake in more meaningful work in their life?
4. **better relationships:** dating, marriage, better sex etc.

Write out Your Articulation of Their Problem:

Does what you wrote fit the criteria of a clear problem?

- are they aware they have this problem?
- is it urgent?
- it's particular and specific?
- could you articulate it in a way that appealed to more of the five senses? what is it they experience? tell us the story of their experience.

How do they *feel* about this problem?

Write out Your Articulation of How They Feel About This Problem:

What is the specific **result** you offer them that they're craving?

Write out Your Articulation of The Result You're Offering Them:

In what ways does what you're offering them . . .

save them time?

save them money?

save them energy?

Does (or could) what you're offering also give them the following results that people are willing to pay for? In what ways could it . . .

pamper them?

boost their self esteem?

increase their social status?

build relationships?

give them immediate help?

give them a sense of belonging?

bring them fun?

showcase them to the world?

give them easy instructions?

help them succeed at something they want?

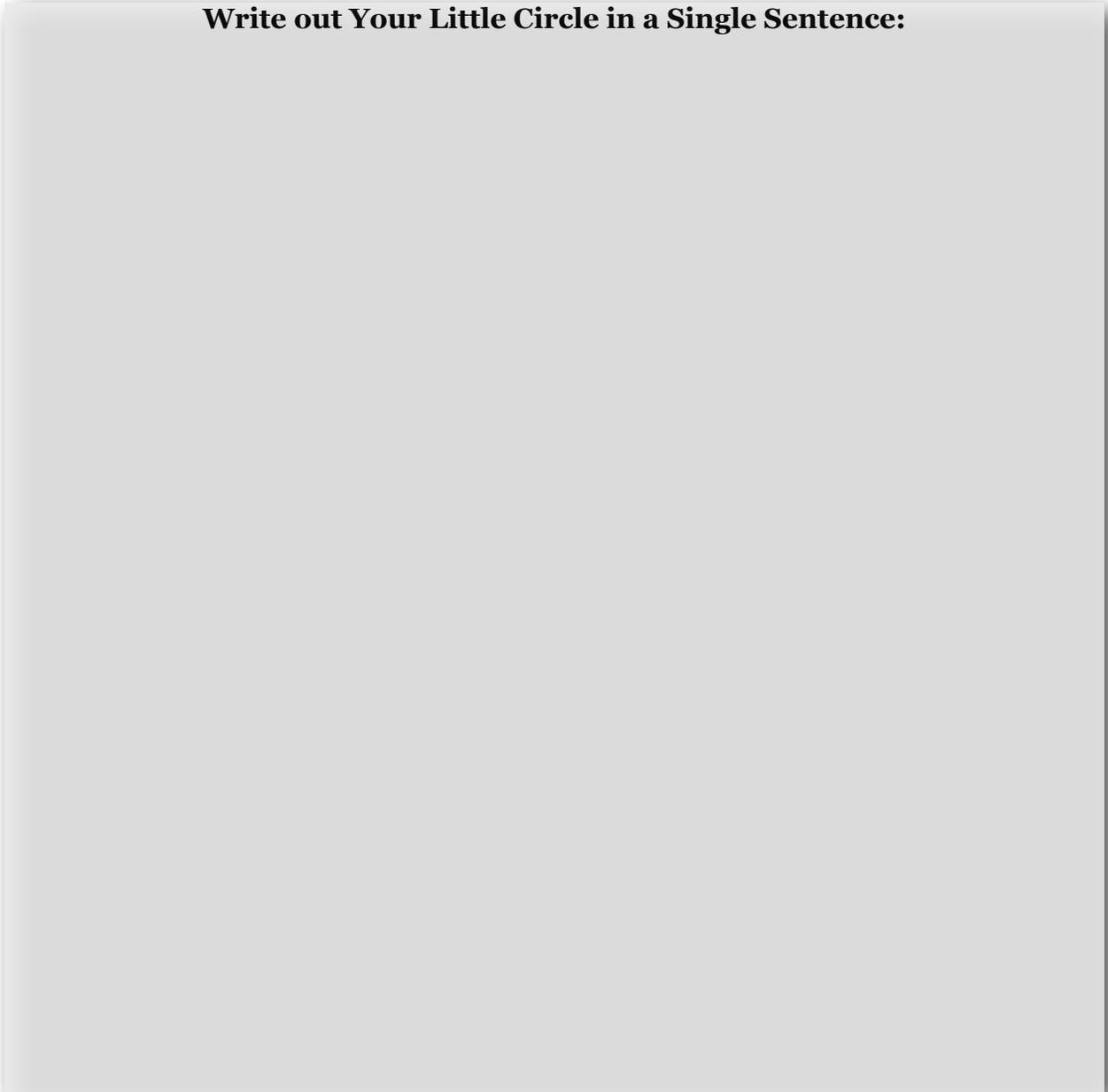
help them contribute in a way that's meaningful to them?

help them grow?

Put it in all together in the Following Sentence:

“You know how _____ (kinds of people)
struggle with _____ (problems)
and feel _____ (way about it) ?
Well, what I help them do it do get _____ results.”

Write out Your Little Circle in a Single Sentence:



Is Your Little Circle On Track? Check In:

Take your top three 'little circle' niches and see how they rank on the criteria of a solid niche.

Niche Criteria	Yes/Maybe/No
#1: It's Clear Who It Is and the Problem They Have	
#2: There are enough of them who can afford to pay you full price for your products and services	
#3: Are there particular places where they congregate and hang out? Are there hubs ?	
#4: Can you honestly say you care for, respect and even love your tribe?	
#5: Do you know what the result is that your tribe would be willing to pay for?	
#6: Are you passionate about delivering that result?	
#7: Do you want to be known for delivering that result?	
#8: Do you have the expertise or desire to commit to being the expert in delivering this result?	
#9: Can you identify other players who are creating successful businesses serving this market too?	
#10 - They are aligned with your why	
#11: They agree with or are intrigued by your point of view	