

niching for hippies
(supplemental materials)

Eight Ways to Know Your Niche is On Track:

Knowing these criteria probably won't help you find the inspiration to come up with your niche. But they will help you filter whatever inspiration you come up with to know if it's a good business idea.

It's Clear: This is the most important one. There's an old adage in marketing: 'the confused mind says no'. Is the community you're serving clear to people. When someone asks you who you work with and you explain in they should immediately know if they are in that group or not and they should immediately know if they know someone in that group. No fuzziness.

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

Will they identify with this group you're thinking of working with? Will they say, "That's me!" If you say 'vegan', people know if they're a vegan or not. If you say, 'single mom' they know if they are a single mom or not. But if you say, "I work with people who have problems and want different results in their life." You get funny looks. You need to focus narrowly enough to establish some relevance. You need to focus narrowly enough that the needs and problems become obvious. You must think in terms of *communities* of people - not just *qualities* of people. 'Back Packers' is a better target than 'people who are going through transition.'

How do you know if you have a clear target? You should be able to describe an average day for them with relative accuracy. You should be able to tell me about their life and the struggles they have. With a clear target, this is easy to do. A clear target will share common needs, values, experiences and situations. They would be able to relate and empathize with each other if they met. You'd hear them saying things like, "Me too! I totally know what you mean. I'm dealing with the same thing." This shared experience is the bottom line of a target market - without it, you don't have one.

There are enough of them who can afford to pay you full price for your products and services: While most people don't niche narrowly enough, you can make your niche too narrow. If there are only three people in town who fit your description you may need to broaden your reach. You need to be really honest with yourself here. And challenge yourself: if you think there are enough people - what are you basing that on? Hope? Or have you actually done some research and poking around?

It's important that they are able to pay you an amount that feels good and meets your needs. That may be a small amount or a large amount. That's up to you - but if it's less than you really want and need you will begin to resent them. It will drain your energy. And you won't have enough money to sustain yourself. It will start out as a gesture of goodwill, but will end in bitterness. NOTE: If the niche you are really into can't afford you, all is not lost. You have a few options. One is just to let go of making more money and enjoy working with them. Second is to pick another niche that can afford you and work with them enough to meet your needs and work with your niche the rest of the time.

If your target markets can't afford to pay you - that's fine ... and you have a non profit. Which is great. I love non-profits. Just be clear what your business model is. If the community you want to help can't afford your services or products - then you will need to make money through grants, fundraising, sponsorship etc.

You can find them: They already have established, high quality hubs, communication networks etc. Basically, this means that you can find them and reach them easily.

What is a hub?

Think of it like the hub of a wheel. It's the only point on the wheel where all of the spokes come together and meet.

A hub is any place where you can find your niche.

It might be an association they belong to, an event they tend to go to. I can't tell you how many times I hear people get excited about a niche they have little hope of reaching. Before you commit a dime to any niche ask yourself: Do they tend to hang out in the same places? Do they read the same magazines? Do they spend money in the same places? Are they a part of the same groups?

There are seven main categories of hubs (i.e. events, businesses, groups, publications, individuals, support systems, and websearch related).

The more and better quality hubs that your niche has, the easier they will be to reach. The fewer hubs there are, the harder it will be.

Why do you want to find hubs? Why do they matter so much? Well, consider this - you can spend all of your time trying to find your clients individually, or you can just go to where they *already* are. You can spend all of your days trying to win the trust of the individuals in your niche one at a time . . . or you can secure the endorsement of someone they already trust and win over all of their trust at once. The latter is far easier in the long term.

When I go to a new town I could spend hundreds of dollars postering the city about my workshops, or I could just call up the local progressive, local business network and get them to host it. Much easier.

Some communities of people know each other and hang out and others never meet each other - but are only connected by hubs. For example: when I worked with student councils in Alberta - the student council advisors knew me - but they didn't know each other. Most of them only worked in their own schools and had never met or hung out with another Student Council advisor from another school. They were *indirectly* connected through me. Other communities, such as skaters, hang out with each other all of the time. They're directly connected to each other.

They are underserved: the niche is often based on what your competitors *aren't* doing. If they have a need but are being ignored by your competition, that can be a goldmine. If they're already being courted for their business by dozens of other businesses then that niche is less than ideal ****unless**** you are able to offer something so unique and so clearly more valuable that they no longer consider you in the same ballpark. If you're able to do that then you're in a good place. If they are over-served - if they are inundated with options then you need to do one of two things:

One, be the only option that focuses just on that niche exclusively (e.g. the only massage therapist in town who works only with mothers). If there's already a lot of other businesses focusing exclusively on that niche then you might consider picking a sub-niche - focusing on one particular sub-group of people in that niche (e.g. be the only massage practitioner in town that works exclusively with new mothers).

Or second - you will also need to distinguish yourself in some other way. You can differentiate yourself by: what you do, how you do it. how much you charge, who you offer it to, when you offer it and where you offer it.

What you're looking for are areas with good demand but low supply.

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

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

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

They agree with or are intrigued by your point of view: you see things in a particular way. You've got a particular 'take' on your industry, the nature of the problems people face, what it takes for them to get the results they're craving etc. You've got opinions. And it's important that people are on the same page or at least open. Because trying to change someone's point of view is a losing battle. If you recommend a more primal diet of raw meat, dairy and eggs and in walks a macrobiotic vegan . . . it doesn't matter if all of the other criteria are a fit – they will never work with you. Your worldviews must, in the end, match.

You love them: this one is important. This must be a community of people you have affection for, a community of people you are passionate about supporting, protecting and serving.

They're fun and easy to work with and in alignment with your nature (these are likely the kinds of clients you most easily and naturally attract and the ones to whom you feel the most attracted - it's a niche or community that you want to see thrive). Who would *really* excite you to work with? Is there a particular niche or community of folks with whom you just naturally seem to love working?

Fears Around Niching:

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

And no question that meets with more resistance and fear.

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

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

You are asking yourself, "who am I *best* able to help? . . . and would they like me? Would they hire me? Am I really marketable?"

I sometimes think that avoiding the whole niche conversation is a way we avoid really putting ourselves out there. After all, if I just say, 'oh, I'll work with anybody.' Then we can avoid being rejected. We can avoid seeing that people aren't responding to our offers.

The tragedy of this is that, by trying to appeal to everyone, you end up being far less appealing to anyone.

To look at the question of niche can bring you face to face with a lot of very personal issues about what you're passionate about, why you're here on Earth, what your talents. And when those aren't clear in our own hearts, well, we're sometimes embarrassed and would just rather coast along and not look at it.

I've found that some people sort of "short circuit" when asked to address this question directly. Their eyes glaze over and they go into a deep haze. They feel overwhelmed. Others feel like to choose a niche would insult their craft. Others think, "if I pick a niche - will people think 'oh, herbalism is only good for that particular issue' and I don't want people to think that. It would hurt the reputation of my whole modality."

Others have the fear, "what if I pick the *wrong* niche? What if I invest so much time and energy into this and it fails or doesn't feel right?"

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

This, of course, is why god invented dating.

Which we'll talk more about soon. Yeah. It's that kind of ebook. The fear of 'what if I pick the wrong niche?' is just another form of 'what if I marry the wrong guy?' or 'what if I start dating her and realize we're not a fit?' or 'what if I apply for this job and I hate it?'. That's life. We make the best choices we can and then we learn from them. We do our best not to disappoint others but we still do. We keep refining our real world understanding of what we want.

My hope is that this ebook helps to make that process of refining faster, deeper and easier for you.

The truth is, you could pick a perfect niche and *still* fail. A strong niche isn't a guarantee of success, it just makes it a lot more likely. You could be a farmer and do everything right and still have a hail come and destroy your crops right before you harvest them. That's life. You could date someone and do everything right and they still break your heart. You could invest your money right and still lose it all. No guarantees.

But perhaps the biggest fear is this, "If I choose one niche I'll lose people!"

First of all, the reminder that you don't just need to pick one niche (but you'd be wise not to have more than three as your primary focus).

But secondly, the humbling reminder that you already are losing people.

Fact.

Some people you will lose because you remind them of their ex or their parents. True story.

Some people you will lose because you don't specialize in anything – you seem to be such a generalist and they don't trust that you can help them with your particular problems.

The central myth that keeps us so stressed is the unrealistic expectation that we could capture 100% of the market, that we could make everybody love us, that we could get anyone and everyone as a client. The myth that by choosing a focus we become less attractive.

If you try to be everything to everybody you'll just become nothing to everybody. You'll become generic and thus invisible. No matter what strategy you're using right now, you're already losing people. Some people love it and others are turned off by it. The truth is that you're always going to lose people. Always.

The only question is, 'are you losing the people you want to lose and attracting the people you want to attract?'

And this lifts up the truth of the situation: deep down we have preferences about who we want to work with. We don't always consciously acknowledge them but they're there. And I think we don't always acknowledge them because we're scared of being disappointed and rejected. We're scared of it not working.

So niching is less about 'choosing' a niche and more about noticing that we've already chosen one. Noticing that we already have preferences and deciding to do something with that awareness; refining it over time.

From that place, we come up with a strategy to make sure that as many of our clients as possible are those kinds of people. We start becoming really conscious about making sure we repel people (nicely) who aren't a fit and attract the ones who are. Part of niching is about becoming okay with losing people. It's about seeing where we've been settling for clients that haven't been a fit out of fear.

Nineteen Reflections, Premises, Wonderings and Distinctions:

You don't need one: Here's a fine place to start in an ebook about niches. You don't need one. This is important. There's no dogma or ideology that says you have to. There are no marketing gods who will get angry with you if you don't. I've heard of many businesses that have never given niche a second thought and they're doing just fine. Thriving even. Some people drink whisky and smoke cigars til they're 105 years old. A mystery. So, again, hold this exploration with some lightness, fun and curiosity. Thinking about it will likely make your life much easier. And the truth is that you may *already* have tapped into various niches without realizing it - but being more conscious about it might just help you be more strategic about where you invest your time and money.

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

Your niche is not your platform. It's a part of it. Your platform is what you're known for – your brand, your identity. And there are six elements of that: yourself, your business, the journey you take people on, your point of view, your deeper cause and the places you take them they never would have considered. Your platform is the weaving together of all those things. Your niche is at the heart of the journey you take people on: who you work with, the problems they struggle with and the results they want. In my mind, your niche is the who + the problem, but we'll get into that more later.

You can't separate your niche from your platform: like a fold in a blanket or branches on a tree, it's a part of the bigger whole, but its own thing. Each piece of the platform informs every other piece. Your point of view on things will absolutely affect who is drawn to work with you and who you work with will absolutely affect the way you design your business. It's all woven together. It makes it more complicated but, in a way, that's a sigh of relief because you'll rarely ever feel stuck in every area of your business at the same time. You might have no idea on who your niche is but feel really excited and full of ideas about the bigger why or the result you're offering. Which leads nicely to the next idea . . .

Start anywhere: One of the most overwhelming parts of sorting out your niche is where to start. My advice: start anywhere. Start with what feels the most true and clear for you. Sometimes what's most clear are the qualities you want in a client, sometimes it's the demographics, sometimes it's the problem you want to solve and other times it's type of business you want to run. And more. Like pieces in a puzzle start anywhere you can see a fit. I've been to workshops where they tell people, 'here's the formula to figuring out your niche and you need to start with this'. They might be right, but in my experience it never happens in such a linear and straight forward fashion. I have rarely seen anyone figure out their niche in a workshop. It usually happens later, in the shower, while driving somewhere or in a conversation with a friend when the brain is relaxed and distracted and then it hits. Sometimes the best we can do is start anywhere and be ready for inspiration when it strikes. Start where you're clear. There are so many doorways into your niche. There's no one formula. The formula is to start where you're clear and keep readjusting and refining. It never stops.

A niche may take a while to identify (and that's okay). Think of clarifying your ideal client as a long-term process rather than an *event*. You'll be able to answer some of the questions in this virtual workshop easily. Others you'll need to sit with; some for a few weeks and some for a few years. That's the truth. Most people tell me that when they stumble across their niche - and stumble is really a good word - it's like a light bulb going off and they think, "Why didn't I see that before?" Because they couldn't. It's a process.

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

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

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

The refining never stops: I think we need to start seeing niching as both a process *and* a result. In quantum physics speak, it's the particle and the wave. There's an idea that you can pick your niche and then you're done. It's a good theory but I've rarely seen it work in practice because people evolve, markets change and so does our niche. Who's to say in a decade that you'll be the same person and want to work with the same kinds of clients? And even while you have the same clients, you keep refining. You'll keep having new experiences and tweaking. It just never stops.

Would you move into a new community and just announce to everyone 'this is my role'? You might. And you might even pick a good one but a change in the environment might change your role. Or make your current role redundant. You might then have to change your niche.

There are so many pieces to the niching puzzle. As each piece gets clear (they rarely all get clear at the same time) the whole gets clearer. It's like a spot in the horizon that you're drawn to but can't quite make out yet. It gets clearer as you get closer. It's a process that you can trust.

The generalized life and the specialized biz: a provocative notion – trying meet all of your needs through your business might be hurting you. What if your business wasn't supposed to meet all of your needs? What if it was okay to have a business that was a monoculture? What if bio diversity in your life was important but not in your business? What if you could have a business that was laser focused on one thing and then got your other needs met through your community, your hobbies and other things? Sometimes I wonder if people put too much pressure on their businesses to be everything to them. Maybe you end up designing a business that meets all your needs. Maybe you don't. Maybe that's okay.

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

On another level, a niche is the very expression of nature. Ecosystems are full of niches. Each creature playing their role.

You might know more than you think: I was at a workshop in 2010 and speaking with a woman who felt really stuck around her niche. She kept repeating, as if it were a mantra, 'I don't know my niche'. I could hear the panic in her voice as we sat down at a round table in a little mezzanine across from the workshop room. She'd clearly been struggling with this for years and was so frustrated. But the more we spoke, the more it became clear to me that she was actually extremely clear about many things related to her niche and about her niche, but she, somehow, couldn't see them. I looked at her and said, 'I think you have a story about not being clear on your niche. I think that might be what's holding you back more than anything. You keep saying you know nothing and then you keep giving me amazing and rich details about who you want to work with.' In hindsight, what was likely holding her back even more was the sense that her niche had to look and be articulated in a particular way and since she couldn't fit into that formula she felt like she didn't have any clarity. Start with where you're clear. Move from there. You might already be clearer than you think.

Being an expert vs. being a specialist: I kind of love this distinction and wish I could remember where I heard it from. So much in the marketing world encourages us to attain 'expert status'. And, for a lot of people, that can feel like a lot of pressure. Like we have to know everything (or at least pretend that we do). This can lead to us posturing and feeling like a fraud. It can lead to us feeling entitled to be paid big bucks because we're an expert. It's a mixed bag. Being a specialist is something different. Being a specialist says, 'here's where I focus my time, this is the area

I'm most fascinated with and I know a lot but I still have a lot of things to learn.' Being an expert can breed arrogance but being a specialist can breed humility. It might just be semantics but I liked the distinction.

There are toxic reasons people want to be a rockstar expert in their niche: Life can be really easy and fun. But the more we want to be famous, to be rich, to 'make it' in the big city – the harder we have to work and the more we have to sell our soul. Notice your motivations, do you want a wonderful and simple quality of life or do you want to be rich and famous? Either one is fine, just notice because you might not be able to get both.

When people get hooked by money and fame it all becomes about them. It becomes about their bank account and reputation. It becomes a falling in love with their own reflection – the very definition of narcissism. And that often leads to strategies and tactics that are all about boosting their numbers as big as possible rather than finding a perfect fit and working with that.

And there are bigger political and social justice questions we need to be asking beyond our own business success. Why do we need to niche? To distinguish ourselves. Why do we need to distinguish ourselves? To get clients. Why do we need to get clients? To make money. Why do we need to make money? To buy food, shelter, medicine and clothing. Why do we need to buy these things? Because we don't know how to make them for ourselves, because we lack community, because we're told we'll be cooler if we buy them. Because we're told that if we make more money we'll have a better quality of life. We no longer live in a village where everyone can do the basics.

But, it's good to remember that money is not a need in life. Perhaps living a simpler life might be the answer to needing a niche. If you have a simpler life, you'll have less need for money. If you have less need for money, you have less need to distinguish yourself and spend so much time on your marketing.

A story to illustrate . . .

An American tourist was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked.

Inside the small boat were several large yellowfin tuna. The tourist complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them.

The Mexican replied, "Only a little while."

The tourist then asked, "Why didn't you stay out longer and catch more fish?"

The Mexican said, "With this I have more than enough to support my family's needs."

The tourist then asked, "But what do you do with the rest of your time?"

The Mexican fisherman said, "I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siesta with my wife, Maria, stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my amigos, I have a full and busy life."

The tourist scoffed, "I can help you. You should spend more time fishing; and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat you could buy several boats. Eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman you would sell directly to the processor; eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing and distribution. You could leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then Los Angeles and eventually New York where you could run your ever-expanding enterprise."

The Mexican fisherman asked, "But, how long will this all take?"

The tourist replied, "15 to 20 years."

"But what then?" asked the Mexican.

The tourist laughed and said, "That's the best part. When the time is right you would sell your company stock to the public and become very rich, you would make millions."

"Millions?... Then what?"

The American said, “Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siesta with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos.

It gets messier before it gets clearer: Boy this one is so true. When you clean your room, things often get way messier before they get cleaner because you’re pulling old stuff out of drawers, sorting it etc. It’s the same with niching. When you start to really sit with it, you realize there are all these gems but they’ve not yet been set into a crown. And there’s also a bunch of coal. And it can be a lot to sort through. But, just like tidying your room, it’s so worth it for the burst of energy it gives you. Be wary of stopping in the middle. The messy middle is not where you want to leave things.

The Inverse Law of Geography: there are two central dynamics in picking a niche these days – geography and affinity. In the old days you had to work in your community of geography.

You did business where you lived. We lived in communities defined by geography. But, now, with the internet, ubiquitous travel and postal service we are living increasingly in ‘communities of affinity.’ (also known as niches).

The wider the geography you’re working in, the narrower your niche can (and must) be. Wide geography = tight niche. But the converse is true. If you’re serving a small geography then your niche will need to be broader. That just seems to be how it is. If you own a club in New York then there’d better be something really unique about it. If you own a club in a small town, chances are it’s the *only* club. I know a woman in Orangeville, Ontario. She’s the only yoga teacher there. Problem solved. No need to niche into ‘prenatal yoga’ to get clients. In fact, if you niche *too* narrowly you might not have enough people to sustain you. If you serve a global market, there will be a lot of competition; a lot of other folks offering almost exactly what you do. Trying to reach everybody in a world of billions is futile. If you reach globally there’s a chance to pick what are known as ‘micro niches’ where you focus on a (sometimes absurdly) particular aspect of a problem people struggle with or a (often ridiculously) small subset of the population. In other words - when working locally you need to be more of a jack of all trades. When working globally you can afford to be an uber-nerd.

You don’t so much choose your niche, as you discover it: This is true in at least three ways. First of all, you already have preferences of your ideal clients you might not be aware of. So, part of this work is about uncovering, discovering and noticing vs. deciding on our niche. Deciding is a very intellectual process. What I’m suggesting is that there are parts of you that have *already* decided who they like to work with. As we pay attention to that our understanding refines. In many ways, you don’t choose your niche. You uncover it with your honesty. It finds you. The second level is that, your niche is likely you. We’ll get into this more later – but your niche is likely people like you, people who are currently going through something you went through in the past. This happens so often and will be a theme through this entire piece. The third level is a bit more literal. You literally discover them. And this often happens because they’ve discovered you. I hear it all the time where an entrepreneur steps back on day and notices that a lot of their clients seem to all fit into a particular group. After years of running workshops for green businesses I noticed that a third to half of my workshops were filled by holistic practitioners. At first, I suppose I discounted it. But then it kept happening. Since then, it’s become one of my strongest target markets. Who knew?

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

Your niche statement is not your ‘tagline’. Most of us eventually come up with some pithy phrase that kind of captures what we do that’s funny. For example, when people ask me what I do I often joke, “Marketing consulting for hippies.” This usually gets their attention. What do I follow with? My **niche statement**. Your tagline might be a good attention getter - but follow it by making sure they know what kinds of people you work with so they know if what you offer is relevant to them.

You can be explicit without being exclusive. Just because you’ve picked a niche doesn’t mean that you can’t work with people outside of it. Let’s say you’re a massage therapist who focuses on pregnant women. That doesn’t mean you can’t also massage men or elderly women - it just means that you aren’t *targeting* them. It means that the bulk of the people you attract will be *within* your niche, but you will still attract other folks who don’t fit your niche - just

because they like you, happened to hear about you first, or were recommended by someone they trust. That's fine. There's no need to turn them away.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Also:

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

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

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

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

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

There's still the significant question of where to find them since there aren't any hubs I know of but you get the idea. Sometimes you can't go direct you need to go to those *affected* by the issue.

If you're stuck, ask yourself, "Who's paying my bills?" Your niche might be

Inner vs. Outer Realities:

Fundamentally, there are two ways we can define our target market. The outer things and the inner things. Most people opt for the outer things. People often say things like:

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

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

But we need to be aware of the difference between demographics and psychographics. Many people think that a niche is defined by the external appearances (e.g. age, ethnic background, gender, income). But this is only one aspect of your niche. And not necessarily the most effective.

Why?

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

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

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

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

Here's a simple equation:

Niche = target market = subculture = community = lifestyle.

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

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

Inner realities are often more powerfully in niching than outer realities.

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

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

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

"American marketing has historically been based upon customer demographics - what we look like on the outside. But in the past few years, psychographics - what we look like on the inside - have become a far better means of

capturing the hearts and minds of customers. Demographics tend to be more tangible and are primarily focused on age, race, or income. Psychographics focus more on intangible - passions, beliefs, or values. Demographics are often defined by how the world sees us while psychographics are defined by how we see ourselves.” (Marketing That Matters, p,67)

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

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

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

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

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

Is it a fit?

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

Let me tell you a story.

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

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

And yet she was at the workshop.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Real Life Examples:

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

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

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

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

How to Write a Lovable Homepage is for entrepreneurs who:

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

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

You'll fit right in if:

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

Alison Mark's Six Figure Home Office Series:

This program is right for you if:

- You are a business owner who is committed to growing your business
- You have an important message to get out into the world
- You are serious and ready to take a big leap in your business

- You can make a significant time investment during the program; I'm suggesting participants put aside at least 5 hours a week to work on their product, in addition to coursework and calls (roughly 2 hours per week)

This program will work great for you even if:

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

My 'How to Create Your Free Gift' Workbook:

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

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

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

It might also be a fit if . . .

- You have a newsletter sign up box – but not many people are taking you up on it.
- You have the capacity to update your own website (or are in the process of setting one up). It could also work if you've got a reliable web person who does it for you.
- You think your home page is already pretty swell. It immediately let's people know if they're in the right place by naming who the site is for, the problems you will help them solve and the results you'll offer.
- You have access to a web or graphic designer who can make you a fancy image of your gift.
- You like the idea of being generous with people you've never met.
- You've got so much to say! You feel like you have so many ideas and insights to share.

- People are visiting your website but you never seem to hear from them. They come and go leaving not a whisper of a trace behind them. Lots of traffic but little business.

My daylong workshop: The Hotbox.

This workshop might be a fit for you if:

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

An Intriguing Thought:

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

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

- **the 'About Me' page** on your website: this material could also help you see what's true about you and share that so that people could read it and say, 'wow. this person sure is a fit for me! they're just like me!'
- **the 'About You' page** on your website: you might not have this kind of page, but having a page that really describes who your perfect fit is as a client can go a long way
- **on your homepage:** you can give people a taste of who you work with here. Carrie Klassen has written a wonderful workbook to help you do just that.
- **piece in sales letters:** you can do this exercise for your clients in general but you can also apply many of the same questions to each product or service you create. You can ask yourself, 'who is this particular thing just perfect for?'
- **write out the story of your ideal client:** if you can, in story form, tell the story of what it's like to be your ideal client it makes it so much easier for them to find themselves in your work.
- **use this info to figure out your hubs:** once you get crystal clear on who you're trying to reach, it's much easier to find them. Trust me on this. If you could sum this up into a half a page description and share it with people and ask, 'where do you think these sorts of people hang out?' you'd start getting answers.

- **when talking about your products and services from the stage:** this is, perhaps, my favourite application of all of this. If you've had the misfortune of going to a marketing workshop and been pitched and pushed to sign up for a program with manipulative hype and tactics. It feels gross. So, instead of doing this, you can just say, 'So, I've got this thing. Here's who it's a fit for, here's who it's not a fit for. Here's the special offer I want to give you today.' Be clear. Share it. Let people make their own decisions. Everyone walks away feeling like you respected them vs. trying to 'sell' them.

The Implied Niche:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The reality is that we need both. Sometimes people create something so new, cool and unique with no target market in mind - and they get adopted by a community, the word spreads and their target market finds *them*. By genuinely expressing yourself and making something cool - you may end up attracting people anyway (who are likely the same people you would have attempted to target). Or sometimes you'll target one group - only to be shocked that another community is even more passionate about it. So, you can start with no target market - but again, most highly unique products and services carry an 'implied' target market. It's not a bad idea to spend some time thinking about who that might be.

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

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

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

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

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

If you do *eco-friendly* lawn care there are likely going to be some folks that are more into that than others.

At the heart of it, you're only going to be helping folks who have a problem you can help them solve. Marketing starts with relevance but has resonance as its ultimate possibility.

But, what if a *lot* of people could technically benefit from the use of your product or service?

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

And that may or may not be true.

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

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

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

Do you follow?

The niche implied by your boat – but what you do - is, almost always, too wide.

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

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

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

Some products have a much clearer implied niche.

For example, your product might only be used for a very specific purpose (e.g. menstrual pads). Your product might come with a predefined niche. This is an implied niche - you don't even need to say who you're targeting - it's implied in the type of product. Even so, you can often afford to narrow the niche down even further or at least come up with other ways to differentiate your product or service (e.g. organic cotton, chemical free menstrual pads).

And differentiating your product may actually change the niche.

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

But who is into what you're offering?

This is where it gets interesting.

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

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

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

Sometimes it can be very powerful to pick your niche indirectly like this. There's a chain of boutique hotels that each have their own very distinct flavour (each one modeled after a different popular magazine). The vibe and aesthetic each hotel has is so strong that the niche is implied - instead of overtly selecting their niche - their niche sort of selects them. Their niche is 'people who are into this magazine'.

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

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

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

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

"I hear that. I get how frustrating that must be. And . . . I want more of it. Bring it. I think it's fucking beautiful. I wonder if you're focusing on the wrong work in helping people to relax. I want to see you working with women who are shy and collapsed and could use a bit more ferocity in their lives, learn how to set boundaries . . . so many women need what it is that you have!"

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

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

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

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

- Dr. Howard Thurman

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

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

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

So, do you start with yin or yang?

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

Wound as Niche:

For many people, this is the most profound notion in niche marketing. The idea that our deepest wound may end up being our truest niche.

Before I even formally had this notion in my mind, I began to see that there was a deep connection between one's ideal niche and one's nature as a person. I can't tell you how many times I've heard people in my workshops say, "well, basically, my niche is people just like me!" And that's not a crazy response. It makes sense.

I keep seeing, in my own life and the lives of others, how our lives ending up preparing us to bring certain gifts to our communities. Gifts that no one else *could* bring. There are certain things we're good and certain things we aren't good at. And it's a relief in a way because the world is full of lots of needs but only one you. There's a lot of sickness in the world but only one medicine like you. We're not built to solve every problem in the world. But there is something we are prepped for. Something we can give that no one else can. And I think that's got a lot to do with our niche.

At its baseline, your business exists to help people on their journey from Island A (their problems) to Island B. And, if you've done that journey yourself you're going to be a lot better qualified to help others. You are like the Sherpa that guides people up the mountain. You've walked along the path before. You have a first hand knowledge of it.

And so it is with niching.

If you have a lot of experience with the community you're trying to reach (better yet you're a *part* of them) - if you're an expert in their experiences - you're going to do better.

If you know their world inside and out, if you know the trends and troubles, the key players, the politics, the hope and dreams etc. of your niche - you're bound to have an easier time of it.

If you know the emotional landscape of their lives – all the better for you.

It's possible to randomly pick a niche and work it. You can do that. It's just harder is all.

Consider these three options and ask yourself which is more appealing to you:

1. Someone who has their product and service and is trying to sell you on it hard (regardless of whether or not it's a perfect fit).
2. someone who is committed to learning about and understanding your needs and taking as much time as they need to really make sure they understand you before they sell you anything
3. somebody who *already* understands you and has designed something perfect for you. When you're a native (vs. a tourist) in your niche, you're going to be far ahead.

Of course, number three is the most compelling. So much time and energy is saved.

Your deepest wound may be your truest niche.

Read that again. It might just be the most important idea I know of in niching.

A lot of the conversation about target markets and niches can get pretty . . . dry, hollow, abstract, cynical and 'tactical'. It can be incredibly uninspired.

And it's easy to see how it happens.

People go to a marketing workshop and they hear that they need to choose a niche. And so they think about the kinds of clients they like or the past jobs they've had and they decide that 'yes! i'll be a coach for lawyers' but . . . they don't really give a shit.

It's kind of an arbitrary choice.

But the best niches aren't arbitrary – they're deeply authentic.

So where do these deeply authentic and resonant niches come from? How can you find a niche that's so good it makes your toes curl with goodness? A niche that's so authentic you never feel like a fraud? A niche so good that marketing doesn't even feel like marketing anymore. Where do you look to find this kind of niche?

You look to your wounds.

You look to those really hard things you've gone through.

You look to where you've been 'pulled under' (like the surfer pictured here) and come out the other side knowing how to ride those particular waves.

You look to your own history and the significant events in your life.

To me what's interesting about this is that this is obviously not a new dynamic. Every shaman, every major healer out there went through some really intense crisis moment in their life. I remember reading this interview with this Siberian shaman.

They said, "Before you got your healing powers, did you get sick?"

He looked at them with a really funny look and said, "Of course I got sick."

He looked like, "Are you new? Why are you asking me this?"

One coach I spoke to had no idea about what kind of clients she wanted. Turns out she used to work in the soul crushing corporate world. And when I proposed to her working with that niche - specifically closet mystics and progressive women working in the corporate world - she lit up like a candle.

If you've been through breast cancer and you're a holistic practitioner, you might feel passionate about helping other women going through that process. If you've been through a painful divorce and you're a life coach - you might feel inspired about coaching women who are going through one themselves. Some people find that helping others through painful events that they've gone through is actually very healing for them.

I worked with one coach who did a lot of personal growth workshops - but she was having a dickens of a time identifying any niches. I asked her to describe who was *already* coming. She told me that many of them were women who'd gone through a painful divorce. I asked her if this might be a potential niche. Turns out it was. She had been through a painful divorce herself and loved the thought of helping other women through that.

If you were told to shut up when you were young and have spent the rest of your life finding your voice – then you could be the perfect guide to help others find their voice.

Conversely, if you were made to speak when you didn't want to, you might be the perfect person to help people set boundaries, enjoy their solitude and create restful spaces for themselves.

Or consider this example from Blaire Finnie from Victoria who attended my workshop in Vancouver yesterday.

"You know how highly functional adults and teens between the ages 15 and 35 with diagnosed mental illnesses struggle with their identity, their relationships, and an overwhelming confusion about their prescription medication(s)?"

Well, I support people who live as their mental illness to transition into living with and eventually without their diagnosis and, in some cases, without their medication.

For example, I have been diagnosed with OCD, clinical depression, and twice with life-long bipolar disorder. I took antidepressants and anti psychotics, and was hospitalized in a psychiatric ward twice. Needless to say, I was living with extreme suffering, fear, and rage. I believed deeply that I was broken for ever.

Over a period of about three years, having done all kinds of self-study and research, I found ways to overcome these challenges, and to move from blame, fear, and a fundamental lack of trust in myself and my experience of life through to acceptance, self compassion and self-love, and ultimately toward innate trust within myself and in my experience of life. One critical part of this process was to commit, unwaveringly, to a lifestyle primarily focused on spirituality.

Now, I have a strong and healthy sense of my identity, as well as a nourished and active body. I have beautiful, dynamic, and loving relationships with my family, a partner, and many friends, and I don't even need to worry about prescription medications or psychiatrists because I no longer take any drugs of any kind, including pharmaceutical and recreational drugs.

I offer educational and inspirational seminars and lectures to schools, businesses, support groups, and families. I offer one on one coaching and guidance, as well as hands on healing and bodywork in individual sessions. In my work, I emphasize rest, proper nutrition and supplementation, regular exercise, and the creation routine in your lifestyle. My aim is to help you to realize who and what you are, and who and what you are not. I offer help and support for you to move beyond your belief that you are permanently and fundamentally mentally ill."

Is there any doubt that he carries an immense and authentic credibility around helping people who are deeply mentally distressed? Is there any doubt that he will have a profound empathy?

Or what about my client who practices as a shaman. Sure, shamanism can help a lot of people – but who can he best help? Well, this man got involved in biker gangs for years. It took him four years to get out of it without being killed. But here's a fellow who engaged in a very toxic and intense form of masculinity and is now one of the most beautiful embodiments of healthy masculinity I know. Do you think he might just have something to say to other men about embodiment a more authentic and life affirming form of manhood? I do.

A few weeks ago, I led a little workshop at Hollow Reed here in Winnipeg. I was here leading a workshop last October and was completely charmed by the place and the people running it.

We had an intimate little group of seven people who were all just the cat's pajamas.

A highlight of the evening for me was when we were talking about this whole question of niche.

Because it was a small group we could go around and have everyone share what niche they wanted to fiddle with. One woman – a spiritual counselor – shared that she felt kind of stuck.

"I love to work with the entire family to help them resolve things. Get everyone together. But, I feel like a bit of a fraud because I wasn't able to do that with my family. I've done all I can but they're not wanting to fix things."

I could feel where she was coming from. How can you promise to take someone on a journey you were unable to complete yourself. If you've ever tried to position yourself in that way – it's really stressful.

"Well . . . maybe," I offered. "Your best niche is to work with people who've been unable to heal the difficulties in their family and are now left with trying to heal themselves and deal with the realities of that. And maybe you might even end up working with the whole family down the road . . . but why not start with those people? That's a path you've absolutely walked down yourself."

Her eyes widened, "I could do that and feel so authentic about that . . ."

Or what about my dear friend and colleague **Alex Baisley**. He spent nine years as an underwater welder in the Atlantic Ocean when the two things he hated most in the world were being cold and being alone. Then he spent six years as a reiki practitioner and that left him miserable too. He realized he was a gypsy stuck in an office. And now he travels about North America and helps people to create wonderful, unconventional, quirky and sustainable

lifestyles. He's been through the pain so many of his clients face of having so many ideas and talents and not knowing how to weave them together.

Or what about me? I spent years learning and doing 'hard sales' and cold calling and learning NLP and sales techniques. I did so many things that felt gross. It changed me. It affected me. I became more 'slick' in my personal interactions. My hippie friends distanced themselves. It hurt. And now? . . . I'm allergic to inauthentic marketing. I just can't stand it. But I can smell it a mile away.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Consider this example from a realtor, "I work with people with disabilities-- who struggle to find a home that they like and can afford and who feel overwhelmed and confused about where to even start in applying for financing."

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

What follows is a excerpt from a transcript of a call I did with Jeffrey Van Dyk exploring the connection between our niche and our wounds . . .

Tad: Since getting to know you something that I have become aware of is that one of my wounds a lot of my life was always feeling like I wasn't cool enough. I grew up feeling that other people were always cooler than me. I never seemed to fit in.

What's interesting is that as a compensating mechanism for that I started learning how to play the guitar, do close-up magic tricks, and be really funny and entertaining. I saw that that got me attention and made me cooler. It also helped me figure out how I could get into inner circles of people.

Unconsciously what that had me do was to always be performing and entertaining - even when it wasn't appropriate. I was putting on the "Tad Show." In my early twenties I was always doing that. Also if I'd show up in a group of people I'd unconsciously try and get in there. It maybe even felt a little bit pushy and insensitive to other people.

However what's interesting is that as I've come to embrace it, the same things that unconsciously were harmful for me in a conscious way can become art. Now at my marketing workshops all of those magic tricks and entertaining can be a part of the facilitation for the participants.

Jeffrey: Absolutely.

Tad: In talking about this need to be a part of the inner circle, part of the gift it gave me is the ability to power map a room. I can think, "Who do I need to talk to?"

This unconsciously can have me running around scrambling desperate, but consciously can also lead to a lot of discernment.

Jeffrey: Exactly.

Tad: It's interesting and ironic to me that I'm talking about working with people around marketing when such a core

wound for me is being cool and accepted. It's just an interesting connection between marketing and that. That's where I am in my "uncomfortableness."

Jeffrey: Yes. What I would say about that is that the strategy that you had to use in the wound of, "I need to be cool. I need to be liked" – and this is really, "I need to be loved. I need to be seen. I need to be witnessed, acknowledged, and heard." Right? I would say that that's the thing underneath the "I want to be cool."

Tad: Right.

Jeffrey: What that wound of "I need to be cool; I need to be witnessed, seen, heard, and loved" developed all sorts of skills.

It's just like you said, "I can really energetically map a room and see who I need to know."

It can either be unconsciously driven by my wound: sort of like hot potato or hot stove. I touch it and "ouch!" I pull the hand away. That reactive energy is fueling the activity.

Or you can use the skill set you built from the wound in a really conscious way by being a grounded, energetic reader of a room. You can say, "Who is in my tribe that I need to know?" You can use it that way.

It's not really a bad or good, you know? It's just, "Wow. I have this amazing skill. I wouldn't have had it without that wound. I wouldn't have needed to learn how to read energy in a room and map it. I wouldn't have had a reason to learn that skill."

There's a beautiful, beautiful way that the wound prepares you perfectly for your life's work. In my work with Tim Kelley we would always say that, "Your wounds are the training program for your purpose."

We have different wounds that actually prepare us in different ways. I think in some ways I have a different wound that led to similar development. As a kid I always felt like – well, there are two things that I'll speak about. One is that I always felt judged and wrong. I grew up in a really religious community that felt, "You have to do everything right."

I remember once when I was at a friend's house. They were going to church. I was wearing shorts. They wouldn't let me go with them. They said, "You can't wear shorts to church."

I was always saying things that were inappropriate. I remember being somewhere with my mom. She had gotten her tubes tied. I didn't really know what having tubes tied meant. I was four. I remember asking these ladies, "Hey, have you gotten your tubes tied, too? You look pretty old."

I remember the condemnation in their stares. They were looking down at me. I thought, "I'm just curious. I'm asking these questions."

So the wound was, "Oh crap. There's something wrong with me."

I always felt kind of broken: almost like a defective toy. That was the big wound that I wanted to hide from the world. "I'm defective. I don't want you to see it, because if you see that I'm defective you won't love me." My compensation strategy for that was being a star performer. So like I said, "Different wound but a similar strategy" from what it sounds like for you.

Tad: Right.

Jeffrey: So I learned to put on a show. I didn't learn magic tricks, et cetera. I just learned to be really charming and entertaining. Later in life I eventually spent a good decade – literally – on stage. I've sung all over the world on huge stages.

Now as a speaker and teacher I really know audiences, you know? If you really want to know how to work a room to learn an audience, try being a cabaret singer in a bar full of people half drunk. That will teach you and it will teach you quickly.

The difference is that if I'm doing it from the place of, "I'm secretly broken. I want you to love me." I'm kind of like a leech on the audience, you know?

If I'm trying to teach consciousness work, if I'm trying to support people in building their bright lights, the big downside of that wound-driven energy was that some part of my psyche always believed that I needed to be the brightest light in the room in order to be loved. This means other people can only shine so bright before I'm threatened.

So I had to do some work with that part of my psyche. What it said was, “Blah, blah, blah. I want you to be the brightest light so that you’ll be loved.”

I said, “Great. How do you hope I’ll feel if I’m loved and seen as this bright light?”

“Oh, well then you’ll be free because you’ll feel really comfortable, et cetera, et cetera.”

What it was really after was this deep sense of freedom for me. Its strategy was, “Make sure you’re the brightest light in the room.”

Jeffrey: So in working with that part of my psyche it created a new job description for itself. When it really realized it said, “Well that’s great but it’s not making me feel loved. It makes me feel isolated.” Is this right? If I have to be the brightest light in the room, I’m not in community any more. I’m not in relationship. It feels really lonely.

Then it was, “Oh yeah. That’s not so good.”

So it created a new strategy. This is like a very young, teenage part of my psyche. It said, “I know. I’ll be someone who creates a band of super heroes who can change the world.”

Tad: Right.

Jeffrey: Its philosophy was, “Oh, well with super heroes everybody has their own super power. They’re all super cool.” Right? However one bright light doesn’t outshine the other. They all have really interesting, super cool, magical super powers.

My work and really helping people understand what they’re on earth to do is like saying, “What is your super power? What’s your magical thing that your wounds have perfectly designed you to do?”

So this part of my psyche that used to be really pretty detrimental to my work in the world has become part of the biggest ally of my work in the world. That transition is a big part of allowing the wound not just to inform the need but allowing the part that seems to be your biggest nemesis to actually be the greatest contributor.

What we do in The Spiritual Marketing Quest is that we start by looking at what the wounding experiences were. Then from those wounds we look for what emotional landscape you are an expert at from which you can serve other people. This is because in some level your ideal clients, which we call your Divine Market, has the experience of this in emotional landscape and is looking for support to find a new experience.

For example if someone grew up feeling imprisoned where they had a really controlling home life and maybe went to Catholic school. They might really know the landscape of imprisonment: the hopelessness, desperation, longing, the give-up, the whole landscape of it, right?

Now we can look at, “Well what markets feel imprisoned?”

Let’s give some examples.

You just made me think of **Pam Slim**. She has the blog, *Escape from Cubicle Nation*. Suzanne helped to brand and build it. For those of you listening Suzanne is my business partner in The Spiritual Marketing Quest.

Pam’s wounds were that she grew up in Marin County, California. What’s the wound about that? Well, she grew up in San Anselmo. Her father was the mayor of San Anselmo. Her father decided to divorce her mom and find himself.

Her experience of it was that she grew up in a wealthy suburb and people talked. She was suddenly the black sheep. She was the kid whose father left the community, quit being the mayor, and *divorced* her mom.

So she always felt like she was trapped in that experience. “I’m in the suburb, in this place, and everybody looks at and stares at us. They talk about us. I’m trapped. All I want really is a sense of freedom and that sense of escape.”

When she came to Suzanne she wanted to build a corporate consulting business. However where her heart really was, was with the people in the cubicles who wanted to escape. So that’s where the real benefit was built. She knew about that craving for escape.

She’s become one of the top bloggers in the world. She is in the top four thousand blogs in the world out of a half a trillion blogs.

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

Then there's **Mari Smith**. She's a huge, huge, huge teacher of using Facebook and social media.

I don't know if you've ever met Mari. She's fabulous and I adore her. She's tall. She's about my height or your height, Tad – about six feet.

She grew up in rural Canada as a tall, gawky girl. Her best friends were the chickens. All she wanted to do was connect, to have community. So what did she end up doing? She ended up being one of the top people in the world on creating community online. She was absolutely using the gift of that wound. Some people can sort of stumble into it just by following their desire and what they really want. For others of us having some support to do that is really beneficial. That's what I'm always looking at.

I have another guy: **Dike Drummond**. I adore him. He's such a sweet man. He grew up and became a doctor, an M.D.

At some point he had a midlife crisis. He realized that his parents wanted him to be a doctor since he was a kid. He realized that he never actually wanted to be a doctor. His career kind of fell apart. He let go of his practice. His marriage fell apart. His life fell apart.

What he realized through it is the value of using a midlife expansion moment – expansion opportunity – to transition with grace and that having the crisis is optional.

He has a business now called the 3-Hour Midlife Crisis. In a three hour workshop he has people explore what they really want that they've never been willing to give themselves. They also explore what benefit they've gotten from not saying yes to what they really want – from not answering that call of their soul.

Being able to re-evaluate is now the time to say, “Yes” and if so, “How will they do it?”

This is so that they can use the crisis as a gorgeous, gorgeous opportunity for expansion, you know?

I'll just mention one more. The woman who, when she got 98% on a test had parents who would say, “Why aren't you living up to your full potential?” I mentioned this earlier.

Her wounding was, “I'm not good enough.” Just straight up: “I'm not good enough.”

Like I said, she created a strategy of, “I'm going to work really, really, really, really hard to validate my worth.” As a result of that, she has multiple degrees and what-not. She also got completely burnt out. She burnt out her adrenals.

She has a degree in dietary sciences. She's a nutritionist, a raw food coach, et cetera. However instead of just being a raw food coach she now serves women who have been driven to prove and validate their worth on some level. Women who have worked really, really, really hard only to have their bodies fail on them.

They are looking for nutritional support in order to find new balance.

If you are that woman and go to her Web site you're going to say, “Wow. She knows me. She knows who I am. Sure, I guess I could go to somebody else who could support me in nutrition and raw food if I wanted to do raw food. However, why would I? They don't know who I am and this woman does.”

I could go on and on.

Byron Katie: She wrote the book, *Loving What Is: 4 Questions That Can Change Your Life*. She went through this seven year massive depression. She had to check herself into this place. She was sleeping on the floor because she didn't even think she was worthy of being on the bed.

She went through this massive pain but at the end of it what she came out with was, “Wow. Believing my thoughts

makes me suffer.” This incredible work came out of it.

Marshall Rosenberg who wrote many books about non-violent communication. He grew up in Philly during the race riots. He saw that just the color of people’s skin was enough to get them beaten. His last name – Rosenberg – is a Jewish name. It was enough for him to get beaten. He just lived with this question his whole life: “Why do people do this?”

He asked, “How can we communicate in such a way that isn’t violent? Where does this violence come from?”

For his whole life that just became his through line - this question. Out of that came this incredible work of non-violent communication.

A colleague in London, England, **Ellie Chester** went through many terrible years of chronic fatigue. And what has that turned into? Working with people around their exhaustion. Notice that she doesn’t need to target ‘chronic fatigue’ specifically. She can go a bit broader into the human experience of exhaustion (whatever the cause of it is). But you’d better believe she knows the emotional landscape of that feeling.

The Biker Shaman: There was a guy I know in who I met. He came to my workshop. He was just this cool dude. He was doing shamanism stuff.

We were going around and I was asking, “Who are you trying to reach?” They all kept answering, “Middle-age, white women.” It came to Duane and he said, “Well, yeah, women, I guess.” I asked, “How do you feel about working with men?”

He said, “Oh, I’d love to – if I can get them to sign up for anything.” I said, “Let’s worry about the ‘how’ later. I’d love to explore that.”

We then went for lunch. It turned out that he’d been a member of a biker gang. It was a biker, biker gang.

He knew a thing or two about hardened men.

It took him four years to get out of it without getting killed. It was *that* kind of gang. He had this experience of this real toxic, shadow side of masculinity. Then through this shamanic kind of healing work that he’s engaged in, he’s just the most beautiful man – so gorgeous.

I said, “Wow. You have something to offer there.”

Now it may be about men, but there’s some journey that he went through. It just struck me that men seem to be the most obvious example and there may be another one there.

“The depth of the wound has a relationship to the height or expansiveness of the gift.”
- **Jeffrey Van Dyk**

The Sunrise Foundation and Barry Kaufman. He had a son who had autism. He got a lot of, “Here’s what you do. Here’s how you deal with it.”

Basically the advice was, “You just have to adapt. He’s just going to have this for the rest of his life.” Something in Barry just felt, “I have to try something.”

He began these years of experimenting by entering into his son’s world. His son would be sitting and staring. He would just sit and stare with him. His son would do these repetitive motions. He entered his son’s world and did the repetitive motions, too. This whole school of thought around autism came out over these experiences. It’s called The Sunrise Foundation.

It’s been this crazy wound: the devastation for the family finding out that their son has autism. Now the son actually doesn’t have autism. He’s totally, fully functioning.

They now have this whole foundation. Another of my friends just went to it to learn how to work with their twins. She came back just overjoyed. They knew that the people who started the foundation “get it” and have been through the same experiences before. They have incredible credibility because they’ve been through the same specific experience. When she came back it was just like she had so many new ideas and tools.

It’s the first breakthrough that I’ve seen for my friend’s family in five years. It’s because these people went through it and took it forward.

<http://plussizeinnerpeace.com/> - At After going to the Quest and being at the weekend I was thinking, “I’m not getting it. I’m not getting my instant niche. I’m not walking away with this.” However I realized while I was there that, indeed, as Jeffrey and Suzanne talk about, the soup was simmering.

A few weeks later I was led in a certain direction about eating. My big wound is that I’ve been more than 100 pounds overweight all of my life. That clearly has impacted absolutely every area of my life, especially the whole shame, guilt, blame, not good enough – that whole series of emotions. They are pretty deep and powerful.

At any rate, as things have transpired over the last few weeks, it became really clear to me – and spirit downloaded to me – my new direction. It’s called, “The Plus-Size Inner Peace Network.”

It’s going to be a community for plus-size women to believe in their inner beauty both inside and out. It’s going to celebrate their uniqueness as they are. There are many paths to that self-acceptance. Some of that will be losing weight but some of it is just to be who you are.

It’s like you were talking about: the lady in the health and wellness. I’d love to get her name, Tad, because I’m going to be doing an interview series for the launch of this new site.

I can hardly breathe right now because I feel so empowered. For the first time in my life I feel like I’m stepping up for who I really am without all of the struggle against being fat. Now, being who I am – I’m celebrating and embracing all of it. Now I’m encouraging and inspiring other women to do the same thing. That’s just beyond cool. I guess I’ve said enough, so thank you, thank you, thank you.

Abundant Yogi - <http://www.abundantynogi.com>

Last year at some point, I came across a lady named Kris Ward who runs a business called Abundant Yogi. Maybe I felt an affinity because my own business name is one of apparent contradictions too. “Marketing and hippies?? What?”

So many conscious entrepreneurs really struggle with making their business more than just an expensive hobby for them. Kris was in that place and in this blog interview she shares where she is now and some ideas on how you can turn your expensive hobby into a really wonderful, sustainable business you’re thrilled with. And to do it in a way that also creates a wonderful quality of life.

Here’s what Kris has to say about her story . . .

“Abundant Yogi is a reaction to all the “yogier than thou” tendencies I saw in the yoga and holistic wellness community, where teachers and service providers within the industry were afraid to promote themselves and their services for fear of looking greedy, too “corporate-y”, or un-yogi-like. I knew this was going on because I played into it for YEARS before I sat myself down one day for a serious BIG-SELF on little-self INTERVENTION.

I got really honest with myself about the lifestyle I wanted and the dreams I had, and I basically just made the decision that I was going to defy the norm and become an “Abundant Yogi” (a phrase that, up until that point, had pretty much been an oxymoron—at least for me and the other yogis I knew).

This decision was a no-brainer for me. I’d been wired like a true entrepreneur since I was a scrawny little 7th grader selling Blow-Pops and Airheads at school for 50 cents a pop and counting my wad of babysitting money over and over in a very joyful yet OCD fashion. My dad always told me I’d have to marry a rich guy or become a business owner because I had such expensive taste. I actually LOVED participating in the exchange of value.

To deny that I loved the game of business as much as I loved being a yogi and wellness coach just so I could be accepted by my 'spiritual' community was a big fat lie and super uncomfortable for me. It wasn't authentic.

So I stopped pretending, relaxed into my desires, and started trusting them a lot more. I sought out and mentored under some really amazing people—entrepreneurs, leaders and coaches who were running multi-million dollar businesses built on integrity and real value. I began modeling them and learned everything I could from them, applying all the parts that felt right to me.

It took a few years but eventually I found my groove and got to the point where I actually felt free from the good opinions of others. At least enough to be myself (potty mouth and all) and "let it all hang out" on my blog and in my videos, courses and newsletters. And once I found that sweet spot, everything just started to flow.

Clients, speaking gigs, money in my bank account, better relationships, more confidence and creativity, the support team I wanted and needed... it all went from being ONE HUGE STRUGGLE (or nonexistent) to being quite fun, exciting, and easily accessible.

And you know how we humans are. The second we have a breakthrough and we discover the "magic formula" to anything, all we want to do is share the good news and bring other people into the same good fortune. So that's how Abundant Yogi came to be.

I figured surely there were others out there like me (in the yoga community and beyond) who actually LIKED the idea of getting paid to be the real them, truly leaning into their pleasure, passions, and callings, and giving themselves permission to live the lifestyle they choose—for no other reason than that they choose to. That's what the creative life force within them is called towards. And they choose to answer that calling in an honest way, through doing work that they LOVE that utilizes the best of their unique passions, talents and skills. That, to me, is the essence of lifestyle design."

Neil Strauss wrote a book called *The Game* all about the emerging 'pick up artist' scene that was happening in the United States. You either love the book or hate it. But the interesting part is his story. For most of his life he had no luck with women. Despite being a best selling author for years writing books with Jenna Jameson and Motley Crew – the only kiss he ever got was from Tommy Lee (the lead singer). He felt awkward nerdy and scrawny. But then he heard rumours of these underground lairs of men who were learning how to pick up women. So he thought he'd write an expose on it. He went undercover and ... got totally sucked into the scene. And it changed his life. For the first time ever, he was starting conversations with women he would have never even dreamed of approaching before. He was dating. He was feeling attractive for the first time in his life. And eventually, he began to teach other men how to handle their dating life. Do you think he might have a bit of credibility having spent most of his life with no belief in himself around dating?

A colleague of mine **Candyce** was depressed for years and then discovered Reiki. And engaging with that healed her depression. Can you think of anyone more qualified to help people through their depression. She is intimately familiar with the terrain of depression. Another fellow in London, Ontario healed his depression with meditation. Same thing. He will be able to translate the practice of meditation into that specific world of depression. He'll be able to help them see the relevance in a way that few other people could. Other people would be busy trying to sell the boat, 'meditation is amazing! You need to meditate.' Not very compelling.

Thomas Leonard was one of the founders of the modern life coaching movement. And he was an incredibly emotionally sensitive person. If you yelled at him he would cry. And for years he felt like a cripple because of it. And then he read a book called *The Highly Sensitive Person* and it framed that kind of sensitivity as a strength not a weakness. It was, after all, the most sensitive animal that warned the herd of danger. He began to realize that his sensitivity also meant that he could pick up on things going on inside his client that other people never could have. It would also make Don't you think that history would make him especially attractive to folks who were also feeling crippled by their sensitivity?

One of my clients, **Shyra Rawson** shared these words with me after a workshop she attended, "*For some reason, during our conversation, I started talking about how I had experienced severe depression as a teenager, but healed myself through meditation, understanding that I was empathic (so I learned to clear my energy, put up protection etc.), music & writing and a new world view. Then, Yvette stopped me and said 'Shyra... Why isn't THAT your niche???' and just those words completely grounded me. I realized that I could integrate all of my skills - as a holistic nutritionist, reiki practitioner and energy medicine practitioner and I could help teenage girls (ages 15-24) with depression. I started to get 'visions' about workshops and retreats.*"

Most **comedians** are a fine example of transforming wounds into gifts. So many comedians grew up feeling like outsiders and insecure. And, instead of letting them cripple them, they become the source of laughter for others. The audience sits there in awe thinking, ‘wow. They totally know.’ Comedians know that those things which are most personal are most general.

My friend **Jana** is a yoga teacher. Years ago she broke her back and used yoga to heal herself. I knew of another woman who was basically paralyzed and could barely move. A yoga teacher encouraged her to come to class and just do the postures in her mind. Bit by bit she began to experience movement in her fingers and toes. And it spread. Now she’s a yoga teacher with no small amount of credibility. She understands the landscape of that particular situation – but even moreso, she understand the landscape of hopelessness, loss and grief.

The Therapy Vault: Lisa Mitchell has created something beautiful that was born out of empathy. It’s an amazing example of how our deepest wound can be our truest niche. It’s also an incredibly practical case study in becoming a hub for a community.

Furthermore, it’s got a really wonderful and unique welcome video on the homepage. I asked Lisa to share the story of how it all came about. Here’s what she had to say ...

After 20 years in the mental health profession, as an art therapist, psychotherapist, and trainer, I realized that I felt tired and burdened with client stories of pain and recovery.

In my work with therapists, as their therapist or trainer, I heard about these same difficulties of carrying remnants of stories and pain not their own. In our profession, we are expected to bare it. And there’s a myth that if we have good boundaries, proper training, and excellent self care we shouldn’t feel burned out or heavy hearted.

I had an answer in my art and creativity.

In order to save myself from burn out, and to help other therapists learn to sustain themselves on a day to day basis in their practice, I decided to expand my business. Of course, I didn’t have a clue about how to do this. Or what it would even look like.

In my work with Suzanne and Jeffrey, I not only found my business platform, The Therapy Vault, but I also learned to live into it by honoring parts of myself that I wasn’t allowing in my work formerly.

It was tough work, because it required more vulnerability than I felt comfortable with, but in a funny way, they helped me become unburdened. And now I feel totally re-inspired with my work, and am helping other therapists transform their burdens into beautiful pieces of inspiration.

Yoga for Caregivers: Last fall, I did my first ever workshop in Winnipeg, Manitoba. You can read about it here: day one, day two, day three. And I sort of fell in love with the town – particularly the hippie neighbourhood of Wolsley.

One of the people who made my visit possible at all was a wonderful woman, mother and yoga teacher named Beth Martens (pictured right). As we got to know each other and discuss this whole idea of niching for her business a niche came up for her that felt so true: caregivers.

What you’re about to read is a gorgeous example of the power of empathy and becoming a hub.

So recently we had a little chat about how that was going for her.

How long have you been teaching yoga now and what got you started with it?

My yoga practice is going on 20 years, beginning in Mysore, India when I took my first of eight trips there to study yoga, meditation and kirtan. I’ve been teaching yoga and leading kirtan full time since 2003, upon recovering from Hodgkin’s Lymphoma.

I began with this practice because of a life-long attraction to practical spirituality. I was totally disillusioned with religion and social control, but discovered quickly that the spiritual arts can be very personal and guided by a system at the same time.

I ended up in India almost by default, choosing a last half credit to graduate my undergrad degree in anthropology, taking a one-time-ever course in meditation for credit, and then feeling attracted to leave the academic behind and get my own feet in the ocean of life.

When I discovered that yoga is even bigger, more all-encompassing than anthropology, I traded “up” for the direct experience of all the stuff I’d read and heard described. I wanted to see for myself what the science experiment in consciousness itself could hold for me.

You’ve recently been exploring focusing on the niche of ‘caregivers’. Can you tell us what prompted that – what was the need you saw in your community that gave you this idea – and how does that connect to your own life?

Carving out a niche was on your advice, and I really and finally got the point, that trying to be everyone’s singing yoga teacher was costing me too much energy, scattering my limited marketing efforts and making me feel overwhelmed enough to not promote at all. Choosing a niche that genuinely matters to me makes me feel alive and energized in the communication and though still overwhelming, I don’t get stuck with that daunting, “where do I begin?”

You’ve also been a good model for supporting and uplifting one another in our small earth and consciousness-friendly projects, and seeing how high we can fly when forces are combined, competition removed from the foreground, and co-operation fully engaged. It’s way more fun and has the fantastic side effect of making me feel connected with my community.

I also feel it was career transforming to hear you speak to the need for marketing plans to reflect community needs, to actually bring people together and to treat that growth like the real measure of wealth. I was tripping on and off that idea vicariously, where now it’s an integral part of the game plan as well as instructions to students. Thanks Tad!!

As I mentioned I had a three year struggle with my health, cancer of the lymph, that caused me to ask life’s big questions, and forced me to come up with answers, as my life was at stake. In those years I was in need of and very close with several caregivers, and saw first hand what they were going through in efforts to help me save my own skin, not a little thing.

After recovering I also walked with several family members through their own scary illnesses, and now am the single mom of a young son. When creating this niche I didn’t even see myself in the role of caregiver, but started getting lucid as I was reading and writing about the symptoms that this group share, no matter how they came to the role.

And they do indeed share stuff, mainly including a sense of energy depletion, reduced immunity and social isolation. Caregiver is a role many will default into suddenly, rather than choose, so that creates a whole level of crisis-style lifestyle management that can go on at that crisis pace for years.

As our health care system becomes more and more weighed down demographically, as our society becomes less and less adept at caring for ourselves and each other, caregivers are left to pick up the pieces, survive on behalf of their loved ones and carry extraordinary and heroic-level burdens.

The deeper I looked into caregivers’ mostly silent journey, and realizing they have very little support systemically, the more I began to emotionally engage. I recently, for example, re-friended someone I hadn’t heard from for 15 years because her husband had a severe stroke and I was ill at the time. She is lucky enough that a decade of care to him has resulted in some recovery and she is regaining some lifestyle freedom, but for ten years, her personal life did not exist.

It makes these people desperate for some sense of connection with others that get what they are going through, and hungry for chances to take care of themselves for a change. I find caregivers’ stories riveting and almost unbelievable testimonies to the enormous power of the human spirit. And that makes me want to be of service to this group.

What is it that you’re offering these caregivers?

In the short term I’ve created workshops called Yoga Cream Pie as an answer to what ails caregivers, both physically, spiritually and socially. This currently three-hour workshop is a refuge for caregivers, where they will get a chance to enjoy a yoga practice that is not only good for them, but feels amazing and makes up for the inevitable pleasure deficits that follow being isolated, literally stranded on the desert island of their obligations.

The session includes supported and restorative yoga, as well as massage while they are in these already delish poses, with the live music called kirtan, India’s ecstatic chant tradition. I also give them some time at the end to meet at least one person in the group with whom they can identify, share something about themselves and realize that they are in fact, not alone in their caregiving experiences.

People come to these sessions looking haggard, drawn, depleted. They likely rushed there, begged and borrowed to get the time and have a huge hope that they are not wasting their precious time off.

After the session, which always seems so short, participants leave refreshed, with more energy than when they arrived, they have got their bodies gently opened, lovingly worked-upon with healing hands of an RMT and filled with the magic mantras that are the food for my own healing journey. Their faces are the most telling of the benefit, looking younger, more relaxed and so much happier.

And this is just the beginning of what I have envisioned.

What's the response been?

I'm a little slow in the start up of this project, but the response has been awesome with the hubs that I've contacted, related to caregivers. I've received nothing but good feedback from the multitude of organizations that come into vicarious contact with caregivers, because there on the front line, they know that the caregivers need to be not just recognized, but supported. And they have nothing or little to offer, being almost entirely client and patient focused. A focus on caregivers hopefully will reveal that care is a community responsibility, and that caregiver shouldn't mean one individual, but rather a whole team of help and love."

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.

I love this.

Yoga for Round Bodies

Yoga for Round Bodies
CLASSES & RETREATS

These yoga classes and retreats are offered specifically with the round body in mind. In these classes and retreats, not only will you have the opportunity to explore yoga in a way that suits your constitution/anatomy best, you will also be able to practice and explore in a comfortable, non-competitive environment in small groups, in pleasant surroundings. Classes will include restoration (deep relaxation) practices, gentle yoga and mindful movement.

Absolute beginners welcome along with any other "level." Any size is welcome. This exploration is not about how big or not big, nor how advanced or not advanced, how flexible, nor how strong. Nor is it about weight loss. It is an opportunity to come and begin from where you are, to move your body and quiet your mind in a comfortable, supportive environment.

NO YOGA EXPERIENCE IS NECESSARY, yes really!
And your teacher is round, too!

These offerings are intended for beginners and do not include vigorous practices, however, if you have done yoga, they include a significant amount of restorative practice—of benefit to anyone—and foundational principles that can be applied to any level of practice. Class size is small enough to accommodate modifications and individual attention. And because stress is a significant challenge faced by most of us, ample time is given to explore relaxation/restoration practices so you can also learn useful tools to counterpoise everyday stress and its effects.

I did a quick interview with Tiina about this and here's what she had to say,

What gave you the idea to start this?

“After practicing massage therapy for a number of years, I realized I needed to do something to counterbalance the physical stresses of my work, and thought Yoga would be perfect. Though I quickly fell in love with yoga, I found myself frustrated and discouraged over and over, as it was difficult to find teachers who were able to work with my very round body. When I discovered yoga using props, I found some liberation in the practice, but when I found a class called “Full-Bodied Yoga” and tried it, by the third class I found myself saying, “Oh my God, I have to become a yoga teacher so I can teach classes like this.” That is where the seed was planted, and I’ve manifested a thought into reality. Feels great!”

How has the response been?

“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!””

A lot of people would say, ‘by narrowing in your niche so much, you’re limiting who comes! aren’t you afraid of losing clients?’

“Hogwash. My niche came very naturally to me, but if I had to choose to-niche or not-to-niche, I would definitely niche. By having a niche, it allows me to utilize and develop my skills, knowledge and expertise in a very focused way. In the end, it also makes marketing EASIER... the niche guides where I spend my very limited budget of money and time. E.g., if I’m just promoting a regular yoga class, aside from the usual suspects, like online yoga directories, etc., where would I advertise? If you’re advertising to EVERYBODY, like in a major city’s newspaper for example, your message is going to be totally watered down, unnoticed. If I take a targeted message/product/service with to a specific group with a deliverable promise specific to them, it will capture attention because they want what I have to offer them specifically. It’s impossible to “market to everybody.” You have to find out who is interested in what you have, or tailor what you have to specific groups. “Marketing to everyone” is kind of like being Waldo.”

Here’s an email I got from a client of mine on this theme . . .

“I did go through the 41 page workbook you sent me and I think that the most powerful question there, for me, was about the 5 most pivotal moments in my life. That got me really thinking and from there, the other questions started to show me obvious themes in my habits, hobbies and preferences. Sooooo.....

I started formulating ideas. One of the most pivotal experiences for me was when I took 5 weeks in Europe, alone, just as I got divorced. It was an amazing healing experience. I LOVE to travel, I LOVE to take groups on travel retreats (as well as to go myself) and so how could I shape my experiences into something doing that? I started thinking about creating unique trips for women who are newly single that would be different in that the group would really be a safety net and I would create an atmosphere for being alone and exploration. This got me thinking to writing a workbook first.

I came up with a title: "Unaccompanied Woman..... Travelling Alone"

I have a sense of some of the sections and chapters, utilizing the metaphor of outward travel and exploration for the inward journey.

For example,

Finding Yourself Amongst the Ruins (about finding your center again, and remembering who you are - maybe the old relics of yourself that you buried or lost in the relationship)

My Life, My Museum (about how to cherish memories but let go of attachments, and also pulling some of those relics out of the closet that were found in the previous chapter)

Etc.....

Each section would have an anecdotal story, what the lesson from that is, some exercises to do on your own travel adventure and room for journaling.

I started going through my own journaling from that trip (over 50 pages) to see what patterns or experiences there were that led me through my immense healing experience. I also was thinking about the highly popular book "Eat, Pray, Love" which actually does not have a workbook, or trip or anything associated with it that I could find. I thought there could be some kind of alliance there once I am prepared with the workbook. My networks could include women's travel groups (of which there are many) as well as recovering from divorce, how to be single kinds of groups. I see this

as a crossover between the two.

Anyway, I don't think this is a niche for ALL of who I am forever, but it is a piece that is important, that I love and I think there could be a market for."

Notice the creativity and ideas that come from having a clear niche she resonates with.

You want a niche? Look to your wounds. You might be surprised with what you find there.

Some of the core reasons why your wound can be the best source of your niche:

- you'll have a deep empathy for what your clients are going through (because you've been through it) and that means they'll melt in your presence, they'll feel safe, open up and want to work with you.
- you know the terrain of the problem they're experiencing intimately (because you had that very same problem) and that means you'll know how to word your sales letters and that, when you speak about it people will really feel you.
- you know the terrain of the journey that they're about to go through (because you did the same journey) and that means you'll be an excellent guide for others.
- you'll save time on market research (because your whole life was market research) which means you'll be able to shave months or years off of the growth cycle of your business. You'll intuitively know what others spend a fortune to find out.
- you'll see through their bullshit (because you were full of the same bullshit when you were in their shoes) and that means you'll be able to help them make progress faster
- your offers will be better (because you'll know just what you would have loved to get and be offered when you were struggling) and that means you'll make a lot more money with a lot less effort
- you'll have a better sense of the hubs and potential partners (because you know where else you went to for solutions when you were in pain) and that means you'll make even more money with even less effort.
- You might not just find that it's a wound you have healed (or are healing) – but that it's the wound in the world that you are here to help heal. You might find that instead of feeling like an isolated entrepreneur trying to make a buck – suddenly you're a part of a larger movement for change in the world. Suddenly, all of the injustice you've endured has woven you into a larger movement for justice, all the pain you've experienced becomes the well of relief you are able to offer to others.

Niche Projects:

This is one of the most liberating and practical ideas I've ever had on how to deal with choosing a niche.

It's inspired directly from my colleague and friend Alex Baisley of www.bigdreamprogram.com.

There's so much talk in the marketing world about 'building your empire' and 'information empires'. And that can feel intimidating. Again, it's like being asked to marry your niche before you've dated.

But what does dating look like in business?

In essence, it's about creating a few niche projects before you consider creating a niche business.

Here's why:

- Niche projects take less work than niching a whole business (but can open the doors to a niche business).
- Niche projects can give you real world experience with the niches you're considering. It's easy to theorize that a niche would be great but you can't actually know til you've interacted with them.
- Niche projects can allow you to explore new landscapes without having to move there. You can work with a niche group without having to become trapped in a reputation of only working with that group.
- Doing a niche project might just open the doors for you into new ventures and connections you could never have imagined.
- Your niche project might just turn into your main thing.

How to know if a niche project is a fit for you:

- you get that having a focus would be helpful.
- you have some ideas of niches but feel scared to commit.

Criteria of a Good Niche Project:

- The niche meets the criteria of a good target market
- You feel really excited about it
- It has a start date and an end date. It is finite. It doesn't last forever. Or it is ongoing but with a very low time commitment.
- It's something that, if it works out, could be repeated on a regular basis (e.g. monthly, quarterly, once a year).
- It must benefit you in some way in addition to being a chance to learn. It must either build your list, make you money, get you clients etc. This benefit should really be thought through strategically. What are you going to get out of it?
- It must benefit your niche in some way whether that's by inspiring them, educating them or connecting them with each other.

28 Categories of Niche Projects:

For years, I was doing workshops for ‘conscious entrepreneurs’ and ‘green businesses’ and then I noticed that I had so many holistic practitioners coming to my workshops. So, I came up with a workshop just for them. And now it’s one of the main workshops I do.

I am really passionate about local food and permaculture type businesses and, recently, I noticed that they all struggle with their marketing. They’re an underserved niche I’m super excited about so I’m working on a workshop just for them.

One of my clients does shiatsu, massage and is a medical intuitive. But when she spoke about the stomach/spleen connection at one of my workshops she lit up. She talked about the Chinese medical perspective on leaky gut syndrome. I suggested she might consider becoming a specialist in that and make her target market other practitioners. Instead of just treating clients, she could teach other practitioners what she knows about it.

It’s not hard to be an expert in such a niche area because so few people ever really focus on anything.

Here’s another wrinkle, she sells Univera products (a multi level marketing health product company) but she *hates* the slick, corporate, rara hype aesthetic of the company. She can’t stand the phony, lack of real style - like you’re always being manipulated or sold to. She hates the free cars and cruises, and exhortations to make millions! She didn’t want to send clients to the Univera website.

I offered the idea of holding workshops on Leaky Gut and talk about all the kinds of supplements one might use to address the issue (e.g. tea tree oil, yogurt, acidophilus, coloidal gold, marshmallow root etc) but also the Univera products. She doesn’t need to push them or hide them. And I suggested that, when she mention them, she do so with the disclaimer about her honest feelings on the marketing tactics of the company. “I can’t stand their website and how they market but the products are amazing. So feel free to check them out” sort of thing.

Ideas for Niche Projects:

- 1. Host a workshops or talk about the topic.** E.g. **Edmonton hypnotherapist targeting business folks around sales.**
- 2. Host a party, potluck or gathering for people and/or hubs in the niche** (e.g. a yoga studio hosting a mixer for the yoga scene. It was a summer picnic for anyone interested in yoga or yoga teachers and studio owners). Another yoga studio hosts a ‘goddesses night out’ where they have two hours of events for women and then men are allowed in. Whenever I do a workshop, I host a party on the Saturday night for the participants, my favourite clients and local hubs. Super fun.
- 3. Hosting a tour of things relevant to your niche** (e.g. a woman passionate about strawbale homes hosted a tour of all the strawbale homes in her community and charged people \$25 for it). You could tour wineries, sites, yoga studios, do a tour of relevant resources for new parents in town, a green home tours where you can actually visit green homes and go inside them, tours of places you can’t normally get into, of little known places, photography tours for photographers, tours on organic grocery stores where you explain products for people wanting to get healthier or with particular conditions etc.)
- 4. Hosting celebs:** if there’s someone who’s big in the scene you’re passionate about – why not host them to come to your area? You can host a talk or movie screening or reading for them. No expertise required. In one move, you will be connected to the core folks and hubs in that scene.
- 5. Hosting a meetup networking group for your niche:** Maybe your niche might enjoy having a monthly social get together of some kind and nobody else is hosting it.
 - You may have heard of **Green Drinks**. It started in England years back and now is in over 600 cities globally. It’s an event where people in the ‘green scene’ (e.g. academics, entrepreneurs, ngo or government workers) can get together to meet each other in a casual environment.
 - Last year, we hosted an event called **Indigo Drinks** – which was about bringing together people in the Edmonton holistic health scene. We got about 50 people out and it was a huge success. In the end, the group hosting it needed to step back so none have happened since then – but I think it will be coming back.

- c. In Toronto there's an event called **Foodie Drinks** for "Foodies". Foodies aren't just those who care about the best dish – they care about expanding access to healthy food, supporting farmers and animal welfare too.
 - d. Helen Goldstein of Toronto hosted an event called **Buddha Groove** that was a classy and funky mixer for folks in the holistic scene.
- 6. **Support an existing meetup group for your niche:** maybe your target market is folks working in the green scene. You might consider finding out if someone local is hosting a Green Drinks event and seeing if you can support. Easy! You don't even need to make anything up.
- 7. **Hosting co-productions:** Could you get together with businesses that offer complimentary products and services and create a special, co-produced event?
 - a. A **cloth diaper company** hosts an event on Natural Parenting with lots of experts in other areas like how to make healthy baby food at home, how to deal with a colicky baby, breast feeding, infant massage, a parenting coach etc. Everyone involved promotes it – everyone wins.
 - b. You can try an **Pecha Kucha** style event (i.e. ten speakers do presentations around a core theme. They get 20 slides. 20 seconds per slide. Each presentation is 6 and half minutes of goodness and brilliance).
 - c. Another examples is **Moon Dance Painting** – *“it was the first non-toxic, low-odor painting contractor in the Bay Area. When they founded it they knew that lots of customers would prefer an environmentally sensitive painting contractor. Yet very few of these customers would actively search for a company like theirs because they simply wouldn't even know it existed. They knew that their company's success was predicated on making sure that the eco-friendly customer knew that Moon Dance existed. But their marketing budget was small. So, here's what they did. They got in touch with the local Whole Foods Market community relations representative and suggested that the store could sponsor a “Green Home Series” in which a green designer, builder, landscaper and painter would come in and make presentations on how people can “green” their homes. The end result? They were able to connect with their perfect niche of customers - all without spending more than one hundred dollars on marketing. And of course, each speaker in the series endorsed the others during their talks.”* – **Marketing that Matters, Chip Conley**
- 8. **Hosting Retreats:** Consider hosting an overnight, weekend type gathering for your niche. The retreat could be about something you specialize in but also just about something you're fascinated by and want to convene people to discuss and explore together. Sometimes you don't have to offer answers, just the space to explore and build community around an interest people share.
 - a. Erica Ross hosted her **Bloom** retreat for self employed Toronto Goddesses - <http://bloom-spa-retreat.yolasite.com/>
 - b. Alla Guelber hosted the **Meaningful Work Retreat** to explore the question of 'what is meaningful work? How can we create it and sustain ourselves with it?' - <http://www.meaningfulworkproject.ca/>
- 9. **Put on a show or presentations:** Why get stuck with the same old boring stuff? Could you put on a play, a comedy show, an art show on the theme you're passionate about?
- 10. **Take your show on the road:** could you do bike tour (like Otesha.ca does), a cross country motorcycle tour, could you make a project of a road trip, could you tour your workshop to different cities?
- 11. **Host something in your living room:** what if you hosted a craft group, or circle for moms, a house concert to raise money for a cause.

12. **Host a sampler event:** Dee Dussault in Toronto hosts a monthly event where you can come and for \$20 at the door sample as many different holistic modalities as you want for \$10 a pop. Each evening features 6 or 7 practitioners offering a variety of services (all of whom are promoting the evening). And once a quarter she does a bigger one with even more practitioners.
13. **Host a live class:** maybe you could make a bit of money teaching people how to do what you do. It could be one night, over six weeks, monthly etc.
14. **Host an ongoing, paid small group:** Why not work with the same people over an extended or ongoing period of time.
15. **Host a 'walkshop':** you cover the same content as in a workshop but you're walking and talking at the same time.
16. **Give out an award:** what if you decided to acknowledge people in your niche who you admired with an award? Who doesn't like getting awards.
17. **Host a ceremony or ritual** to honour an important transition your clients are going through.
18. **Hosting a competition:** Competitions are such a brilliant niche project. Instead of spending your energy on trying to *get* awards, why not give them away? Competitions have a beginning and an end and are excellent for encouraging behaviour. Could you host a friendly competition amongst folks in your niche?
 - a. a woman who teaching writing classes in Toronto hosted a friendly '**love letters**' competition where she invited people to submit love letters – things they'd already written or might write for the contest. Then she had a panel of writers help choose the top six. No big prize. It was wonderful. I secretly participated in it.
 - b. Linda Claire Puig hosted her "**Best Newsletter Contest**" where people applied to have their newsletter featured in it and judged. Her business is to help people improve their newsletters and to help them get ready made content. This content not only grows her list but helps her learn more about the topic.
 - c. **YEGwood.com** recently hosted a competition. They threw a launch party for their sustainable, wood framed sunglasses. At the launch party was a photographer who took your picture of people holding or wearing the glasses (my picture featured here). And then the photos were put onto the facebook page of Georgie Magazine (one of the sponsors) and the person with the most votes on their photo would win a special pair of the glasses with some one of a kind artwork etched on the side. And I can tell you that I hustled to get people to vote for me.
19. **Host a 30 Day Challenge:** Whereas the competition pits people playfully against each other, a challenge joins people together in a common goal.
 - a. Many yoga studios host a 30 day yoga or meditation challenge where you commit to doing your practice for thirty days straight. Because it's in person it also develops a really strong sense of community and then you can have a little celebration for everyone at the end.
 - b. <http://bodyforlife.com/> - hosts a body building/weight loss challenge where people take a before photo and after photo after 12 weeks of an intensive exercise and health regimen. The results are staggering. 10 winners are chosen every year and the winner gets a free, sweet car.
 - c. I was speaking with a business coach who had the point of view that most entrepreneurs needed a regular spiritual practice to check into their own inner wisdom rather than desperately looking for more tactics and strategies. So we came up with the idea of her hosting a 30 day challenge where entrepreneurs would commit to a regular stillness practice in the morning before they started their day.

20. **Limited number of in person makeovers:** What if instead of doing a typical workshop you offered a limited number of people some very one on one intensive work for a special deal. Might some people be really excited to spend the day with you having an intensive makeover in their fashion, business, health, relationships, website, social media strategy etc.)
21. **Limited 'in field' coaching:** Related to the makeover is the idea of you being with them while they do something new and giving them live, in the moment feedback. Dating coaches sometimes offer this kind of 'in the field' feedback where they'll take a man out during the day or night and push them to approach women they're interested in and then watch the interaction and give them honest and encouraging feedback afterwards. But maybe you could give people in field feedback on their public speaking, gardening, on stage performance etc. What's an area in your client's lives that they might really enjoy some focused and honest feedback.
22. **Hosting a debate on important topics:** Every community has issues that are contentious, questions that are the core of the community, the struggle to balance different elements. What if you were to host a fun (or serious!) debate between two or three people to explore the issue? Might you be able to get out a nice crowd to listen and ask questions? Exciting!
23. **Host a webinar or teleclass:** What if you put together a webinar (online powerpoint presentation) or teleclass (a conference call)? It could be 30 – 60 minutes and you could invite hubs in the niche host these for you.
24. **Host a Telegroup:** A telegroup is an ongoing group of people you work with over time (anywhere from a few weeks to forever) around a core set of issues. It could be focused around you giving them content or supporting them in giving each other feedback and sharing their best practices with each other.
 - a. <http://www.spiraltable.com>: my friends Rob and Merriam bring together leaders in the organic food and beverage industry to share their best practices, make commitments to each other and share progress. They facilitate a 90 minute call each week and then send follow up notes and do research on key issues for the group between calls.
25. **Write a book, ebook, white paper or special report:** Writing something substantial can go a long way to establish your expertise within your niche. It gives you something free or relatively inexpensive you can share with people. It's also an amazing chance to refine and structure your own thinking.
26. **Record interviews with leaders in your niche:** You could record a series of interviews on a particular topic of interest to your niche. What if you were to identify a key pain point and struggle of your community and you interviewed the smartest people you could find on the topic and sold that as a product?
27. **Host a day of hotseats:** Instead of feeling you need to be an expert, you might just host a day of hotseats where you bring together 5 or 6 carefully selected, very smart people in your niche and facilitate them in giving each other feedback. I recently started to do a workshop called The Hot Box - <http://marketingforhippies.com/events/the-hot-box/>. The basic format is that each entrepreneur gets 5 minutes to express a single issue they want feedback on and then 30 minutes for the group to ask clarifying questions (no advice allowed) and then 10-15 minutes for feedback and advice.
28. **Creating online cartoons, zines, comic strips or zines:** This is one of my favourite ideas. What if you committed to creating a zine or graphic novel that explored the issues you work with?

The Downside of Niche Projects:

Niche projects are a lot of work. Every time you do them you'll need to sort of reinvent the wheel. You will have to create the sales materials for them. You'll have to figure out new hubs. You might have to create a new web page, new posters etc.

One way to address this is to create a system and outline of a core promotional structure that you use again and again regardless of your niche. This will make more sense once you read the section of Niche Themes about the work I did with David Jan Jurasek.

