

The Core Projects

The Five Niche Projects I'd Most Recommend To Any & All of My Clients

CORE PROJECT #1: DO A SERIES OF LIVE NICHE INTERVIEWS

I was speaking with my colleague Aaron Vidas of www.aaronvidas.com about how he helps companies find their most profitable customers. It turns out one of the things he does is engage their ideal customers in a lot of interviews and conversations.

They all center around the questions: “what problem do you solve and for whom? and how can you solve that problem? What's that worth? How do you add value to them?”

The challenge is, you can think you have really clear answers to these things and not realize the number of inaccurate assumptions you're making about what they need and what will work for them.

For example, I used to assume that all people needed to figure out their niche was to know it was important. Then I realized they needed some criteria of what a good niche was. Then I realized I was assuming people should be able to figure it all out in a few hours (or even a weekend).

Turns out those assumptions were all, for the most part, wrong.

And one of the easiest ways to challenge our assumptions is via little niche projects but also in conversations.

Step #1: Catalogue Your Assumptions

To get at what *you're* assuming, try completing these sentences twenty times each:

- ‘I’m assuming that your biggest problem is _____.’
- ‘I’m assuming what you’re craving most is _____.’
- ‘I’m assuming that the solution that would be most helpful to you is _____.’

Once you've catalogued your assumptions, book some time to sit down with someone who you think represents your ideal client.

Step #2: Make a List of People.

Identify a list of people in your target market and people you know who know people in that field. Also their hubs - people connected to them.

Step #3: Invite the Conversation

Send a short 4-5 line inviting a brief conversation. Here's an example of something I might send, "Hey there, I've got this thing I'm working on - it's something i'm experimenting with. It's tailored for _____ (kinds of people) struggling with _____ (kinds of problems) and I think it does

_____ (result) for you, but I'm not sure. Can I take 15 minutes of your time to get your honest feedback and see if it actually solves that problem for you?'

Make sure you position this as an experiment. People don't like being mean in their feedback but most people are up to help an experiment.

Framing it as an experiment takes a lot of the pressure out of it for people. Because an experiment could succeed or fail and there's no attachment - you're just testing things out.

Step #4: Have the Conversation

Have a call or in person (especially if it's an emotionally charged thing). You could do it via email but a live conversation is likely a bit better.

The first thing is to frame the conversation with something like, "I'm going to tell you about my experiment, then ask you a bunch of questions and, I'd love to see if it's actually a fit for someone like you."

Then you introduce it and give them the elevator pitch first - features and benefits 'the goal of it is to help you get _____'.

Then you can do the conversation in any way you'd like but here are some ideas of things to ask them:

- 'What problems, if any, would that solve for you?'
- 'What do you like about this idea most and least?'
- 'What would make it more useful for you? What's most important to you when buying when you sell?'
- "If that problem were solved, what would that impact of that be for you? Would it save you time? money?"
- What else do you use to handle this problem?
- Have you ever considered _____ (your boat)?
- What are the barriers that have stopped you?
- What are the risks you perceive in doing something like this?
- Is this the kind of thing that you honestly think you'd do?
- Share your assumptions with them and see if they're correct.

Basically, you share your idea and ask for their frank feedback on it. The interview is there to test the assumptions you have about what you're offering. If you assume that your people would LOVE something and then they say that they don't, don't ignore it, write it down. Be curious. Be open. Be grateful for the feedback.

Be willing to ask the stupid questions.

The interviews are about pattern recognition. And you'll notice the patterns fast.

You might also ask,

'Is there anyone else you can think of who I could talk to who might be able to give me good feedback? Where would I find more people like you? What associations are you apart of, magazines you read, blogs you follow, where do you hang out?'

Do a dozen of these interviews (you could do this in a week) and you'll be hugely further ahead than most others in your field.

At the end of the conversation, if it *really* feels like a fit and you're ready you can straight up ask them, 'So, this isn't even ready for anyone to buy yet but, is it the kind of thing you'd *want* to buy/sign up for today if you could? I'm not trying to sell you, I'm just genuinely curious.'

If they say 'no' you can say, 'Thank you so much for your honesty. Can you help me understand why? What's missing? What could we add? Where doesn't it feel like a fit? What would make this better?'

And then listen. People will help you design the perfect product for them.

But, personally, I would shy away from any kind of ask in that moment. For me, the purpose of this conversation and the context they're brought into it with is that it's about their feedback. I'd rather get their feedback, implement it and then get back in touch with them to say, 'Can I share what I finally came up with, with you? I think you might love it!'

There's a certain kind of 'free intro session' that myself and many of my colleagues teach which is really about helping potential clients get really clear about where they're at and then seeing if it's a fit to work together.

I think this is a different kind of conversation that you have while you're in the process of still designing and crafting what you have to offer.

I used to run workshops for Student Councils in High Schools on how to get more school spirit in their schools. To promote them, I'd call up Student Council advisors and, during my conversation with them I'd ask this question, 'If you were going to design a workshop tailor made for your student council, because you know yours better than I ever will, what would you want to have in it?'

What would you want to have it do? What would be most important?' And they'd tell me. They helped me design my workshop.

Make sure to weave any new information into your ideal client profile.

Another Great Example from a Spiritual Authors Coach:

“Do you know a spiritual/inspired entrepreneur who is ‘on fire’ to write their first book but just can’t get started? They have already reached a level of business success and now want to extend their influence by writing a book.

They are committed and passionate about what they do, but are struggling to bring their ideas together and structure them into a book, may wonder if they have the credibility to write it or fear that what they want to say has all been said before.

If so, then I would very much like to interview them. I’m Leda Sammarco and I empower people to write books that make a difference. I’m putting together a ‘Just Get Started’ package for first-time authors who want to write a book within the ‘Mind Body Spirit’ genre, and would really like to get some feedback about this.

The interview will take no more than 30 minutes and can be by phone, Skype or email. In return I will give each interviewee a 30 minute telephone/Skype coaching session to discuss their first book.”

My dear friend Jennifer Summerfeldt in Edmonton sent this out to her friends and colleagues recently . . .

I am writing you to announce that I have officially opened up my SoulBirth counseling practice. After 10 years of working with women in the birth realm I have transitioned into the realm of the soul, continuing to offer women counsel (as always), and also now a direct path to heal from what I call our 'womb wounds': traumatic births, miscarriage, abortion, infertility, etc.

One big problem I’ve noticed is that rarely are women ever fully heard, witnessed, or held in their womb traumas. My specialty as a mother of 3 (having moved through and beyond my own womb wounds) along with my past experience as a (renegade) Midwife is to support women to feel fully, release, and rewrite their story in a framework that fuels growth and transformation in their lives.

Over time I have developed a unique and step by step process, using childbirth as a metaphor that I call 'Midwifery for the Soul'. It is the same process that I successfully used to overcome my own grief and trauma....and I want to share it with women who want and need it now....

So here`s why I am writing... my intention is to grow my client base through referrals from people who really understand who I am, what I offer and who it can best serve. I would love it if you could share the following opportunity with that special someone who comes to mind

(of course, only if it serves)....

I`ve created a special 30- minute breakthrough session 'Womb Wound to Womb Wisdom' to help women get unstuck, moving forward on the path to healing their womb trauma; and I am excited to provide this service.

For a limited time only, I`ll be gifting these sessions to select people in my circle (and yours). This month, I have 5 sessions available.

If someone you love would like to have one of these spots, please e-mail me with the answers to the following questions in preparation for our session.

- 1) What are you struggling with in relationship to your womb health and grief?
- 2) On a scale of zero to 10, how important is it to you to start on the healing path as soon as possible?
- 3) What is causing you the most frustration moving forward?
- 4) What have you tried in the past to solve this frustration and how did that work out for you?

I would love for one of those sessions to be one of your dear friend`s if you think it would be a good fit!

Simply hit reply, answer the questions and I will promptly reply to book your session. Alternatively, I can be reached directly at (780) 902-6264 or visit my website at www.SoulBirth.ca

Thanks for your help! If there is anything I can do on my end to help you in any capacity, please let me know!

Warmly,

Jen

p.s. I have included my new flyer for you to read more on the soul birth process, as well as testimonials from happy women that I have worked with in the past. Enjoy and please feel free to give me your feedback, I would love to hear it!

CORE PROJECT #2: HUBS GATHERING & DATABASE

This idea is so simple to do but so potentially huge in its impact.

I'm stunned that more people don't do it.

Here's the idea.

Host an in person gathering of all your hubs.

Hubs are those people who are well connected to your niche and well respected by your niche.

They're like the one's and two's in the photo to the right. Their circles overlap a lot of other people's circles. An endorsement from a '1' can mean more to you than an endorsement from ten '4's. Placement in the 'right' media can save you a lot of time and money.

When you start thinking about your niche market, and how to reach them with effective word of mouth marketing - you immediately need to start thinking about the 'hubs' in their networks. You need to ask yourself, "who do they already trust?"

Luckily, it's not that hard.

These seven questions will take you most of the way there.

1. **EVENTS & LOCATIONS:** Where does your niche gather, congregate, celebrate and hangout?
2. **BUSINESSES:** Where do they already spend their money?
3. **GROUPS:** What formal groups are they a part of?
4. **SUPPORT:** What resources or groups exist to support them?
5. **WEBSEARCH:** if your niche were to search for a solution to their problems on google, what would they type in?
6. **PUBLICATIONS (on and offline):** Where do they go for news and information that is relevant, credible and valuable for them?
7. **INDIVIDUALS:** Which individuals do they most trust (whether globally or locally)?

Once you've got a list of them make a hubs database (which is kind of a niche project in and of itself).

It occurred to me recently that the bulk of my business has come from this one technique.

But it's something I do that I'd never taught explicitly. Or ever seen taught.

If you've followed my work at all, you've heard about how important it is to [identify your hubs](#). To think about, 'who is it I'm trying to reach? And who's already connected to them? Where can I find them?'

And you might have also heard me harp on how critical it is to have a customer database. Huge.

But let's combine those two notions: database + hubs = a database of your hubs.

Here's a practical thing you can do immediately that could change your business entirely.

Create a spreadsheet in excel or what have you with the following columns:

Priority: what priority are they to you? how good a hub? Try to give everyone on it a 1, 2 or a 3. 1 is a super good hub and 3 is just okay'.

Type: in my case there are holistic schools as one type. Then there are groups, holistic centers, people, retail and online listing type hubs.

Niche: what niches are they focused on? In my case, it's either green or holistic or both.

Group/Business Name:

Contact Name: Who is the best person for you to talk with there to make things happen?

City/Province: Where are they? If you're limiting your reach to a city - you might make it neighbourhood based. If you're international, you might make it country based.

Email:

Website:

Who Referred Them: This is great to keep track of. Then when you call them or email them you can remember to say, "*I was talking with _____ and they said to call you.*"

And I would challenge you to see if you can come up with 100 hubs for your business. This sounds hard but it's actually easy once you sit down and really focus on it. Once you've got this database you've got a lot of directions you can go. You've got a list of key people to invite to your special parties, to take to lunch, to give special invites to on your events, to ask to spread the word to their lists. How to use this list is another topic. But having this kind of database can be a total game changer for people.

Once you have the database, invite them to a gathering.

Here's what it might look like, you invite them to a central, comfortable and convenient location you have exclusive use of. A big living room, a loft space, a meeting room.

I'd cap it at 25 people max.

Have it go from 1-4pm where the actual introductions will start at 2pm.

Lightly cater it (it's worth the \$300 max that you'll spend) or make it a potluck. Up to you.

People arrive and mingle and then, at 2pm, you sit down in a circle and everyone has two minutes to introduce themselves.

I've invited people to share the following things:

You name

What you do.

What's coming up next for you

Anywhere you're needing help as long as it's not just 'I'm looking for clients or trying to fill a workshop.'

And then you mingle for another hour and go.

By the end of that time, everyone will remember who you are even if they don't remember anyone else because you're the host.

Put another way: by the end of this party you will have 24 incredibly powerful sources of business know you and like you and, likely, wanting to send you business or partner with you.

Everyone wins at this. They meet each other. You meet them. Win/win/win.

And of course, it's then the most natural thing in the world to approach the people you're most excited to work with - where you see the best fit - and to say, 'We should grab coffee soon!'

If you want to see a much larger version of this with a more civic twist, check out the Good Hundred Experiment we run in Edmonton.

<http://good100.eventbrite.com/>

CORE PROJECT #3: WEEKLY COFFEE DATES WITH HUBS

Here's the simplest idea in the world that very few people do.

Once a week, have a 30 minute coffee date with a hub. It could be in person or over the phone. At the end of a year that's 52 hubs you've connected with. Not just 52 potential clients, 52 people who could all be the source of *dozens* of potential clients.

Basically, you'd call them up or send them an email that looks something like this:

"Hey there, I just came across you/heard about you from _____ and it seems we're both reach the niche of _____ and offering them different things. And I know I'm always looking for people I can trust to refer them to businesses like yours for issues I don't deal with and I was wondering if you might be up to get together for 30 minutes over coffee. I'd love to get to know what you're doing better and see if there's any way I could help and if there might be anywhere it's a fit to collaborate. No pressure. I'm sure you're really busy."

And then when you meet, I'd make sure you frame and run that time well (you asked them out so don't waste their time).

- 1) Small talk and hello's.
- 2) "So, I'd love to hear a bit about what you do and ask you some questions, if that's alright, so I can better understand what you do, then I'd love to hear about who your ideal kinds of clients are so I can keep my eyes open and then hear about what's coming up next for you that I might be able to help you with."
- 3) "So, tell me a bit more about what you do." (and then ask any questions that come up for you).
- 4) "And, if I were going to refer clients to you, what would be your perfect kind of client?"
- 5) "And what's coming up next for you? Any big projects?"
- 6) "How can I help you?"

I can promise you that they will ask the same questions back, particularly the 'how can I help you?' question. It can be powerful to not ask for anything at that moment and just say, 'You know what, so kind of you to offer but there isn't anything right now. But I'll keep you posted!' Going slow and not leaning on them for anything is a sign of strength they'll respect.

And, if there's something that feels like a win/win you might share that.

But this coffee date isn't about pitching anything or coming up with a collaboration. It's just a first date to establish a real clarity about what each do and begin to establish trust.

CORE PROJECT #4: WORKSHOPS & TALKS

Number one, this is the most basic one, host a workshop or talk on the project. This is the most common one. We see it around a lot. I know of a hypnotherapist in Edmonton who targeted folks around sales issues and did this workshop but really picked ten of the most connected business people in town, invited them to this workshop, and offered them all a free 90 minute hypnosis therapy session around sales and just to show them what he could do around hypnosis.

I'm not actually sure if the therapy sessions were on sale but he was showing them the impact they could have. That little move, that little project filled his practice because he really focused on that group, connected with the most influential people, the biggest talkers, the most connected, the most respected people. They had a huge, huge role in him filling his practice.

I was just talking a friend of mine in Edmonton, Canada. She and her friend Harmony are thinking about starting a store, a retail space around birth. You could have workshops, buy baby products with the natural, holistic bent to it. They said, "What do you think?" They're both new moms themselves.

I said, "Well, you're new moms. You might have kids again soon." They nodded. "That's a lot to take on in general, retail. With that kind of overhead, it's incredibly stressful. My take would be instead of trying to start a whole storefront which is going to take ten times the effort and money that's going to be so much more than you think it's going to be right now, why not start with some niche projects?"

One of the niche projects we came up with, and as soon as I said it, their eyes lit up, was the idea of doing a workshop around the 12 toughest decisions that every natural mother has to make. Doing a workshop talking about, "Do you homeschool or take them to school? Do you vaccinate or not? Do you breastfeed? For how long? What do you feed your kids?" all these questions.

It doesn't have to be a workshop, and this is an important thing for a niche project, where you're like, "Here's the answer." It could just be, "Here are the questions and the different factors. You can make your own choice. I have my own opinion but you've got to make your own." That could be a really cool project.

I was studying nonviolent communication for awhile. I started doing a bunch of workshops for free in my living room. That was a way that I could learn and get better at it but also start to build an email list of people I knew would be interested in nonviolent communication so if I got to a point where I felt strong enough to lead a workshop I could charge for, I would have that list, more of an investment in the future. I just did them in my living room for free. That's a project.

Naming Your Workshops

When we're talking about topics of workshops, here are some potential titles. In fact, let's do a little bit of a brainstorming on the Facebook wall because I bet you've been to so many workshops,

and you've seen some titles. Some of them are probably great and some of them not that great but template things.

This workshop title thing is going to be useful for the rest of the project because some of them are teleseminars or other things. What are the best templates you can think of? Here are a few:

The five biggest threats facing _____ (industry/type of company) (e.g. The five biggest threats facing law firms).

The five biggest blunders that _____'s make when doing _____ (e.g. The five biggest blunders salespeople make when making cold calls, or The three biggest mistakes that holistic practitioners make that keep their wallet empty).

How to _____ (e.g. whatever the result is, how to play the piano, court women, give a solid high five).

_____ for _____ (e.g. yoga for depressed people, yoga for addicts etc.)

The three hidden causes of _____ (e.g. three hidden causes of migraines)

Or just naming the result you help people get (e.g. sold out seminars, or how to fill your workshops with ease).

Figure out what's stopping you from _____,

Three steps to achieving _____

The joy of _____ing,

Uncover your _____ in five easy steps, (e.g. whatever the result is that they want. Maybe uncover your sexual power in five easy steps or uncover your confidence in five easy steps).

Why you don't _____ and what you can do about it (e.g. Why you don't exercise and what you can do about it)

Five tools to help you _____

How to cure _____ in _____ minutes a day.

Five tips that can help you _____ (e.g. Five tips that can help you overcome burnout).

Do you want to be a blank? (e.g. Do you want to be a professional artist? insert the profession or thing that they might want to be).

Fail safe ways to _____.

Do you want to _____?

Five ways to discover your _____.

We can pause there, those are great. Of course, very importantly, let me say the name of the workshop is not enough to fill the workshop. There are other strategies that need to be employed. You can't just have a great title for a workshop and have it fill up. There are a lot of other things. We'll talk about those more in the next call.

But having a really catchy clear focus for your workshop that speaks to people's journey is very important. That's the first thing, hosting a workshop or a talk on a particular topic can be a great project.

Some more real world examples:

- 10 Income Streams for Musicians - <http://musiciansmoneymakingsecrets.com/teleclass/>
- Pleasure Yoga For Women - <http://bit.ly/HHPmIq>
- The Abundant Artist - <http://abundantartistvan.eventbrite.com/>
- Get Relief from Period Pain Webinar: <http://www.lumina-health.com/cramprelief/>
- "Discover How A Simple Information Product Can Instantly Position You As An Authority In Your Market And Generate A STEADY Stream Of Income For Your Business...Regardless of Your Experience!"
- Client Attraction Summit - <https://clientattractionsummit.com/>
- Confidence From the Inside Out ~ 5 Surprising Secrets to Reach Your Ideal Weight Without Diets or Deprivation
- Profound Prosperity: Transforming Your Life Through Spirit
- Ultimate Money Goddess Bali Retreat - <Http://www.moneygoddessexperience.com/Bali>
- Learn the Secrets to a Magnetic Trade Show Experience! - <http://magneticbusinesssolutions.com/magnetic-trade-shows/>

CORE PROJECT #5: HOST A CHARETTE FOR YOURSELF

One of my favourite and most practical ideas for an immediate niche project.

“The word *charrette* may refer to any collaborative session in which a group of [designers](#) drafts a solution to a design problem.

While the structure of a charrette varies, depending on the design problem and the individuals in the group, charrettes often take place in multiple sessions in which the group divides into sub-groups. Each sub-group then presents its work to the full group as material for future [dialogue](#). Such charrettes serve as a way of quickly generating a design solution while integrating the aptitudes and interests of a diverse group of people. Compare this term with [workshop](#).” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charrette>

So, why not host a charette on your own business?

Here are the steps I would take:

- 1) Make a list of everywhere you're struggling in your business. What do you not know how to do that you know you need to know how to do? (e.g. accounting, website, naming your business, social media, legal issues & insurance, designing offers for your little circle niche etc.)
- 2) What's the most pressing of those (e.g. website).
- 3) Pull together as many of your smart friends as you can who have something to contribute for an afternoon or day. Offer to cook for them, cater food. You might want someone else to facilitate this - but get the groups brainpower working to help you get unstuck and solve your most pressing problem.

I think this is an amazing idea for a niche project. Even if you don't like any of the ideas the group comes up with, you'll leave the session much clearer on what you *do* want.