



The Meantime:
the basket of plenty
longer term strategies for the sustainable, and
organic growth of a resilient business

longer term strategies

1. get an assistant
2. schedule time to do long term planning
3. ask your clients for honest feedback about your work
4. focus on quality
5. focus on improving frequency
6. take time to think about your niche
7. connect with hubs
8. get a hub to endorse you to their people
9. find a mentor
10. go on a pilgrimage
11. get a handle on your finances
12. get a business or marketing coach:
13. epilogue: the deeper meaning of the meantime
14. Recommended Resources for Next Steps:

3. ask your clients for honest feedback about your work

Sometimes there is a reason that your business isn't succeeding. And sometimes it's because you haven't been doing a very good job.

This is a bitter pill to swallow.

You can email your list a link to an anonymous survey using a free service like [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com).

At the end of a session with a client, ask them if they'd be willing to go fill your survey out candidly – or you can ask them for feedback directly.

If you want to get better at what you do, there is no faster path than the candid feedback of the people with whom you're working. This takes guts and humility but will shave years off of your learning.

And if people trust that you want to know the truth and will learn from your experiences, it will do more than just about anything to build their trust in you. And the more they trust you, the more they will be willing to spend money on you.

Why not schedule a call with a client once you've finished your work for them to check in on how it was? During the call you can explore what value they received and get constructive feedback. What worked best? What would they improve? What happened as a result of the work? And what was the impact of that happening? Be genuinely curious about what they got from it, keep digging deeper, "So what did that mean to YOU?" and so on.

At the end of the call, if they seem to have received a lot of value, you can say something like, "Thanks so much for your time. And I was wondering – is there anyone else you know who might find this useful. No pressure, just curious."

4. focus on quality

If you don't have a clear niche, consider just focusing on being even better at what you do.

Maybe you're a Plain Jane massage therapist and you can't find anything unique about what you're offering, how you're offering it or to whom you're offering it. That is far from being a hopeless situation. After all, let's remember, just being a massage therapist is a niche. That's a role in the community.

What if you just focused on really giving the best massages you could. I mean, *really*, really. What if you became incredibly intentional about being as loving, present and attentive as you could be? What if you created a ritual you did before every massage? What if you made double sure your hands were warm before touching them and that your nails were always trimmed? What if you asked for honest feedback regularly?

Remember, the real basis of marketing is word of mouth.

And word of mouth comes from people who are thrilled with the experience of working with you. Just focusing on upping the quality can have immediate and long term impacts – even if your niche isn't 100% sort out yet.

Andrea J. Lee said:

“Focus on what's not working, in their opinion, in life or in the world (as informed by their life story if they have that awareness) and be generous in adding value to help heal that. This includes direct contact with people who will 'put up' with us being passionate about the above, and tapping into the courage to just invite and ask to do the work with real people without that niche clarity. Good work is good work, and these first personal relationships don't need niche to 'sell' the 'engagement.' This all adds up to creating proof of excellence and those are the breadcrumbs that lead to greater definitiveness, and the confidence to stand for that as well.”

Jay Abraham shared about how a retail refinishing business gets referrals. His client said:

"We have a multifaceted store in which we sell retail refinishing. We don't ask for referrals directly, but they are the backbone of our business. It's all referrals. People come to us because we delight each and every customer. I have four guys working in the back and we have approximately six weeks worth of work backed up for them, and I don't advertise at all. "We do send out questionnaires and we ask, 'Would you recommend us to a friend?' Whether we sell a new piece of furniture or refinishing, we really believe – from the guys putting their hands on the work to getting it into the customer's hand – our purpose is to absolutely delight them. Whether I lose money on a job or not, it goes out the door right or it doesn't go out the door at all. This makes a big difference. So when we ask for referrals, like I said, we get more work than we can handle!"

However it's not just about focusing on quality but helping customers understand the quality that you have already provided them. For example, An investment marketer gives his clients a graph that shows precisely how much money they've made with him. His sales have multiplied tenfold as a result. He says, "I market a particular investment. We took the investment and we put it in graph form, and I hand those out to existing clients so they can see graphically where they started with this particular investment. Now, this particular investment has increased by 950% in the last 15 years. So, when they see how much money they've made, they love me. This makes it MUCH easier to get referrals. Since we started doing this, our sales are up TEN TIMES what they were before." If you were a fitness trainer, it could be before and after photos. If you were a life coach or counsellor, you could reflect back to them the state they were in when they come in and invite them to appreciate the incredible progress they've made in their life. You might ask them, "I'm curious what is it that I have done on my end that has been most helpful to you in making that progress?"

At my workshops, I often stop and invite people to reflect at what has been the most valuable thing they've learned so far and how they imagine they will use it in their business. Sometimes I'll invite them to consider the impact that it may

have on their business in financial and quality-of-life terms. In a three-and-a-half day weekend workshop, we will do this multiple times.

6. take time to think about your niche

The most important one.

While you're doing all of these things, don't lose sight of the process of figuring your niche out. Get the support you need here. Take time once a week or once a month to really sit with this.

The key question is, 'What is my role in the marketplace? Where do I fit? Where do I do my best work?'

Start with whatever is most clear.

Some people have a very clear sense of the target market with whom they want to work. Some people just have a clear sense of what they want to offer (e.g. massage, life coaching, sculpture, permaculture design). Those are both great start points.

But keep thinking about what it is that makes you unique in your field. This is a long term strategic piece. Don't lose site of it just because you're in The Meantime. These longer term pieces are what will keep you out of The Meantime in the future.

You can find a lot of free resources at NichingSpiral.com

7. connect with hubs

There is no tool I know that is more powerful in business than to partner with the right people.

Consider this, a good piece of direct mail is responded to by only 2% of people. On a good day. So, if you mailed a sales letter to 10,000 people, only 200 would respond. And that would be considered a good response. But, that same letter, were it to come from a source they trusted? Well, it would be opened by a much higher rate of recipients and have a much stronger response rate.

When I led my first workshop in Ottawa, I did about three hours of work on the event and yet filled two daylong workshops with 60 people each. How? By having it hosted by Heather Garrod who runs a store in town called Planet Botanix that is a huge hub in the holistic scene.

When you're in The Meantime, you need to get the most result for the smallest amount of effort. And hubs, while a slightly more long term investment, fits this bill better than anything I can think of.

What do I mean by a hub? I mean someone who is well connected to and well respected by the people you are trying to reach with your business.

We'll get into more specifics about how to connect and partner with hubs in upcoming sections, but, for now, I just want to lift up the importance of thinking about it and connecting with them.

If you meet or hear of someone who you think could help grow your business, go for coffee or set up a Skype date with them. If you think they're a potentially very significant connection, offer to take them out to lunch.

Maybe it's someone new. Or maybe it's someone you've been thinking about working together with for ages.

Unless you want to be stuck at the “cold” level of marketing (where you cold approach and cold call everyone as a stranger) you must start [thinking about your hubs](#).

I recommend connecting with one hub per day getting to know them, what they do, how you can help them and how they might be able to help you. Normally, I would suggest connecting with one new hub per week. But, during The Meantime? Once a day. These are seeds that might not germinate immediately, but some will grow faster than you think and others will provide stability for the future.

8. get a hub to endorse you to their people

There's an old Scottish Gaelic proverb that says, "If the messenger is worthy, then the business is."

Who we hear about something from makes a tremendous difference in how it's received.

This can be as simple as calling five or more of your colleagues or mastermind partners and letting them know you're accepting referrals.

You could email your list with a product of yours (and you should) but you might find that you have burned your own list out at a certain point. That they have bought everything they're going to buy from you. And you might find that an email to a colleagues list bears far more fruit for you. After all, it may be the first time they're exposed to you and so your work is fresh to them. And, if it gets the strong endorsement of someone they trust? That can go a long way.

There are three "wins" to keep in mind when doing this – an idea I got from my colleague George Kao.

The First Win: Them. It must be a win for them. This usually means two things. First, they need to make money from it. Second, it needs to be easy (meaning that you do most of the work). If there are emails to be sent, you pre-write them. If there are posters to be put up, you design them and deliver them. Ideally, they need to do nothing more than cutting and pasting an email and making a few minor adjustments.

The Second Win: Their People. Whatever you're offering must "wow" their people. The only things that a hub wants to hear for having endorsed something on their list is, "Wow! That was amazing! Thank you so much for letting me know about it." Your job is to make them look good to their people.

The Third Win: You. You must also benefit from this. You need to think through how you will get the most out of this transaction. Often this comes from really thinking through what the next step in the offer is because you'll likely be splitting products on the initial offer with the hub. So, once their people have bought the initial thing, what might their next step be with you?

Of course there are levels of this and different ways to go about it, so here are a few options.

If you run a workshop for the holistic crowd, could you get it hosted at the most popular local yoga studio that is most aligned with your values and message? If you offer the yoga studio all of the money from the intro workshop (knowing you'll make your money on them signing up for your full weekend retreat or one on one coaching with you) I can promise you they'll be more engaged in promoting it than if you'd simply paid an hourly rental fee for the studio.

If you're selling an info product and you're wanting them to email their list, you could split the profits on the product 50/50 with them (and make sure that you follow up with the people who've bought to make sure they're happy and to offer them a next step with you).

Maybe you could give the host a series of gift certificates worth 30 minutes of massage with you and invite them to email either their whole list or only their best clients with them and then use the 60 clients in 60 Days strategy.

If you're a mortgage broker, maybe you could approach the top realtors in town and offer them your services for a fraction of the cost of most mortgage brokers (letting them keep most of the money) for two years in a row in order to prove yourself to them. Sure, you don't make as much money immediately, but you do make some and you're set up for long term profitability.

A man who operated a duct cleaning service found a way to get referrals from his competitors, giving a big boost to his sales. To generate leads, he went to his *competitors* who were also selling heating and air conditioning equipment but who did not offer duct-cleaning. He gave them a covenant letter agreeing not to

solicit or interfere with their customer base, but to have access into their customer base for the duct cleaning service. Whoever sold his service to the customer got a direct percentage on the gross. Probably 30% of the work he did in the months following the implementation of this strategy was a direct result of his competitors' introducing his service to their customer base.

The key to ask yourself when approaching any hub is, "How can I make this a no brainer for them to say "yes" to? What's in it for them? How could I make this even more valuable for them?"

If you come from this place, hubs will feel seen and honoured. They have invested years and years in building trust with their community. It feels good to have that validated.

My colleague Elizabeth Purvis of marketinggoddess.com shared this with me:

"A holistic nutritionist (a Thrive grad, indeed!) launched her practice by offering a free consultation as a bonus with a colleague's launch. Her parter was launching an information product and was no longer doing coaching; our gal was doing coaching and had no product. She offered her 30-minute session and at the end of the launch, was given a spreadsheet with 40 some-odd names. Very shortly she was full with a waiting list of 2.5 months.

This is an AWESOME strategy that people can use with partners who are "just two steps ahead" of them – i.e., they don't need a big name to make it work.

Another idea: Partner with a colleague who offers a complimentary service; offer a free Breakthrough Session to all of their current or past clients (a well-known mentor followed this strategy to launch her business with no list and no website; she was booked 2.5 months in advance selling dozens of her \$2k program)."

9. find a mentor

This is so huge.

Can you find someone who has built a successful career doing what you do? Could you ask them to mentor you? One solid mentor is worth more than any advice that any random marketing or business expert could give you.

And I will guarantee you that your mentor has been through The Meantime at least once in their life. If they're worth their salt as a mentor, they've been through it plenty of times.

Ask around. Ask everyone you know. Find someone who can ask you the tough questions, help you in the short term and guide you in the long term.

Here's another guarantee I'll make you about your mentor, they didn't create their success on their own. They had plenty of their own mentors and supports who pitched in along the way. They're likely very happy to pass it on.

10. go on a pilgrimage

When we're in The Meantime we often can't see a way out other than "working harder."

But your soul may need the *opposite* of knuckling down and focusing on building something.

It might need some time to unravel a bit and wander. The whole reason you might be in this crisis might be about poor planning on your part. But it also might be a sign that things are deeply and fundamentally off in your life. Maybe you're in the wrong relationship, living in the wrong city and working on the wrong business (or maybe you shouldn't even be an entrepreneur in the first place).

You can learn more about this idea of pilgrimage from nicolemoen.ca.

Maybe you need to go travel and just enjoy your life for a while. What if you just sold everything you own and downsized your life. What if you went on that grand adventure you've always wanted to. What if you went to work in a bar on a tropical island (I have a colleague who is starting a website soon on this topic - jetset-hippie.com).

Maybe that's what you're really needing until the next step becomes clear.

11. get a handle on your finances:

This has absolutely not been my strong suit over the past couple of decades but these resources come highly recommended to me.

Mr Money Mustache (Great frugal money habits)

<http://www.mrmoneymustache.com/2012/10/08/how-to-go-from-middle-class-to-kickass/>

Man Vs Debt (Where to sell your stuff)

<http://manvsdebt.com/where-to-sell-your-crap-flowchart/>

And Then We Saved (Spending Fasts)

<http://andthenwesaved.com/>

You Need a Budget.

<http://www.youneedabudget.com/?AFFID=77477>

52 Week Money Saving Challenge:

<http://www.goodshomedesign.com/52-week-money-saving-challenge/>

12. get a business or marketing coach:

This is so helpful. There are so many good people out there, but do find someone who can help to guide you along the way. It will cost money, but it will make you and save your far more.

13. epilogue: the deeper meaning of the meantime

“Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently.”

Henry Ford

When you're in the midst of The Meantime it can feel like the end is nigh. Everything is crashing down. We owe money. We're behind on just about everything. There's shame. We feel overwhelmed.

And it's appropriate because The Meantime isn't there to comfort you. It's there to end many things. This is the great secret to making it through this narrow tunnel... knowing it was meant to defeat you all along. It was never there to reassure you, it was there to knock you down and humble you deeply. It was there to make you more human.

Rainer Marie Rilke says it so well: “Winning does not tempt that man. This is how he grows: by being defeated decisively by constantly greater challenges.”

And Stephen Jenkinson puts it so powerfully when he writes, “If you wrestle [inescapable truths], you will grow muscle. There's no doubt of that. You will hurt in places you didn't know you had. No doubt of that either. And you will lose, by the normal calculus of trying to engineer the life you hope you deserve. It will not come out as you had planned, wrestling [reality]. Your plans are usually the first casualty of the match. But here is the great secret of it: you will be able to boast of your defeat. You will be able to stand in the wreckage of what used to be your certainty, your creed, your way of doing life's business, and you can tell wild, true stories of how it all came to ruin. Whatever is left standing—and there is always something left standing when you wrestle angels—is the thing that was true about you and about your life all along, as faithful a companion as the earth that will someday cradle you again. Finding someone to tell, who will stay still long enough to listen and might understand, well, that is a human struggle.”

Often times, I have people say, ‘But, what if I can't get through The

Meantime?” Yes. But what if you *can*?

‘But,’ people say, ‘What if I don’t have the commitment it takes to make it through The Meantime.’

And to them I refer the beautiful words of Rumi: “Come, come, *whoever you are. Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving. It doesn't matter. Ours is not a caravan of despair. come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand times. Come, yet again , come , come.*”

“Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time we fail.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

The end isn’t always a bad thing. Sometimes the end of one thing is the beginning of something wonderful. The Meantime gains its power when we honour it for what it really is - an opportunity to rethink everything and begin again in a new way.

A fellow named Fabio Fina, hearing I was working on this product sent me these words, “*I have personally hustled, once I was so terrified and was literally going hungry, with only one bag of rice in my cupboard, and a bunch of flyers for my healing/coaching practice. I was hoping it would break loose, and all these clients would come pouring in. It didn't happen. I was terrified, as lots around me was falling apart. It was shedding time, spiritually and emotionally. So I sold the only thing I had that was of value, my 23 years old car, moved out of my house, and rented a room in a community house for very cheap. This course of events completely changed my flow, the house I moved in was awesome, and now I had money to buy food and feel more secure.*”

In Michael Meade’s remarkable book *Why The World Doesn’t End* he points out that. “*The meaning of the word “end” might seem obvious and conclusive; yet root meanings reveal “tailings” and “remnants” and “that which is left over”... [it] carries the sense that the current state cannot continue and that it is too late for things to simply be repaired. In order for things to change in a meaningful way, many things must come to and end. As archetype of radical change, [it] presents a pattern in which a shattering of forms occurs before the world as we know it can be reconstituted. In the cosmic turn around if enough endings can be found, things can begin again... When the end seems near, ancient and lasting things are also close and waiting to be discovered... What we*

find at the end are both last things and things that last... Chaos not only describes the way that things fall apart at the end, but also the original state from which all creation continually arises... In the end, all we can offer the world is the life we came here to live and the gifts our soul would have us give. When the end seems near, genuine security can only be found in taking the kind of risks that lead to a greater sense of life and a more encompassing way of being in the world... Great crises and impossible demands often provoke hidden resources and reveal hints of the hidden wholeness and unity of life. The threat of collapse and utter loss can provoke a deeper sense of wholeness where nothing but total involvement and whole-heartedness will work... this capacity for great vision and imagination tends to awaken only after other approaches have failed.”

You will make it through. I'd love to hear from you when you do

Recommended Resources for Next Steps:

The 28 Laws of Attraction by Thomas Leonard:

[amazon.ca/28-Laws-Attraction-Chasing-Success-ebook/dp/B0010VEKXQ/](https://www.amazon.ca/28-Laws-Attraction-Chasing-Success-ebook/dp/B0010VEKXQ/)