



The Art of Relevance

How to Have Your Ideal Clients Saying,
“That’s Me!” vs. “So What.”

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Introduction

Your clients are on a journey.

Your ideal clients are on **Island A** where they are struggling with a particular problem and all the symptoms that come with particular problem. They don't want to be there on Island A.

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

They're so in love with their **boat** (which represents what they do and how they do it) that they talk about their it all the time. But people only care about your boat if it can help them with their problem, if the provider's or practitioner's boat can carry them to **Island B**.

This seems like it would be a liberating approach or perspective. You're not limiting your options, you can fix anything! 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?

Your clients want to be on Island B.

They want, more than anything, to be on Island B where they will find the results they are craving.

Your business is the boat that can take your clients from one island to another.

Island A is the painful set of symptoms your clients experience in their lives. It represents the problem they face. Island A 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.

It's really as simple as that.

Some examples:

- Scattered and disorganized on Island A? Want to get to focused and organized Island B
- Conflicted, addicted, and constantly at the mercy of strong emotions like fear and anger on Island A? Want to get to strong, harmonious and equanimous Island B?
- Lonely on Island A and want to find a relationship on Island B?
- Broke on Island A and want to make some money on Island B?

That's the basic idea.

Your business is a boat that can help clients make that journey.

This simple island metaphor, which I have deepened and expanded over time, has formed the basis of the marketing approach that I teach.

So, one of the first implications of this metaphor is that we might want to stop talking about our boat so much. People don't care about *your* boat. They care about *their* journey. Even if they want to buy your boat from you . . . why? Where are they hoping to go with it? What are they hoping to do with it? They're buying the boat for something. What is that something?

The purpose of this eBook is very simple: to help you understand and become very good at articulating the reasons why people would want to buy what you have to sell.

Stated another way: we need to actually become experts on the journey more than geeking out about about the mode of transportation.

I've seen many of my clients struggle, particularly holistic health practitioners. They tend to talk endlessly about their boat, "Oh yes. This boat is made from a combination of Reiki, shiatsu, and traeger therapies, and the work that reconnects. It's powerful." Most of them are offering "general help" that doesn't do much to address immediate and pressing symptoms. A lot of holistic practitioners focus on what they think people need instead of what they're struggling with and they're only reaching clients who are already into holistic things.

Sure the details and stories behind the wood you chose for your boat's deck, the way you've rigged your sails, the way you've designed and painted your hull, are fascinating. But they aren't compelling reasons for a prospective client to book passage and climb on board unless you are going where they want to go.

This is one of the simplest notions in business and yet equally the most difficult to grasp.

Many entrepreneurs never really crack the code on this one.

Many entrepreneurs don't understand the need to identify the real pain that their clients feel, and the real results their clients want.

Over the years, I expanded this metaphor to add two more islands.

The first was Island C. Island C represents the reality that some businesses are offering something wonderful and necessary that no one even knows exists and therefore cannot possibly crave. It's an Island that you can't see from Island A, and is barely visible from Island B.

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Island C is what might be possible in the life of ONE person that they hadn't previously considered. This is different than the bigger cause we imagine, which is what we envision for our whole community, or for the world (though they are likely connected).

Island C is the place you got to in your life that you never dreamed possible before. But now you're here! Amazing.

Island B is a promise. Island C is a *possibility*.

Island B is the result a prospective client imagines. It's what they're craving to the extent that they can articulate.

Island C goes beyond this into articulating a client's most deeply felt yearnings. It offers up the hope and the possibility that things could be even better than they imagined possible.

My colleague W. T. S. Tarver, a meditation teacher from Toronto, once articulated it like this:

Island C is where the potential clients would really want to go if they knew about it and could understand what you were saying, but from where they are presently standing (indeed, living) they truly, honestly can't see it. If told about it, Island C might sound so fantastic that it actually can compromise the credibility of the story-telling captain.

As far as they are concerned, everything in the prospective client's actual experience inclines them to believe and understand that all they are shopping for, all they want, all they need is passage to Island B. Stories about Island C are dismissed as myths, hyperboles, "marketing buzz," or even deception or outright lies.

For the entrepreneurs who I coach the "ships' captains" in the metaphor and mindfulness facilitators in this instance, many of their boats are in fact actually registered and berthed at Island C. That's where they stop routinely, do their maintenance, get their supplies, hang out with their friends and the other captains, etc. For them it's part of the regular run. Sure Island B is way better than Island A, but it's just a stop-over on the way to Island C. Who would want to be stuck on Island B, admittedly better though it may be than Island A?

As I see it, all the ordinary (but at times overwhelming and perfectly real) things that most people complain about most of the time are all on Island A. I see concentration, clarity, equanimity and all of the "relative" and pragmatic benefits of meditation to be Island B phenomena, including the list of the five indicia of when a practice is said to be "working". I locate the "transcendent" benefits of

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deep practice on Island C. Everything to do with actual technique is the boat: analogous to rigging, hull design, etc.”

The island I identified after A and B was Island Z which was to represent where people silently feared they might end up if they never got off Island A. such fears that people expend an enormous amount of energy walking around ignoring each day.

Together, these represent the journey your customer is on.

It's like that.

To to sum it up:

Island A: I'm lonely.

Island B: I want to date someone.

Island C: We fall in love and say, “I never knew I could feel this way.”

Island Z: I'm going to die alone never having known true love.

Island A: I'm sick.

Island B: I want to be healthy.

Island C: We cleanse, do yoga, start juicing and say, “I never knew I could feel this way.”

Island Z: I'm never going to get well. I'm going to fall apart.

Island A: I'm broke.

Island B: I want to to be able to pay my bills on time and have money left over.

Island C: We do the work needed to handle our money and say, “I never imagined I could feel so at peace and proud in my relationship to money.”

Island Z: I'm going to become a bag lady.

Island A: I'm full of angst and depression.

Island B: I want to feel good again.

Island C: We get deep into our personal healing work and one day wake up saying, “I feel so beautiful and light. I feel so at peace.”

Island Z: I'll end up killing myself or being a hermit and dying alone.

Five Reasons to Figure Out Islands A and B

Why bother figuring what your clients' Island A and B are and articulating them well in your marketing? Five reasons.

Reason #1: It keeps prospective clients riveted to your marketing.

In the beginning, keep your focus on clients' deeper needs, not your product/service. You must speak directly to the need – hit them right between the eyes. Don't dance around it. If it's focused on a significant problem of theirs, they will be willing to read a detailed sales letter.

Reason #2: It compels prospective clients to act.

Not only are they more likely to read more information, they're more likely to pick up the phone and place an order.

People don't get on your boat because they love it. They get on your boat to get off Island A or to get to Island B. Until they perceive some relevance in what you do for their life – nothing happens. And why should it?

Reason #3: It gives you a powerful opening to every cold sales conversation you have.

How do most cold 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, you instantly get their attention and interest; you interrupt and engage them. For free lessons on how to do this, go to: unlockthegame.com

Clarifying Island A and B will give you a compelling opening for your homepage or sales letter, and every presentation or cold call you ever do.

If your marketing speaks to a significant problem of your potential client's, you'd be shocked how much they're willing to read. A 30-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.**

Reasons #4: It allows you to qualify prospective clients almost instantly.

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.

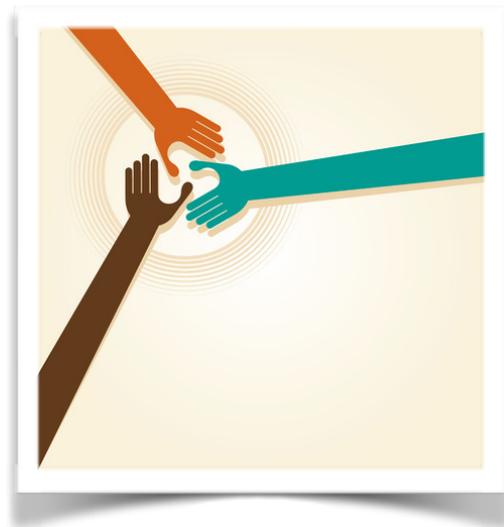
There are so many elements of whether things are a fit or not – but the fastest, clearest and most important one is this according to you client: “can you help me with a problem I’m experiencing?”

If the problem we solve is fuzzy, so will your clients’ minds be when they’re trying to figure out if it’s a fit. **Always remember this: the confused mind says “no.”**

Reason #5: Prospective clients feel a profound sense of trust in you.

They feel profoundly safe with you because they know that you understand them. Don’t underestimate the power of this. 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.”

Your capacity to understand this story and articulate it well is at the heart of how successful, or not, your business will be.



If you can articulate any prospective client’s lived experiences and problems even better than they can, they will experience a profound amount of trust with you.

They will feel safe with you because they know that you understand them. Don’t underestimate the power of this. In the client’s mind the logic goes like this: “if they [you] understand my problems so clearly, they [you] must understand how to design a solution as well.”

On a personal level the client may love you dearly, or they might give you polite interest at that cocktail party, but on a business level they couldn’t 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 problem on mine?”

They’re coming to you to get something. Your business is just a tool. Your boat is just a boat to them. An means to an end. 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.

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You can articulate your potential client's problems better than they can. You can articulate the needs and inklings that they barely even knew they have 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 not only understand Island A, you know how they feel about being on Island A.

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 in *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 understand our prospect's world because we don't live in their world, no matter how much we try.”

ARI: Understanding more about your prospect's 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

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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.

Listen. Empathize. Guide.

Island A: The Painful Symptom

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

– Plato

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"As a writer, you should not judge, you should understand."
– Ernest Hemingway

"Caidlidh duine air gach cneadh ach a clineadh fhein."
(A man can sleep on every hurt but his own.)
– Scottish Gaelic Proverb

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 important 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 will 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. Empathy is the key. Without it, your business – and especially your marketing – is pointless.

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

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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."

*

**CARPENTER'S RULE:
Measure twice. Cut once.**

*



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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 on digging deep into their situations. Only eight people were there (but by the end of the day I realize I should limit it to six in the future).

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 group's focus and time.

But the details are important. They have five minutes to share what's up for them. Then the group has 30 minutes to make sure they really "get it." We diagnose before we subscribe. For that 30 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 30 minutes than at the beginning.

*

I'm leading a workshop on Non Violent Communication for a housing co-op 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. I ask 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 somewhere that people needed clean water, but then 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."

Measure twice, cut once.

*

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 thousands of marketing messages everyday. People unconsciously filter out 99% of the stimulus coming at them.

What's left? Only what's 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, then they will pay attention. If they can't, they won't. It's really as simple as that.

It makes me think of these words from Chet Holmes in his book *The Ultimate Sales Machine*: "I had a merchant services company as a client. They primarily target retail stores. So in the stadium pitch scenario, their audience is retail store owners. If they walk out there and start off with, 'I'm going to show you why our merchant services are better than anyone else's,' the 90 percent are leaving since they are not in the market for merchant services right now. So what could you say to keep every retailer in the stadium to hear a little more? Here's a great title: "The Five Reasons All Retailers Fail." The tactical executive reading this is already saying, 'But if all I really want to do is sell merchant services, then why would I bother with all this?'"

Why indeed? The answer, in one word if you can believe it, is **relevance**.

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Until the prospect perceives some relevance in what you do to their life – nothing happens.

Perhaps the greatest blunder I see people making in business is thinking that their clients are interested in their products or services; falling into the illusion that *that's* what they're buying from you.

This is not true.

There is a deeper need.

Here is the core truth about marketing and business, the ignorance of which kills countless businesses: people are not buying your product or services – they are buying solutions to problems, relief from pain, fulfillment of needs or results that are self serving to them.

They're coming to you to get something. Your business is just a tool. An means to an end. But what is the end they're after?

That's the million dollar question.

The point is that it isn't about you.

People love people who take them out of pain they thought was inevitable.

And they don't care who it is.

Most practitioners spend so much time trying to articulate what makes them so unique and great. That's important, but far more important is to be able to articulate your clients' problems – as well as their strengths – with empathy and clarity.

Rich Scheffren put it this way in his *Maven Matrix Report*:

You can almost instantly install yourself as your market's dominant Maven, its go-to source, the person and/or company with the best, most authoritative information, the most important information, and it starts with just one thing: CARING MORE . . . The process starts with empathy. You need to articulate your niche's problems better than they have ever done themselves. Prospects have to believe you care before they'll care. If you don't already know your markets "pain points" you're marginalizing your results. You absolutely must do some detective work to find them. Do keyword research, read the most popular blogs in your niche, go to forums and see where people need help, go to Amazon and analyze the comments buyers had to share about what they liked and didn't like in the books covering your market. After you've got a list of the market's pain points – you need to synthesize them into a blanket statement, or even

better a personal story of your own that illustrates your understanding of their frustrations. Become the empathic, heartfelt advocate of a long-suffering market and you can write your own ticket. When your market can see themselves in your story – you’ve just secured their attention.

There are two questions in business:

1. What are you *selling*? What’s the physical product or service you’re selling?
2. What are the clients *buying*? What’s the problem they’re trying to solve? Why do they need your help?

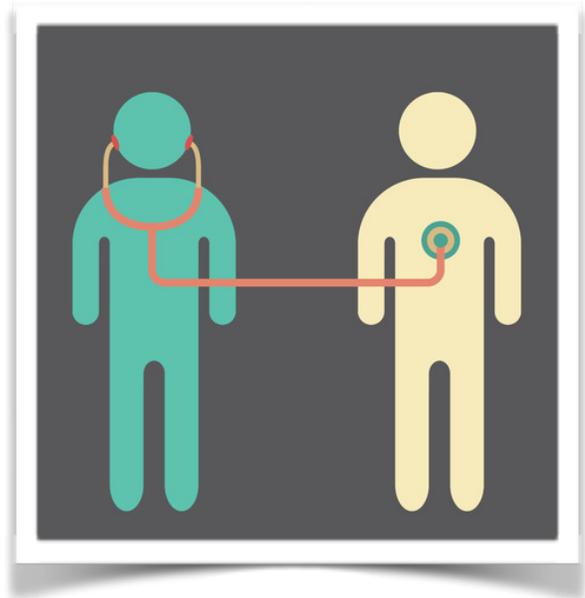
The second question, for most service providers, is much more important.

Their Symptoms vs. Your Diagnosis

“The highest form of knowledge is empathy, for it requires us to suspend our egos and live in another’s world.”

– Bill Bullard

You need to understand their problems (symptoms) before telling them you know what the real problem is (diagnosis).



Here’s a sneaky phrase that sounds like a problem but isn’t. “I work with _____ kinds of people who need to . . .” This isn’t a description of their problem – rather it’s your interpretation and evaluation of what they “need to” do about it.

Instead of articulating your understanding of their current situation and problems, you’re already diagnosing and giving advice. So, if you are doing this, step back and reconnect with your clients’ problems as they experience them.

Too often holistic health practitioners or life coaches say that they will help people with their:

- Limiting Beliefs
- Low Self Esteem
- Unhealed Trauma
- Chronic Stress
- Lack of awareness of how bad their situation is
- Obliviousness to their own power
- Fear of their power

This is fine . . . *if* they actually realize they have those problems.

But most people don’t walk around saying, “now . . . if only I could get over my limiting beliefs.” They’re more likely to walk around thinking, “Why is everyone so mean to me? Why is life so unfair?” Most people with low self esteem wouldn’t say they had it – they would just compensate in whatever way they do – by never saying “no” or being a bully. People with trauma almost never know they have trauma. People with chronic stress rarely realize how bad it is.

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So, you need to identify their symptoms and speak to those. If you just list a bunch of diagnoses (why *you* think they experience their symptoms) you will lose them or, worse yet, never get them.

One of the biggest blunders I see in marketing is entrepreneurs trying to market based on what they think people need. They say things like, “People need to be more grounded and balanced.” or “They need to be more alkaline.” or “They should be more kind.” or “They shouldn’t be so mean.”

But that’s not marketing.

That’s your opinions about other people. That’s you being deep in their business. That’s not empathy showing. It is your deep intolerance of their experience that is the problem. It’s your perspective of them, which they will, almost certainly, not recognize if you say it to them (except, possibly, to take offence to it).

It’s not enough for you to see a problem or an opportunity. Whoever you’re marketing to needs to be aware of it.

The people you’re marketing to are:

- Sitting there craving to meet their soul mate and we’re trying to sell them on opening their heart chakra.
- Trying to make more money and we’re trying to sell them on getting over their limiting beliefs.
- Trying to lose weight and we’re trying to sell them on meditation to become mindful of their thoughts.
- Struggling to not be so stressed and anxious and we’re trying to tell them about the magic of herbalism.

They’re not buying the boat (your modality, the tools you use, your certifications, etc.) they’re buying the journey to 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 the client’s 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 up my point of view in three words.”

And I’d say, “No, you can’t sum up your point of view in three words but you can often sum up the result they’re craving in three words (seven at most).”

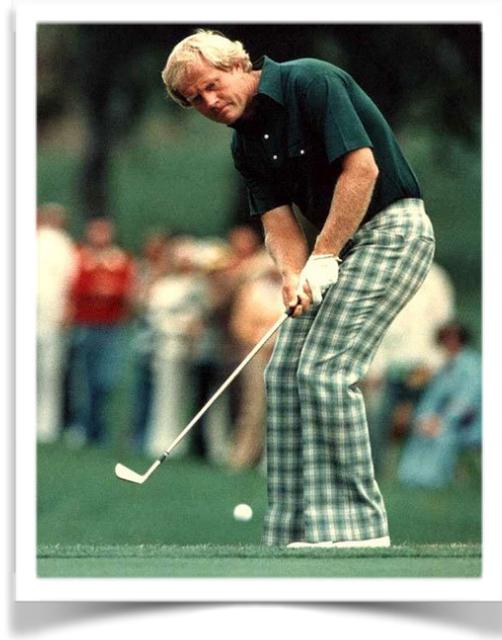
A Story from a Jack Nicklaus:

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 with that, he 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 30 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.

“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 customer’s biggest perceived problem. Give them your solution, or somebody else will.”
– Jay Abraham

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.

Imagine a full page ad in a golf magazine: which headline do you think 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 something like this, “We work with managers who aren’t getting the kind of buy-in they’d like from their employees,” you would be addressing their real concerns. And what’s real for them is that they are rarely to blame. They are probably 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.

*

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?”)

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That phrasing of “Do you know . . . ?” is important.

It’s important that they (the ones listening) *do* know.

It’s important that we speak 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).

Consider this: which of the following headlines do you think is most likely to get people’s attention?

HEADLINE #1:

Do you know how people struggle with always dating the same type of person?

HEADLINE #2:

Do you know how some people’s heart chakras are closed down due to past unresolved karma?

It’s obvious isn’t it? Headline #1 is going to reach people directly.

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?

Empathy needs to be at the heart of your marketing.

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

Our business exists to help people with their problems.

It’s a simple enough idea – but the implications are profound and applications often totally overlooked.

Do you know Aesop's fable about the lion stuck in the hunters' net?

In the fable, a lion wants to eat a mouse who has woken him up. The mouse begs forgiveness and promises to return the favour if ever he is given the opportunity.

The mouse also makes the point that such unworthy prey as he should not stain the lion's great paws. The lion has a fit of uncontrollable laughter and when he recovers, he lets the mouse go, saying that he's not had such a good laugh in ages.

Later, the lion is captured by hunters and tied to a tree. The lion roars with all his might for help. The mouse hears the lion's roaring pleas for help and frees him by gnawing through the ropes.

The moral of this fable is that little friends may prove great friends.



Here's the point: do you think the lion cared *who* took the freed him from the hunters' net? Or what particular set of *tools* the mouse used? What *technique* was used? *Where* the mouse learned it? No. Maybe afterwards. But the first and foremost thing on his mind was "get me out of this net."

"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 on 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 can respect the integrity of this stance, I also think it’s entirely misguided. These practitioners are often failing profoundly in their marketing. What often happens is that they fall in love with describing their amazing boat and what their points of view are.

Always remember: empathy before education.

It’s been said, “They don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Sometimes people just need 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 are willing to articulate that in your marketing – an amazing thing happens: first of all, you get your potential clients’ attention. Secondly, those people don’t feel manipulated, they feel seen. If you can articulate their problems well, they feel heard, understood, and acknowledged.

And that creates something else – profound trust and connection. If you can give your clients 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 so well, then your solutions must be equally well thought-out.

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And, once a relationship has developed – you may even be able to help your clients 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 (Island C) – and wouldn't that be a wonderful gift to give them?

Ask yourself: *“What's going on with my ideal clients that makes what I'm offering relevant?”*

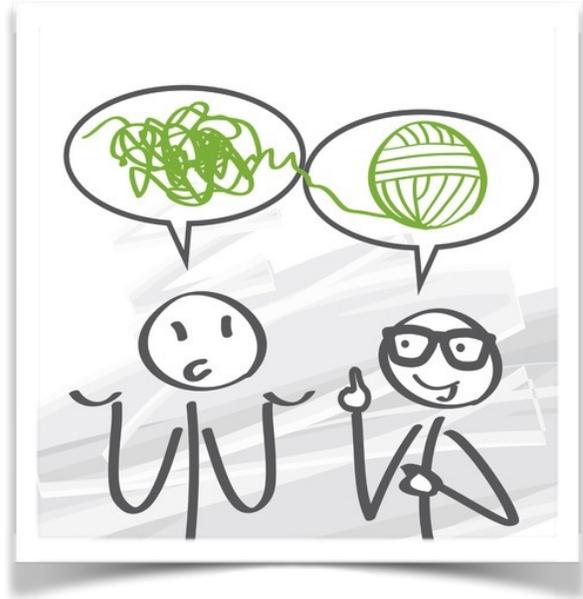
If there's no problem, there's no relevance.

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

Coaching Session: Infidelity and Truth

In 2015, I had a coaching session over Facebook with a relationship coach named Claudia Neely. She expressed her work at the beginning of our conversation as, “You know how committed couples go through hurt and pain when one of them hasn't been monogamous? I help those couples find a more open, honest and authentic relationship.”

To introduce this conversation and what I saw with Claudia's initial description:



Too often people come up with an initial wording or way of articulating what they do, and then they stop. They don't keep tinkering with it and reworking it to see if they can get to the heart of of that issue.

And one of the big things that can get in the way is wanting to talk about our point of view and philosophy too soon, before relevance has been established. Having written a book *Point of View Marketing* I'm certainly not against delving into this, but it has to come after relevance has been established with a client, not before.

I also often see entrepreneurs wanting to talk about what they think people *need* before talking about what they are *craving*. I see them talking about how their clients *should* see things before acknowledging how their clients already *do* seen things. I see this all the time.

So, what follows is the transcript of a conversation I had with Claudia in the private Facebook group for a niching program I led a few years ago.

Claudia: Okay, here's my attempt at describing what I do: “You know how committed couples go through hurt and pain when one of them hasn't been monogamous? I help those couples find a more open, honest and authentic relationship.”

Tad: Great! This is really clear. a few thoughts and potential tweaks:

Island A: “You know how in some couples, even though they love each other so much and seem to have it so together . . . an affair happens or cheating and it's so devastating and painful for both of them.”

Island B: “I help them overcome the hurt and loss of trust to build an even more open, honest and authentic relationship than they had before (even when it seems impossible).”

or

Island B: “Instead of having the situation of a partner cheating on the other be a reason to break up, I help them use it as an opportunity to break through to a more profound level of openness, honesty and authentic relating than they had before (even though it seems impossible).”

Claudia: Hmmmm, yes to fleshing this out but I want to be authentic too. I won't use the language of “affair” or “cheating” because I don't believe in either. Non-monogamy is not necessarily “cheating” or wrong. Lying, however, is incredibly hurtful. Some couples I work with do re-commit – more openly and honestly – to monogamy, and some do not. Some have split up. Yet all have been much more honest, peaceful and real about what they need, why the lies happened (usually lies are on both sides), and how to be more authentic about inner needs in whatever future they decide is right for them. Polyamorous couples struggle with issues around lying, too – around agreed limits, fluid bonding, all sorts of things around agreements and lies.

Tad: Right, so polyamorous couples may be *one* target market and more traditional relationships might be another one. this might be important in your marketing because for traditional monogamous relationships I *would* use the word cheating or affairs – even though you don't believe in it, because it's how *they* talk about it. with poly couples maybe you don't need to. And I would weave “lying” into island A. and for Island B

“Instead of having the situation of a partner cheating on the other be a reason to break up, I help them use it as an opportunity to break through to a more profound level of openness, honesty and authentic relating than they had before – whether or not they decide to stay together (and even though it seems impossible).”

Claudia: Oooh! I like that Tad! The first part of the map is to get rid of the words “cheating” and “affair!”

“You know how caring and loving couples experience non-monogamy as cheating, go through tremendous pain, and often break up – or get pushed to stay together? I help those couples use this time as an opportunity to reach new levels of openness, honesty and authentic relationships, whether or not

they decide to stay together (and even though it can seem impossible to do so!).”

And . . .

“You know how poly couples and lovers can experience a violation of trust that can shatter a relationship, but our greater culture ignores that this is so painful because the relationship isn't monogamous? I help those lovers work through the violation and find a more honest and authentic path forward – whether the lovers stay together (and even though it may seem impossible to do so!)”

Tad: Ok. So, let's clarify the focus of the exercise. Right now we're trying to articulate the “who” in such a way that they would read it and say, “Wow! That's totally me.” That's it. That's all we're doing. Right now we're not trying to change anyone's mind or share any of our philosophy (which actually becomes vital later).

So when you say, “The first part of the map is to get rid of the words ‘cheating’ and ‘affair?’” I love that and it's doesn't fit here. That's an issue of point of view which I've written a whole book about.

If the people reading your description aren't there yet, you will absolutely piss them off. Which might be fine. So it's really important to ask yourself – do you want to only work with people who share your point of view on “cheating” and “affairs” being words we should get rid of or do you want to reach people outside that. There's no right answer here.

I can say that if I was married and my wife slept with another man and I read these words, I would feel 100% ungotten and judged:

“You know how caring and loving couples experience non-monogamy as cheating . . .”

I'd say, “Of course it's cheating! We had an agreement and she broke it. She had an affair!” I would stop reading the ad and dismiss it.

I think so much of marketing is about translating, empathy and meeting people where they are rather than insisting they immediately see things as we see them.

For example you could lead a workshop called: “Getting over Infidelity” or “Healing from Cheating” or “After the Affair: Seven Steps to Healing from the Pain of Infidelity” and *in* that workshop one of the key things you could unpack

are concepts around those words and why we might want to let go of them – which could be powerful for people.

But if you lead with it in your marketing? Only those who totally agree with you will lean in.

Does this make sense?

When you wrote:

“You know how poly couples and lovers can experience a violation of trust that can shatter a relationship, but our greater culture ignores that this is so painful because the relationship isn't monogamous? I help those lovers work through the violation and find a more honest and authentic path forward – whether the lovers stay together (and even though it may seem impossible to do so!)”

Boom. that's so clear and strong. I totally get it and I think you'd have a lot of “that's me!” with this one.

Claudia: Tad! I hear ya and here is an attempt (deep breath):

“You know how really loving couples in the aftermath of an affair struggle with all sorts of societal messages about how they should suck it up and stay together or give up on their relationship and just get divorced already? Well I help those couples see how they can grow through the hurt and pain, reconnect to their partner's truths, and find their own authentic path that they choose.”

Tad: Wow! I fucking love it! Bam! That's so beautiful! I *love* how you've framed it (accurately I think) as how society has this black and white sense of things and that you need to either stay or go kind of thing and I love how you're bringing a third alternative to it.

Claudia: Phew. Thank you again. And yup, we are a black and white kinda culture . . . thanks for helping me through this. Awesome process.

Tad: I could even see this:

“Well I help those couples see how they can actually use the experience to grow their relationship through the hurt and pain (and maybe even recreate it in a new and better form than it was before).”

or

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“I help those couples get to the heart of why it happened in the first place and make the changes in their relationship so that they’re living by their own inspiring agreements with each other instead of the rules imposed by society.” (not sure about this one – kind of Island C but just jamming.)

Claudia: LOVE the last one! Both rock, though. Can I steal them?

Tad: Go crazy. Keep jamming on it. Keep fiddling. Again, the only real test that matters here at the basic level is could you show this to someone who’s clearly in your little circle and have them say, “Wow! That’s me! I need that!” so there are no real rules on how to do that. The more feedback you can get from those people on the wording the better. you’re doing so great

Claudia: oh, yea, I am fiddling! will post! gotta stare out some windows to get the right words . . . My latest fiddle (after some soup):

“You know how really loving couples in the aftermath of an affair struggle with all sorts of societal messages about how they should suck it up and stay together or give up on their relationship and just get divorced already? Well I help those couples see how they can grow through the hurt and pain without shame or blame, reconnect to their own and their partner's truths, and help them recommit to a new, healthy, and unique relationship that doesn't have to conform to anybody else's boxes.”

I love this example because it shows the multiple iterations that these niche statements can go through and how easy it is to fall into language that loses people. It’s so easy to speak about what we think they need rather than where they’re hurting or our diagnosis instead of their symptoms. And it’s easy to come up with an articulation that’s okay and not push further to find the wording that’s more compelling.

I include this conversation to encourage you to keep crafting the way you speak about what you do so that it’s as relevant and compelling as possible. This is why getting feedback is so important (even though we all secretly hate it). We need to hear, candidly, how our words are landing for people and if our current wording is expressing what we were hoping to express or if it’s losing people or giving utterly the wrong impression. It’s so easy to speak in vague, nebulous and lofty terms. What’s hard is to make it concrete and down to earth.

But I also share this conversation and process so you can see how much clearer and better it got with a willingness to keep working on it. And it didn’t take long.

Why Your Clients Can't Have What They Want

Often, as you hone your niche, your articulations of *who* you are trying to reach will include a result (Island B) but it will often be in the context of “and they feel clueless about how to achieve it.”

It is very rare that a business exists outside of the context of solving some problem.

Sometimes the reality is that they know what they want but that they lack the skills, time or money to achieve the result on their own.

And so this will often sound something like:

“They want _____ but _____ prevents them from having it.”

“They need _____ but they lack the _____ to create it.”

“They’re craving _____ but they feel clueless about how to achieve it.”

It’s like a headline I saw recently: “Thinking of buying a digital camera – but don’t have the foggiest clue of where to start?”

For your business, that could translate to:

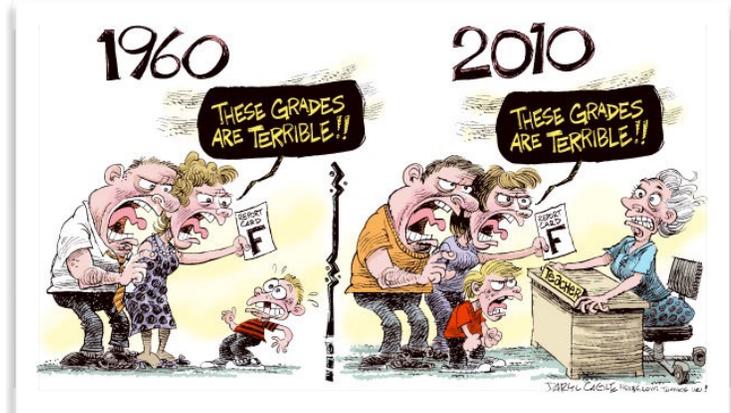
- “I work with people who want to start an organic garden in their backyard but feel overwhelmed at the idea and don’t have the foggiest clue of where to start.”
- “I work with farmers who are frustrated with how much they’re paying for electricity and would love to get off the grid but don’t know what other options they might have.”
- “I work with people who are frustrated and annoyed with the look of their homes but lack the time or eye for design to make it how they want it to be.”

What’s key here is that you don’t just say “I help _____ kind of people to get _____ result.” and *skip* the problem all together. I think it is wise to still speak to the problem and how they feel about the problem.

Sometimes the problem is what prevents them from getting the result on their own.

Difficult Teachers: A Marketing Lesson

I recently had lunch with my friend Govert van Ginkel. I hadn't seen him in a couple of years but we both share a passion for Non Violent Communication and how we can engage in healing and supporting others best. He and his partner TR were in town and we went for lunch at one of my favourite cafes in town, Noorish.



Govert was updating me on the past two years and the kind of work he's been doing and the difficulty of pitching "Non Violent Communication" type workshops to various groups.

"I was brought in by a Muslim school a while ago and they wanted me to do some team building amongst the staff to deal with some of the ways they related to each other. The challenge is that the staff all thought they communicated really well with each other. So I knew they wouldn't really be open to that. So, we came up with a different topic!"

"What was that?"

"How to deal with difficult parents!"

"That's amazing. From a marketing angle that's so amazing. What happened?"

"Well, we played a bunch of games with them and through those games that were about how to deal with difficult parents they actually began to realize the ways they communicated with each other that weren't so great. They began to see the ways they weren't such a great team that no one was talking about."

It reminded me of my conversation with Sexologist Jessica O'Reilly about how she would lead workshops called "How to Blow His/Her Mind" that would sell out vs. tantra workshops that would try to market directly to the deeper need.

It's really hard to sell things to people that they don't want – even when you think they "need" it.

You might see their limiting patterns, dysfunction and what they need so incredibly clearly . . . but if they don't agree with your diagnosis and assessment they're unlikely to take your advice or follow your guidance.

So much of helping people is about finding the right way in – the doorway. It’s about figuring out how to reach people without pushing them. How to honour people and invite them to consider more.

And, in my experience, the best way to do this is to meet them where they’re at. The best way to reach people is with empathy for what they’re actually struggling with vs. frustration and impatience that they’re not ready to “get down to the real work” (as you see it to be).

Govert could have tried to lecture the staff about their resistance to this important work he was offering and rolled his eyes at them thinking, “How can they not see how incredibly dysfunctional they are!” But how far do you suspect that would have gotten him?

Often our thoughts that our clients should be any different than they are is exactly what kills our marketing. Because then our marketing takes on the tone of shaming. Of making them “wrong” for being who they are.

But Govert looked carefully at the situation and asked himself, “is there anywhere that these people are struggling (and know that they’re struggling) that I could offer help? Is there any difficulty they’re experiencing that I could help relieve that might open the door to deeper work if it goes well?”

And he found it: these poor teachers are criticized constantly by parents. And he empathized with that. Imagine, you do your best all day only to be yelled at by a parent for not doing it perfectly enough? Ouch.

And so of course they were open to help with that. And once they’d met Govert, he helped them see other areas in which they were struggling. And once they saw their own struggles in his work, they became open to further guidance. They were humbled by what they saw about themselves. But they weren’t shamed. People are open to feeling humbled, but no one wants to feel humiliated. People want to do better; they don’t want to feel like they’re not doing enough.

Empathize. Meet your clients with kindness at the place where they are. You might be surprised where it will take you and where they might ask you to go with them from that starting point.

Here’s another important point. Empathy doesn’t mean the absence of responsibility. I’m not suggesting coddling people for their entire life and saying, “Awww. Yeah, it’s so hard.” and hiding the impacts of their behaviour from them. I’m saying that coming from a place of shaming, blaming, and diagnosing doesn’t work.

As a friend pointed out, “There will be times when the client is clearly causing their own pain. Maybe they can see it, and maybe they can’t. So how do you approach that? With empathy and compassion, bringing them to a place where they can see they have the power to remove the source

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of their own pain by changing their habits. It's very human and normal for us to be our own worst enemies. So Govert has provided a good example of helping the client take themselves to the place of seeing their accountability, without hitting them over the head with it. Some people point out our mistakes overtly, others do it covertly, while he does it . . . Govertly.”

The Four Core Symptoms

When you first start to sorting out what Island A is for your business, it can be hard. There's a good chance that the work you do can help a lot of people. And there's a good chance that you're interested in working with a lot of different types of people.

Where do you even start?

How do you begin to find a focus?

The notion of the Four Core Symptoms is one that I heard first from Max Simon and it struck me as an incredibly useful tool. This won't work for everyone but I've found it helps people sort out an initial direction for their marketing.

The Four Core Symptoms is based on the idea that there seem to only be four areas of life that people rank as important when polled. If you were to ask a stadium full of people to write down their most stressful symptoms in life, 99% of them would fall into one of these four categories. Another way to say this might be that there are four main "relevance filters" people have and, whenever they come across something new (e.g. some new health product, budget planner, or exercise craze), they're wondering, "Could this help or hurt me in one of these four areas?" If they think it can help, they'll lean in. If they think it will hurt, they'll lean out.

If you're feeling stuck identifying the Island A of your business, this is a solid place to start.

Look at your business, consider which one of these four symptoms is primary.

And, when I say primary, I mean which of these four tracks do *your idea clients'* symptoms primarily fall into.

Health: physical health, tired all the time, overweight, feeling weak, stiff and achey, poor digestion, poor sleep, chronic headaches, lower back pain.

Money: this could mean poor cashflow, bad money management, unsure how to save money or where to invest it, not enough clients, etc. Poor sales, people burning out, ineffective marketing, work/life conflicts, no processes or consistency, staff feeling overwhelmed, overspending or undersaving, poor product or service quality, poor customer service, not enough income, high turnover rates, low morale, too much debt, unemployment.

Peace of Mind: stress, lack of a sense of meaning, never enough time, lack of confidence, addictions, boredom, phobias, hate their job, overwhelmed, grief, no motivation, frozen with fear, uncertain what to do next, paralyzed by too many options, life has become empty, wondering “who am I really?” existential angst, yearning for something but don't know what.

Relationships: dating, marriage, no sex life, kids don't listen, fighting with their romantic partner all the time, low libido, feeling like they're not a very good mom/dad/boyfriend/wife/sibling, employee conflict, unable to set boundaries, feeling unloved, unhappy marriage or relationship, poor communication, poor social skills.

You might be a naturopath who sees all physical health concerns as having roots in the spiritual level and be tempted to say, “Aha, so I'm in the spiritual track then.” But you're not. You're in the health track.

You might be a spiritual guide to people who focuses on helping people through their marital struggles. If that's your focus and if the symptoms they have are all centred around marital struggles, then you are in the relationship track.

Of course, nothing is so cut and dry, but it can be incredibly useful to decide for yourself, based on the symptoms of your ideal clients, which of these four is dominant or which symptoms you feel strongest about helping people to learn to handle.

Your business offering almost certainly touches on all of them but ask yourself which of these brings people to your door the most often.

Choosing one of these four symptoms to focus on has the immense benefit of making everything in your marketing life simpler.

It's easier to write sales letters. It's easier to figure out the hubs for your business. And it's so much easier for people to talk about what you do because their mind can categorize your work in a way that makes intuitive sense to them.

Again, once you begin to work with people, you can speak to the other three symptoms and show them how you see all four being connected (because of course they are). But this exploration is all about ‘how do you get their attention?’

You get your clients' attention by speaking to what's already relevant to them.

What's already relevant to them?

These four symptoms: Health. Money. Peace of Mind. Relationships.

Relevance: Shallow and Wide vs. Narrow and Deep

I recall seeing the following ad text from an expressive arts therapist:

I am an expressive arts therapist who works with children and adults.

Do you relate to any of these questions?

- *Do you feel dissatisfied with life?*
- *Have you been feeling down for some time?*
- *Are you tired of struggling and suffering?*
- *Are you often angry and moody?*
- *Are you or your children unsure about yourselves in the company of others?*
- *Are you or your children having trouble relating to others in your lives?*
- *Are you facing a life-transition in which you feel scared or unsure of yourself?*
- *Are you experiencing anxiety at work or at home?*
- *Are you suffering from a loss that leaves you deeply saddened or overwhelmed?*
- *Are you going through creative blocks that paralyze you?*
- *Are you longing to feel joy and a certain lightness of being in your life?*

*If you have answered yes to any of the above, click here to see how the arts and I can help . . .
I am also an Arts Educator. I facilitate exploring the arts at local Ontario Early Years Centres, the Dundas Valley School of Art and at my studio in the expressive arts classes.*

So this person works with children and adults. Well, that's everyone.

And then the questions . . . as you read them over can you imagine any human being who couldn't answer yes to all of these?

So that would seem to be a win! Everyone can identify.

It's true but the identification, while wide in its appeal, is immensely shallow. People will say, "yes" to those questions but not, "YES! Oh my God! How did you know? I thought I was the only one!"



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And so marketing will always be the balancing act of wide-and-narrow with shallow-and-deep. If your business is in a small town, you'll have to go wide and shallow but, if you're marketing to the whole world on the internet, then narrow and deep is likely a better approach.

But what does that look like? We will look at it in the next section.

Examples of Island A

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One of the best ways to learn about what Island A can look like is to see as many examples as possible.



In the following section, you will read a number of case studies of people who have articulated the symptoms their ideal clients live with empathetically, clearly, and succinctly. I hope they help you in articulating yours.

There are a lot of examples here, likely more than you need, but my hope in including them all is that you might find a few that are relevant to what you do.

My comments are in *italics*.

Example #1: Island A for an Executive Director of an NGO

A friend of mine wrote me a while ago and said, “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 that person trying to get an Executive Director’s attention I wouldn’t have the headline be, “Is your organization out of alignment?” That would be my diagnosis about the underlying causes. That would be me speaking to the sign and not the symptom. 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 a lot of 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

Example #2: Non Violent Communication Workshop

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 down your heart.

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?

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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 exactly what's wrong with them when you 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?

Notice that this ad doesn't say, "You should be more kind," or, "You need to be less violent in your communication." It simply speaks directly to very particular, narrow moments in people's lives that I think people could identify with.

Example #3: Sexual Enrichment Counsellor

Kristi Beatty, a sexual enrichment counsellor in Calgary articulates the experience of many women when she lists the following symptoms:

- 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.

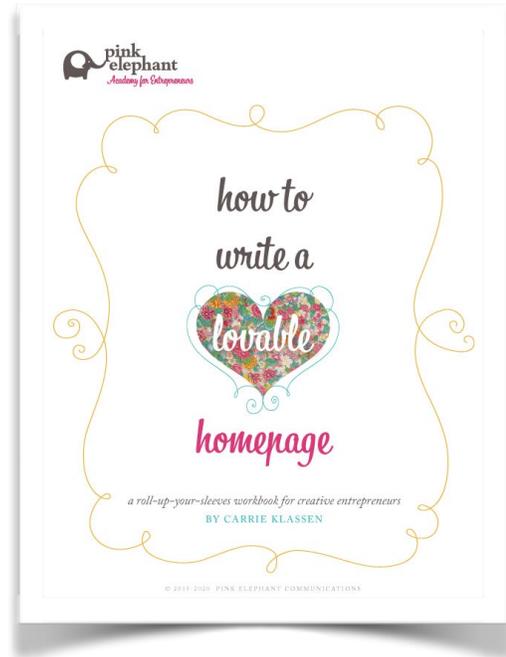
What Kristi does brilliantly here is not only name very specific moments in a woman's life but also how they feel about them and their secret, inner thoughts about them. She writes this so well that I imagine some women might read this and say, "How did she know? I thought I was the only one!"

Example #4: How to Write a Lovable Homepage

Carrie Klassen has written a wonderful eBook called “How to Write a Lovable Homepage” and she articulates the symptoms of her potential buyers beautifully. This is a short and sweet example of a narrow niche. It’s for a very particular group of people (entrepreneurs) who are wanting to accomplish a very specific thing.

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



Example #5: Rebellious Entrepreneur Tele-Summit

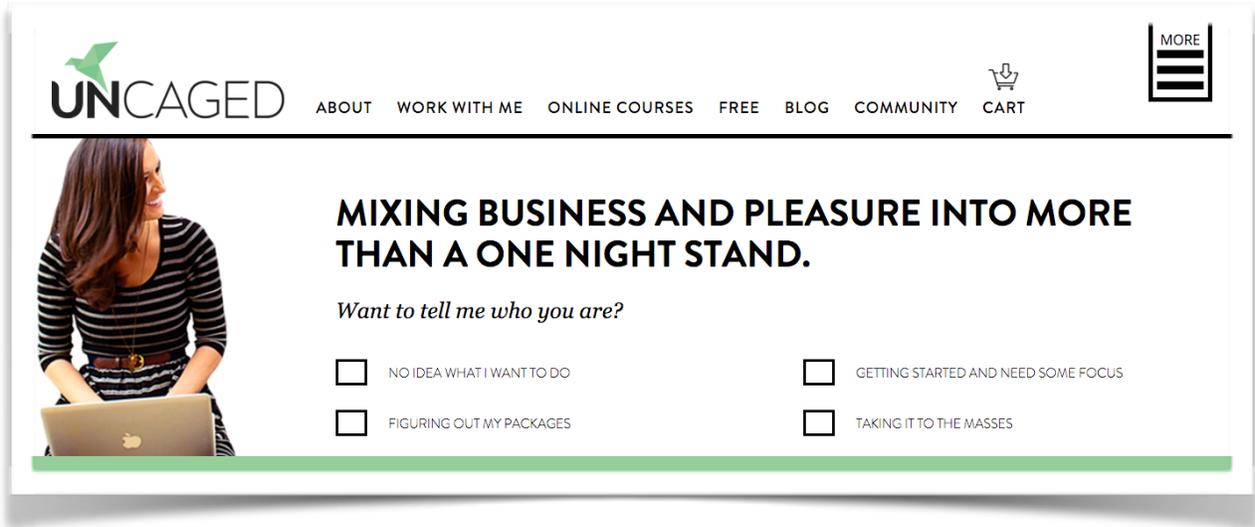
I came across this tele-summit the other day and I loved their write up for its bold specificity and strong opinions. In this case study you'll see them speaking to the more subtle symptoms many entrepreneurs have experienced in the recent boom of business coaches online. They're speaking to what I'd call "industry frustrations." In every industry, there are things that annoy people. Plumbers show up later, have their ass hanging out of their pants, charge more than the initial quote and don't fix it right the first time. These can be symptoms people have too. So, you can think about your own industry and ask yourself, "What am I sick of in my own industry? What do others secretly hate about my industry?" And then offer something different than that and name those things in your marketing.

The Rebellious Entrepreneur Tele-Summit is for you if:

- You are DONE with being like everyone else and doing BUSINESS just like everyone else
- You're ready to be a leader
- You're over the popularity contest on Twitter
- You don't care if your website isn't a Wordpress website
- You think squeeze pages are so LAST season
- You and what you offer in business are NOT mainstream
- You're sick of registering for tele-classes that don't provide any real value
- You're sick of giving away good-quality content away for FREE to help you "build your brand"

Example #6: The Uncaged Life

I love this example from Rebecca Tracey of TheUncagedLife.com



The first thing you see when you go to TheUncagedLife.com are four options. If you click on one it takes you to a page that tells you more about how she can help you with that.

Option 1: No Idea What I Want To Do

That's an Island A description if I ever heard it with the Island B (figuring out what I want to do) implied.

Option 2: Figuring Out My Packages

Island B. Clear and simple.

Option 3: Getting Started and Need Some Focus

Sounds like Island A ("I'm just beginning my business!") mixed with Island B (getting focused).

Option 4: Taking It To The Masses

This is a clear and compelling Island B.

Example #7: Pink Elephant

This is one of my favourite homepages I've ever seen because it's not about the boat at all. It's not about her, it's about you as the person visiting the website. pinkelephantcommunications.com



Carrie Klassen of Pink Elephant is the Audrey Hepburn of Canadian marketing. I love her and her work immensely.

Notice how the first things you see on her homepage are not about her or her boat but about you as the person visiting it.

Notice how she speaks to the real experiences people have and what they yearn for:

- Marketing can be quiet, gentle, and kind . . . and still be marketing.
- You want to make a living doing what you love.
- It'd be nice to have enough.

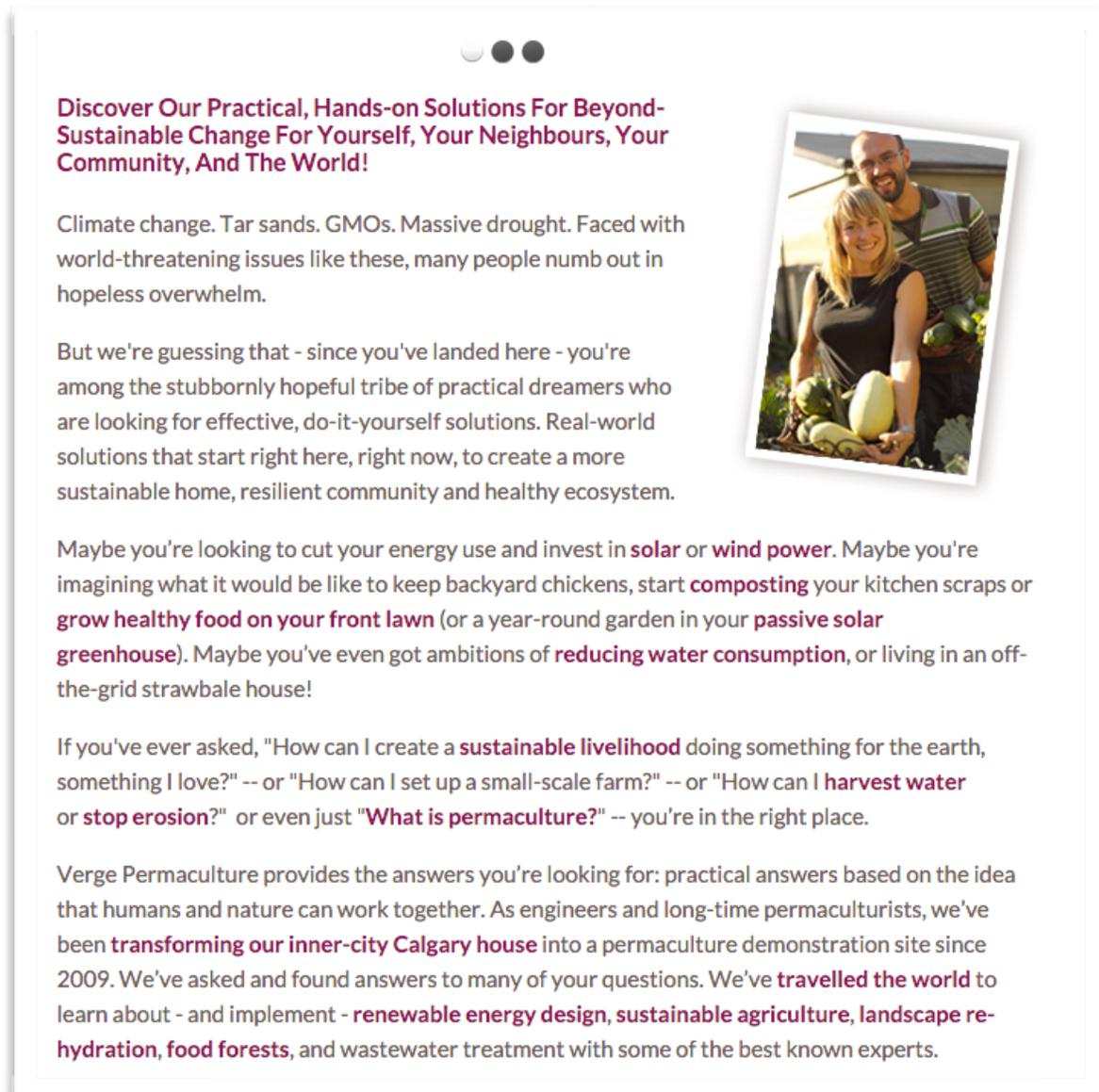
And she does it without garish headlines, big red buttons and hype filled language. This is a wonderful case study in how you can say them same thing in different tones and have it attract a different type of person.

Simple. Direct. Brilliant.

Example #8: Verge Permaculture

The good folks at VergePermaculture.ca nail it in their homepage text below too. Notice how specific they are in what they reference as things their people might not like (e.g. climate change, tar sands, GMO's, etc) and what they'd be into (e.g. DIY solutions). And then they speak right to the personal by addressing the specific results those people might want to accomplish (e.g. investing in solar or wind, starting composting, growing food, living off the grid, etc).

The section "If you've ever asked . . ." is brilliant and names the secret thoughts people have.



Discover Our Practical, Hands-on Solutions For Beyond-Sustainable Change For Yourself, Your Neighbours, Your Community, And The World!

Climate change. Tar sands. GMOs. Massive drought. Faced with world-threatening issues like these, many people numb out in hopeless overwhelm.

But we're guessing that - since you've landed here - you're among the stubbornly hopeful tribe of practical dreamers who are looking for effective, do-it-yourself solutions. Real-world solutions that start right here, right now, to create a more sustainable home, resilient community and healthy ecosystem.



Maybe you're looking to cut your energy use and invest in **solar** or **wind power**. Maybe you're imagining what it would be like to keep backyard chickens, start **composting** your kitchen scraps or **grow healthy food on your front lawn** (or a year-round garden in your **passive solar greenhouse**). Maybe you've even got ambitions of **reducing water consumption**, or living in an off-the-grid strawbale house!

If you've ever asked, "How can I create a **sustainable livelihood** doing something for the earth, something I love?" -- or "How can I set up a small-scale farm?" -- or "How can I **harvest water** or **stop erosion**?" or even just "**What is permaculture**?" -- you're in the right place.

Verge Permaculture provides the answers you're looking for: practical answers based on the idea that humans and nature can work together. As engineers and long-time permaculturists, we've been **transforming our inner-city Calgary house** into a permaculture demonstration site since 2009. We've asked and found answers to many of your questions. We've **travelled the world** to learn about - and implement - **renewable energy design, sustainable agriculture, landscape re-hydration, food forests**, and wastewater treatment with some of the best known experts.

Example #9: Heart of Business

Here's Mark Silver's homepage from HeartofBusiness.com nails it with the headline speaking to the silent pain many conscious entrepreneurs feel and then naming the result they most crave in the sub-headline. The rest of the page fleshes it out.

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 not exactly a job description for what you most want to do. No job gives you the freedom that being self-employed does, nor 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."

It doesn't have to be that way.

Whatever your calling, you can be effective, full of integrity and in your heart with marketing, money and doing business.



Example #10: Jane the Practitioner

Years ago, I wrote the following piece as a way to convey Island A and Island B through story. I wanted to take the story I was hearing over and over from my clients and tell it in my own words so that they might read it and say, “That’s me!”

And that’s just what’s happened. I can’t tell you how many holistic health practitioners have read this and told me, “Oh my God! How do you know?”

Here it is.

A Common Story: Jane the Practitioner

by Tad Hargrave

Chapter 1: The Itch

Jane looks at the lives of her family and friends and shudders. Many of them seem to be trapped in jobs and relationships that don’t inspire them and, more often than not, drain them. They eat foods that she knows are hurting their health. They don’t have passions or activities that fulfill them. She doesn’t want that kind of life for herself.

Jane wants to feel alive. She’s not quite sure why she’s so unsatisfied, she can’t quite put her finger on it, or even clearly articulate the alternative she’s craving. But something feels . . . off. It’s like a vague itch that she keeps trying to scratch but can never quite reach.

Chapter 2: Inspiration Strikes

Everything changes after a friend of Jane’s introduces her to a holistic healing modality that makes a huge difference in her life. She is skeptical at first but the more she looks into it – the more “sold” she is. And, as Jane applies it to her own life – she begins to notice changes. Her health improves, her relationships get better, she’s better able to set boundaries and she is feeling more and more at peace.



And that’s when a light-bulb goes on for Jane: a lot of people seem to be making it as holistic practitioners and coaches . . . why not her? She could do this for a living!

So, she does some research and decides to get certified in the technique or modality that had the most impact on her.

She spends years (and thousands of dollars) doing this. She spends years learning the philosophy and practical applications of her craft. And the more she learns, the more she loves it. It's implied that once the program is over she'll have everything she needs to run a successful practice. "If you build it," she tells herself. "They will come."

Eventually, Jane graduates.

Chapter 3: Reality Strikes Back

After all those studies, it dawns on Jane that she has no idea where to start. She immediately feels overwhelmed. The question of "how do I start a business?" circles in her head and she can't get rolling. So, she looks around at what others are doing. She follows suit and spends even more money on a gorgeous logo, business cards, and flyers. And she tells all of her friends that she's in business. Jane has hung her proverbial shingle.

But a few years later — despite best efforts — Jane still finds herself struggling to attract as many of the kinds of clients she most wants to work with. She places a few ads in the local new age publications but gets an abysmal response on them. Each day she checks her voicemail and email hoping to find it full of bookings from people who saw her flyers or ads or posters at the local organic food store but . . . they never seem to come in at the levels she's hoping for.



Jane has never made more than \$20,000 per year, even on her best year.

The other thing that Jane is finding discouraging is that a lot of the clients she works with don't seem to want more than a "bandaid." They don't really seem willing to take full responsibility for their own healing — they just seem to want her to "do her thing" on them. And then when she successfully helps them heal . . . they don't need to come back. So Jane waves them farewell and is struck by her need to replace that income somehow.

And then there are the disappearing clients. Some people would come in for a session or two with Jane, seem very happy with her work, some even tip her generously, and then they just . . . vanish. But they were just getting into the juicy part of her course of treatment, she thought she was clear that there was more to be done to get the desired result.

And Jane is left wondering, “did I do something wrong? What happened?”

And the worst part is that she has no idea why she’s still struggling.

Chapter 4: A New Hope

After a lot of heartfelt self-reflection, reading, and commiserating chats with other colleagues about the challenge of getting and keeping clients, Jane realizes what the problem is: she’s only offering one modality. So, she goes back to school (and spends a lot more time and money) to learn some new modalities and techniques to offer her clients. Some of them seem thrilled – others seem nonplussed.



And that’s when Jane starts to see a problem that’s been created by her expanded set of offerings. Instead of being able to simply say, “I’m a massage therapist,” she now has three or four other modalities to express and so she finds herself saying, “Well, I do a unique combination of shiatsu massage, traeger, Reiki and quantum touch.”

And now people seem more confused than ever by what she does.

Chapter 5: The Dawning Realization of the Missing Link

Jane feels clueless about marketing. She wonders why she never learned any of this at her school. She learned how to do her work – but not how to market it, articulate it, or sell it. Often when Jane tells people what she does she notices them glaze over, particularly now that it’s a combination of modalities, and not “get” what it is that she really does.

Knowing that she needs to market her business, Jane keeps talking to people about her business – she can’t bring herself to actually ask people to come in for a session

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without feeling pushy. She continues to pass out her business cards – the new ones listing her increased skill set – and putting up her flyers and posters.

Marketing advice and friends tell her to “go online” and Jane spends even more money and time to create a website – but gets little to no business from it. She realizes she has very little idea of how to make the most of it: great. A website. Now what?



And heck, maybe the people she wants to reach aren’t online. Or . . . maybe that’s just another “excuse” she’s created with regards to her business. It’s so very frustrating and discouraging.

Secretly, Jane dreams of someone else showing up and just handling all the marketing for her. If only she could just show up and help people, just worry about being a healer, and someone else could send her the clients.

And oh, If only she didn’t have to worry about setting her fees. When Jane tells people her fees, she often sees them flinch as if too say, “that’s way too much,” and so she often immediately offers them a deal and drops her fees. After all, if she loses them there are hundreds of others who offer something similar to what she does. She feels like a commodity some days.

Jane’s friends encourage her to stay positive. Some of them even imply that her feelings of doubt are manifesting the shaky results in her world. “Maybe,” she begins to think, “this is about my self worth . . .”

Others tell her that Jane she just needs to keep trying, to be more persistent. But the truth is that she’s exhausted and overwhelmed. Jane wants to spend time on her marketing but it always seems to slip through the cracks. Between spending time with friends and family, doing sessions for clients, taking time for herself and her creative pursuits, tidying, doing the books, and so on . . . she never seems to find the time to focus on her marketing. And even when she does, Jane feels daunted. She has no idea where to start or what else to try. She doesn’t know if she has any more effort or energy to give.

And secretly Jane feels incredibly inadequate. She tells herself that if she were more enlightened and healed she would just “know” where to go and what to do and that it would all feel easy. She begins to suspect that her lack of business success is a reflection of her own lack of inner growth.

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And she sometimes feels like a hypocrite or a fraud for not being perfect. She talks to people about living a balanced life but here she is – over-worked, yet not getting ahead financially, and not even having the time for a balanced life of her own. Jane’s work is to share a lot of wisdom and advice about how to live more healthfully, yet doesn’t really have the time or will to apply her own advice anymore.

And the *marketing* part of her work still looms . . .

She knows she needs to learn how to “sell” what she does – but has no idea where to begin or how to “sell” in a way that doesn’t feel pushy, inauthentic, slimy or insincere. Which is so antithetical to her actual work. She feels shy in social situations with new people and hates the idea of tooting her own horn or meeting people just to “convert them into clients.”

Jane knows she needs to get better at articulating what she does – but she feels too close to it. She can’t see the forest for the trees.

She knows she needs to articulate what makes her unique but . . . she hates the old-school notion of competition. Jane wants to see the other practitioners succeed too! How can she express what makes her different, without slamming other people who do what she does?

Jane finds herself wondering, “How do I market while maintaining integrity? How do I paint a picture so that others can see what I see? How do I teach people that herbal medicine doesn’t have to be ‘alternative,’ but instead can be legitimate ‘normal’ health care?” She feels so overwhelmed by all the marketing advice: do this, do that. She feels so torn. What to do first? And what next? And how will she stay focused on her passions and practice effective marketing at the same time. She so doesn’t want her marketing to distract her from the work she love.

Jane looks at her brochures, flyers and posters and knows they could be much better – but she doesn’t even know where to begin. She’s been told to create an email newsletter (that’s the golden secret!) but she’s on a bunch of other practitioners’ emails already and barely even reads 10% of them (and hardly likes 10% of the ones she DOES read). She does not want to spam people. But her posters and flyers don’t seem to be working to increase her clientele significantly.

She finds herself “avoiding” marketing. Jane distracts herself. She does anything except marketing! She goes for walks, plays bridge, tidies her office, surfs FaceBook, goes to yoga class . . . but she doesn’t. Do. Marketing.

Jane's practice is going nowhere fast. She thinks she's pretty much doing what others have done and their practices have flourished (or so it seems). She's beginning to think this is not what she's supposed to be doing.

She started with such a passion for her work and such clarity that she was doing what she came here to do – but as Jane looks at her bank account and her stack of bills, she finds herself wondering if it really is. Did she make a huge mistake? Maybe she should take a full time job for a while. The financial instability is beginning to take a stronger emotional toll than she'd care to admit. Jane's finances feel overwhelming and out of her control. Even the thought of developing a budget or "tracking" her finances feels like an impossible mountain to climb.



After all, Jane needs to do everything in her business – and there's a never-ending to-do list. She has to return all the calls and emails, she is her own administrator. She has to set up and clean up, she is her own cleaning and maintenance person. She has to do the accounting and taxes, she is her own bookkeeper.

Jane starts to find herself avoiding doing self-promotion because it's so much work to find clients. She's got no real sounding board or support system. She's getting more last minute cancellations than she'd like.

And on top of it all she is noticing that she's losing passion for the core modality she started with. She's just so tired and disillusioned.

Chapter 6: Resentment and Helplessness

Jane finds herself beginning to resent the very work that once brought her to life. She resents putting in so much effort and getting back so little.

Her life feel so imbalanced but she still can't seem to find the time and energy to take care of herself in order to do her healing work from a balanced place. Jane knows that healing or therapy work don't work as well when she's burnt out and frazzled but she feels cornered.

And it makes her secretly feel like a bit of a fraud – who is she to offer others healing when she's still struggling at such basic levels herself?

And Jane feels “wrong” for not knowing what to do. Her friends tell her that since what she offers is so great, she should simply be grateful and “attract” her clients. “But how?” she wonders. “By osmosis?!”

In the end, Jane decides to take a part time job (in addition to going to school and spending a fortune to learn yet another modality!) all of which restrict her time even more, preventing her from having the time to do any of the marketing she *should* be doing.

Jane even notices herself start to see her clients as bill payments. She finds herself falling into the trap of counting how many clients she’s seen that week or month and comparing them to the bills, “one more and I’ve got the rent!” She feels horrible when she catches herself doing that.

She wants to make it work but, after thousands of dollars, and years of effort, Jane still has no idea how. She feels lost, alone and helpless, and sometimes, ready to just give the whole thing up.

Chapter 7: Everything Changes

One crisp fall day after a particularly excellent treatment from one of her practitioner colleagues and some particularly useful reading about marketing, a thought she read resonates deeply with Jane and inspires an important realization: *The skills she uses to help people heal are different from the skills she needs to grow her business.*



Jane suddenly and genuinely realizes that she has spent years learning how to help people get better but almost no time in learning the skills of *how to grow her business*. She realizes that she has spent years working *in* her business but very little time working *on* her business.

Lightbulbs are going off all over the place: Jane sees that for years, her practice was more of a hobby. But now she knows she needs to get serious about learning about business and marketing.

So she starts with a huge tidy of her office space, and sits down with a pen and paper. But she’s stuck. She doesn’t know where to start. Jane knows she needs to handle her marketing but, as usual, has no idea where to start.

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So, she goes to the bookstore and purchases a highly recommended book, does some googling and finds more resources. She hears about a marketing workshop in her area and goes to that. And then, Jane does something that had never occurred to her, instead of wishing away the business side of her practice on somebody else – she hires a business coach.

They talk once a month and she gets assignments to do and she really applies herself. And things start shifting. Slowly at first but, within a year, Jane is astonished to find that she has more than doubled her practice and also raised her rates (with far less drama than she'd imagined).

She finds herself attracting a better and better quality of client – people who are conscious and genuinely open to change (rather than looking for a quick-fix, bandaid solution). Jane feels more and more excited about her work every day and, because she's making better money – her heart feels totally free to be present with her clients. She's no longer worrying about paying her bills.

And the best part is that Jane is now able to help her friends who have lived through the same story. She finds herself sitting them down and revamping their own marketing plans – and is delighted when they start seeing results too.

Jane's life has a more freedom in it as she feels an increasing sense of clarity about how to articulate what she does and how to attract more perfect clients. Even though there's still a lot of work to do, it no longer feels like a mystery to her, and it's no longer depressing, Jane is galvanized.



Example #11: A Story for Men about Women

What follows is a piece of marketing that is a little too real for men. This piece cuts very close to the bone. In story form (like the last piece) it tells the story of one person and their experience of Island A. There was more to the piece that went into Island B but, I share only the first part here. This may seem out of place in a book about business and clients relationships, but it's not. It's an artful and honest rendering of what happens all too often between men and women (and, I'm sure, men and men and women and women and those who identify as neither or non-binary).

This is what we are going for in our marketing: a level of deep understanding about the symptoms and experiences our clients have without judging them. The relevance of your marketing will be determined by your capacity to faithfully witness and candidly report on the lived experiences of the people you are proposing to help.

If you can articulate their story in such a way that they find themselves silently nodding as they read and seeing themselves in your words, they will also trust that you have something to say about the solution. Your capacity to plant the seeds of relevance is what sprouts credibility. If they trust you 'get them' they will be very open to trusting that you can help them.

A Story for Men about Women

by David DeAngelo

I'd like to tell you a story that you might find strangely familiar. Don't be alarmed.

Once upon a time, there was a man who was very attracted to a particular woman.

The more he got to know her, the more he began to feel attracted to her . . . and that attraction grew into a deep emotional attachment and affection for her.

But there was one problem.

As his emotional attachment grew stronger, he also grew more and more insecure.

Why?

Because he couldn't tell whether or not she felt the same way towards him.

Sometimes she would say things like "You are so important to me," and, "I'm glad that you're in my life" . . . but nothing ever progressed past the "friendship" stage.

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Something was wrong with the picture.

She wasn't acting like she was "falling in love," but as a friend.

The insecurity that he felt became a spiral that amplified itself . . . and the more insecure he became, the more afraid he grew of "screwing things up" by kissing her or asking her to be his girlfriend.

Plus, the more insecure he became, the less time she seemed to want to spend with him.

So he made a bold move.

After spending many days and nights obsessing over this girl, the man finally arrived at the conclusion that if she only knew how HE FELT, that she would feel the same way.

He TOLD HER how he felt.

He confessed that he was in love, and that he would do anything to be with her.

She looked at him with compassion in her eyes and said "Thank you . . . I really mean that . . . but I don't want to mess up our friendship . . . you're too important to me."

This only confused the man more.

Did it mean that she really loved him too, but that she was afraid of something?

Did it mean that she wasn't ready for a long-term relationship?

Did it mean that she didn't love him, and was trying to give him a hint?

Did it mean that he needed to put everything on the line and REALLY let her know how he felt?

He had to make sure that she knew just how much he wanted to be with her . . . so he bought her a gift, wrote her a long letter . . . again confessing his feelings.

And then the unthinkable happened . . .

She didn't reply.

The Art of Relevance

He called her three times a day for almost a week before reaching her.

She made an excuse about being very busy, and said “I’ll try to give you a call soon, I have to go . . .”

. . . but he never got a call back.

Over the following months, the man tried desperately to understand what went wrong . . . and what happened.

This story really effectively paints a common scenario that many men can relate to. There’s nothing abstract or conceptual about it. It’s a very human experience written without any judgment. It’s just saying, “Here’s how it seems to be sometimes.” That’s what your sales copy should be, at it’s best, a faithful witness to the way things are. When we’re articulating people’s struggles and yearnings, we don’t need hype. We don’t need to twist the knife. We just need to articulate the experience honestly. If we do, people will read our words and so, “Oh wow. That’s me. This is my story.” That alone won’t sell anything. But it will immediately establish relevance and also begin to establish credibility (if he understands the problem that well then there’s a good chance he understands the solution well too). Words like this let people know that they’re in the right place in their search for help.

Example #12: Lite Beer

I've included the following example as it is a fine example of a company listening to what people were getting from their product. Most companies obsess over how to tell you what they're giving you. This is an important distinction to make. What you think matters might not be what they think matters.



From the book, *Buzz Marketing* by Mark Hughes:

After the brewmaster created this new recipe for Lite, ad agency McCann-Erickson was charged with discovering if Lite could become a successful national seller. They first visited Newark, New Jersey, interviewing seventy-five people who were drinking Gablinger's light beer. They discovered something that might not sound surprising today, but was a lightning bolt at the time: Heavy beer drinkers had no interest in low calories. They weren't drinking Gablinger's because of lower calorie count; they were drinking it because it didn't fill them up. A guy sitting at the bar who could down two or three regular beers could down four or five by choosing Gablinger's. And that meant hanging out longer at the bar without getting a case of beer bloat.

The Miller folks now had a hint of what could make light beer advertising succeed: Promise that it would be less filling but still good tasting. An elegant concept test was devised, measuring the appeal of three different ad messages.

They heard nuggets of truth (doesn't make you belch . . . can stay at the bar longer so you don't have to go home . . . doesn't fill you up). These early adopters could have cared less about their waistslines – they lifted more steel and moved more pallets than most of us. "Low-cal" wouldn't connect. But "less filling" – now there's something that had value.

What matters to you (no calories) might not be what matters to them (able to drink more with less bloating).

Another great example of this is the Disney corporation. Disney discovered that at their hotels, though they prided themselves on washing the sheets every night, it eventually occurred to them, "Does anyone care?" Turns out that not many people did. So they told guests that they would wash the sheets every four nights or more often if they asked. Almost no one asked.

One more example of this that I love: British Airways once asked their international passengers what else they could be offering them on the long, over night flights. Perhaps more drinks? Better snacks? Better entertainment? The resounding answer came, "Let us sleep!"

Island A Quiz Examples

The Art of Relevance

One of the most common ways of looking at symptoms are quizzes. We see them online and in magazines all the time. The genius of these is that they speak directly to our lived symptoms. They speak to things we can easily answer “yes” or “no” to.

Notice how clearly the following example quizzes speak to what people experience vs. our ideas or diagnoses about those experiences.

The point of showing you these quizzes is not to suggest that you should start using quizzes in your marketing (though you might want to). The point is that, in order to create a good quiz, you need to hone in on the lived symptoms of your ideal clients so clearly that they could give an easy “yes” or “no” to them.



Quiz #1: Are You a FaceBook Addict?

By Selah Koile

How many times a day do you check your FaceBook account?

- a. Once or twice a week.
- b. Once or twice a day.
- c. Every time I sit down at a computer.
- d. I don't even bother logging off; I'm on all day and all night.

Who do you usually add as your FaceBook friends?

- a. I wait for my friends to find me.
- b. Just my closest friends and some new people from my classes.
- c. Everyone from my high school, my English 1101 class two years ago and people I see on the bus every day.
- d. Every person I've ever made eye contact with. And all the people they've ever made eye contact with.

If you answered . . .

Mostly A's: Not obsessed at all. Most likely, a friend with good intentions forced you to join.

Mostly B's: Mild user. You could stand to take advantage of more that the FaceBook has to offer.

Mostly C's: Very active user, borderline addicted. But your friends probably are in the same boat, so it doesn't seem so bad.

Mostly D's: Completely obsessed. It might be time for an intervention or a stint in rehab.

How many FaceBook parties have you been to?

- a. FaceBook parties? What are those?
- b. My best friends invited me to a couple.
- c. I get at least one invite a week, and I go to most of those parties.
- d. All the parties I can find, whether I'm invited or not.

How many groups have you joined?

- a. A few related to my major and my interests.
- b. Several, mostly funny or nostalgic.
- c. A lot. I search daily for new groups to join and have created one or two of my own.
- d. More groups than the site will allow me to display. I'm also the creator of half of those groups.

Have you ever been stalked on FaceBook?

- a. No, no one's ever bothered me.
- b. A couple of people from my childhood managed to track me down.
- c. Yes, several people I've never met have tried to call or e-mail me after seeing me online.
- d. Please. I'm the biggest stalker of them all.

Quiz #2: Are You Addicted to the Internet?

Use this brief screening measure to help you determine if you might need to see a mental health or other social services professional to help you successfully deal with "Internet addiction."

Instructions: This is a screening measure to help you determine whether you might have an unhealthy relationship with the Internet. This screening measure is not designed to make a diagnosis or take the place of a professional diagnosis or consultation. For each item, indicate the extent to which it is true, by checking the appropriate box next to the item.

- Do you find that you stay online longer than you intended?
- Do you prefer the excitement of the Internet to intimacy with your partner?
- Do you neglect household chores to spend more time online?
- Does your work (or school work) suffer because of the amount of time you spend online?
- Do you form new relationships with others online?
- Do others in your life complain to you about the amount of time you spend online?
- Do you become defensive or secretive when anyone asks you what you do online?
- Have you ever noticed that your job performance or productivity suffers because of the time spent online?
- Do you check your e-mail before something else that you need to do?
- Do you snap, yell, or act annoyed if someone bothers you while you are online?
- Do you find yourself anxiously anticipating when you will go online again?
- Do you block out disturbing thoughts about your life with soothing thoughts of the Internet?
- Do you fear that life without the Internet would be boring, empty, or joyless?
- Do you find yourself saying "just a few more minutes" when online?
- Do you feel preoccupied with the Internet when off-line, or fantasize about being online?
- Do you lose sleep due to being online late at night?
- Do you try to hide how long you've been online?
- Do you choose to spend more time online over going out with others?
- Have you tried to cut down the amount of time you spend online and failed?
- Do you feel depressed, moody, or nervous when you are off-line, which goes away once you are back online?

Quiz #3: Are You Highly Sensitive?

Copyright, Elaine N. Aron, 1996

Instructions: Answer each question according to the way you personally feel. Check the box if it is at least somewhat true for you; leave unchecked if it is not very true or not at all true for you.

- I am easily overwhelmed by strong sensory input.
- I seem to be aware of subtleties in my environment.
- Other people's moods affect me.
- I tend to be very sensitive to pain.
- I find myself needing to withdraw during busy days, into bed or into a darkened room or any place where I can have some privacy and relief from stimulation.
- I am particularly sensitive to the effects of caffeine.
- I am easily overwhelmed by things like bright lights, strong smells, coarse fabrics, or sirens close by.
- I have a rich, complex inner life.
- I am made uncomfortable by loud noises.
- I am deeply moved by the arts or music.
- My nervous system sometimes feels so frazzled that I just have to go off by myself.
- I am conscientious.
- I startle easily.
- I get rattled when I have a lot to do in a short amount of time.
- When people are uncomfortable in a physical environment I tend to know what needs to be done to make it more comfortable (like changing the lighting or the seating).
- I am annoyed when people try to get me to do too many things at once.
- I try hard to avoid making mistakes or forgetting things.
- I make a point to avoid violent movies and TV shows.
- I become unpleasantly aroused when a lot is going on around me.
- Being very hungry creates a strong reaction in me, disrupting my concentration or mood.
- Changes in my life shake me up.
- I notice and enjoy delicate or fine scents, tastes, sounds, works of art.
- I find it unpleasant to have a lot going on at once.
- I make it a high priority to arrange my life to avoid upsetting or overwhelming situations.
- I am bothered by intense stimuli, like loud noises or chaotic scenes.
- When I must compete or be observed while performing a task, I become so nervous or shaky that I do much worse than I would otherwise.
- When I was a child, my parents or teachers seemed to see me as sensitive or shy.

If you wish to use this questionnaire for psychological research, you may, but we recommend that you use a 1 to 7 scale, from 1, "not at all," through 4, "moderately," to 7, "extremely" and the longer, 27-item version, found in the article, Elaine N. Aron and Arthur Aron, "Sensory-Processing Sensitivity and Its Relation to Introversion and Emotionality," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1997, Vol. 73, No. 2, 345-368.

Quiz #4: Eco-Friendly Lawn Care

do you want a great looking lawn but don't know how to get one without using potentially dangerous chemicals?

If you can answer “yes” to some of the 14 questions below, this service might be for you:

1. Are you concerned about the **health risks** to your children and your pets of the long term use of lawn chemicals?
2. Are you **frustrated** with or **embarrassed** by the way your lawn looks?
3. Does your lawn have a ton of **weeds** and **brown patches**?
4. Have you had a **bad experience** with chemical fertilizers?
5. Are you (or someone you love) suffering from a **disease** and you don't want to expose them to any more chemicals than absolutely necessary?
6. Are you **chemically sensitive** (but still want a nice lawn?)
7. Do you have **children or pets** that have been affected by the toxicity level of your lawn?
8. Do you have **elderly people or people with respiratory diseases or cancer** in your life that have been affected by the toxicity level of your lawn?
9. Have you noticed a certain **disease** on your lawn that chemical amendments have not been able to cure (ferry ring, snow mold, etc)?
10. Have you tried to handle your lawn on your own but can't seem to 'get it right' and now you just want some **expert advice** on it?
11. Have you just laid out **new sod** and you want to start it off to the right start so that it stays healthy?
12. Have you realized that your lawn **doesn't stay green very long** when you use fertilizers?
13. Have you found out that pesticides you've used in the past have **killed things that you didn't want killed**?
14. Is your lawn **sparse** and you want it to look thicker?

Quiz #5: Practice Building

practicebuildingquiz.com

How successful is your business? How effective is your marketing strategy?

Take our market-wise assessment quiz today and learn EXACTLY where you stand . . .

- I know exactly who my target clients are.
- I can name at least 5 publications they subscribe to.
- I can name at least 2 major challenges my prospects face on a daily basis.
- I know of at least one message board my ideal prospects visit.
- I have just the right solution to help them solve these problems.
- I do things differently or better than my competitors.
- My prospects clearly understand what I do and how I can help them.
- I follow up with every prospect.
- I follow up with every prospect automatically using autoresponders.
- I follow up with every prospect with at least 5 messages.
- I have created at least one marketing program for solving a specific set of problems.
- I have written a sales letter that explains each product or service program in detail
- I conduct teleclasses for my target audience at least once a month.
- I follow up with all teleclass participants each time.
- I have a web site that promotes my business.
- My web site contains client testimonials demonstrating the quality of my work.
- I have a mailing list that grows daily thanks to my web site and other sources.
- I publish a newsletter and e-mail to my mailing list at least once a month.
- I write articles and post them on my web site at least once a month.
- I submit my articles to article directories, discussion lists, and e-zine publishers.
- I understand and implement the basics of Search Engine Optimization.
- My product(s) are directly related to my services, and offer solutions to my audience.
- I have a free product that I give away to prospects.
- I feel that all my marketing activities contribute to the growth of my business.
- I track most of my marketing activities and know how my clients find me.
- I get invited to speak on the topic of my expertise at least 3 times a year.
- My clients are happy with my services, I feel that I am truly helping them.
- I have read at least 3 e-books or books on marketing.
- My business has grown noticeably in the last 12 months.
- My businesses growth is right on track with my business plan.

Quiz #6: Progressive Newspaper

dominionpaper.ca

If you resonate with the following nine statements then the Dominion may be the paper for you:

- You know, or at least suspect, that you're not getting the full story from the *Globe and Mail*.
- You are disturbed by the war in Afghanistan but are confused and don't have the information to articulate clearly what the problem and alternative "solutions" are. You feel this way about a lot of other issues, from First Nations to the environment, to corporate practices.
- You find it frustrating sifting through indymedia sites on the web with no central site with a round-up of important stories.
- You find much of the indy news to be sporadic, opinionated, full of activist lingo and poorly written.
- You can find more reliable, alternative views coming out of the States or Britain (Democracy Now, the Guardian) but you can't find something similar in Canada.
- You feel like the world is moving in the wrong direction, but don't feel like that's accurately depicted in the mainstream media. So, you're left without the knowledge and motivation to take appropriate action. You're left feeling frustrated and helpless.
- You silently suspect that Canada is not the peace-loving bastion of all good things that you might have once believed it all was.
- You are involved in environmental and social justice work and need to be "in the know" regarding issues in your field and related fields.
- You're tired of looking like a dumb ass in front of your friends when you can't back up your claims with concrete stories and facts. You know that what they're saying about Afghanistan is bullshit but you can't defend that position beyond calling them "ignorant douchebags." You're wanting accurate and dependable information.

More Examples of Island A

Hopefully you are getting the hang of what a clearly articulated Island A could look like. But let's look at some more micro-examples. Each one of these hones in on a particular, honest symptom and names it clearly. Each one of these leaves very little doubt in your mind if it's for you or not.

Read on for **Micro-Examples of Island A . . .**

Micro-Example #1: Nicole Moen speaks brilliantly to a common human experience on her website nicolemoen.ca, "Have you ever felt the urge to walk out your door and just go? You know, like, simply start walking . . . who knows where?"



Micro-Example #2: 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 . . . 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. 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 . . . 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.

Micro-Example #3: A homeopath I worked with came up with this wording, "Do you suffer from a neurological condition? Are you taking pills that just make you feel worse?" purehomeopathy.me

Micro-Example #4: A friend in the UK who is a physiotherapist who works with injured yogis came up with a brilliant website name that spoke to the symptoms: brokenyogis.com

Micro-Example #5: The Therapy Vault, a website that is no longer active, 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. So they created an anonymous website that would allow therapists to share with each other.

Speak to the symptoms, not about your diagnosis.

Micro-Example #6: Another 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 secretaries. They realized that these secretaries wanted to be heroes to their bosses. They changed their marketing to address that and their sales exploded.

Your capacity to give voice to the experiences people have is the heart of marketing. Your capacity to put words to things that people might be unable to do themselves is inseparable from your capacity to reach people.

Micro-Example #7: 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 fodder for the larger machine.

Micro-Example #8: 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."

Micro-Example #9: 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 title 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 . . .)

Micro-Example #10: Ari Galper realized that most sales people hated cold calling. Hated it. They had a fear of phone. But their jobs depended on it.

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

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

Speak to *their* symptoms, not about your diagnosis.

"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?

A Collection of 48 More Examples 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.
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.
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. **Low Impact Living:** 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. **Unlock the Game:** 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. unlockthegame.com
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. 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.
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. 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.
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.
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.
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. 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?!"
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. 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.
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.
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. 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.).



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.”
27. **Job Retention:** works with small business owners in Western Canada who are dealing with job retention and absenteeism problems.
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. 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.
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. goodcleanlove.com
31. **Momprenneur Magazine:** A magazine for mother's who are entrepreneurs and struggling to how to meet the needs of both their business and their children. themomprenneur.com
32. **Pet Supplements:** I work with pet owners who have pets suffering from allergies, diabetes and other chronic diseases.
33. **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.
34. **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.
35. **Vegetarians and 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).

36. **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. tomcallos.com
37. **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.
38. **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).
39. **Grief Coach Academy:** works with coaches to help them learn how to guide people through heartbreak and dramatically cut the amount of time their clients spend there.
40. **Backyard bounty:** Guelph homeowners who have backyards they're not using who keep thinking, "it would be so great to have a garden."
41. **The Brides Project:** 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. thebridesproject.com
42. **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 favourite recipes to food allergen free. theallergicchef.ca
43. **Sleep Yoga:** Yoga for people who can't sleep: 'Nuf said. bethmartens.com
44. **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.
45. **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 and integrative treatment upon a heated massage table with a tempurpedic face cradle . . . music and aromatherapy included, if you like.



46. **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? sleepsense.net
47. **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.
48. **The Brown Bag Dance Studio:** One of my clients who ran a dance instruction studio confessed during a marketing training that he really wasn't that good. "How can I make any big, fat claims or promises? I'm no Fred Astaire. I've never won any competitions." I asked him why he'd started teaching dance. He told us that he'd wanted to help people have more fun dancing. To feel more confident on the dance floor. He really didn't care about perfect technique. The whole room got it, this was the problem he solved: the fear of dancing, the fear of being embarrassed and looking stupid on the dance floor, and the desire to be confident.

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 you've found your niche yet.

Island A Examples: Concluding Thoughts

You've just read dozens of examples of how your clients' symptoms might be put into words. You'll notice that these examples were all simple and easy to understand and didn't rely on you understanding "the boat."

You might have had no idea what it was that they did or how they went about it but you understood if it was relevant to you or someone you cared about.

This is the big takeaway. You don't establish relevance by talking about your boat (unless they're in the market to buy your style of boat). You establish it by talking about their symptoms.

This is the simplest notion and yet it can be the hardest nut to crack for most of the clients I work with because they resist narrowing down to something simple. They want to help everyone with everything. If you're struggling with that, you might want to check out my eBook *The Niching Nest* (nichingspiral.com/nest) as it explores more the question of "how do you choose?"

My hope is that, in this section, you've seen the impact that a clearly articulated problem can have in immediately establishing relevance for the potential customer.

If you articulate a clear issue that your service addresses, then people know, immediately, whether or not it's a fit for them.

And, of course, Island B is the flip side of the coin on all of these.

If you scan back through the case studies, you'll notice that it's not too hard to figure out what the results might be that these professionals offer. If the problem they're solving is that people are lonely, well . . . it's not too hard to figure out that Island B is going to be something about creating more connections with yourself and others.

Under What Circumstances?

The Art of Relevance

This section provides another point of view for how to describe Island A, by describing the moment someone decides they need to buy what you're selling.

In my workshops, I often point out to people that there is a moment where it's too soon to work with them. They aren't ready yet. And there's a moment where it's too late because either the issue is too far gone for them or they've solved it. But there's a sweet spot in the middle where we can show up. And, if we can catch a client at the very beginning of that sweet spot or on their way into it, we have a real chance to foster a meaningful relationship of trust with them over time rather than simply meeting them and trying to hard-close them.



Here is the core question to ask yourself: “Under what circumstances do your prospects start to think about buying what you offer?” (thanks to the book *Monopolize Your Marketplace* by Richard Harshaw for articulating this gem).

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

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, mulling over and talking to friends, etc.

It's good to remember that only about 3-5% of people are ready to buy right now.

Maybe they're unaware they have an issue and then BAM! something happens and now they're thinking about it. Sometimes this process takes years for them to move from noticing the issue to taking action.

But if, in your marketing, you can speak to these recognizable (to them) symptoms and events, you will have their attention and you will, immediately, establish relevance because instead of saying, “Hey! Let me tell you about me!” you're asking them, “Is this true about you?”

A client of mine, Maggie once said to me, “I'm confused around symptoms vs. feelings and the pain points: for example, symptoms of despair.”

I replied, “One of the best questions we can ask ourselves, and one of the best ways to get a sense about this dynamic of island A and island B is: **“What is the right moment or the perfect moment for you to show up in their lives?”**”

The Art of Relevance

It can't be too soon, the client won't be ready to work with you.

It can't be too late, you won't be able to help.

Find the sweet spot, that's when you need to show up.

The better that you can articulate *that* moment and what's going on for your clients in that moment, the better.

It will be easier to market yourself.

It's not very compelling when you read something that says, "So yeah, I don't know, are you struggling with things in your life?" Or, "Stressed, overwhelmed with money, and health, and relationships and spirituality?" That's so generic, and it's very hard to see oneself in that. The more clearly you can articulate, "Here's that moment," the better.

If they're in despair, what does that *look* like? Paint us a picture: use all five senses.

It's like when you talk about good writing. So much of good writing comes down to specifics and details. The difference between, "He pulled up in his car," and, "He pulled up in his red car," or, "He pulled up in his 1968 red Camaro," or maybe even, "He pulled up in his 1968 red Camaro with the white stripes and chrome hub caps, the one he'd inherited from his father on the occasion of his wedding to his first wife." Those kinds of details make the story more compelling. So much marketing is so blah and generic, and there's no art in the writing of it. Don't be afraid to paint a picture with your words.



If you can articulate, "Here's that moment they're in," so well that the client is just like, "Oh my God, are you spying on me? That's me! That's my life!" then your marketing will soar.

I saw John Gray, who wrote *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* do a talk once, and he was articulating common relationship dynamics. I was about 18 or 19 years old at the time. I was listening to all these couples around me who were middle aged and hearing these sorts of things from all around me: "Oh my God, you totally do that! Yes, you do! You're doing it right now!" [Laughter] while other people were saying, "Oh my God, does he spy on us? Is he in our bedroom? How does he know these things?" It was amazing to see how specifically he had nailed his descriptions and how perfectly the descriptions landed for that particular demographic.

That's somebody who really gets it; who, when they say it, you're like, "Oh, my God, you're singing my song. That's it, that's what it's like to be me." So it's empathy that your statement actually comes down to, our ability to articulate the client's experience in the way that they will understand it – because we've all had that experience where we read a book, and the book articulated some inklings, some thoughts we've had, but it says it so much better than *we* could have said it, and the gratitude we even feel for that author for managing that is immense.

"You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who had ever been alive."

– James Baldwin

So, let's dig into some examples of what might happen to let you know it's time to think about buying something:

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

- It's breaking down constantly.
- I've spent more money on repairs than the car is worth. I feel frustrated.
- I hate the look of my car, I feel embarrassed.
- I just saw a new car I like.
- I want to get a more fuel-efficient car.
- 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?

- My family pet is escaping through gaps in the fence.
- Animals are getting into your garden.
- The posts are rotting.
- I'm building a new swimming pool and the fence is required by law.
- You have children and you can't leave them alone in the yard as they might run into the street.
- I'm selling my house and I want to get top dollar.

Example #3: Under what circumstances might you start thinking about hiring a web designer?

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

Example #4: What might happen to let you know you were needing a life coach?

- I am feeling lost in my life.
- I just got laid off and have no idea what to do. I feel overwhelmed.
- I've just gone through a painful divorce and am wanting to start fresh but know I need support.
- I keep meaning to handle important areas of my life but never seem to get around to it. I feel ashamed and embarrassed.
- I feel dissatisfied with my life but can't put my finger on why that is.
- 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.

Example #5: You know it might be time for a spiritual retreat when . . .

Courtesy of CarmenSpagnola.com

- Everything in your life feels not-quite-right. It might feel okay, but not-quite-right. The reason for the not-quite-right feeling may or may not be apparent. It's just that it's not quite what you were expecting, or hoping for, and you thought you'd be further along by now. Should it be such a slog? Things should be more clear, shouldn't they?
- You're restless and antsy in your life, as though you're always searching for a lost object but you don't even know what the object is.
- You're pretty sure there's some old "stuff," like a way, way, way back kind of pain in your family history that's still holding you back, or holding your children back. It's becoming unbearable to watch it playing out, again.
- You're not clear what your purpose is but you're pretty sure you haven't achieved what you ought to have by now. Or if you do know your purpose, you're not sure you love it any more, or that it's meaningful enough, or that it really matters in the big scheme of things.
- You're moving through your days being super productive all the while suppressing a constant low-grade feeling of anger, resentment or frustration. You're swearing more than you used to. Things are fucked. up. and once again you'll probably be the one who has to be the adult and clean up the mess. You're exhausted just thinking about it and sick of being alone, charged with the task of clearing your family's/partner's/culture's karma. Goddamnit.
- You're crying in the kitchen because of a story on the radio about Syrian refugees. Or maybe it was a stupid lemonade commercial. Whatever, the tears just come upon you and seem out of scale to how fine you were a minute ago.
- You wish there was secret doorway in the bookcase or a portal through the tree trunk that led to the real, sane world.
- You're craving a sign – anything – telling you what you should be doing to find peace and contentment in your life. You'd do whatever Spirit wanted if you only knew what it was.
- You wish there were more elders around.
- You've got an uneasy feeling that you might be the elder we're all waiting for.

Here's a longer list of potential, specific life moments that might trigger people to look for help:

- empty nesters
- need to improve health/weight fitness and know it
- need to improve health/weight fitness and deny it
- post midlife crisis/uncovering a big truth/radical awakening
- pre-midlife crisis/uncovering a big truth/radical awakening . . . but heading there fast
- parents of troubled teens
- parents of troubled children
- children of aging parents
- recently retired
- facing a life transition in work
- facing a life transition in relationship/love
- newly divorced – they left their partner
- newly divorced – their partner left them
- facing divorce
- 1-3 year post divorce
- having a spiritual awakening
- recently changed careers
- recently got trained in a holistic discipline like coaching, therapy or bodywork
- have built an entrepreneurial business
- own an entrepreneurial business more than one year old
- just starting an entrepreneurial business
- selling consulting products or programs online
- recently fired
- recently hired
- in a job and loving it
- in a job and hating it
- looking for a job
- quit corporate job to start their own business after feeling trapped
- mother or father of small kids

Once you've begun to identify the "moment" where your client starts to consider buying what you're selling, then you'll need to do the heavy lifting of articulating it in a concise and clear way.

And this is where it can all go wrong, so, to help you out, I'd love to share my Nine Qualities of a Well-articulated Problem with you in the next chapter.

Nine Qualities of a Well-Articulated Problem

I've seen so many businesses struggle because they weren't able to identify or express a clear problem that they helped people with. Sometimes there was no clear problem. Other times there was, but it was worded so poorly and in a convoluted way that it confused people. And most people struggle with this because they have no idea what the qualities of a well-articulated problem might even be.

As you work on yours, keep these nine qualities in your mind as a sort of marketing checklist.



1. It is urgent?

If it's the kind of problem they can handle whenever, they will likely put off handling it. If there's no urgency, a client 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.

2. It is important?

Urgency will have a client buy but importance will have them come back. This needs to relate to one or more of the four core areas of their life (Money, Health, Relationships, Spirituality). This issue matters to them because it's hurting them in one of those places.

3. It is negative?

Not that we're trying to be negative or to encourage negativity but, to the client, it's not a great thing. A problem is, by definition, something they *don't* want. It's not a result they're after – it's what's preventing them from getting that result.

4. It is present tense?

Your client is experiencing it now. Even if it's a fear about something in the future, they're experiencing that fear right now. In the present moment (and in a visceral sense). It is a set of symptoms, not our diagnosis about it.

5. It is solvable?

More importantly, the client need to believe that there is a solution to their problem. If they do not believe that it's possible to solve their problem and you aren't able to convince them, then it's a non-starter; they won't even try and they certainly won't hire you. Part of your marketing may need to be assuring people that what they want is, indeed, possible – but it's ideal if they already believe this before ever connecting with you.

6. It is particular?

Yes, “stress” is a symptom. True. But the stress of a stay-at-home parent and a CEO are fundamentally different. The stress of living your life hiding the fact that you’re gay is a different stress than trying to scrape enough money together 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.

7. It is sensory?

The most effective of these appeal to your five senses. You can easily describe them. You can visualize them clearly. 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!”

8. Does it have feelings?

Ideally you not only put in the specific symptoms but also how people feel about those symptoms. Often I will read out niche statements that sound very academic, dry and clinical. They lack any human warmth and empathy. This is a subtle but powerful point. People don’t just have problems – they *feel* a certain way about those problems. It might be that they feel sad, ashamed, frustrated, devastated, annoyed, embarrassed, etc. When we talk about the problems people struggle with I think it’s important to avoid sounding too clinical. We want to stay human in our marketing – and that means acknowledging how people feel about the problems they are experiencing.

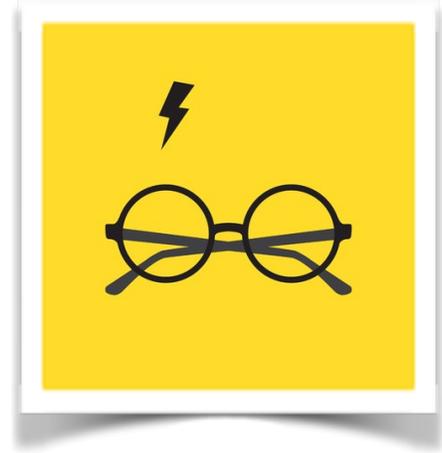
9. It is simple, succinct and clear?

You should be able to get to the heart of it in three words or less. Bad sleep. Acne. Lack of confidence. And you should be able to really nail it in seven words or less. If you can’t, it’s likely too complicated. Keep it as simple as possible.

These nine qualities might seem obvious once you’ve read them but I can promise you that, even if they seem like common *sense*, they are not common *practice*. If you go back and read all of the examples and case studies, you will see that these qualities show up to greater or lesser degrees in all of them.

And, of course, these nine qualities all have their counterparts in Island B as well. A well-articulated problem is the seed of a well-articulated result. And vice-versa. You’ll learn more about the qualities of a well-articulated result in the coming section on Island B.

Seven Ways to Identify and Clarify the Symptoms You Help Your Clients With



You've read a lot about what problems are, you've seen a lot of examples of what they look like in real life, and you've read the nine qualities of a well-articulated problem, but you might still feel confused or fuzzy on how to identify the specific symptoms your clients face or how to identify which ones you would be good at solving.

This is where the rubber meets the road and it stops being so theoretical. What problems do you focus on in your situation?

In my experience, there are six main paths to this.

Way #1: 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. You can read more about that here: marketingforhippies.com/woundasniche

Way #2: 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.

Way #3: 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 do they feel more like they're drowning? Sometimes, this kind of evocative imagery can be used very powerfully in our marketing.

Way #4: Look for industry frustrations

Where are they currently frustrated or aggravated with your industry? What annoys your people about people who do what you do? Knowing this can give you some keen insights into how to design your boat and frame it best. Sometimes these can be the issues you focus on.

Way #5: 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 _____?” or “What is it that keeps you up at night?” or any of the other questions in the [Relevance Workbook](#) (which you can find at this link and download for free: marketingforhippies.com/islandsresources).

Way #6: 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. And, as you do so, notice which of their problems they talk about and how they talk about them.

This can all take some time to sort through. This is the heavy lifting that so few entrepreneurs ever do.

Once you have a well-articulated understanding of what Island A is for your clients, what do you do with it? Where do you use it in your marketing?

That’s what you’re going to learn on the next page.

Way #7: 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 counsellor!” 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.”

What Do You Do if There Are No Symptoms?

What happens if your clients are struggling with an issue they don't even know that they have?

Take trauma for example.

Most of us carry some trauma.

There's some people who carry a lot of trauma, but would never use that word, and so if you put out an ad saying, "Trauma Recovery Workshop" they wouldn't even notice it, because it doesn't seem relevant.

So then, how do you reach those people?

We create mechanisms in our marketing that can help them see the hidden cause of their struggles.

That comes down to being able to identify the particular symptoms that your ideal clients are struggling with and aware of, that they might not have labeled with the same cause.

The first thing is to make some decisions about the kinds of people you want to reach.

If you wanted to work with trauma in mothers, well, you could get booked to speak at women's conferences and events, or on tele-summits or be interviewed by popular podcasters who reach mothers with your message about how many of their symptoms – which they believe are normal – are actually the result of trauma.

Think of the "Dealing With Difficult Parents" workshop my friend Govert did (mentioned earlier in this book). He knew it wasn't the underlying cause, but he also knew he could use that symptom to get people in the door. If Govert wanted to, he could grow this workshop rapidly by taking it to teachers' conventions each year. And, in those workshops he could hint at and point to the underlying causes of why parents are so difficult and how it might actually be them as teachers who are causing some facets of the issues and then help them to see the other issues their communication styles are causing.

Online quizzes, or quizzes and self-diagnostics you have people do during talks, can work well.

Once you know the kind of person you're trying to reach, you can sort out who the hubs are for that kind of person and educate them about what certain symptoms might mean. "If you see ____ or ____, it's a sure sign of ____." This could earn you a good number of word-of-mouth referrals.



The Hidden Blessings of Island A

*“You know, people come to therapy really for a blessing.
Not so much to fix what's broken, but to get what's broken blessed.”*
– James Hillman

“The only way you can help someone is if you know they are already perfect.”
– Cindy Teevens

It's so vital that people do not feel judged or shamed by us for their struggles.

It's very hard to help someone who we think we need to fix.

But what if we could go even farther than that? What if we could help them to see their problems and struggles not only as things to tolerate but things to celebrate? What if, even though their problems were not blessings, there might be blessings in them that you could help them see?



What if the judgments ourselves and our potential clients hold about Island A are the strongest forces keeping them on that island? What if, without being naive, we could see and help them see the potency that Island A has as a teacher for them, as a door to walk through?

What if there's nothing wrong with your clients being on Island A? What if Island A could be seen as a perfectly timed wake up call for them? What if Island A is not an event that happens *to* us but one that happens *for* us?

Sometimes the biggest gift you can give your clients is not so much a solution to their problem but the ability to see their symptoms in a new, more expansive and liberating way.

But this starts with you digging deep into what you see as the potential gifts and blessings in them being on Island A.

The Art of Relevance

For example, years ago I used pushy, aggressive and manipulative sales tactics. And now, when I meet people who have gone through the same thing and want to find a way to market and sell that feels good, I get excited. I know that their insider knowledge of the slimy marketing and sales tactics will actually make them more finely tuned to an alternate way; once they've identified what they like, they can be more thoughtful and courteous of sales people. I see their experience as a blessing, not a curse to get over. Sometimes I want to say to them, "You have a special role in this world to help others caught in these tactics to find another way too."

If someone is an alcoholic, certainly, this brings with it very real troubles. But it also brings with it the possibility of their becoming an incredible friend to those struggling in days to come.

In blessing where people are, you liberate them from the shame that might otherwise hold them in a place of pain or trouble.

I remember emailing a client and suggesting to them, "I would encourage you to come up with an eBook or something called, 'The Seven Gifts of ADD: How your attraction to the next shiny thing is actually a gift to the world' and help them really celebrate that. If they're not ashamed they'll be more likely to hire you. What if their ADD was actually a blessing in disguise?"

It is one of the truest things I know in supporting people to find their niche – that our deepest wounds are often the doorway to our truest niche.

One of the gifts of growing up is that, if we are lucky, we become the adult whose support we were needing when we were younger.

So, while you're getting your client off Island A, who knows what you might be opening up for them in their life. Perhaps they will, one day, use their firsthand experience of that place and their journey to Island B to help others get off of it.

What if getting them off Island A wasn't so much closing a door as opening one?

When Island A can be looked at as a resource and not a problem then beautiful things can happen.

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Additional Resources:

How Highly Sensitive People Can Deal With Anxiety by Sheryl Paul: mindbodygreen.com/0-12861/how-highly-sensitive-people-can-deal-with-anxiety.html

From Door to Door: The Unwanted Blessings of Hard Things: on.fb.me/1PbzA5r

Island A Conclusion

Why have we spent over half of this eBook on Island A when there are four islands?

Because Island A is where the journey begins.

This is where your potential clients actually are. The other islands are hopes (Island B), possibilities (Island C), and fears (Island Z).

Island A is the root of the tree. It's the seed everything else grows from. Island A is the present moment and all of the other islands live in possible futures.

Island A is where the grounding comes from in your marketing. This is what keeps your marketing from being full of hype. Island A is what makes that marketing down-to-earth and real. Island A is what can make your marketing feel human.

Establishing relevance must begin with the serious consideration of “where are they [your clients] right now?” and speaking to that, or speaking in a way that is deeply informed by that information.

Island A is worth all this work.

The logical next step would be to explore the flip side of this: Island B. But before that, we take a brief pit stop on Island Z – I'll explain why in the next chapter, so read on . . .

Island Z: The Unspoken Fears

In some ways, Island Z is actually a part of Island A and so I include a few words about it here, between Islands A and B.

Island Z is the imaginary Island we fear we'll end up on if our problems aren't handled.

Island Z is not a place people can be on, like Island A. Instead Island Z hovers around them – an ominous fantasy, a fear, a phantom. But it *feels* so incredibly real. You could imagine Island Z is in a thought bubble above the person sitting on Island A.



Island Z is where they're secretly scared they're going to end up if they do nothing.

A lot of us have fears we never speak about. Fears we imagine no one else has. Fears no one else could understand.

Some examples of these fears:

- If I don't handle my dating life I'm going to end up old and alone.
- If I approach that woman I'm attracted to she'll think I'm a total creep and tell all her friends and everyone watching will laugh at me.
- If I don't keep my mind sharp I'm going to end up with Alzheimers like my great grandparents.
- I don't want to end up like my father.
- I'm so scared that when I'm older there will be no one to look after me and I'll end up a bag lady.
- If people knew I was struggling with this then _____ would happen.
- If I admit that I've got these unhealthy symptoms then I might find out I have cancer like my mother.
- I'm scared I'm going to fuck up my kids.

These fears are rarely talked about, but they're deeply real for people. These fears aren't things you can be "known" for but understanding them gives you an incredible empathy and sensitivity.

And many of us are secretly so scared we're going to end up on Island Z.

I think it's important to be aware of the Island Z fears. Because, sometimes, these fears are so profoundly deep and overwhelming that people can't even acknowledge that they're on Island A.

The Art of Relevance

They can't even acknowledge that they have a problem because then they'd have to acknowledge the potential implications of that.

If I'm in my 70s and starting to forget a lot of things, I might not tell anyone because if I do they might take away my driver's license. They might want to do tests. They might tell me I have Alzheimers. And I'd just rather not know.

Island Z can be so terrifying that it keeps us frozen in a holding pattern that's not healthy for us. And it's exhausting. We spend so much energy trying to avoid acknowledging it.

So how do you deal with these deep fears in people?

With a lot of love and empathy.

And if those don't work, how do you engage with it?

In the next pages, I'll go through fifteen ideas for how to address fear.

Fifteen Ideas for How to Deal With the Fear of Island Z:



Idea #1: Create a safe place

Instead of pushing harder, we want to come from a place of being gentler and sweeter. We can make sure that we are as safe a space as possible. That might mean extreme confidentiality. Making sure that a client can engage with us in a way that no one else ever needs to know. The more safe a client feels, the more they'll be willing to face the truth.

Idea #2: Empathize

If a client can see that we really understand what they're secretly scared of, this knowledge goes a long way. I can't recommend reading the book *Non Violent Communication* by Marshall Rosenberg enough for this. The key is that we want to give empathy first for Island A. Just for the symptoms as the client experiences them. And, of course, part of the symptoms they experience are their fears of Island Z.

Idea #3: Normalize the problem

We need to help our clients understand that they're not alone. The more we can build the understanding that they're not alone the better. The more they can see this as a widespread issue that many others share the better. We need to normalize the fear. We need it to not seem like it's a weird thing to have that fear. As Tom Compton puts it, "the resistance to the disturbance is the disturbance." Sometimes the feeling that they shouldn't be having that fear is actually a bigger issue than the fear itself. If you can share your own story of how it took you forever to deal with this and how clueless you were – this goes a long way.

Idea #4: Normalize the solution

The more you can make it feel like, "hey, everyone is doing this," the more likely a client will be to try it as well. This often starts with identifying your hubs and enrolling those hubs and getting them to spread the word for you. This is the kind of thing you might want to do in partnership with other people who are helping folks on the same journey (and maybe with a similar boat even). It's like a bunch of independent retailers getting together to promote a "shop local" campaign. A core principle of community based social marketing is this: make it normal to do the right thing.

Idea #5: Use realistic statistics

We need to help potential clients understand how realistic the fear of Island Z is. The fear of a plane crash or being attacked by a shark is blown profoundly out of proportion. More people die in traffic accidents than plane crashes. More people die from pop machines than sharks. Let's just get real here.

Idea #6: Share successful case studies

This is huge. If you can show a client story after story of people who were on Island A and didn't end up on Island Z but maybe even on Island C it will do more than just about anything else you can imagine. You can't ever have too many stories and real life examples.

Idea #7: Tell a story

When there's a lot of shame and fear around an issue, the traditional marketing approach of writing in the "you" (e.g. "Are YOU struggling with money?") might be a bit too direct. It might trigger shut down and defensiveness which could kill it way before it has a chance to begin. Try telling the story of a typical client (or a micro story) or the story of what it might be like to work with you. By telling a story (often in the third person) you give it a bit of psychological distance which allows people to read it and approach the story in their own time and find themselves in it in their own way. Remember, these fears are most often unspoken. So, for someone to read their fears laid out in a story (even your own story) can be a bit mind blowing (in a good way).

Idea #8: Be honest and realistic about the limits of possibility

One of the best things I ever saw in marketing was from a poster about a holistic nutrition workshop. One of the bullet points said, "Come and learn the possibilities and the limitations of holistic nutrition." Wow. That was so powerful. They were willing to admit to it having limitations. That realism built more credibility than any big claim. Instantly more trustworthy. When things seem "too good to be true" they're not trustworthy. Tell your potential clients what you can help them with and what you can't. Tell them what you think is possible and what isn't. Be real with them and they'll melt into openness.

Idea #9: Address shame

The more people can understand that it's not entirely their fault, that there are bigger systems at play that have helped create their problem and that it's a normal human thing to go through, the more they'll relax and open to letting it go. The shame of not having dealt with it yet can keep people from even looking at their issue and admitting how bad it is. No shame. No blame. The more your presence can reassure and say, "hey, it's okay" the more they can begin to open to a new possibility.

Idea #10: Show a step-by-step plan

Few things will inspire more confidence than you showing a client a step-by-step plan on how you're going to get them from Island A to Island B. It moves it away from just being you saying, "trust me."

Idea #11: Educate about your point of view

Go beyond showing them the plan. Show your client WHY you came up with the plan you did. Help them understand not just the route you're suggesting but the map itself. Help them understand the tides, the winds, the hidden rocks underwater. Help them understand why you've made the choices you did.

Idea #12: Build a relationship over time until potential clients are ready

The importance of staying in touch over time and building trust by adding value can't be overstated. Marketing is like baseball and you can't skip bases.

Idea #13: Share a bigger context

Share your why. Share the bigger cause you see it all as a part of. Help them see that by taking the journey on their own, they're making a contribution to a much wider movement. If they can see themselves as a part of a wider movement, they're a lot less likely to give up – they'll feel more accountable and more bolstered by others.

Idea #14: Create community

Perhaps the most important of all – can you connect them with real people? It can be done virtually or in person. But can you help to become a hub and foster a wider sense of community?

Idea #15: Encourage

Life is so short. Too many people die with regrets. Sometimes some old fashioned real talk and encouraging words to live our lives fully go a long way – especially if all of these other pieces are in place.

Island B: The Results They Crave

The Art of Relevance

"This is a big problem for entrepreneurs. There is no focus on the specific results their customers want to experience or the pains they want to go away. This doesn't motivate prospects to buy. Prospects don't want general outcomes such as 'better health' or to simply 'pay for a treatment', instead they want confidence that they can be pain free in three months, sleep eight hours straight every night or have the energy to exercise again. You need to deliver an experience that gives them those results."

— Lisa Princic

Most of the groundwork for understanding Island B has already been laid in understanding Island A. We are clear about where they don't want to be any longer. So, what are they craving instead? Without clearly articulating this, our business is just a sympathetic friend saying, "Yeah. I hear you. Life is hard."

We spend most of our time on Island A in order to prepare us to understand Island B because, in the end, this is what they are buying from us: a result that they're craving. They couldn't care less about the type of boat we use. They just want to know that we will get them where they want to be.

It's an eye opening moment to realize that your potential clients have deeper needs than your product or service; to realize they want what you're selling for something. Most entrepreneurs never fully consider this. They're so in love with their products and services, so obsessed with selling them that they've utterly lost site of the people to whom they're selling them. They have lost sight of why people are buying them.



As my friend Craig Martin put it, "Clients are not buying what you think they're buying. They're not buying a dating site membership, they're buying the possibility of love. They're not buying a movie ticket, they're buying excitement. They're not buying a car, but an easier way to get to work."

A colleague of mine says, "Don't sell the plane, sell the trip." But the trip to where?

This is what Island B is. It's the place that your people most want to get to. It's the result they are craving. It's the future they most want. It's what they yearn for before falling asleep at night.

The Art of Relevance

Sometimes, like Island A, they can't quite articulate it. Sometimes it's more of a felt sense than something they could put words to.

Once you hone in on this correctly, you have the beginnings of a business where your ideal clients look at your business and say, "OMG, I need to work with you!"

Remember: It's not what you put *into* your product or service, it's what they get *out* of it. This shift in focus from what we are *giving* them to what they are *receiving* is central.

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 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 island is not the only in the world — there are other islands! At first he doesn't believe it, but the more he visits the docks and meets the visitors to his island, the clearer it becomes. It's true. And then, one day, he hears about a particular island (which we 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 to seven 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.

Looked at another way, Island B is your promise to them. You're promising to take them somewhere.

What is the promise you're making to people as a business?

Do people really understand what you are offering? Do they understand that it will meet a need? If they don't understand it, they'll be confused, and the confused mind says "no."

Should You Focus on Island A or Island B?

It's good to know that, for many people, Island B is actually more real than Island A.

For example, I want to backpack across Europe, but a headline saying, "Do you hate Edmonton? Want to get out of this podunk town?" wouldn't grab me. I love Edmonton, yet I also want to travel Europe.

However, I still have a problem while planning my Europe trip. Where should I go to see the kinds of things I'm into? Where do I stay? What is the best way to travel? These are the kinds of very real problems that tour guides and travel agents exist to serve. If someone came up with a tour of traditional story tellers I'd be all over that in a heartbeat.

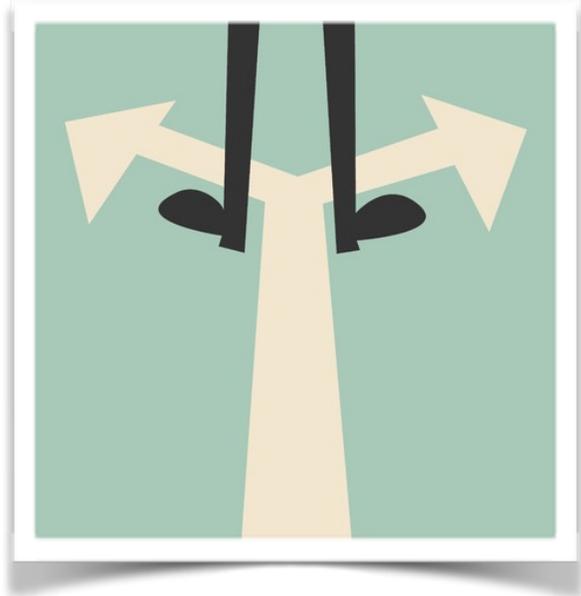
There will always be both Islands, A and B.

So what do you focus on in your marketing?

You focus on whatever is most real for the potential client you're aiming to reach.

For most people, their pain is what's most real. For some people, their yearnings are the most compelling. The respectful thing is to speak to where your clients are, not to where you think they *should* be.

However, your understanding and articulation of Island B is often deepened and informed by your understanding of Island A. The more deeply you understand where your clients are, in a deep and empathic sense, the more clearly you will understand what it is they are craving.



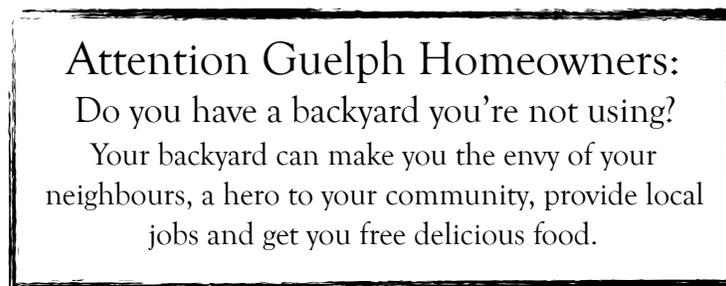
Examples of Businesses With a Clear Island B

Let's go over some examples that can start to untangle your boat from Island B.

And, even before we do, I invite you to reread some examples of Island A to see if you can't imagine what Island B might be for each of them and how it might be worded. It's all there.

But still, it's helpful to focus on a few examples that illustrate this directly.

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. 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?
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.

It's translating what you are selling into what people are buying. It's translating your jargon into words your potential client would use. It's translating what you're offering into the results they are craving.

Remember, they're not buying the boat – they're buying the journey from Island A to Island B.

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" – which 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 Noorish, my favourite cafe in town, 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 Art of Relevance

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.

Again 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 (to the ear of many Westerners) 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 of Feng Shui.

But clients are 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.

EXAMPLES:

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."

*

What does **Tylenol** promise? To reduce fevers and make your headache go away. Sometimes the absence of pain is a very compelling Island B.

*

Your **Netflix** account promises to keep you entertained and distracted.

*

The Art of Relevance

Clearasil sells skin care products. 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 of concise wording.

*

A colleague of mine, Jennifer Pullin from **Fibres of Life**, sells beautiful, fair trade hand-crafted goods. 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 the pieces have wonderful stories behind them. Jennifer has found that the people who buy Fibres of Life pieces are very interested in knowing the stories of the artists and crafts people who made them.

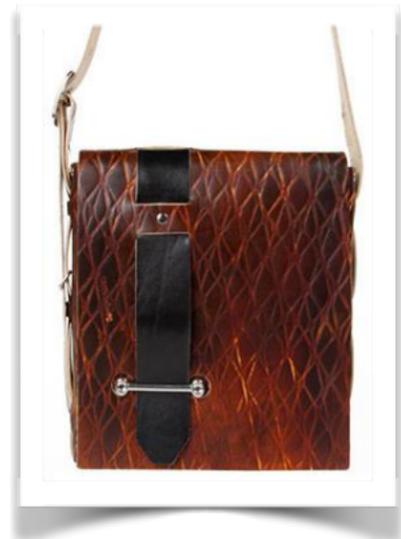


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Think about jewelry. People don't just want jewelry (the boat). They want what they think jewelry will bring them. They want comments and compliments from people. They want it to attract attention or compliment what they're wearing. If you notice that your product often gets comments that is a good sign. We don't just buy jewelry for the jewelry itself.

*

It's the same with the sweet leather bag I bought from **Five Left** (similar to the one pictured right). I love it and get comments all the time. I wanted a sturdy bag, something that would last forever. I think this one will, but honestly I spent \$250 on it because (secretly) I was also hoping to get people saying, "nice bag!" And that has happened. I get compliments all the time. Woot.



*

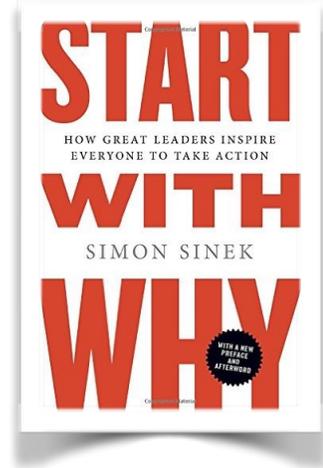
The website **RunKeeper** makes tracking your workouts fun, social, and easy to understand so that you can improve the quality of your fitness. Simple. Clear.

*

To quote from the wonderful book *Start With Why* by Simon Sinek:

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.

*

A website such as **CouchSurfing** helps save 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 of grocery stores visits for folks who are wanting to eat healthier but who feel intimidated by the organic grocery and health food stores. She walks them around, patiently explaining what each product is, what ingredients to look out for, what's gluten free and what's vegan. It's an incredible relief for many of these people (often older) who've faced a health scare and the stare into the aisles of some organic grocery store and think, "I have no idea where to start."

*

Your **hairstylist** promises to help you get compliments from how good your hair looks.

*

The Art of Relevance

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.

*

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.

*

In Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia, there is a beautiful little pottery company called **Birdsall-Worthington**. They realized one day that they don't just sell pots, but heirlooms. They help people mark and commemorate moments, special events, rites of passage. They help people give a perfect and unique gift that the receiver will love. That's a bigger picture. When you realize what the deeper need is you realize that there are many ways to fulfill it. In this case: cards, photographs, a ritualist (someone who performs rituals), journals to record the event could all be other ways to mark and commemorate a special moment in one's life.



*

Also in Nova Scotia, there used to be a beautiful yoga studio called **The Yoga Loft** in the city of Halifax. I spoke with Robert Webber (the founder) and asked him why he thought people came to his yoga studio. "Well," he said. "I think there are a lot of reasons people come. Some people want nice buns. Some people enjoy the stretching. Some people want to relax. But I think for a lot of people it's really about creating conscious community." Creating conscious community. That was it. It's not that his clients would have ever overtly articulated that. But if he knows that this is a core need of his clients, do you think it might help shape what he does?

*

I have a workshop called **Marketing for Hippies 101** and I articulated the result as, "learn the marketing secrets of North America's most successful green, holistic, community-minded entrepreneurs and attract more of the clients you want (without ever sacrificing your integrity or spending a fortune)." or, even more simply that, "Marketing can feel good." You can read more about it here: marketingforhippies.com/intro

*

In David Wood's book **Get Paid for Who You Are**, he shares the following examples of clearly articulated results people might come up with for businesses they could create from who they are and their past life-experience:

- I show you how to make pottery at home in five easy steps
- I help women 45 and over recover from divorce
- I help people who need to buy or sell used heavy machinery
- I show people how to save thousands of dollars on their plumbing expenses, by doing it themselves.
- I connect hikers with the trails just made for them.
- I teach how to make jewelry you love.

*

Natalie Grunberg had an idea for a business. Mail women pretty panties. Once a month. Her business Panty by Post is a brilliant example of 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!).



*

I once heard about a spa in Toronto called **Sunny Mummy**. It was a spa. But with a twist. Most spas don't cater to moms with young children. And Sunny Mummy did, with childcare built into the costs.

*

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 Tiina how the response has been to Yoga for Round Bodies 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!’”

Yoga is a boat that can take you to a lot of different islands. But, as I keep saying . . .

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

*

If you're not from Canada, chances are you've never heard of **Cora's**. It's a chain of restaurants started in Montreal based on a simple result they wanted to offer: healthy, fast, family friendly, brunch food. And they deliver. Consistently. They saw a craving for that offer and they laser focused on how to deliver it. Their staff are consistently solid, food comes out fast and it's always good.



*

An acquaintance of mine, **Michael Rosmer** articulated his Island B based offer in this way, “Your staffing concerns ended in 90 days. Guaranteed.”

*

My colleague Jessica O’Reilly is a **sexologist** who came up with a cheeky and effective Island B title for her workshops, “How to Blow Her Mind” and “How to Blow His Mind.”

*

I once met a **personal organizer** who not only helped people rid of their clutter but also get to the root of it so they could know with confidence that the clutter would never come back.

*

My colleague Vrinda Normand has a great URL for her site that nails the Island B: **IrresistibleWriting.com**



*

The Art of Relevance

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.

*

My colleague **Maya Gangadharan** makes this promise: “I help heart-centred entrepreneurs feel more confident on camera and produce videos that attract their ideal clients.”

*

Or what about this URL that nails their simple Island B message? **StrongMarriageNow.com**

*

I love this headline my colleague **Michael Margolis** used for a program he had about help people write a better bio:

No One Believed Me At First But It’s True:
Learning to Craft a Powerful Bio Story Can Get You a Better
Job, More Profitable Business Opportunities, More Recognition
(and Even Make Your Better at What You Do).

Introducing the proven 7-step process that shows you how to tell your story
in a compelling and memorable way, so you can stand out from the crowd,
have more influence, and expand your business.

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 Island B.

Thoughts on Cravings

All of the previous examples are of entrepreneurs who noticed what people were craving and built a business around helping them get it. You'll find that these results are simple and easy to understand. They're not abstract. You may also notice that they almost all fall into one of the four primary categories of symptoms. They are all grounded in something real. But this can be where things go wrong . . .

Don't judge 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 something deeper and more meaningful. 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 or really desire something, they want relief or to get ahold of that thing as soon as possible. It's easy to judge that until you're in pain or desperate for something yourself.

15 Core Results People Might Want From Your Product or Service

A colleague of mine, Lishui Springford, wrote me once and said, “the key is to recognize complexity and acknowledge it for the customer. And then deal with that complexity for them. My boat is very complex. Overwhelmingly so, sometimes. But my Island B is really clear in my mind. Yes, the process of solving problems is complex. That's why people walk around with all sorts of problems, often for their entire lives. That's why people hire experts: because solving problems is complex.”

Exactly.

And so, with those complexities in mind, we realize that the reason why we hire experts isn't actually that complicated at all.

I see fifteen results. I see fifteen things we save or give our clients. These “savings” or “offerings” are a large part of what they pay us for.

Result #1: Saved Time

Can you help your clients understand how you can 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 for 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 that 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 your clients 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 people 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 homes. 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 homes.

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 New Moon Parties allow new clients a chance to see how this eco-conscious, community-healing home is developing, and enjoy the chance to chance to mingle, network, and share resources, while sampling amazing and affordable healing arts in between! Dee even provides child care if it's requested. Brilliant.

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.

Result #2: Saved Money

Perhaps because of the way you've packaged things and how convenient you make it, might it just save your clients 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 in the longterm than if they handled it with you now (e.g. putting off retrofitting their home, putting off moving to a low-interest credit card, etc.)?



Result #3: Saved Energy

How much emotional energy might it cost your clients 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?

Result #4: Pampered

Can you do anything to make the experience of working with you more luxurious, beautiful and pampering for them? I recently 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?

Result #5: Increased 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 your clients 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 where people really get to feel wonderful about who they are around you?

Result #6: Relationships Built

Here's a twist: can you not only teach your clients 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 by connecting them with people who can help to actualize their ideas.



Result #7: Immediate Help

Can you help your clients 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 in terms of 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?

Result #8: 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? Might your clients be excited to be part of a group of like-minded people who are of a similar calibre? 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.

Result #9: Fun Provided

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 up from that? If you can make it more fun to work with you, clients will come back a lot more often and they’ll send their friends.

Result #10: Showcased

What tools or structures are you creating to showcase what your clients do? Could you feature them somehow? Share 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 you rather than just receiving constant “buy from me” messages.

Result #11: Easy Instructions

Can you give your clients 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? Can you put up free videos, offer paid videos, live classes?

Result #12: Supported Success

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.

Result #13: Assisted Contributions

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” event. 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. For instance, Toms 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.



Result #14: Growth

Again, two paths here. First, can you help reflect to your clients all of the ways that they're already growing? Second, can you give them 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 30-day challenge? Can you run a contest where people set a goal and work towards it?

Result #15: Sense of Security

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 defence – you know exactly how incredible it feels. You can do this by reviewing other products and services, by giving clients good criteria to make decisions, and by giving them a heads-up on things coming down the pike. Help people feel secure and they will love you forever.



Nine Qualities of a Well-Articulated Result

A well-articulated *result* is the other side of the coin of the well-articulated *problem*. The coin itself is the lived experience of your potential client.

1. It is Urgent

If it's the kind of result a client can pursue whenever, they will likely put off handling it. If there's no urgency they may regard what you do with fascination and respect, but they likely won't buy. If it's a mild yearning they may never move towards it. It needs to be more urgent. It needs to be more of a craving.

2. It is Important

Urgency will have clients buy, but importance will have them come back. This needs to relate to one or more of the four core areas of their life (i.e. Money, Health, Relationships, Spirituality). This issue matters to your client because it's something they deeply wanting in one of those areas.

3. It is Positive

A result is, by definition, something a client *wants*. It's not a problem they're struggling with, it's what would make the struggle worthwhile if they were to achieve it.

4. It is Future Tense

The clients are not experiencing it now. But it's something they *want* to experience.

5. It is Achievable

The client needs to believe that there is a way to get to Island B. If, deep down, they do not believe that it's possible to get the result you're promising and you aren't able to convince them, then it's a non-starter; they won't even try and they certainly won't hire you. Part of your marketing may need to be assuring people that what they want is indeed possible – but it's ideal if they already believe this even before connecting with you.

6. It is particular

Yes, “peace” is a result people crave. True. But the peace of a single mother and the peace of single, globe trotting nomad are fundamentally different. The peace of finally coming out of the closet about your sexuality is a different peace than finally having enough money to pay your bills.

7. It is Sensory

The most effective results appeal to your client's five senses. You can easily describe the client's results. You can visualize them clearly. 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!” When we articulate the results, we want to do so in a storied way that gives context to what we're talking about and helps the reader picture it.

8. It has Feelings

Ideally you not only put in the specific result but also how people would *feel* about having that result. Often I will read niche statements that sound very academic – dry and clinical. They lack any human warmth and empathy. This is a subtle but powerful point. People don't just want concrete results, they want to *feel* a certain way. It might be that they want to feel happy, at peace, relaxed, joyful, loving, content, or proud. When we talk about the results people are craving I think it's important to avoid sounding too clinical. We want to stay human in our marketing and that means acknowledging how people would feel if they achieved that result.

9. It is Simple, Succinct, and Clear

You should be able to get to the heart of it in three words or less. Better sleep. Clear skin. Confidence. And you should be able to *really* nail it in seven words or less. If you can't, it's likely too complicated. Keep it as simple as possible.

What if I Can't Guarantee a Result?

Fairly often, in workshops, the question (and it's a very good one) comes up: "What if I can't guarantee a result?"

That question usually emerges from conversations about creating guarantees, and better-than-risk-free guarantees, doing clever and bold risk reversals, etc. But of course, not all kinds of work are suited for these kinds of marketing manoeuvres.



And this is an important question because, if Island B is, in essence, the promise you're making to other people, it's vital to keep those promises.

But the world is littered with businesses that over promise and under deliver. If we're honest with ourselves, we all do it sometimes even when we try hard not to.

But, good intentions or not, if you tell clients you can help them lose 50 pounds in a year and your plan doesn't work, they're going to be pissed.

Some businesses work hard at selling a mirage. Think of all the commercials that pair beer and women, they're selling you a mirage. Drinking that beer will not get you a date. It's a totally false correlation.

And the world is full of green washing these days where businesses spend inordinate sums of money trying to convince people that their super harmful product is more green than it is to appeal to people's craving to live a more eco-friendly lifestyle.

Recently, in my The Meantime Program, a participant shared the following comment, which contains this same admirable problem: "It's difficult/impossible to predict an outcome from Reiki treatments. There are two reasons for this: 1. If I did identify a specific condition that Reiki could help people with I probably couldn't advertise the fact due to the Advertising Standards Agency not accepting that Reiki is effective for any medical condition (without the 'robust' research to back it up they say it's not acceptable). 2. Probably the stronger reason is that what happens as a result of Reiki treatment is not predictable because it's not under my control: what the Reiki energy does for each individual depends on their sub-conscious need on that particular day. I cannot, in all integrity, promise any specific result, because I don't know what it will be. I know that I can offer a compassionate, non-judgemental healing space where change is possible, but nothing can be guaranteed. There's a more predictable outcome for people I teach Reiki to: that they will have

healing in their own hands. So should I focus on this instead? However that doesn't really work in terms of the funnel because most people need to receive treatment first."

You can see the problem here.

Let's retrace our steps a bit.

Remember that your business is like a boat that can take people from Island A (where they're suffering from some problem) to Island B (where they have some result they are craving). These are the basics I delve into in the Marketing for Hippies 101 program.

That's the essence of a business, that journey.

Without the journey, there's not much of a business. There's just a boat.

Stated another way: every business exists to solve a problem. If there's no problem to be solved, there's no business.

Stated yet another way: if there's no result being offered, then it begs the question if there is a problem or if what one is offering is, in fact, a solution in search of a problem. So, in this case, the Reiki practitioner can't advertise to treat a specific condition because a) it's illegal, and b) it's unpredictable.

What to do?

Consider this, as it is always vital to do, from the side of the customer. Imagine how it might feel to them for someone to say, "Pay me money. Then you'll lie down. I'll do some things on you. You may or may not notice anything. It can be very subtle. But, if, in the next few weeks, something good happens, then I'll take credit for that. If nothing happens or something bad, I'll say it's either so subtle and powerful you can't notice it or that your fear is getting in the way."

Consider how that might sound less than accountable or desirable to most people.

So what does that tell us? First of all, that the Reiki practitioner's client is not going to be "most people." That her ideal clients are going to need to be people who are already open, or even irresistibly drawn, to energy work – in particular, Reiki. These are people who will understand the idea that energy work is unpredictable and not be bothered by it.

That's distinction number one.

Tied to that, fundamentally, the Reiki practitioner's target market is going to need to be people who want to get on her boat (even just to sail around). They will need to be people who want a Reiki session and who will be happy to pay for it. They need to be people who wouldn't need or

even want any kind of guarantee. People who want to enjoy “a compassionate, non-judgemental healing space.” And she absolutely *will* get clients based on this alone. There will be people who want those things. There will be people who meet her and think she’s so lovely and want to hire her. She will meet people who have been dying to try out Reiki and say “yes” to her. That will all happen.

The only question is, will it be enough to sustain her. If it is, then I would encourage her to just enjoy that.

But if not, it’s likely got something to do with what we’re left with in her scenario. We’re left with someone saying, “My boat is beautiful. I can’t promise to take you anywhere, but it’s cozy inside. And everyone is welcome.”

Which isn’t bad (truly). But it’s not great (double truly).

That offer is the offer of a “generic healer.” Of which there are likely hundreds, if not thousands, within 50 miles of where the Reiki practitioner lives. And more and more every year.

Of course, the immediate response is often going to be something like, “But this can heal anyone! That’s the best part of this modality! It’s for everyone!”

It’s for everyone? Maybe so. But you could make the same case for yoga and I could give you a lot of examples of different niches people have found in that world. Or permaculture. Or Traditional Chinese Medicine.

The “it’s for everyone!” approach will work if you want to do Reiki as a hobby for friends, but you are unlikely to build much of a business out of it.

To continue the boat analogy, it would be like someone going down to the harbour and seeing thousands of identical boats. How are they supposed to choose? I’ll tell you how . . . price. They will go for the cheapest one. And you don’t want to be in a race to the bottom.

What that means is that, as it stands, the Reiki practitioner’s marketing plan needs to be geared towards finding people who *want* “a compassionate, non-judgemental healing space.”

Huh.

And where would you find those people? Is it possible that this is actually code for every human on the planet? And why would they want it from her vs. someone else? And, if they want that but haven’t tried Reiki yet, how do you get them to try?

It could also be that her target market, a bit more narrowly, could be those who just want a straight up Reiki session. But, again, many of the same questions arise. Where do you find them? What makes her different than the thousands of others who do Reiki?

You see the marketing questions that immediately arise.

So, what's clear is that, to make the marketing planning easier, a bit more focus and definition in the reiki practitioner's niche could be useful.

There are, fundamentally, two different approaches to this. The Artistic Approach and the Entrepreneurial Approach. I get into these in much more depth in my book The Niching Nest, but here's a summary:

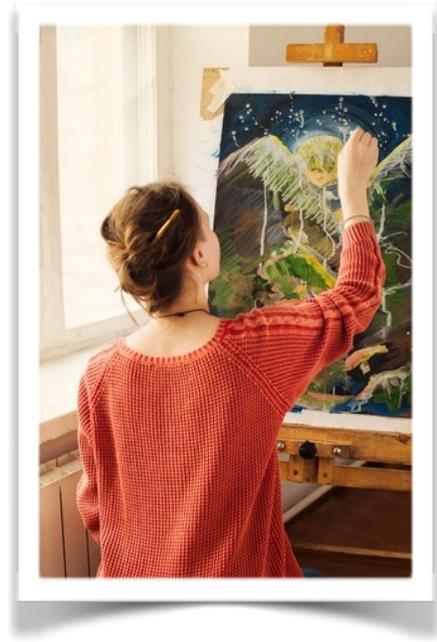
The Artistic Approach:

I would encourage the Reiki practitioner to clarify what it is she most wants to give and how. I'd encourage her to look in the marketplace and notice what she sees missing that she'd like to offer. I'd want her to clarify her point of view, find her voice, bring her personality to the forefront, tell her story and speak about why this work matters to her so much. And I'd want to know all about what kind of lifestyle she might want. I'd be so curious about which parts of her work she loves the most and which parts she wouldn't mind losing. I'd want to know which conversations come up between herself and clients that she'd love to explore more.

I'd want to see her try to sum up her platform in a page. And then to weave that together into the most clear and beautiful offering she can manage. Then, the basic pitch is, "Here's the art I make. If you like it, great. If not, I bless and release you." Or specifically in the Reiki practitioner's case, that statement would be, "Here is the healing modality I practice. If you like it, great. If not, I bless and release you." The Reiki practice is the "art" in this statement.

And, once she was done that, I'd invite her to consider who might be most interested in that.

Thomas Leonard was a business coach as well as a life coach. People would ask him what results he would guarantee and he'd tell them he didn't guarantee anything but that he was pretty sure they'd be happy with the results. They'd ask him why on earth they should hire him at his high rates then. He'd tell them, "You probably shouldn't."



And often they'd hire him anyway. He refused to get caught in the trap of promising something that was out of his control.

But, and this is an enormously important part of it, he had the skills and competence to back that swagger up. He was incredibly good.

The Entrepreneurial Approach:

I would encourage the Reiki practitioner to hone in on one particular target market (i.e. a particular group of people struggling with a particular problem). She might ask herself, “who needs a compassionate, non-judgmental healing space who I most want to help?” and then focus her marketing efforts on them. Then, the basic pitch is, “I’ve created this thing [my Reiki practice] to help you solve your problem and here’s why it’s so good.”



And, once she was done that, I'd invite her to create the most wonderful and creative offer she could. But, for this to become a solid business, one of those needs to move.

Until one has a solid niche, it's difficult for much to happen. I can promise that, as the Reiki practitioner's niche gets clear, many of these questions will answer themselves.

You can find a lot of free help on your niche at NichingSpiral.com

So, a fuzzy niche will get in the way of our having clear promises we can make. But here's mistake I often see: **thinking you have to do it all for your client.**

In one of my Niching programs a few years ago, a participant posted in our private Facebook discussion group:

Hi guys, last night I had one of those “aha” moments – an insight came that might look kind of obvious after the fact, yet it feels like a key thing for me . . . After both Tracie and Nicole brought the idea of partnering with someone who can provide the marketing part for my niche, I have finally nailed down one of the key things that both caused my resistance to niching and brought up the “impostor syndrome.”

The Art of Relevance

It is the belief that it is my responsibility as their coach to provide them with complete, A-Z solution to their struggle. And if I see, say, marketing skills as an important part of the path, yet I'm not in position to teach them those, then the whole “boat” seems useless, ‘cause it cannot take them all the way to their “final” destination . . .

This also made me realize why having a wide and trusted referral network is such a must – without it my boat, however state-of-the-art it may be, will forever be “just a small piece of puzzle,” hence forever unsatisfactory.

I replied to her with this:

Yes! this gets to the heart of it – what is the Island B that *you* can (and want to) take them to? They might crave to go further – but if we can take them a part of the way it's still such an incredible gift. Might be the thing that actually gets them unstuck for the first time in years! This, of course, is an example – this course is not about “figure out all of your marketing forever!” It's just, “let's make progress on figuring our your niche via a niche project.” That's it. And yet 51 people are signed up here.

Seven Things to Look at When You're Struggling With "But I Can't Guarantee my Offers!"

When people say, "But I can't guarantee anything." It's often code for . . .

1. A lack of competency

Real talk. This is the big one. It's very easy to hide incompetence underneath a blanket of jargon and bullshit and claims that the process is unknowable. Facilitators, consultants and healers do it all the time. But, as shaman Martin Prechtel said (and I'm paraphrasing), "If people don't get better, don't call yourself a shaman." Not that it's controllable but, if there's never any measurable or noticeable result, then who are you kidding? The truth is that if you help people get better, if you help them produce a measurable, noticeable, and meaningful result in their life that they've been craving but could not produce on their own, you won't need to worry much about marketing or worrying about not being able to guarantee your offers because the word-of-mouth will be so strong. If people come to you with back pain and leave without it, if they come to you suspecting an emotional cause to their physical ailment and you help them solve it, if they come to you with heartbreak and you help them find some meaning or peace in it, if they come to you struggling with their finances and you help them find clarity, they will tell everyone they know about you. And for your newly referred clients, because the recommendation is coming from a friend, asking for a guarantee is likely to be the last thing in their minds. So much of this is about mastering your craft and being truly committed to getting actual, real world results for your clients. So much of this is about defining what is expected from them for this result to happen, what kind of space needs to be created in their lives, and then supporting them with that.

2. A fuzzy niche

As you read earlier, the lack of a niche means there's no particular journey being offered. This makes it impossible to guarantee anything. Because there's no "thing" to guarantee. After reading a blog post in which I discussed this question of "What if I can't guarantee?" a participant from my program [The Meantime: A 30-Day Cashflow Challenge](#) (who had previously emailed me about the issue in relation to her Reiki work) wrote me the following:

"Wow thanks for writing the blog about my question Tad. Yes I understand your points. I think my issues are: 1) Not wanting to opt for a niche in the past, still lingering a bit – because yes Reiki can help anyone with anything if they are up for it. 2) Not being clear enough about the niche I want to serve – and perhaps not daring to be clear. 3) Not having clear packages, free stuff, sales funnel, although this started to evolve at the beginning of this year and I think more clarity on this will help. Perhaps a shift from seeing what I offer as just Reiki and more as a wider 'package' – something about self-care and self-honouring perhaps. 'Healing' seems too vague as an offering, so I know I have to try to get down to who I really love to help."

3. An unclear map

If you're taking people on a journey from Island A to Island B, they may not need a guarantee if they trust your map and the route you have plotted out. Sometimes them just knowing you've got a clear plan, process, perspective, approach, philosophy or set of principles on which you base your work is enough to eliminate any need for a solid guarantee.

4. Your clients aren't feeling safe

Fundamentally what's being hinted at here is the sense that people perceive some risk in spending their time and money with you. And so, to address it, we offer guarantees. What's important not to lose sight of is the fact that the guarantees are just a tactic to address the underlying issue of fear. They're a tactic to help people feel more confident in their investment. And they're one of many tactics. Other ways to reduce risk include testimonials, online video, writing blogs, certifications, public speaking and leading workshops, etc. Any kind of free sample you can create will be a huge help. Creating compelling packages is another way to reduce risk. All of these tactics will do ten times more for you with less effort than if you have a clear sense of your niche.

5. The results you're offering are big and vague.

If you're making vague promises they will come across as untrustworthy. If you claim to be able to help everyone with everything, you will absolutely come across as a charlatan. It's such an unbelievable claim. Sometimes the result we're offering is too big. And sometimes while we're not guaranteeing any particular big result, we're implying it with phrases like, "this can help anyone with anything." And when people feel uncertain they're going to want more reassurances from you (such as guarantees). I recall being at a networking meeting in Calgary where everyone introduced themselves. One lady shared her work which was so incredibly vague, new age-y and ungrounded, and when she was done there was silence and everyone sat there in an uncomfortable trance of trying to understand what she'd said and also not wanting to make eye contact with her at all. Then my friend Adrian Buckley shared about his incredible permaculture work where they'd do permablitzes and install an entire permacultured landscape in a day and the room broke out into applause. People knew something real when they heard it.

6. What can be guaranteed isn't clear.

You can't guarantee everything, but there are often parts of your work or product that you can. The whole conversation around guarantees is bigger than this eBook can handle but, in this context the Reiki practitioner might be able to guarantee that she'll do everything in her power to make the space as compassionate, non-judgmental and healing as possible. She could even get specific about how she does that. She could set agreements between herself and her client that would have them feel safe. She could guarantee her part of the process (e.g. "I commit to spending 30 minute in meditation at the start of each day and showing up to sessions well rested. I commit to continuing to grow in healing my own life. I commit to continuing my education."). Sometimes the most honest thing you can do is to say, "Our intention is that you achieve _____ and here are all of the things we do to ensure that . . ."

7. What your clients need to guarantee isn't clear.

Sometimes we can't guarantee things because our clients actions are out of our control. You can make clear what you need from them in order for the results to happen as promised and, if they're unwilling or unable to do that, then you are free from any promises you made. That could look like committing to some basic health and stress relieving tactics everyday. It could look like showing up to sessions on time or being willing to do some reading. It doesn't have to be huge on their end, but by requiring that the client take some of the responsibility on for the guarantee they also potentially invest in the process more fully and less blindly.

Thoughts on Connecting Island A and B

So there it is, the basics of your business: Island A and B.

But it might be worthwhile to now pause and consider how the two are connected. Again, you could look at any of the examples of Island A covered in the book so far and, intuitively, understand what Island B might be. And you could look at any of the Island B examples and have a good understanding of what Island A probably is. But let's look at some examples where the connection is crystal clear.



Jacquie Robertson summed up the journey her clients were on in her program **Recharge Your Hormones** in just four words: less crazy, more sexy. Island A = crazy. Island B = sexy.

Simple.

Or what about **Jackie MacMillan** whose URL sums up the problem and the result in three words: thrivingwithautism.com. Island A = autism. Island B = thriving.

Mophie is a company that makes sleek and beautiful external battery packs that wrap around your phone. The problem? Your phone dies sooner than you'd like (and usually when you're out late with friends and were about to call a cab). The solution: Mophie recharges the phone with no extra battery or chord.

doodle.com addresses the frustration of trying to set up meetings via email and makes setting meetings (even with large numbers of people) easy.

unroll.me is a Gmail app that deals with the problem of email-overwhelm by identifying all of the email lists you're on and putting them in a single, digestible email every day. This has cleared 60 emails per day from my inbox.

BoomerangforGmail.com has helped me deal with email overwhelm by allowing me to select emails and have them vanish from my inbox and then reappear whenever I want in the future keeping my inbox visually clean and easy to deal with.

The Art of Relevance

Or what about sites like yola.com, wix.com, squarespace.com and weebly.com which address the issue of not having a website because you can't afford it and giving you the tools you need to make your own website for free.

Or what about uber.com? They addressed the issues of waiting forever for an expensive cab ride, and cab companies that didn't seem to care about their riders or drivers, with a simple and effective service that gets you an affordable ride fast and the capacity to rate drivers.

Or, if you want to keep your money going to local cab companies, what about the apps **ecab** and **Hailo** which send out your request for a cab to all of the different cab companies so you are guaranteed to get a cab quickly.

Case Study: Lisa Anne Morrison – Professional Organizer

Years ago, Lisa Anne Morrison sent this to me as a great example of nailing Island A and B. She had attended a weekend workshop I'd led in Halifax, Nova Scotia and applied the concepts to her business. These statements were the raw materials from which she was intending to build her marketing materials. I love this example as one that clearly lays out both the problems and the results. Her points give me a very clear sense of where her clients are when she first meets them, and then where she can take them.

ISLAND A:

- recently expanded, needing to hire people, suddenly doing payroll, needing to delegate, multitasking
- desk and office is so cluttered and you know you need to get it organized (but not sure how)
- your archive room is overflowing with past documents, past work
- computer desk top is cluttered
- maxed out. you're able to handle it all at one point but things have grown/expanded/sped up enough that you no longer can handle it. Ideas written on a piece of paper like a checklist. The list gets overwhelming, "how am I going to get all of this done?"
- you're so busy that you're skipping meals and not getting enough sleep
- life is feeling like a constant crisis and there never seems to be enough time
- you find yourself breaking promises and disappointing people (and you feel terrible about this). You are spinning so many plates/juggling so many balls and things are starting to drop
- your stacks of work are precariously balanced and about to fall in on you
- you're the bottleneck. you're overwhelmed. you're frustrated
- same problems and glitches keep coming up again and again but you have no time to fix them. You are craving to get organized but you can't find the time and don't even know where to start. You feel daunted just thinking about it.
- you're taking work home all the time. can't keep work and personal separate. work is taking over. getting late night calls. feel guilty if you're not working
- health, good food is neglected. start getting feedback from friends and partners complain that they never see them because they're always at work
- scared of getting more business because you don't know how you'll handle it

ISLAND B:

- if you're organized, you'll be able to keep your word and build integrity and trust
- want to feel on top of things
- craving to be able to leave work at the office and not take it home with you
- ease, space, relaxed
- earning more money with less effort
- business will grow without all your time going to it
- effortless accomplishment, leveraged time. you do very little and so much happens

Case Study: Trade Shows

Learn the Secrets to a Magnetic Trade Show Experience!

You've poured your heart and soul into a trade show, you've come home with a stack of cards and draw ballots (and aching feet) and you're happy about only one thing – that it's over! The only tasks remaining are to clean up the exhibit, find your prize winners and execute your follow-up plan. Tomorrow . . . or maybe the day after . . . or next week . . .

Let's face it, trade shows are exhausting. And there are plenty of companies who will help you get your exhibit branded and ready for prime time, but there are very few that can help you to create a business plan so that you can accurately measure the results of your investment.

Register today for this one-day workshop and learn the secrets to create a magnetic trade show experience – one that reignites your passion for your business and delivers a boatload of qualified business prospects.

What You Will Learn in this Workshop:

- How to evaluate the trade show promoter's hype
- How to choose the trade show that's right for your business
- How to create realistic and measurable goals for what that trade show can deliver
- How to create a solid action plan to guide your activities before, during and after the show
- How to increase profitability and drive new customers to your business

You'll learn how to plan your offer, draw attention to your exhibit, plan your giveaways, handle difficult guests, gather prospective client information, engage and qualify your potential customers and more. You'll learn practical steps to plan your post-show activities – how to pursue hot leads, warm up cool leads and prioritize your initiatives so that you can pace your energy to stay the course.

Island C: The Unimagined Possibility

“The greatest personal limitation is to be found not in the things you want to do and can’t, but in the things you’ve never considered doing.”

– Dr. Richard Bandler

There is something beyond Island B.

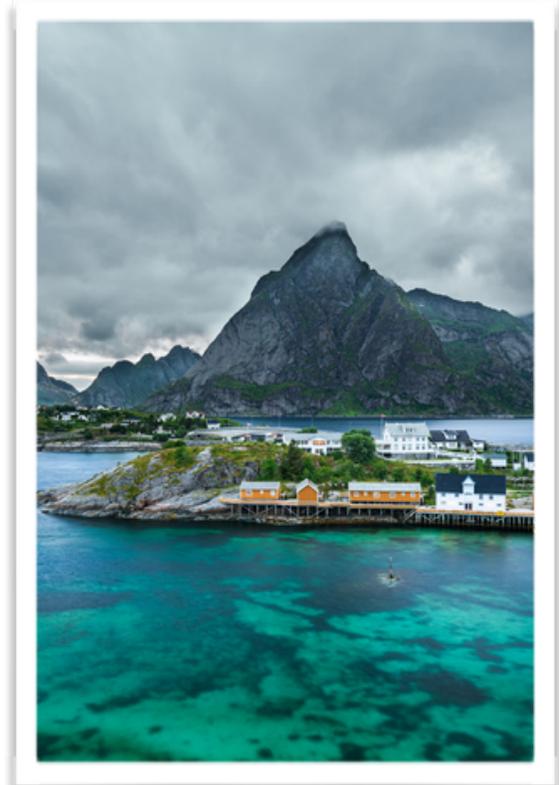
For simplicity’s sake, I’ve decided to call it Island C.

If Island A is the pain they’re in now and Island B is where they want to get to, then Island C is what we know is possible for them that’s even beyond Island B.

There’s the pain they feel. There’s the thing they’re craving, but the thing they’re craving only goes to the limits of their imagination. Our cravings take us to the end of what we know but no farther.

Island C is the possibility they have never imagined for themselves. It’s the thing that’s not even on the menu but that, if you ask, the kitchen might make for you. It’s that hidden place in the park that only yourself and a few others know about. It’s that tiny town you visit that no one else knows about. Island C is everything they want but better.

I recall hearing about a small town in Europe which grew rapidly in population and was suddenly faced with a sewage crisis. Their sewage system was a canal that ran through the centre of town. A fine system for a sleepy little town but a problem for the population they eventually had. The smell was terrible. What could they do? Island A couldn’t be clearer. But what was Island B? What was the result they were craving? A chemical treatment facility for their sewage. But then one person pointed out that they could use what’s known as “living machines” to treat the sewage. No plant needed to be built at all. They just had to plant swamp reeds and flowers along the long canal and the plants would be fertilized by the sewage, clean the water, and beautify the canal. That’s Island C: a more positive possibility than they’d ever have been capable of imagining. No one in that town was falling asleep wondering, “Is there a way to treat all of this sewage with flowers?” They’d never known it was a possibility and therefore couldn’t crave it. Island B is the result they crave. *Island C is the result they never knew was possible.*



More Real Life Examples

Claudia Bolli from Edmonton imagines yards not just as things to be landscaped (Island B) but sees the possibility in them to become sanctuaries for people. It's a vision most people wouldn't hold for their yards.

The world of **permaculture** looks at desertified and salty soil and sees the potential for an oasis.

The **Authentic Man Program** in San Francisco sees beyond the possibility of "better communication" with women or skills to "pick them up" to the deeper possibility of authentic relating and seeing our interactions with others as a path of spiritual growth. They lift up the possibility of a level of realness and authenticity in relating with women that most men would never even consider.

My colleague **Ari Galper** works with a lot of sales people who are (secretly) terrified of cold calling (Island A) and their best hope is to learn some tools to make it less painful, or to have ways to pump themselves up to make it through it or some better "closing techniques" so they can make more money (Island B). But the assumption is that it's doomed to be painful. Ari lifts up the possibility that cold calls can not only be effective but feel wonderful and respectful for both sides.

In October of 2011, I met Jon and his wife Peggy at **Pun Pun** (an organic farm and sustainability center) in Thailand. While most people living in the city (and hating it) dream of maybe making more money in their job and having life be a bit less hard — Jon has the notion that more possible, that life can be easy.

Many people struggle with **type II diabetes** (Island A) and they hope to live a normal life (Island B). Gabriel Cousens had created a protocol that might entirely heal it through nutrition (Island C). Healing or curing Type II Diabetes is not even on the radar of most people who struggle with it.

Most **non-profits struggle with funding**. They scrape by, get money from government, foundations and corporations and it's stressful to deal with the politics, red tape and lack of money (Island A). They would love to get a bit more time to get all those funding proposals in and host a few really sweet fundraising events. Terry Axelrod of Benevon proposes something a bit different: the possibility of forever ending the chasing for funding by creating a system for individual giving campaigns that works so seamlessly that it's never, ever an issue again. Your mission could be not just "better" funded — but fully funded.

Most people work at a job that isn't really their thing (Island A) and dream of one day retiring and doing what they really want to do. Work hard, retire, have an amazing lifestyle (Island B). **Alex Baisley** suggests that you might actually be able to have your dream lifestyle much sooner than you'd think. He suggests that if you start with your ideas for an amazing lifestyle you can then back your business and projects into that and start living your dream lifestyle right now rather than

down the road when you're 65. Even further he points out that you might just make more money doing the things you love to do and living the lifestyle you've always dreamed of living.

Mark Silver suggests that every act of business can be an act of love.

Edmonton's **The Chocolate Doctors** suggest that chocolate can be not only a guilty pleasure but a healthful one when it's made raw.

Lynne Twist sees fundraising not as the shitty job to be avoided in the world of fundraising but as one of the most beautiful and sacred jobs one can perform – a job that actually be a part of healing the world (not just a job to fund the work that heals it).

Challenge Day sees bullying not as something we should just cope with but something that can be transformed. They believe high school can be more than tolerable but actually a beautiful experience.

A man I met in Calgary worked with **men who'd been devastated by divorce**. Most of them would hope for things to be neutral – but he believed you could actually create a better relationship with your ex than you had when you were together (whether or not you ever got back together).

Whereas many activist men carry shame for being a man (Island A) and their dream is to be a better ally to women (Island B), **David Hatfield** offers a deeper and richer possibility – that we can not only support our sisters, but that brotherhood is a constant possibility. That being a man is something to be celebrated not something to be ashamed of.

TED talks are full of people sharing possibilities you'd never even imagined before. We leave watching a TED Talk uplifted and inspired. Full of hope for what's possible. We've seen something new in the world.

So many people suffer emotionally (Island A). **Byron Katie** has the point of view that our suffering comes from our thoughts. And that when we question them we can not only cope – but that we can really truly be at peace and live in the moment.

Many progressive white people feel guilty about being white (Island A). **Martin Prechtel** suggests that there is an indigenous heart of humanity and that it is possible to reclaim it. Even for white people.

Martin Luther King Jr. wasn't just working for the end of racism (a large enough goal) but the creation of the beloved community. His vision was about a culture, not an individual, the spirit of it. He saw further.

The Art of Relevance

Island C is your provocative proposition – your potentially outrageous idea of what might be possible in the life of a single person (e.g. that marketing can be done in a way that doesn't feel gross, that you can parent without being too permissive or too authoritarian, that you might be able to heal your depression without drugs, etc.)

Sometimes all people know is that they are craving relief from Island A. Relief from their pain. Sometimes it's really hard to see beyond that.

Island C is the thing people might have inklings of but would never imagine. It's not on the menu to order. It's the new wonderful idea that we bring into the world. A tiny thread reweaving the world into wholeness. And isn't that a wonderful idea, that you bring not just a new person but (at least one) new possibility into the world with you. A possibility people may never have considered before. A possibility you are able to share because you've lived it into being.

People only know the solutions they know. They don't know what else is available. They yearn for more but can only fit that into what they experience or know.

But you see further than they're able to.

Considerations and Caveats

Island C *could* become the land of hype and false promises. It could become the land of shattered dreams. Don't do that to people. Don't offer up something you haven't personally experienced. Don't tell them you can guide them to the mountain top when you've only ever been half way (and no one else has ever made it).

It's important to speak both to the possibility and the limitations; the opportunities and the challenges; the beauty of the promised land and all the work it takes to get there.

To paraphrase activist and astrologer Caroline Casey: When your community looks into the mirror that reflects the current world's woes and feel such despair and are overwhelmed from it – we wave our hands and the mirror becomes a window through which they can see what's possible. And, with another wave, that window becomes a door and we invite them through.

We're telling people a new story about their lives that they've never heard before – or not heard for a long time. The true stories of what is possible. Of what we can be.

We call the new world into being with the eloquence of our words and our living.

“Better to create prophecy than to live prediction. What makes us passive is toxic. What makes us active is tonic. This is the difference between predictions, which make us passive, and prophecy, which is active co-creation with the divine.”

– Caroline Casey

Where to Use This All in Your Marketing

So, where can all of this be used?

It should be used in “points of contact.”

Wherever it's likely that it will be someone's first exposure to you, you should speaking to what's relevant to them instead of about yourself and how great you are.

- **Homepage:** most important. The very first thing on your homepage should be Island A or Island B. Your homepage is not about you, it's about your potential clients. This is crucial to understand. You don't have to say the infomercial sounding words, “Do you suffer from bad breath?” You can simply share the story that allows your ideal clients to find themselves in it. Sometimes that's more powerful.
- **Your bio:** your website's “About Me” page is a place where Island A, B, C, and Z should be showing up. Your bio is the place where you tell your personal story, and build your credibility as someone who knows first-hand about what it's like to struggle with the issue at hand.
- **The “About You” page:** tell the client's story:. Another option is that you can articulate the story of your typical client. You can offer a little story or a big one.
- **Headlines:** the first words on your sales page: the headline. It should ideally speak very directly to the result your potential clients are craving. Could you sum up the result you're offering into three words? You might be shocked to find that you can.
- **Sales letters:** your sales letters should be written around what you uncover with your work.
- **Email subject lines:** you could do worse than making sure that most of your email subject lines are focused on either Island A or Island B.
- **Titles and subtitles of talks and workshops:** you can dramatically increase the response to your talks and workshops by giving them a name that directly describes the problem it solves or the result it offers.
- **Your Twitter profile description:** Do you help people get more clients? Name it there. Do you help them get over heartbreak? Name it there. Do you help people sleep better? Name it there.
- **URL:** 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: getknownnow.com or the dating coach whose URL is doubleyourdating.com

To Summarize

Our clients experience pain where they are [Island A], and want to get to a place of less pain [Island B].

To engage the client, empathize with their Island A to show them you understand and care. Use marketing language that reflects their experience, not your diagnosis (which the client might not identify with or understand). Understand why the client needs your help (because they can't solve it themselves). If the client seeks the wrong solution because they don't understand the true source of the pain, engage with them at the level of their pain and take them on a journey from there.



You can engage Shallow and Wide or Narrow and Deep. You can try to engage everyone in the world on a surface level, or serve a few people on a much deeper level. Deep engagement requires intimate knowledge of the client's symptoms, pain points, and reflecting these back to potential clients via marketing material.

When attracting clients is hard, work on the marketing, not just improving the performance of your core skills. Hire a marketing consultant if necessary. Consider using questionnaires to engage potential clients. (Do you suffer from these symptoms? I can help.)

Understand where the client *is* at the moment they decide to buy (not too early, not too late). Articulate the problem, the lived experience of where they are at. Some ways to identify symptoms you feel drawn to solving include looking at your own wounds and where you've struggled. Interview your ideal kinds of clients and ask them about what it's like being them. Then figure out how you can best help. Use these symptoms in your marketing.

Once you have engaged clients by understanding their pain, then understand the results that clients crave, and plan a route from pain to results. Sell this plan (something I speak about more in my [Point of View Marketing eBook](#)). Focus on the results and the plan, not on the specific vehicle or technical skills you employ. Go into detail on all the benefits you can offer (self-esteem, success, fun, growth, saving time/money/energy).

If you can't guarantee a specific result, there are a couple ways to deal with that. First is to see what might be wrong with your approach, your messaging, and your competency.

The Art of Relevance

Clients are scared that if things keep going wrong, they'll end up on Island Z. You need to confront these fears. Offer safety, empathy, success stories, honesty, context, community, and encouragement. Deal with your clients' shame in a non-shaming way.

Beyond Island B lies Island C, a place that most people have never even heard of. Don't overhype it or offer false promises, but do go into detail on what is possible beyond short-term, surface-level fixes. A brave new world.

Conclusion

Relevance.

This will always be the first step in marketing.

Or at least it should be.

This is the final gift of focusing on relevance first. It frees you.

Old school sales and marketing is like a shark swimming ever closer circles around the agenda to get the sale. Everything seems to be in service to the agenda of getting the sale. All offerings are laid on the altar or convincing people to buy from us.

And *that* is why marketing feels so terrible.

But, if you come at marketing from the understanding that marketing isn't about seduction but about filtering, it's a whole different story. If you come at marketing knowing that what you're offering isn't going to be for everyone and that job one of your marketing is to help people sort out for themselves if what you're offering is a match for them, then your marketing will be clean.

If marketing is about filtering out the people who aren't a fit, then relevance is the very first filter.

What if, when we made cold calls, instead of beginning by talking about ourselves and how great our offer is we started with, "Hey there, I'm hoping you could help me out. I was wondering if your company was struggling with _____ issue and, if so, who to speak with about that?" You might find out, immediately, that they don't have that issue at all and so there's no need to follow up, do a presentation, or get your hopes up.

What if our headlines and email subject lines weren't written to get everyone to read more but, as best as possible, to only get the *right* people to read more? You might find that you get a lower response in numbers in the short term but that everyone who buys is thrilled.

What if all of our marketing was rooted in this idea of establishing relevance first and letting the client decide if what you were offering was for them? You might find that there is less drama for everyone.

If you do the work suggested in this book and get clear on the four Islands A, B,C and Z, then you might be surprised at how much better your marketing feels, how much easier it is to do and how much stronger your word-of-mouth is and how much happier your clients are.

For your handy Art of Relevance Workbook and more free resources to help you with clarifying the journey you help your customers on go to:

marketingforhippies.com/islandsresources

Gratitude

Years ago marketing guru Jay Abraham turned my gaze to the notion that most service-based businesses existed to solve problems and help people get results . . .

. . . Years later, Mark Silver would help me see this as a sort of journey from one place to another and that it was our role to help them make that journey.

And it was from Bill Baren that the central metaphor for this book came; the idea of a journey from one island to another. I am indebted to all three of them for helping me understand the core mechanics and art of creating relevance in our marketing and business lives.

My deep thanks are also due to the good Susan Kendal Urbach, stalwart friend, fellow Waldorf alum and intrepid assistant without whom my business would crumble.

The good Craig Martin of Calgary also offered excellent edits and significant suggestions of wording in this eBook and helped me see things in a fresh light. My gratitude to him.

Thanks to Brittany Duggan for her smart editorial eyes and excellent questions that undoubtedly made this book more concise and clear.



Tad Hargrave

Tad is a hippy who developed a knack for marketing (and then learned how to be a hippy again). For over fifteen years he has been touring his marketing workshops around Canada, bringing refreshing and unorthodox ideas to conscious entrepreneurs and green businesses that help them grow their organizations and businesses (without selling their souls).

He does improv comedy semi-professionally, co-runs Edmonton's progressive community building network TheLocalGood.ca, founded streetcarshows.com, indigodrinks.ca, socialyogiyeg.com, and the Jams program of yesworld.org. He speaks Scottish Gaelic and helps to run novascotiagaelsjam.com, and is also a huge Doctor Who nerd.

Tad currently lives in Edmonton, Alberta (traditionally known, in the local indigenous language of the Cree, as Amiskwaciy (Beaver Hill) and later Amiskwaciwaskihegan (Beaver Hill House)) and his ancestors come primarily from Scotland with some from the Ukraine as well. He is drawn to conversations around politics, history, ancestry, healing and how those all intersect.

You can learn more about Tad and his work at marketingforhippies.com and nichingspiral.com.