

your six week
marketing 101 for holistic practitioners
grounding materials
week one

from

www.marketingforhippies.com

three foundations of a thriving business

By: [Tad](#) | Published: January 16, 2012 · [10 Comments](#) ([Edit](#))

At some point last year, it became clear to me that there are three main things most entrepreneurs need to have handled in order to thrive. They overlap each other like circles in a Venn Diagram.

And I realize now that I'd never written about them explicitly. So, here we are.

First, there's a seven minute video of me sharing the overview and then I've written a recap and bit more about my thoughts on this.

First of all, I want you to imagine that a successful business is like a stylish bucket full of water. And then we need to ask ourselves, 'why don't most people have a full bucket of water?'

FOUNDATION #1: Your Platform

Your platform is what you're known for.

It's your brand, your identity, your reputation.

It's also the basis of every, single marketing decision you'll ever make. It's the core of what makes a business either authentic or not, original or a copy cat.

I want to submit that there are [six things](#) you can be known for. And that most entrepreneurs only focus on ONE of those things (which is also the one that makes them seem the most generic, boring and 'just like everyone else.' You can be known for what you do, but also [why](#) you do it, your [point of view](#) on it, you can be known for you and your style, you can be known for the particular [journey](#) you take people on and you can be known for the [unimagined possibility](#) you introduce into people's lives.

Most businesses try to get known for what they do or make (e.g. I'm a massage therapist, I make widgets, I sell groceries). The challenge is that, unless you're the only one in your area or community doing that then how are they supposed to make a decision about who to work with? How should they know if you're a [perfect fit](#) for them?

When people don't have a platform their marketing will always come across as generic and lack lustre.

Foundation #2: The Container

There's no point in pouring more and more water into a leaky bucket. The first step is to stop the leak.

It seems obvious. But most entrepreneurs don't so much have a leaky bucket as a sieve or strainer. It holds onto almost nothing.

And some entrepreneurs have a bucket that's so ugly (to them) that they don't even bring it with them to the river side. They're afraid people might see them with it and laugh at what an old bucket they have.

It's important not just that our bucket 'works' but that we're so proud of it and so charmed with it that we want to take it everywhere. That we'd be so happy for people to see us with it.

I've known so many people who've gotten covered in the media for their work and have gotten no clients from it. Or they're super well known and loved, but don't have a lot of clients. So much water that pours in and then almost immediately out.

Your container is the embodiment of your platform. It's what people see or experience about your business that immediately gives them a sense of whether or not what you're offering is a fit for them. The clearer your platform, the stronger your container.

If you were hosting a party, the platform would be the theme of the party and the container would be all the decorations, the cleaning, the hot cup of cider offered to guests as they arrived. Your website is a container. Your landing page. The story of your business. The free workshop you do is a container. The blog is a container. The community that you cultivate and create is a held in the container of your online forums, live events, your email list etc. Your container is comprised of all the structures you create that warmly hold your community.

Your container are all the things they can see, hear and explore that give them a sense of you.

Your container are all the processes and systems you create that make it safe for people to check you out at a safe distance and slowly get closer to you and opt in to being in touch with you.

Imagine Oprah Winfrey tells everyone to check you out. Vaguely mentions what you do but not enough to give anyone a real sense of it. So, what do they do? They check you out online. But, what if you don't have a website? Or what if your website doesn't really clarify what you're about? So many people would see your site, maaaaybe bookmark it . . . and then be gone forever.

But what if they found your website and the [homepage](#) immediately helped them figure out if what you were doing was a fit or not, the ['about me' page](#) gave them a really good sense of who you were and what you were about. And then there was a way they could sign up for things to be in touch with you (e.g. 'join my email list and get this free gift' or 'follow me on twitter or facebook' or 'come to my monthly free workshop' etc). Imagine the following you'd build over time.

For a container to be effective, it needs to be clear (which means the platform should be clear). It's good if it's safe and welcoming, but at the bottom line it needs to be [resonant](#).

If they're on [Island A](#) and trying to get to [Island B](#), your container is, basically, your boat.

Your container is the home made ready for the party. When they show up that they want to stay. They get to the door and they're nervous, but then they smell the food, they see how beautifully

decorated it is, they see the wonderful people inside, they're greeted with a cup of hot apple cider and they hear the beautiful music etc.

One of my colleagues [Bill Baren](#) recently shared a thought about this. He had a client who was promoting a teleseminar and there was a webpage people would go to to register for the teleseminar. They were obsessed with reaching more people. But Bill asked them to pause and check out what percentage of people who were actually going to the landing page were signing up. It turned out that 10% of people who hit the page actually entered in their name and email to register for the free teleseminar. That means 90% hit the page and just left.

“Doesn't it make more sense,” he offered. “To see if we can tweak the page to boost the percent of people that say yes? Isn't that a better use of energy? Instead of investing so much time and effort in getting more people, let's see if we first can't get more results from the people who are already coming. Right now we've got a tub with a huge leak. Instead of pouring in more and more water, let's plug the leak first.”

When there's no container it can be so confusing, 'I'm doing everything right and I'm not getting any clients!'

The container has a lot to do with being ready. Preparing our home to receive guests. Making sure we're ready for when they show up. Being craftsmen of our arts. Attention to details. Small things matter. [Wrapping our gifts](#) as beautifully as we can. This gives us a sense of pride. We're *excited* (not embarrassed) to send people to our website. We can't *wait* to show off our cafe. We know that the details are handled so we don't fuss about them. We can relax. The container, we find, not only holds the potential client – it holds us too.

Foundation #3: The Path

If the platform is the bucket design, and the container is the bucket, then the path is a faucet that water comes out of (and I suppose your clients and income would be the water). Not much point in having a beautiful bucket if it's going to sit there empty all the time.

Another analogy: So many people set up their businesses in the middle of a forest with no paths leading to it. They are hoping that somehow, lost in the woods, the right people will stumble upon them and want to buy what they're offering.

The more paths you have leading to your doorstep the more easily you can be found. This is the heart of marketing, making it easy for the [right people](#) who are a perfect fit to find you and say 'yes' to working with you.

But there are so very many ways to market what we do.

And that can feel overwhelming. Where do we start? Especially when everyone has an opinion about what the 'best' form of marketing is. There's public speaking, writing, hosting events, social media, PR, advertising, online events, free samples of our work . . . So much.

Weight watchers has an interesting and very down to earth take on this. When doing their workshops, they'll ask their audiences, 'what do you think is the best form of exercise for weight loss?' and people will throw out their opinions: running, walking, swimming etc. And then they'll say, 'Here's the truth. There is one form of exercise that is the best. It's proven beyond a shadow of a doubt to be the most effective form of exercise for weight loss. Do you want to know what it is? The best exercise is . . . the one you'll do.'

And there it is.

The one you'll do.

I think the analogy of paths is good for another reason: they're already looking for us. People are already struggling with certain [problems and symptoms](#) and looking for relief. Let's make it as easy as possible for them to find us by making as many clear paths through the woods as we can. The easier you are the find, the more easily you will be found.

Many people think that marketing is about searching people in the forest. But we need to remember, the people we think we need to search for are already searching for us. And they're highly motivated. So, let's put our energy not into chasing anyone but into getting very clear about who the perfect someone's are that we want to work with, creating wonderful and inspiring containers to receive them into and then making it almost impossible for them not to find out about us and check us out in low risk ways.

We can't always afford to lay down a highway to our doorstep. Start with trails of breadcrumbs. Start where you can with the types of paths that resonate most with you.

When there are no paths it's like you've got this amazing thing that nobody knows about.

My suggestion to you: pick three paths. Pick three marketing tactics and strategies that feel really good for you and invest deeply into them. Do you like writing? Speaking? Hosting? Think about the ways of expressing yourself that you are naturally drawn to and delve deep into those.

When a business has all three of these, a clear platform, a strong container and easy paths they tend to have all the business they can handle.

What do you think?

your platform: six things you can be known for (and one other)

By: [Tad](#) | Published: November 15, 2011 · [30 Comments](#) ([Edit](#))

If you want to succeed in your business – you need to become ‘known’ for something.

How do businesses ultimately succeed?

By [word of mouth](#). People telling people because they want it to thrive. Because they love it. Because they know it will be useful to a friend.

In short, the business is known for being good at something.

And that ‘something’ should be clear from the first moment people meet you. That something is your [brand](#).

It should be something that’s so clear that people can express it to their friends.

It doesn’t need to be something you can sum up in a slogan (but bonus points if you can) but it should be something people can feel and ‘get’.

And, of course, this can all feel a bit daunting.

So, let’s break it down.

I would submit that there are **six things** your business can be known for.

That your platform isn’t just one thing. It’s not some pithy sound bite or elevator speech or a single Unique Selling Proposition. It’s a weaving together of six things. At least.

And, I’d submit that most businesses settle for being known for only *one* of these things (almost always the same one – which also happens to be the least inspiring and the one most likely to have you relegated to commodity status where people compare you only on price).

Before I give you the six (plus the one other). I need to tell you a story – to give you an image in your mind.

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

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

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

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

So, in this image we have six elements I want to lift up for your consideration. Each of them is something you can become known for.

1. The Captain: you.
2. [Boat: what you do. Your irresistible offering.](#)
3. The [Journey](#): the problem you solve and [result](#) you offer for a particular group
4. The Sea: your particular [point of view](#) and map on that journey.
5. The Sky: the overarching reason and cause that all of your work is an expression of.
6. The Unimagined Possibility: beyond the place they can imagine going, there might be something even more wonderful.
7. [The Deepest Fear](#): if they do nothing – what are they secretly afraid might happen? (this is the 'other one' because it's not something you can really be *known* for but it plays a role).

If you've been following my work for any time at all, you know that a core theme of mine is about identifying the '[journey](#)' that people are on.

Metaphorically, it's like people are on Island A where they're struggling with some problem (i.e. set of symptoms they don't like) and they want to be on Island B where they have the result they want (i.e. something they're craving).

And your business is like a boat that takes them on the journey from Island A to B.

The truth is that some people will just want to buy from you because they like you, the captain, so much. Some people have such a great vibe that people spend money with them because they just want to support them and be around their vibe. This is the heart of any kind of holistic work because the implied message in holistic healing is, 'do what I say and you'll end up like me'.

And when practitioners have a [bad vibe](#) – all the marketing tactics in the world won't help them.

But, the best vibe in the world isn't something you can build a business on. You can have such an amazing vibe and still be broke unless people are clear about the other four pieces.

And, in your marketing, you want to make sure that you're speaking to their journey, not just talking about your boat and how great it is. The [homepage on your website](#) should be about the journey, not about the boat. The first words in any presentation you do should be about the journey – not about the boat.

But most marketing is just people talking about the features and benefits of their boat. But when people see you as a boat, sometimes it can be hard to tell you apart from all the other boats. And so you're a commodity. They have lots of options and 'let's see who's cheapest' becomes the mantra.

So, getting clear about the nature of the journey is vital.

On the outside edges of that journey are two other islands. Behind to the left of Island A you can imagine [Island Z](#). That's where they're secretly scared they're going to end up if they do nothing. These are fears like, 'if i don't handle my dating life I'm going to end up old and alone', or 'if I don't keep my mind sharp I'm going to end up with alzheimers like my great grandparents.' 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 which will allow you to engage the other three more deeply and [safely](#).

The key here is that Island Z is not real. It's a mirage. A nightmare fantasy. The worst case scenario. That's why it's not part of your platform. It's a part of their internal world.

To the right of Island B, we have [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](#). As I wrote a few days ago,

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 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 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 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 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 the world (though they are likely connected).

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.

And then you have a certain map or route that you'd recommend for how folks can get from Island A to Island B. You have a certain [Point of View](#) about the journey. You can think of that as everything that's under the water connecting these two islands. It's your diagnosis about the underlying, root causes of why it's so difficult for folks to make this journey. I've [written a lot](#) about that lately.

But there's something more that's been becoming clear to me recently.

It's not enough to be clear about WHAT the journey and the boat are or HOW you take them on the journey – they need to know WHY you're so passionate about that journey and what the bigger picture is for you. They need to know what this is about beyond the money. Why does your work matter to you and to the world?

Your why is the bigger cause you stand for.

It's the journey you see that the world or your community is on (e.g. Martin Luther King Jr.'s articulation of the journey from a deeply racist USA to 'the beloved community').

[Simon Sinek](#) talks about this in depth in his brilliant book, [Start With Why](#):

“People don't buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it.

WHAT: Every single company and organization on the planet knows WHAT they do. This is true no matter how big or small, no matter what industry. Everyone is easily able to describe the products or services a company sells or the job function they have within that system. WHATs are easy to identify.

HOW: Some companies and people know HOW they do WHAT they do. Whether you call them a “differentiating value proposition”, “proprietary process” or “unique selling proposition”, HOWs are often given to explain how something is different or better. Not as obvious as WHATs, many think these are the differentiating or motivating factors in a decision. It would be false to assume that's all that is required.

There is one missing detail . . .

WHY: Very few people or companies can clearly articulate WHY they do what they do. When I say WHY, I don't mean to make money – that is a result. By WHY I mean what is your purpose, cause or belief? WHY does your company exist? WHY do you get out of bed every morning? And WHY should anyone care?

When most organizations or people think, act or communicate they do so from the outside in, from WHAT to WHY. And for good reason – they go from clearest thing to fuzziest thing. We say WHAT we do, we sometimes say HOW we do it, but we rarely say WHY we do WHAT we do.

But not the inspired companies. Not the inspired leaders. Every single one of them, regardless of their size or their industry, thinks acts and communicates from the inside out.”

A strong 'why' or cause doesn't marginalize anyone – it's different that a position. Your point of view is a position. Your point of view says, 'I'm for this and I'm against this.' People will often disagree with your point of view. But a reason why you do something is less likely to get disagreement. Usually they're the kinds of things that anyone can relate to and empathize with – even if they might choose a different approach. Your cause is a stand for something bigger and

deeper. Your cause says, ‘as a world we need to get to island B’ your point of view says, ‘and here’s my belief about the best way to get there’.

Your why is what you want, not what you don’t want. It’s the core of what you’re for – not a list of things you’re fighting. It’s often inarguable. Once you land on it, it’s like, ‘who could be against this?’

You might picture the ‘why’ as the golden sun shining above the islands and the boat – holding them all. The umbrella of the sky.

What’s interesting about all of this is that when the journey, point of view and larger ‘why’ are clarified – the boat often changes.

You will, in the end, be known for your boat – but make sure that your boat is an expression of you not just a cookie cutter, copy cat boat. Make everything about your boat an expression of the cause. If your business is about fun and celebration then make it a fun boat with wonderful colours and amusements around every corner. If you’re in love with elegance and beauty – then make your boat the most elegant boat the world has ever seen with lanterns and candles and beautiful dinners. If you’re passionate about adventure – then let your boat be rough and the rooms people sleep in be spartan.

And, of course, the boat must be a boat that you want to be on. It must fit the kind of [lifestyle](#) you want to have. As you figure out your ideal lifestyle, that will do more to help you design your boat than just about anything I know. And, if you need help with that, there’s only [one person](#) I can commend speaking with on that.

Every plank of your boat should ‘fit’. It should make sense. It should all communicate a clear message. They should be able to look at the **boat** and quickly get a feel for it what kind of **journey** it can take them on, what your **point of view** is and what you’re **about** at the core. And then, when they get on the boat their initial impressions should be deepened and confirmed.

Island A: The Painful Symptom

By: [Tad](#) | Published: December 11, 2011 · [9 Comments](#) ([Edit](#))

Words of introduction in which I explain of the incredible length of this post which should probably be an ebook

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

- Plato

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

It might just be the most important part of it.

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

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

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

*

So many people in life struggle.

Alone.

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

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

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

But let me start by telling you a few stories.

*

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

And she is venting.

Relationship stuff.

The drive is two hours.

And, during the entire drive, I barely say two words. I'm listening. Not that I don't want to say things. Or feel like I have brilliant things to say. I do. I keep having pithy aphorisms, quotes and inspiring things to say that I'm convinced will help her. But something is telling me to keep my mouth shut and keep listening. So I do. Five minutes of silence pass as we drive. And then she takes a deep breath and says, 'And another thing! . . .'

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

I keep listening.

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

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

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

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

It feels wonderful to be 'gotten'.

*

CARPENTERS RULE:

Measure twice. Cut once.

*

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

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

It's a simple format.

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

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

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

*

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

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

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

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

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

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

Measure twice, cut once.

*

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

*

Relevance

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

So, let me break it down.

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

[Relevance](#) is the word.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*

Their Symptoms vs. Your Diagnosis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Client for life.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Duh.

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

Empathy before education.

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

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

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

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

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

If you changed your approach to be, “We work with managers who aren’t getting the kind of buy in they’d like from their employees.” You’ve got to speak to what’s real for them. And what’s real for them is rarely that they are to blame. They probably are feeling hard done by. That

doesn't mean that you can't help them identify where they are responsible for what's happening to them – all it means is that you can't start there.

A million more examples follow . . .

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. have you ever had someone listen to you so deeply and non-defensively when you were in pain and angry with them that the pain went away and you were left feeling wonderful?
2. does the idea of **conflict** secretly scare you?
3. do you have a lot of trouble **saying 'no'** without feeling guilty?
4. do you often feel like your needs are **a burden** on others?
5. is it really important for you to be seen as '**reasonable**' and '**nice**'?
6. do you often not share the truth of what you're feeling and needing with loved ones because **you don't want to hurt their feelings**?
7. do you often feel confused about exactly what it is you are feeling and needing?
8. do you believe that your needs are something you should **transcend** or ignore (vs. just getting them met)?
9. do you have strong belief in right and wrong? (and that people who do 'bad' should be punished while those who do 'good' should be rewarded?)
10. do you find yourself **staying put** and **staying quiet** (smiling sweetly and unable to speak up) in intolerable situations?
11. do you think that if you're nice enough people will love and respect you?
12. do you often feel deep **resentment** and **bitterness** towards people for not listening to you?
13. do you sometimes feel scared that your feelings will overwhelm you or others?
14. do you sometimes lie about how hurt or uncomfortable you feel because **you don't want to be 'rude'**
15. **do you feel guilty** about asking directly for what you want and need?

16. do you secretly fear that humanity is rotten at its core?
17. when someone is in a great deal of emotional pain, do you find yourself initially trying to help them understand **how they manifested this** into their life (and to take responsibility for it)? or do you try to help them understand the spiritual lessons that they're gaining from it . . . instead of just listening and giving them empathy?
18. do you think it's important to 'call people on their shit?'
19. do you think it's important to be blunt and tell people what's wrong with them when you can see it?
20. do you intellectually believe in the idea of finding a win/win solution but **emotionally shut down** and react in ways you wish you didn't when conflict arises?
21. do you wish you could maintain your full presence when people are communicating with you in ways that you don't like?

I hope this is making sense.

Speak to the symptoms, not about your diagnosis.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How to Write a Lovable Homepage is for entrepreneurs who:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Speak to the symptoms, not about your diagnosis.

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

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

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

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

The title of John Gray's best-selling book '**Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus**' struck a chord all over the world. People heard that and said, "Wow. That's true. It's just like that." (NOTE: Friends of mine also staged a comedy production called 'Men Are Stupid, Women Are Crazy.' which also seemed to resonate strongly with both genders . . .)

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

Is Selling Painful For You?

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

Old "tried and true" sales techniques that were once successful have completely lost their effectiveness over the years. That's why I developed a

sales approach that will quickly and automatically put you ahead of the game and instantly in a league above your competition.

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

“Is your boss a psychopath?”

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

Tired of your increasing workload without added pay?

80% of employees dislike their work.

DO YOU?

Call us today – we can help.

Speak to the symptoms, not about your diagnosis.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It’s obvious isn’t it?

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

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

Life can be hard sometimes.

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

Our business exists to help people with their problems.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Phila Hoopes

But isn't this being negative?

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

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

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

Is that a disempowering focus? Probably.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Three Compelling Reasons to Clarify Island A:

REASON #1 – THE OPENING

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

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

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

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

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

REASON #2 – [IS IT A FIT?](#)

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

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

REASON #3 – [TRUST](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 1) **You realize that they’re on Island A and want to go to [Island B](#).** You realize that it’s not about *your* boat – it’s about *their* journey.
- 2) **You realize that many people are in learned helplessness about their problems.** They think the pain is unavoidable – they’ve tried so many different times. They don’t believe those deeper needs will *ever* be fulfilled. They fear that the problem is permanent. They’ve learned that they can never get off Island A.

3) You can articulate their problems better than they can. You can articulate the needs and inklings that they barely even knew they had themselves – you can put words to those vague discomforts, niggling doubts and unclear concerns.

This is a huge sign of progress.

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

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

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

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

Nothing builds your credibility faster than this. Nothing.

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

“The Prospect’s World — How Do We Understand It?”

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

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

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

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

Four qualities of a well articulated problem:

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

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

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

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

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

Thoughts on how to use these symptoms in your marketing:

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

Island B – The Results They Crave

By: [Tad](#) | Published: December 10, 2011 · [4 Comments](#) ([Edit](#))

People crave things.

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

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

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

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

Here's another piece about 'the journey'.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Attention Guelph Homeowners:

do you have a backyard you're not using?

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

Marketing is translating.

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

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

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

The owner observed that they were selling more of the tinctures that were mixed and focused on particular results. That if there was a tincture, elixir or potion focused on the brain and mental clarity, boosting libido, reducing stress, or boosting the immune system, it tended to sell better.

People don't have the time or interest to learn about every single herb and come up with the perfect combo to give them what they want. Save them time and hassle and do it for them.

Marketing is translating.

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

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

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

So, what if instead of leading with the boat of Feng Shui you wrapped that modality and practice around a particular result? What if you said it was about attracting the love of your life? Or attracting financial abundance? Improving your health? Or creating a sanctuary to give you more peace of mind? And what if you packaged in some other elements to help them on the journey, maybe some coaching, some herbs focused on that result, and gave them some daily rituals and maybe even hosted a workshop to help them (perhaps led by someone else). Maybe it was a year long program. You get the idea.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Victoria Laine does a simple thing that most entrepreneurs could do but never think of. She hosts tours. Now, she does [tours of grocery stores](#). But maybe you could host a tour of strawbale homes. Maybe you could host a tour of gluten free options in your neighbourhood. A medicinal plant walk. A pub crawl with a theme related to your work. Maybe you could host a tour of all the strawbale homes in your community (even if you're not a strawbale expert yourself). So many businesses could do this easily.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It's a spa. But with a twist.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Or Max Simon who had a workshop called, “Sold Out Seminars”. Very clear what he’s teaching.

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

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

Another Lense: The Four Tracks

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Eventbrite](#) is a site that makes it so easy to create an RSVP page for your event. It handles the payments, the reminders and even gives you name tags to print. I could spend the time to figure out how to have an online shopping cart and set up reminders on my site but, frankly, I'd rather just use their service and pay them the 5% from any money earned.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So there are two routes here.

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

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

There are so many options.

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

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

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

A Few Common Blunders:

BLUNDER #1 -MISTAKING THE CRAVING FOR THE DIAGNOSIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BLUNDER #2 – JUDGING THEIR CRAVINGS

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

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

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

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

Where to Use Island B in Your Marketing:

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

The Shadow Side of Island B:

- **Over Promising and Under Delivering:** If you tell people you can help them lose 50 pounds in a year and your plan doesn’t work they’re going to be pissed. Don’t promise what you can’t deliver.

- **Selling a Mirage:** All the commercials that pair beer and hot women are selling you a mirage. Drinking that beer will not get you a date. It's a totally false correlation.
- **Green Washing:** Trying to convince people that your super harmful product is more green than it is to appeal to people's craving to live a more eco-friendly lifestyle is lamesville. Read more about that [here](#).

island c: the unimagined possibility

By: [Tad](#) | Published: November 30, 2011 · [5 Comments \(Edit\)](#)

This blog is about the importance of seeing further.

About the things we know are possible for our clients that they might only have inklings of for themselves.

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

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

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

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

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

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

But I've recently realized that there is something beyond Island B.

For simplicity sake, let's 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.

“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 (Father of NLP)**

Generic Examples . . .

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 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 A: I'm broke. Island B: I want 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 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 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 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 they imagine, it's what they're craving to the extent they can articulate it.

Island C goes beyond this into articulating their most deeply felt inklings. It offers up the hope and the possibility that it could be even *better* than they craved it to be.

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](#) (and 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 – [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 his entirely heal it through nutrition (Island C). Healing or curing Type II Diabetes is just 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 forever ending the chasing for funding by creating a system for individual giving campaigns that works so seamlessly that it's never, ever and 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 of reclaim it. Even for [white people](#).

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.)

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 – but it's the spirit of it. He saw further.

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 of.

But you see further than they're able to.

I wrote a week ago in a [blog post](#) (paraphrasing something I'd heard [Caroline Casey](#) say),

When your community looks into the mirror that reflects the current world's woes and feel such despair and overwhelm 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.

[Caroline Casey](#) says it so well,

“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.”

How to Figure Out Your Island C:

Try answering these questions and see what comes up for you.

- What do you know is possible that most people don't?
- What's the secret you know?
- What is the possibility you want to wake up in the heart of the world?
- What is a result or reality you currently enjoy in your life or in your projects that most people would never even imagine is possible?
- Thinking of your potential clients, complete this sentence, 'you might be intrigued by the possibility of . . .'
- Most of my clients want _____ but they don't realize they could have _____.

Considerations and Caveats:

Island C could become the land of hype and false promises. It can 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 never 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.

9 reasons why point of view is the future of marketing

By: [Tad](#) | Published: August 1, 2011 · [15 Comments](#) ([Edit](#))

I think that having a clear [point of view](#) is the future of marketing.

The photos to the right illustrate very clear and amusing points of view.

But what does having a clear perspective have to do with *marketing*?

I think it's future of marketing *not* because I think it's the most important but I think it's one of the least understood and least explored facet of marketing today.

The marketing world has been talking about features, benefits, speaking to the problem or even promising a clear result for years. Those are all vital, but I think that point of view is often an overlooked piece. Yes, having a target market matters but it's not a new idea – and what does it matter if you aren't bringing those people a refreshing perspective?

I think that having a clear point of view is the difference between people **paying attention** to you and ignoring you.

I think that having a clear point of view is the difference between people **talking about you** and forgetting you.

I think that having a clear point of view is the difference between crafting good offers and **irresistible** ones.

I think that having a clear point of view is the difference between attracting okay clients and **amazing** ones.

A big claim.

Let me back it up a bit . . .

What's a point of view all about?

Your point of view is your liberating idea.

My friend and colleague [Alex Baisley](#) offered up the liberating idea for entrepreneurs that we should design our ideal lifestyle and then back our business into that – not the other ways around.

The idea that you can live your dream lifestyle right now; that you don't need to wait until you retire.

[John Gray](#) had the novel notion that it's like men and women are from different planets – Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus. A lot of people resonated with it. The idea was that if we could honour our differences we might actually come to celebrate and enjoy them rather than seeing them as sources of frustration.

The documentary [The Corporation](#) came from the point of view that if we were going to consider corporations people (as they legally are) then we should be honest about their personality profiles: psychopaths.

The documentary [The Economics of Happiness](#) explores the idea that we need to shift from global corporate economics to local economics – and that this shift would create deeper community, happiness and well being.

My colleague [Carrie Klassen](#)'s tagline is 'guilt free marketing for nice people.' There's a whole worldview in there. That marketing can be done by nice people without guilt. What an idea!

I had the idea that marketing training should be accessible to people regardless of their income – and especially to folks doing good work to make the world a better place.

These are all ideas that some people will hear and say, '*yes! that's always felt true for me . . . you said what I've always been feeling.*'

Your point of view should express people's unarticulated inklings.

What's *your* liberating idea?

It's some new notion (or an old notion framed in such a way that people can hear it) about how to engage in a particular journey people are on.

It's both the **map** and the **route** you're planning to take but it's also **WHY** you chose that route. It's all the elements (e.g. wind, tides, waves, sea monsters, rocks and reefs, safe harbours, pirates etc.) that come together to determine why one route from Island A to Island B is better than the others.

It's your understanding of not just the *source* of the pain (the symptoms people experience) but the **underlying causes** of it.

It's your world view, opinion, your take on things, your angle, your diagnosis, context, an expression of your unique voice. It's your thesis.

It's the accumulation of all your past experiences of a particular journey organized, sifted and distilled.

Generally, it's about your point of view on yourself, life and other people – but more narrowly it's your take on how to best make the journey. It's your opinion on how to go about solving the problem. It's the case you're trying to make to the jury about why the evidence should be looked at in a certain way.

It says, 'there are _____ people/communities with _____ problem. and I think that _____ is the best way to address it because of _____ factors.'

It's acknowledging that what's being done is, somehow, not enough. that if enough were being done – if the right approach had been found, we wouldn't still be having the issue. It doesn't mean your plans are guaranteed to work – but that you have a working blueprint; you have a direction.

You do things a certain way – why?

Here's a piece I wrote in another blog post about this:

The heart of marketing is this: "*You have _____ problem, and want _____ result.*" Does that make sense? You're basically asking them to trust you. You're asking them to follow your lead, to trust in your product or service, to trust the process you will be taking them through. And that can be scary for people – especially around certain problems.

Once you've established the basic relevance clearly, once people see that what you're offering is a fit, that it's designed for people like them, you need to go about building some credibility by telling them about past results, and how you do what you do. But there's a level most people ignore which is sharing why you do your work the way you do it. Sharing the 'point of view' or 'philosophy' that guides your work. It's surprisingly powerful to give people the bigger picture, the context that you see yourself working in. Like showing people not only the best route from Grand Central Station to Central Park – but breaking out the whole map of Manhattan and explaining why you chose that route. There's something about this that is enormously reassuring and can allow people to really relax into your guidance.

This is my experience: most people have years of experience in making a journey and supporting others but most people haven't reflected on it and articulated their findings. They're learned from their experiences, but they haven't yet learned what they learned. They went through the experience but they haven't taken the time to sit with it and pull out the lessons in such a way that they'd make sense to anyone else.

Nine reasons why point of view matters so much . . .

reason #1: the confused mind says no. Most people's businesses are tremendously fuzzy. No one really 'gets it'. They describe them and people are left having no idea what it's about. You

need to be clear about the journey you're offering to help them with (i.e. the problem you solve for a particular group of people and the result you're helping them achieve).

That's the *baseline*.

If there's no clarity there then there's no chance for relevance.

But *beyond* that you need to be clear about your perspective of the journey. If you aren't . . . well there are a lot of other people offering what you offer to choose from. You don't want them feeling fuzzy about your approach to the problem. You want your core philosophy to be clear and explicit.

Again, it's not just what you're offering – it's where you're coming from.

When it is, your approach will make sense to them (and you). When your point of view is clear to them then suddenly everything you're doing will make sense to them because it all comes from the same core perspective. They will value it more. Everything gets aligned. Your point of view becomes the true north around which everything magnetizes. This 'golden thread' provides an overall narrative or story to follow. This doesn't mean people will love it, or agree. It just means that what you're offering will make sense to them and that they can decide if that is a fit for them.

reason #2: You'll attract way better clients. There's an old adage that 'people love buying, but they hate being sold to.' And yet, there's the fear that if we stop advertising and selling then people will stop buying. But a) that's a terribly limited notion of marketing and b) it's just not necessarily so. What if there was a way to draw people to you who are a perfect fit for you?

There is.

But let me define 'perfect fit' in a way that might be new for you.

Criteria #1: They are committed to taking a [journey](#) that you can help them with.

Criteria #2: They are generally the kind of person you like to like to connect with. They embody the qualities you most want (e.g. open minded, positive, ready to do the work and take responsibility for their lives, they show up on time, pay well etc).

Criteria #3: They share your [point of view](#) on life and particularly the journey even if they haven't been able to articulate it as well as you (or they're in a place where they're genuinely open to being persuaded about another way of seeing things).

When you put out a clear point of view, your approach will attract people who are already aligned with what you believe; people who are open to what you have to say and ready to work with you. It's like a clear homing beacon. It's like a bright lighthouse that cuts through the rain and the fog indicating where safe harbour is. They see the lighthouse and think, 'Aha! Finally. We've arrived.' That's how we feel when

It's much harder to try to educate a client into a new point of view. You'll still have to do some of that – but overall you'll be getting a lot more people who are a match for what you're offering.

And consider this: while clarifying an explicit definition of who you're trying to reach (your [niche](#)) is vital – what if a niche could also be implicit? What if another way to look at your niche is, 'people who are into _____ point of view'? Interesting, yes?

Consider these brilliant words from [Seth Godin](#)'s book seminal book [Tribes](#).

This leads to an interesting thought: you get to choose the tribe you will lead. Through your actions as a leader you attract a tribe that wants to follow you. That tribe has a worldview that matches the message you are sending.

Important clarification: Great marketers lead people, stretching the boundaries and bringing new messages to people who want to hear them. The core of my argument is that someone's worldview, how they feel about risk or other factors, is beyond your ability to change in the short run. Sell people something they're interested in buying. If you can't leverage the worldview they already have, you are essentially invisible. Which is a whole other sort of magic, one that's not so profitable.

If you are leading a tribe focused on saving the world by fighting global warming, the tribe will of course have a worldview that includes the idea that global warming is a problem and that it includes the idea that global warming is a problem and that it can be addressed through its actions. They come to the tribe with that in mind and your leadership resonates with them.

If, on the other hand, you choose to work to persuade a different group, one with a very different worldview, they will likely reject you. Al Gore started leading his tribe when he didn't know who they were. He stated his message and people found him.

Ultimately, people are most easily led where they wanted to go all along. While that may seem as if it limits your originality or influence, it's true. Fox News didn't persuade millions of people to become conservatives, they just assembled a tribe and led them where they were already headed.

Tribes are increasingly voluntary. No one is forced to work for your firm or attend your services. People have a choice of which music to listen to and which movies to watch. So great leaders don't try to please everyone. Great leaders don't water down their message in order to make the tribe a bit bigger. Instead they realize that a motivated, connected tribe in the mist of a movement is far more powerful than a larger group could ever be.

As the ability to lead a tribe becomes open to more people, it's interesting to note that those who take that opportunity (and those who succeed most often) are doing it because of what they can do for the tribe, not for what the tribe can do for them.

This is the heart of the matter: **Every leader cares for and supports a movement.** A movement like the free speech movement at Berkeley or the democracy movement in Tiananmen Square or the civil rights movement in Mississippi. Or maybe a movement like the obsession with hand roasted coffee in Brooklyn or the worldwide collection of people obsessed with tattoos.

Today, you can have a narrow movement, a tiny movement, a movement in a silo. Your movement can be known by ten or twenty or a thousand people, people in your community or people around the world. And most often, it can be the people you work with or for, or those who work for you.

The web connects people. That's what it does. And movements take connected people and make change. What marketers and organizers and people who care are discovering is that they can ignite a micromovement and then be propelled by the people who choose to follow it.

reason #3: A clearly expressed point of view will help you find the right hubs. You'll naturally attract more clients, but, perhaps even more importantly, you'll know where to find them. The myth of target marketing is that people hang out primarily with people who share the same demographics. While this is true in some ways, in others it's not. People are more likely to hang out with others who share a similar worldview.

Not all black males, ages 50-60, living in Seattle, making \$60-80,000/year are going to hang out in the same places, read the same magazines, or frequent the same events. But Pentacostal Christians? Fanatical pet owners? Doctor Who fans? Vegetarians? Anarchists? Improvisors?

Once we have identified the world view we're coming from we can begin to ask ourselves, 'where would people who believe this (or are open to this) hang out?' To read more about the importance of thinking beyond demographics [click here](#).

People often gather around a world view.

reason #4: Your offers are more likely to succeed when they align with what they already believe. It's crucial to understand that people *already* have a point of view on why they're stuck. They already have some kind of 'take' on their own situation. They already have a general worldview. Imagine a fundamentalist, born again Christian walking through a health show and seeing one booth for a pagan, ritual healing business, and another one that is all about prayer and faith healing. In truth they might do the exact same thing! But guess which one our born again friend goes to.

Now, some are confused and lost and very open to a worldview that would make sense of their current problems. And some are clear what the problem is and changing their minds is unlikely.

So, the point isn't to cynically figure out your target market and identify their worldview (though I guess you could do that). It's about you figuring out your own worldview (and you can begin that process by answering [these questions](#)) and then sharing that as clearly as possible. Your

liberating idea becomes the beacon that draws people in. It's a refreshing alternative to what they've already tried.

A clear and unique point of view is a powerful distinguisher. It is the core of what makes you unique. It's the heart of why you design your offers the way you do.

But it's more than this.

Your offers will become clearer, better and more aligned. Remember, your point of view is your diagnosis of the situation – and so it informs and affects your offers, your solutions – even your tone. As your understanding of the territory deepens, your map gets better and you're better able to design a boat that is perfect for the route you want to take. The clearer your point of view is the more your offers will become embodied expressions of them. If you're liberating notion is that we're all equal – it wouldn't fit to run a workshop where you are on stage speaking down to everyone the whole time with no chance for group interaction.

If you're a men's program and your take is that men need more honest feedback from women about what it's like to be with them – you're hardly likely to have the basis of your business be e-books. You're far more likely to design workshops and events where men get a chance to get that live feedback like the [Authentic Man Program](#) did. Their point of view about raw authenticity isn't just an idea – it affects the tone of their marketing, the colours they choose on their website etc. Nothing in your business is left untouched by your liberating idea.

Given that a core part of my point of view is about accessibility of this kind of marketing info for conscious entrepreneurs – it wouldn't be very congruent for my programs to be the most expensive in the world and all happen at tropical resorts. So, I offer my workshops on a [pay what you can](#) basis.

This will happen naturally but it's also possible to engage it consciously as an art form.

reason #5: They will trust you more. Think of anyone you deeply trust. Don't they have a clear point of view? Don't they have a clear and well articulated understanding of certain things? In fact, think of anyone who's well known for making a difference in the world. People often become famous for a holding a certain point of view. Others who share it say, 'yes! i've always believed that too.' This is at the heart of becoming a hub.

Think of Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, Che Guevara, Malcolm X or Mother Theresa. Didn't they all have crystal clear perspectives? We come to depend on people for these. People who can clearly express what everyone else has been feeling and thinking and back it up . . . we love these people.

There's something reassuring about knowing where someone is coming from and what they're about.

reason #6: Your point of view is the source of every piece of content you ever create. Over the years I've come up with a [bunch of questions](#) that help people clarify their take on things. You could write a blog post question and have people love it. Looooove it.

Why?

Because people are looking for a map that makes sense. They're looking for someone they can trust. They're desperately trying to make sense of their situation so they can know where to invest their energies.

reason #7: It feels really good to articulate it and take your whole life's experience and find a framework for it, to make sense of it. It's freeing and liberating. There's the old saying that 'every master was once a disaster'. Because they went through pain but then they reflected on it and harvested the wisdom from it. Your mess is your message . . . but only once you've reflected on it and learned from it.

Articulating your point of view is not only an offering to the world – it's a beautiful gift to yourself. It's healing. It refreshes you. It will have you excited about your business again. You will feel rich . . . overflowing with this feeling of, 'wow. I have so much to say about this!' And you do. You have more to say than you can imagine. Don't believe me? Go answer [these questions](#) and see for yourself.

reason #8: It will make people talk about you. Point of view is central to word of mouth marketing. It's what draws them to you. It's how they talk about you to their friends. '*you know how most _____'s do it _____ way? Well he does it _____ way instead because of _____ story.*' People like to talk about ideas that make a difference. It makes them feel smart. And, if the idea was liberating to them, you'd better believe they'll tell everyone.

reason #9: You get to be yourself. Perhaps the best reason . . . A while back I wrote a blog about [finding your voice](#). There's something even better than finding your voice. It's expressing it. When you get really grounded in your point of view you move much more into a place of expressing yourself instead of trying to *impress* everyone. You get to authentically say what you think.

Scary. Will anyone listen? Will anyone care. It's the feeling that every artist feels as so beautifully captured in this video by [Tanya Davis](#)

So, it's scary but you can do it! What's the alternative? Trying to be someone else?

In fact, it's more than that . . . this approach doesn't just *allow* you to be yourself – it demands it of you. It requires that you actually say what you want to say in the way you want to say it.

You get to swear if you want to (heavens!). You get to call a spade a spade. You get to say what you think about your industry. It's so relaxing to no longer feel like a fraud, like we're posing and pretending to be someone or something we're not. What a relief to no longer be chasing

people but simply sharing where we're coming from and seeing who that resonates with (more people than you think).

*

So that's it – nine reasons why having a clear point of view is the future of marketing. I'd love to get your reflections on where or not this makes sense or resonates with you.

50 real life examples of point of view in action

By: [Tad](#) | Published: August 3, 2011 · [14 Comments](#) ([Edit](#))

The other day I wrote [a post](#) about why [point of view](#) mattered (and even gave a bunch of [questions](#) you can ask to hone in on yours) so much in marketing and I gave a few examples.

But I thought a few more might help really drive home how pervasive and effective a clear perspective is in life and business.

Here's fifty of 'em . . .

[Joanna Macey](#), author of *The Great Turning*, believes that we are in a time of *The Great Turning* and that there are three core types of work needed. Holding Actions (e.g. lock downs, sit ins, tree sits, direct action, letters to the editor etc), Creating Alternatives (e.g. strawbale, permaculture, solar power, wind power, non violent communication) and Shifting Consciousness (e.g. deep ecology work, yoga, shamanic work, writing books or making movies on our relationship to the planet etc). Moreover, she believes that all three of these types of work need to work together instead of criticizing the others as being 'less real'.

[Non Violent Communication](#) comes from the belief that there are two ways to live. The first is to come from the place of 'how do i get what i want?' and the other is, 'how do we all get our needs met'. They believe that if we come from the second place we're all much more likely to get our needs met and live happier and healthier lives.

Many people follow the 10 commandments which are a point of view of how to live a good life.

Freud did not believe in the collective unconscious, but Carl Jung did. They had a difference of point of view and ultimately divided over it.

Similarly, there are many different schools of thought in yoga, branches of the church and Buddhism that all come from the same root. What divides them now? Differences in point of view.

The five elements in traditional Chinese medicine are a map and point of view on what is needed to have in balance to live a healthy and happy life.

The four directions are an indigenous perspective on what is needed to have in balance to live a healthy and happy life in harmony with nature and the seasons.

The seven chakras come from the point of view that our well being starts from an energetic basis before the physiological one and are a map and model of the seven core energetic centers.

[George Lakoff](#) wrote a book called 'Don't Think of An Elephant' and he believes that the best way to understand the worldviews of liberals vs. conservatives is to look at it as a family model. His point of view is that the conservatives fundamentally have a Strict Father model and that

liberals have a Nurturing Parent model. And that both models have a very different worldview underneath them.

[David Deida](#) believes that the ‘zing’ in sexual relationships comes from polarized sexual energies – when one partner steps in the masculine energy and the other partner lets themselves open to the feminine energy.

The people who work for restorative justice believe that the point of justice should be about restoring wholeness in a community – not just punishing people.

The zodiac is not only a map of the sky but a point of view about why we are the way we are and are born with the qualities we’re born with.

[Derrick Jensen](#) lays out [twenty very clear premises](#) about why we need to act now to create change starting with a premise that western civilization is not and will never be sustainable.

Feminism is rooted in the belief that men hold power, anarchism – that the state holds power, racism – that white people hold power. And they all work to confront and shift that power.

A participant in a recent Vancouver workshop was going to lead a workshop for men with anger issues. His belief was that, underneath the anger, they were really just afraid.

Thomas Leonard wrote his book [The 28 Laws of Attraction](#) to articulate a point of view that said all this striving and personal growth was actually unnecessary – that you could set up your lifestyle to bring you what you were wanting much more easily.

My core take in marketing is summed up in the metaphor of [the journey](#) from Island A to Island B that I illustrate in [this video](#).

The four food groups is a point of view. As are the food pyramids. The Zone. The Blood Type diets. The vegan diet, raw vegan diets, primal diets, traditional foods etc. They’re all points of view of what we should eat and why.

The famous doctor Jack Nicklaus had crippling knee pain. The doctors diagnosis was that his knee was irreparably damaged and that he needed surgery. Then he saw Pete Egoscue who thought it was his hip rotated forward. So he worked on the hip and the knee pain went away. In the end, Pete’s map matched the territory better than the doctors.

Jon Stewart took over The Daily Show years ago. He believed that this mock news show should be about making fun of the MEDIA and their bias towards sensationalism and conflict not about pranking people (which the show had been). This point of view became the heart of the show as he gradually replaced everyone on the staff and built a team around that understanding.

Marketing guru Jay Abraham believed that the single most potent thing you could do to increase sales was to take on the risk of the transaction rather than expecting the customer to.

The book ‘Men Are Great’ says it’s point of view right in its title.

The anti oppression movement comes from the understanding that power and privilege are not evenly divided in society – and that the lines of power tend to run along lines of race, class, gender and other forms of privilege.

Two of my favourite shows growing up, MacGyver & Doctor Who are both rooted in the idea that problems can be solved with smarts and not guns.

Debbie Ford is a recent proponent of the ancient idea of ‘the shadow’. The idea that our greatest gifts and authenticity will be found in our darkest shadows and that the things we repress end up controlling us.

[8tracks.com](#) is an online community based on the idea that mix tapes are cool and people should be able to share and listen to music freely.

Byron Katie, author of Loving What Is bases her work in the understanding that our suffering is caused by our thinking and fighting with reality.

Contrarian Australian dentist, [Paddi Lund](#) once believed that the purpose of a business was about generating money but after years of deep depression he came to understand that the purpose of business was about generating happiness.

Tiina Veer of Toronto believes that yoga should be accessible to [people with round bodies](#).

The movie [Lemonade](#), about people who used being fired as a chance to reinvent their lives, sums up their point of view in it’s tagline: “It’s not a pink slip. It’s a blank page.”

[Patch Adams](#) holds the belief that health care should be free and that we can care for each other.

My new friend Aumatma believes that health care can be offered on a gift economy basis. Meaning people don’t have to pay anything other than what they want.

Kris Ward of [Abundant Yogi](#) has her point of view nestled in her company name – the idea that economic abundance and yogic philosophy are not mutually exclusive.

My old pal Joey Hundert created [Sustainival](#) out of the notion that the best way to reach the unconverted with a message of sustainability is through fun – so he’s created a sustainable carnival of sorts where he powers rides (e.g. the gravitron or ferris wheels) with vegetable oil.

Winnipeg’s brilliant [Beth Martens](#) began to offer yoga classes to care givers (e.g. taking care of elderly parents, sick spouses or children etc.) because, from her own life experience, she could see that they needed extra support.

[TED Talks](#)! Every single TED Talk is based around a liberating idea. Every single TED Talk expresses a point of view.

The [Orgasmic Birth](#) movement comes from the idea that birth doesn’t always need to be painful. That sometimes it can even be pleasurable. Radical notion!

Christianity holds the idea that the only way to eternal life (which is itself a point of view) is through Jesus Christ.

Former Anglican minister Tom Harpur wrote the Pagan Christ based on this idea: there was no Jesus of Nazareth – that the bulk of the new testament were simply egyptian myths that had been redressed in the clothing of a new age and time. The website www.jesusneverexisted.com is based on the same notion.

Author Michael Tsarion believes that civilization started in the west (Ireland) and migrated East. His entire two volume set The Irish Origins of Civilization works to back that up.

The amazing project Post Secrets is based on the idea that people would like to share their secrets and read the anonymous secrets of others.

San Francisco's restaurant Millennium is based on the idea that vegan food can be world class and taste amazing (not just tofu and salads).

The Mayor of Edmonton, Stephen Mandel is a big believer in the book, The Creative Class which talks about how important the Arts are to local economic development.

The Kinsey Scale suggests that human sexuality is not a cut and dry line of heterosexual and homosexual – but more of a scale or spectrum that we all find ourselves in.

Louis Pasteur created the germ theory to suggest that germs were the cause of disease. His colleague Antoine Bechamps believed that 'the microbe was nothing – the terrain was everything.' That germs were the result of a polluted and toxic blood stream not the cause of it. On his deathbed, Louis Pasteur confessed that Bechamps was right. But Louis Pasteur had sold his point of view better.

Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla both promoted different forms of power. Thomas Edison won. But many people would disagree that his form of energy was, indeed, better than Tesla's. But the best point of view doesn't always win. The best articulated one does.

Before his career destroying affair was exposed, John Edwards shared the belief that there wasn't just 'one America' there were 'two Americas'. There was an America where you could afford to feed your kids and an America where you couldn't. An America where you could afford health insurance and one where you couldn't. His analogy rang true for many.

My friend Jeff Golfman started his blog, www.thecoolvegetarian.com based on the idea that there were already enough recipes out there. There was already enough research to suggest that a plant based diet was better for people and the planet – what he saw missing was any conversation about lifestyle and how to live a rocking and fun life as a vegetarian or vegan, how to deal with the social aspects of it.

My friend and colleague [Alex Baisley](#) offered up the liberating idea for entrepreneurs that we should design our ideal lifestyle and then back our business into that – not the other ways around.

The idea that you can live your dream lifestyle right now; that you don't need to wait until you retire.

[John Gray](#) had the novel notion that it's like men and women are from different planets – Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus. A lot of people resonated with it. The idea was that if we could honour our differences we might actually come to celebrate and enjoy them rather than seeing them as sources of frustration.

The documentary [The Corporation](#) came from the point of view that if we were going to consider corporations people (as they legally are) then we should be honest about their personality profiles: psychopaths.

The documentary [The Economics of Happiness](#) explores the idea that we need to shift from global corporate economics to local economics – and that this shift would create deeper community, happiness and well being.

My colleague [Carrie Klassen](#)'s tagline is 'guilt free marketing for nice people.' There's a whole worldview in there. That marketing can be done by nice people without guilt. What an idea!

The website <http://makelovenotporn.com> (extremely adult content) comes from the notion that pornography has skewed people's understanding of what sex is and could be and has created a world of assumptions (points of view) on how it's supposed to look. And her website is about directly challenging those.

64 Point of View Revealing Questions

By: [Tad](#) | Published: July 22, 2010 · [6 Comments](#) ([Edit](#))

(this began as 24 questions and ‘sentence stems’ but has slowly expanded over time)

The heart of marketing is this: “*You have _____ problem, and want _____ result.*” Does that make sense? You’re basically asking them to trust you. You’re asking them to follow your lead, to trust in your product or service, to trust the process you will be taking them through. And that can be scary for people – especially around certain problems.

This was driven home to me by [Lois Kelly](#)’s amazing book on [word of mouth marketing](#), “Beyond Buzz” (most of the questions below – the first 24 I think – are taken directly from her book). I’ve added a few of my own at the end too.

Once you’ve established the basic relevance clearly, once people see that what you’re offering is a fit, that it’s designed for people like them, you need to go about building some credibility by telling them about past results, and how you do what you do. But there’s a level most people ignore which is sharing why you do your work the way you do it. Sharing the ‘point of view’ or ‘philosophy’ that guides your work. It’s surprisingly powerful to give people the bigger picture, the context that you see yourself working in. Like showing people not only the best route from Grand Central Station to Central Park – but breaking out the whole map of Manhattan and explaining why you chose that route. There’s something about this that is enormously reassuring and can allow people to really relax into your guidance.

As you look out at all of the options that your target market has to solve the problems you work to solve, what do you notice? What is your point of view and perspective on what you see? What is your opinion about your industry? What is your take on the issues and trends in your industry? Look at the questions below and complete as many of them as you can without repeating yourself. Do at least seven of them (but the more the merrier).

Here are [Lois Kelly](#)’s most excellent point of view questions and ‘sentence stems’ (with a few add ons).

1. We believe that...
2. Our take on _____ situation is that...
3. The narrow slice of the issue that more people should understand is...
4. The one thing that matters the most in this issue/trend is...
5. People are wasting too much time talking about...
6. The thing that should worry people is...

7. Conventional thinking says _____, but we think it's really...
8. The area where too much money and time is wasted in this industry is...
9. Overcoming this one obstacle would change the game...
10. To make a big difference in this area we should focus on just this one thing...
11. We never want to be associated with...
12. To make customers believers they need to understand this one thing...
13. If you had a crystal ball, what changes would you predict for our industry over the next two years?
14. What gets me most excited about our industry/business is...
15. What makes people anxious about this issue/trend?
16. If we were to look at our business/organization as a cause, what would it be?
17. What most surprises people about this issue?
18. What makes you angry about perceptions of our business/industry?
19. Our product/industry/company matters more/less today because...
20. Why is our industry/service especially relevant at this point in time?
21. The biggest risk in this industry is (...) and no one wants to talk about it because...
22. People would be very surprised if they knew this about our industry/organization...
23. I'm hopeful that one day our industry will...
24. What is your diagnosis and understanding of why they can't seem to handle this problem? Are there institutional barriers? Mental barriers? Have they been raised believing certain lies? Are there certain principles they fail to understand? How would you explain to someone who was totally open and non-defensive about why they're struggling so much?
25. At its heart – my work is really about . . .
26. When I look at my target market, what I most want for them more than anything in the world is . . .
27. When I look at my target market, what I most see going on for them that I don't think they even see themselves is . . .
28. What books or magazines or blogs best capture and articulate what your business is about.

29. What's missing in the conversation about _____ is _____.
30. I take a strong stand for _____ in my industry.
31. I take a strong stand for _____ in my community.
32. I believe that the three most critical elements to the journey from _____ to _____ are ...
33. When I look at my clients, the three biggest patterns I notice are ...
34. My clients often feel alone – like they're the only person who is going through ...
35. The three biggest blunders I see people making over and over again that cause them to fail to get the results they want are ...
36. The three biggest myths people have about making the journey are ...
37. The three most common myths about my industry are ...
38. What have you been thinking about with your industry, craft etc. that you haven't shared with anyone? (these often help to reveal your next place/step)
39. What are leaders in your industry talking about? Is there anything that *doesn't* feel true about this? Where do you differ from them? Where do you agree?
40. What are your competitors talking about? Is there anything that doesn't feel true about this? Where do you differ from them? Where do you agree?
41. What are the top three things that trouble you about your industry? Grosses you out? Upsets you? Frustrates you?
42. I think the three most important principles of a successful journey are ...
43. To successfully make the journey, you need to understand the difference between _____ and _____.
44. Before people set out on their journey, they should appreciate the genuine dangers of ...
45. What are people self diagnosing themselves with that's wrong? They say to themselves, "I need _____ (often the quick fix/magic bullet they got sold (e.g. social media))" when they really need _____." They think their real problem is _____ but you think it's actually _____.
46. What are your clients trying to 'prove' to the world – who are they trying to make wrong?
47. Who are your clients secretly trying to impress?
48. What are your clients (perhaps even unconsciously) in reaction to?

49. What do your clients REALLY want and what is it they THINK they need to have in place in order to let themselves have it?
50. What do the experts say about making the journey that you most disagree with?
51. What do you see as the top three approaches people typically tend to take to making this journey and the strengths and weaknesses of them all (and why is *your* approach better/different?).
52. What are the three biggest reasons that it's not their fault that they're struggling with the problems you help them with? What are the external factors that make having this problem likely and perhaps almost inevitable?
53. What are the top three reasons this journey is so hard for people?
54. What are the top three ways that people unknowingly and unwittingly self limit themselves in this area? and why do you think they do this?
55. What are the top three things people are told they need to make this journey that they don't need?
56. What are your top three tips that can make the most immediate, tangible difference to someone going through this journey? What are three simple tools, tactics, approaches or ideas that can make this journey smoother, faster, more enjoyable and less risky?
57. Besides what you offer, what are the top three complimentary approaches for people on this journey?
58. What are the typical phases people predictably go through on this journey? If their journey were a book – what would be the typical chapter titles?
59. What are three places or ways people feel ashamed of having their problems?
60. In your opinion, if someone were to go to someone else who was offering what you offer, what is it that people need to see or hear in order to feel confident they're getting a good deal? What questions should they ask and what answers should they expect?
61. What are the top three things people should consider before embarking on the journey to make sure it's really the right time for them?
62. What supports are most important for people to have in place as they make this journey?
63. What are the top three lies people are told about themselves on this journey?
64. What are the top three lies people are told about the journey itself and how to get the results they want?

twelve ways to figure out your ‘why’

By: [Tad](#) | Published: November 24, 2011 · [Leave a Comment](#) ([Edit](#))

So, over the past week or so you’ve read about [why it’s important](#) to have a bigger cause that your business is about, you’ve seen some [examples](#) of people who have or are exploring this but now it’s time to look at how you can begin to sort this out for yourself.

The first thing I’d suggest is not to attempt to do this alone.

What I’d most commend is to sit down with a dear one in your life over a hot cup of something delicious and to have them ask you these questions and take careful notes for you. They can ask you good follow up questions and reflect what they’re hearing you say.

The second thing I want to suggest is that this is not an overnight process. It will evolve and deepen over time. And that’s okay.

But I do think these questions will help you make some progress.

Here they are . . .

- What has been one of the central questions of your life? What are those topics and questions you find yourself constantly circling around and bringing up in conversations? What are the conversations you find hardest to stop?
- What are the different elements or worlds you’re trying to balance? What worlds do you feel like you’re a bridge between?
- What got you started in what you’re doing?
- What are the changes you want to see your industry undergo?
- What is this work *really* about for you? Try completing this sentence twenty times, “At the heart of it, my work is about . . .”
- Complete this sentence, “When I look at the world, what I most see missing is . . .”
- Complete this sentence – ‘every _____ deserves _____’ (e.g. ‘every woman deserves the opportunity to have a joyful birthing and parenting experience’ or ‘every man deserves authentic brotherhood’)
- what’s the impact of what you do on people’s lives if you do it well?
- If everyone in your target market [got to Island B](#), then what? What would the impact of that be on the world?
- what are you most sick and tired of seeing in the world?
- when you read the paper, walk down the streets, surf the net – what issues grab you and why?
- Whatever you do – is there a metaphorical level to it? If you help people with heart issues on a physical level – is there a deeper metaphorical level to hearts. If you help people to build houses – what is a house really ‘about’? If you sell bicycles – what are bicycles about? If you massage feet – what are feet about at a deeper level?

examples of people with a clear ‘why’

By: [Tad](#) | Published: November 20, 2011 · [Leave a Comment \(Edit\)](#)

As we continue the conversation about [having a clear ‘why’](#) for what we do, I think it’s good to have some real life examples . . .

Gandhi’s work is a clear example. He wanted to see India move from being colonized to being independent once more. It was so clear it became symbolized by a single thing – the spinning wheel. ‘We will spin our own cotton instead of relying on it from the British.’

Independence.

Simple. Clear.

No one ever wondered, ‘what is that Gandhi chap about?’

No one ever said, ‘wow. Gandhi is all over the map. He sure doesn’t walk his talk.’ Gandhi strove his whole life to make sure that what he did and how he did it matched the deeper ‘why’ behind them.

Another example – I think of the work of the [Business Alliance for Local Living Economies](#) to help us transition from the ‘suicide economy’ we’re all a part of to ‘local living economies’.

As they say,

“The Local Living Economies Movement is about: Maximizing relationships, not maximizing profits, Broad-based ownership and democracy, not concentrated wealth and power, Sharing, not hoarding, Life serving, not self-serving, Partnership, not domination, Cooperation based, not competition based, Win-win exchange, not win-loose exploitation, Creativity, not conformity, A living return, not the highest return, A living wage, not the minimum wage, A fair price, not the lowest price, “Being more, not having more”, Interconnectedness, not separation, Inclusion, not exclusiveness, Community and collective joy, not isolation and unhappiness, Cultural diversity, not monoculture, Bio-diversity, not mono-crops, Family farms, not factory farms, Slow food, not fast food, Our bucks, not Starbucks, Our mart, not Wal-Mart, a Love of life, not love of money.”

That’s an extremely clearly articulated ‘why’.

Judy Wicks started the [White Dog Café](#) in Philadelphia. Early on in her career she began to source her meats from cruelty free, local farms and get all of her coffee fair trade via contracts she negotiated directly with the communities she visited. She could easily, and justifiably have said, ‘I’m the most ethical restaurant in Philly.’ But, instead, she thought, ‘if I really care about these animals and I really care about these communities down south . . . then I’d want all restaurants being fair trade.’ So, she went to her competitors and urged them to become more ethical and sustainable. She provided loans to some of the local farmers who were struggling. It wasn’t just about her and her business. It was about something bigger.

[Chris Chopik](#) is a green realtor in Toronto. And, sure, he could try to brand himself as Toronto's greenest realtor. But instead he speaks at real estate conferences about how they can (and should) all become green realtors. Instead of hoarding it, he's sharing it. He wants to see the whole industry go green. Of course, because of these efforts, he's seen as a leader and has a strong reputation as a green realtor.

A woman named Linda Marie who I met at the [Institute for Traditional Medicine](#) in Toronto was sharing with me about her work with people around death and dying. As she shared about her work, it became clear that what it was really about for her. I asked her to share it. She said that her work was about 'grief, suffering, and hopelessness'. This didn't sound terribly uplifting. So, I probed deeper. 'What,' I asked her. 'Is on the other side of those things?' Deep in her bones she felt that grief, suffering, and hopelessness could be a doorway into growth, expansion, and compassion. That we can use our relationship to dying as a door for transformation. Beautiful.

In his brilliant book, '[Start With Why](#)' – Simon Sinek shares a few mainstream examples . . .

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES: In the early 1970s, only 15 percent of the traveling population travelled by air. At that rate, the market was small enough to scare off most would be competitors to the big airlines. But Southwest wasn't interested in competing against everyone else for 15 percent of the traveling population. Southwest cared about the other 85 percent. Back then, if you asked Southwest whom their competition was, they would have told you, "We compete against the car and the bus." But what they meant was, "we're the champion for the common man." That was WHY they started the airline. That was their cause, their purpose, their reason for existing. HOW they went about building their company was not a strategy developed by a high-priced management consultancy. It wasn't a collection of best practices that they saw other companies doing. Their guiding principles and values stemmed directly from their WHY and were more common sense than anything else.

In the 1970s air travel was expensive, and if southwest was going to be the champion for the common man, they had to be cheap. It was an imperative. And in a day and age when air travel was elitist, back then people wore ties on planes – as the champion for the common man, Southwest had to be fun. It was an imperative. In a time when air travel was complicated, with different prices depending on when you booked, Southwest had to be simple. If they were to be accessible to the other 85 percent, then simplicity was an imperative. At the time, Southwest had to price categories: nights/weekends and daytime. That was it. Cheap, fun and simple.

That's HOW they did it. That's how they were to champion the cause of the common man. The result of their actions was made tangible in the things they said and did – their product, the people they hired, their culture and their marketing. "You are now free to move about the country" they said in their advertising. That's much more than a tagline. That's a cause. And it's a cause looking for followers. Those who could relate to Southwest, those who saw themselves as average Joes, now had an alternative to the big airlines.

Just because Southwest is cheap doesn't mean it only appeals to those with less money. Cheap is just one of the things Southwest does that helps us understand what they believe.

It is a false assumption that differentiation happens in HOW and WHAT you do. Simply offering a high-quality product with more features or better service or a better price does not create

difference. Doing so guarantees no success. Differentiation happens in WHY and HOW you do it. Southwest isn't the best airline in the world. Nor are they always the cheapest. They have fewer routes than many of their competition and don't even fly outside the continental United States. WHAT they do is not always significantly better. But WHY they do it is crystal clear and everything they do proves it. There are many ways to motivate people to do things, but loyalty comes from the ability to inspire people. Only when the WHY is clear and when people believe what you believe can a true loyal relationship develop.

HARLEY DAVIDSON: There are people who walk around with Harley Davidson tattoos on their body. That's insane. They've tattooed a corporate logo on their skin. Some of them don't even own the product. Why would a rational person tattoo a corporate logo on their body? The reason is simple. After years of Harley being crystal clear about what they believe, after years of being disciplined about a set of values and guiding principles and after years of being doggedly consistent about everything they say and do, their logo has become a symbol. It no longer simply identifies a company and its products, it identifies a belief.

The logo embodies an entire value set – their own. The symbol is no longer about Harley, it's about them.

APPLE: I'll start with a simple marketing example: If APPLE were like most other companies, a marketing message from them would move from the outside in of the Golden Circle. It would start with some statement of WHAT the company does or makes, followed by HOW they think they are different or better than the competition, followed by some call to action. With that, the company would expect some behaviour in return, in this case a purchase. A marketing message from Apple, if they were like everyone else, might sound like this: "We make great computers. They're beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly. Wanna buy one?"

Let's look at the Apple example and rewrite the example in the order Apple actually communicates. This time, the example starts with WHY.

"Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently. The way we challenge the status quo is by making our products beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly. And we happen to make great computers, wanna buy one?"

It's a completely different message. It actually feels different from the first one. We're much more eager to buy a computer from Apple after reading the second version. And all I did was reverse the order of the information.

It's worth repeating: people don't buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it.

When communicating from the inside out, however, the WHY is offered as the reason to buy and the WHATs serve as the tangible proof of that belief.

I'm not so foolhardy as to propose that Apple's products don't matter. Of course they do. But it's the reason they matter that is contrary to conventional wisdom. Their products, unto themselves, are not the reason Apple is perceived as superior; their products, WHAT apple makes, serve as the tangible proof of what they believe. It is that clear correlation between WHAT they do and WHY they do it that makes Apple stand out. This is the reason we perceive apple as being authentic. Everything they do works to demonstrate their WHY, to challenge the status quo.

Regardless of the products they make or the industry in which they operate, it is always clear that Apple “thinks different”.

Apple did not invent the mp3, nor did they invent the technology that became the iPod, yet they are credited with transforming the music industry with it. The multigigabyte portable hard drive music player was actually invented by Creative Technology Ltd, a Singapore based technology company that rose to prominence by making the Sound Blaster audio technology that enables home P.C.'s to have sound.

In fact Apple didn't introduce the iPod until 22 months after Creative's entry into the market. This detail alone calls into question the assumption of a first mover's advantage. Given their history in digital sound, Creative was more qualified than Apple to introduce a digital music product. The problem was they advertised their product as a 5gb mp3 player. It is exactly the same message as Apple's 1000 songs in your pocket. The difference is Creative told us WHAT their product was and Apple told us WHY we needed it. Dell came out with PDAs in 2002 and mp3 players in 2003, but lasted only a few years in each market. Dell makes good quality products and is fully qualified to produce these other technologies. The problem was they had defined themselves by WHAT they did, they made computers, and it simply didn't make sense to use to buy a PDA or mp3 player from them.

It didn't feel right.

How many people do you think would stand on line for six hours to buy a new cell phone from Dell, as they did with the release of Apple's iPhone? People couldn't see Dell as anything more than a computer company. It didn't make sense. Poor sales quickly ended Dell's desire to enter the small electronic goods market. Instead, they opted to focus on their “core business.” Unless, Dell, like so many others, can rediscover their founding purpose, cause or belief and start with WHY in all they say and do, all they will ever do is sell computers. They will be stuck in their “core business”.

Apple, unlike its competitors, has defined itself by WHY it does things, not WHAT it does. It is not a computer company, but a company that challenges the status quo and offers individuals simpler alternatives. Apple even changed its legal name in 2007 from Apple Computer Inc., to Apple Inc., to reflect the fact that they were more than just a computer company. Practically speaking, it doesn't really matter what a company's legal name is. For Apple, however, having the word “computer” in their name didn't limit WHAT they could do. It limited how they thought of themselves. The change wasn't so practical. It was philosophical.

Everything that comes out of the base of the megaphone serves as a way for an organization to articulate what it believes. What a company says and does are means by which the company speaks.

I recently met a woman who offers business mentorship to women entrepreneurs. And, yes, there's the technical side of it – the information she passes on and particular issues she helps them with but, for her, it's about independence, the beauty of intergenerational support from woman to woman, the shift from cooperation not competition, and women having real choices in their lives instead of feeling trapped and living in the fear of being dependent on a spouse.

[Charlotte Lammerhirt](#) is a mortgage broker in Calgary for her, at it's heart, her work is about helping homeowners enjoy the kind of freedom to have the kind of lifestyle they want.

Graham Stones is a wonderful fellow who lives in England. His 'boat' is massage therapy and yoga. But there are lots of folks in London who do that. One day we were chatting and I asked him, 'why do you do this? What is this about for you?' and he said, 'You know, London can be a very depressing, heavy and negative place and I kind of want to fight back against that sometimes.' As our conversation evolved, it became clear that optimism was at the heart of his work.

Years ago, I worked with [Sheryl Watson](#) (pictured here) who did breast massage.

It was really beneficial for women in maintaining breast health in the face of the increase of breast cancer. I looked at her brochure one day and . . . it was so dry. Technical. And I felt confused. Here was this earthy, vibrant woman with this clinical brochure. I asked her about it. She admitted that she was scared of a brochure about breast massage seeming creepy or weird. Which I can understand – but I think she might have thrown the baby out with the bathwater.

“If this is really about breast massage,” I said. “Then the only things you can send to your list are research and updates on the technicalities of breast massage. But if it's about something bigger than that, like women's empowerment . . .” She cut me off. “Oh! Yes! It's totally about women's empowerment!”

If she decided that it was really about breast massage – that's fine. That's her boat. And that's what she'd be known for. And so that's all she could really send in her newsletters or write about in her blog. If she strayed too far from that people might feel like their time was being wasted, 'I came to her blog for info on breast massage, but instead I'm getting this new age bullshit about goddess work!'

On the other hand, if it's really about women's empowerment then she has a much wider range of options available to her in what she could put in her blog: TED Talks by powerful women, fundraising events about women's empowerment, women's self defense, reviews on books, movies, recipes etc. Having a clear 'why' frees you. And, as you can see from her [website](#) – that 'why' that was so close to her heart is flowering in beautiful ways.

You can be [known for](#) the boat you use. But you can also be known for what they journey is about.

A few years ago, I went to a marketing workshop and got put on the hotseat and grilled on why I do what I do. And, after a few minutes of struggling, it became clear that the pay what you can isn't just something I do, it's something that matters to me. That, at its heart, it's about accessibility and justice for me. Accessibility of marketing info is a bigger cause than pay what you can. Pay what you can is a tactic, an expression of my desire for justice and accessibility.

[Marissa Heisel](#) (pictured right) is one of the only people in Canada trained as both a chiropractor and a midwife. When we spoke she said to me, “every woman deserves the right to have a

healthy, beautiful, joyous pregnancy and parenting experience.” That sounds like a cause to me. Who could argue with that?

Which is part of the point – when you really land on a clear ‘why’ it’s often, at its heart – inarguable.

Of course, she also has a point of view about why that’s not happening, “There’s abuse, war, violence and poverty that creates overwhelming maternal mortality rates. If every woman had this the world would be so much more at peace. So much of the cruelty, ugliness, anger and warfare comes from a deep anger that comes from early on in life – from birth and childhood. If babies weren’t born with this maternal stress then we could change the experience for every woman – these children could grow up able to handle stress differently.”

Your [point of view](#) is, by definition debatable – the larger cause is much less so.

[Janis Rosen](#) helps menopausal women to lose weight. But weight loss, while emotional for some, isn’t exactly an inspiring clarion call. It’s a physical reality. When I explored what it was about for Janis – the answer was clear – she saw weight loss as a path of transformation. As we spoke she shared a phrase she used a lot, that might end up becoming the name of a workshop, ‘getting bigger on the inside’. For her the heart of it was that as we lose weight on the outside we gain growth on the inside. She said, “For some people their path of growth is money. For some it’s relationships – for us it’s weight loss. Instead of hating it – we can embrace it. As our bodies transform – we transform. And that transformation is a part of the larger shift to a new world.”

Again, can you nestle your work into the larger story?

Tanya Fraser is a nutritionist in Toronto with a focus on heart issues in women. So, her niche is relatively clear. She’s got a clear boat (nutrition) and a clear journey (heart health) she takes people on. So, two of the four elements of the platform are there. I offered to her that she might want to explore using the heart metaphorically too. “It seems,” I said. “That you help women to have strong hearts. But why does that matter? So what? What does it mean to be a strong hearted woman? Are there emotional heart issues? The heart is so linked with qualities of love, compassion and empathy.” She’d never considered a deeper and wider story on that before. To me, it feels different to say, “I imagine a world full of strong hearted women. I think that women play such a vital role in the healing of the world. And I work with them to help keep their hearts strong.” That doesn’t mean she needs to branch into emotional work herself – but it opens the doors to all sorts of other partnerships that might not have been available before.

[Saraswatishanti](#) is a yoga teacher in Toronto who started out as angry young straight edge punk. But yoga got her into compassion. It opened her heart.

Yoga is just a boat.

And for each teacher, yoga will be, at its heart, about something else. For some it will be optimism, for others compassion and for others community.

And, in his [book](#), Simon Sinek invites us to start with why.

Imagine the difference between any of the people I've mentioned simply talking about their boat vs. sharing their personal 'why'.

The difference between, "I do yoga" and "You know, London can be a very depressing, heavy and negative place and I kind of want to fight back against that sometimes. To me, life is so beautiful and full of potential. It's something to be celebrated. Optimism and positivity matter to me. They're medicine. And so I choose to bring that into the world a little every day through teaching yoga."

The difference between, 'I do breast massage' and 'I love women so much. I love being a woman. I love everything about women. And there are so many things in this world that would have women be smaller, not be themselves. Everything in my life is about lifting women up to live the fullest most wonderful lives they can have. And I try to do that a little bit every day by helping women take wonderful care of their bodies – and my piece of that is breast massage.'

The difference between, 'I do marketing workshops' and 'I see a world where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. And, worse than that, the rich can afford to go to workshops where they learn how to become even more wealthy. And the people doing the most radical, selfless and wonderful work in the world will never hear about – and could never afford these types of workshops – people doing permaculture, offering holistic approaches to healing, local food providers, solar power . . . and that seems messed up. I want to see these people have access to the same tools and information that can help their initiatives grow. And so I do that through marketing workshops that I offer on a pay what you can basis so they can be accessible to all.'

Isn't it more inspiring to hear the deeper why? Doesn't it give the boat more context when we can see the whole sky?

What is the 'why' behind your business?