



# Don't Market Yourself. Market Your Message.

*a stress-reducing, clarifying & liberating approach to  
marketing your business*

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# Introduction

Don't market yourself. Market your message.

That was a phrase I heard from my colleague Morgana Rae, which is: "make money by putting love first." Something in that made sense to me. It stuck with me like a burr in some hand knit, wool sweater.

It was this idea that, instead of standing up in front of a group and trying to convince them that I was worthy of their attention, that I could just speak about something that I found worthy of my own attention. That instead of pitching myself, an uncomfortable proposition for all involved at the best of times, I could pitch an idea; instead of making the case to work with me I could make the case for their considering an important message.

Don't market yourself. Market your message.

Even more so, it was an admonition against even *trying* to market one's self. The phrase seemed to invite those who heard it to draw their gaze away from the high pressure marketing tactics towards something more visionary and uplifting. Imagine never feeling like you had to make yourself the focus of your marketing?

What if, instead of seeking the spotlight to stand in, you became the spotlight, shining on some message you feel like has been ignored or for too long.

Of course. There was only one catch. You needed to have a message to share.

So, how does one figure this out?

This eBook is my best attempt to give you plenty of examples and questions that can get you started.

I hope it's helpful.

warmest,  
Tad



# Don't market yourself. Market your message.

If you have a business, you are going to be known for something.

It's inevitable.

The question is this: will you be known for the right things and will your reputation bring you the kinds of clients you want?

Not always.

But what if you could be known not just for what you do but for the message that underwrites it?

Your message to the world can actually be one of the most powerful things you can be known for.

**And so here is the message of this book: Don't market yourself. Market your message.**

I think of my colleague Mark Silver's website where it states his core message so clearly: **"every act of business can be an act of love."** So clear. So evocative. So meaningful.

For the past year, I've been beginning to talk about the message that "marketing can feel good" and noticing the resonance that has with people far beyond talking about marketing tactics and tools.



I've noticed that when I share the message that "marketing is a vital part of doing good in the world," it resonates with people. When people understand that marketing can actually feel wonderful, warm and be a force for building community and expression of our values that people light up.

I've noticed that the businesses I'm most drawn to tend to have some sort of a message they're spreading.

# So, what is a message?

Well let's start off with what a message is *not*.

A message is not a promise of a result. It's not empathy for your clients' struggles. And it's not just a statement of values. It's not a slogan like Movember's, "Changing the face of men's health." Your message isn't about you. It's about something bigger than you.



It's not a full blown point of view either. Your message is like the title of a book about your point of view.

Your message isn't the deeper cause or "why" of your business, though it's related to it. The deeper cause of my business is "right livelihood" but the message is "marketing can feel good."

Your message is like the words on a coat of arms, a motto or tagline. It takes your whole platform and point of view and distills it down to the essence.

It's the thing you can't help but talk about and, inevitably, steer every conversation towards.

One client wrote me years ago and said:

"Tad, thank you for these amazing posts — as someone who recently accidentally launched the wrong business :) your ideas are so helpful to me in narrowing down the right one. I can see it now in a simple way, I wasn't 'on message' — my business wasn't having the conversation I really want to have! I chose something easier, less personal and not half interesting enough to me. 'Message' just feels like the conversation you want to have for the next fifty years . . . yay! Too excited to sleep now."

It's an idea that you are so passionate about and find yourself reading about, listening to TED Talks about it but . . . you feel like there's still something missing that you want to see brought out into the world.

It's the drum you beat. It's your core thesis you want to prove. It's an idea you know that, if it were embraced on a mass level, would change the world. If this message were really "gotten" there'd be so much less suffering. It's the way things oughta be. It's a mantra.

It's often the words you wish you'd really understood when you were younger and struggling. It's the words you really want a particular group of people to hear.

Your message is likely the answer to this question: "What would your TED Talk be about?" Every TED Talk is about an idea. Some might feature projects – but they all have a crystal clear message in them. Something simple, direct, easy to understand and up lifting.

There's a point to it.

Standing up at the front of a room and pitching people is just saying, "Buy from me!" But sharing a message is saying, "Whether or not you buy from me, I want you to know \_\_\_\_\_ because it will make your life and the world a better place." And that's attractive. It's coming from a place of giving, not trying to get anything.

Your message is your medicine.

It might take you a while to find it. And, in the process, you'll likely come to find that, even though your business may be guided by one particular overall message, that it contains many messages nested within it like eggs in a bird's nest, or treasure in a treasure chest. Or maybe it's more that your core message is a tapestry seen from a distance but, as you get closer you can see the individual threads.

# Seven Criteria of a Good Message

Again, this idea is new enough that I'm not even sure what the criteria is but here's what makes sense to me right now.



## Criteria #1 – A New Idea:

A compelling message usually isn't a trite platitude (though it could be). Ideally it's a new idea or an old idea said in a provocative new way. It's an idea that's been missing from a larger conversation. It's something that no one else is saying it or saying in quite the same way you are.

## Criteria #2 – Short:

It can be summed up briefly. As Seth Godin put it, "If you can't state your position in eight words, you don't have a position." One way to understand a message is to think of the titles of many personal growth books. I immediately think of Stuart Wilde's book *Life Was Never Meant to Be a Struggle* as a great example of this.

## Criteria #3 – Provocative:

It's a statement that makes sense but provokes further questions and deeper inquiry.

## Criteria #4 – Repeatable:

It's something you could say it repeatedly throughout a keynote talk and it would make sense. It's like the chorus to a song. Think, "I have a dream." It's the kind of idea you could base a keynote talk around entirely. **Don't market yourself. Market your message.**

## Criteria #5 – Easy to Understand:

Not a crazy, complicated idea. A simple idea with profound implications. It's one thought, not dozens.

## Criteria #6 – Well Crafted:

Crafting matters here. The exact right words. Bust out your thesaurus. Toss it by people. See which version seems to land the best with others and which feel best to you.

## Criteria #7 – You:

Your message should somehow reflect or be an authentic expression of you. It fits you perfectly. It isn't just said to sound good or used as a marketing tactic. It means something to you personally. It excites you. You love the idea of being known for this message and spending years (if not a lifetime) exploring it.

*“Expression without a message is just noise.  
A message without expression is just an idea.”*

— Tad Hargrave



# What a message will do and won't do

A message won't sell your product on its own.

No one will read a nice slogan or tagline and say, "yep. I want to spend \$1000 with that company. What a great message."

But a message does give your business a centre of gravity.

A message becomes a core idea that you can keep spiralling around and weaving everything back to so that over time, people increasingly come to appreciate the depth and complexity behind the idea.

A message is something you can become known for.

A message is something that will help attract the right people (who are also passionate about that message).

A message will help you find hubs (who also work to promote that message).

But a message alone won't sell anything. You can't just print it on your business cards and your website.

For a message to be alive you need to constantly find new ways to express and explore it.

But not just expressed by talking about it – expressed in the design of your website, in the names you give to products and services, in how you dress, your logo, your pricing. Ideally, though likely impossibly, everything you do should be expressing your message.



*"Al Gore started leading his tribe when he didn't know who they were.  
He stated his message and people found him."*

— Seth Godin

# Ten Reasons Why Having a Message Matters

**REASON #1: Speaking about your message is more comfortable and inspiring for everyone than being pitched to.**

If I were to put you up on a stage to speak to thousands of your ideal clients and my instructions to you were, “Go and sell them on why to hire you.” my guess is that you’d feel very awkward about that.

Most people would.

Trying to get other people to do something and “sell” people is not a natural act. And it feels even more unnatural when what you’re trying to sell them is *you*.

When I see people trying to “be confident” and “believe in their value” on stage on in a group – it usually comes across as them seeming arrogant and puffed up.

I recall one party I hosted where I got us all in a circle and invited people to share who they were and what they were up to for 30 seconds. We went around the circle and people were so charming, lovely and humble. Until it got to one lady who stepped forward and, in a very heavy, sombre tone spoke about how she was a “spiritual master teacher.” And it seemed so incredibly pretentious. Especially in contrast to the humility of everyone else’s sharing.

But this is what happens when we believe that we need to promote ourselves.

A radical notion: what if you stopped focusing so much on “believing in your worth” and started enjoying sharing a message you found worthy?

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what if, instead of telling you go up and sell them on you, I told you to go up and share with them the message you are most passionate to share with them?

Don’t you notice an instant shift in how that feels? A relief. An exhale. And likely even excitement.

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And put yourself in the audience's shoes. Which would you prefer?

**Option A:** To sit through an hour of painful transparent attempts to sell you without appearing to sell you (which now feel even more gross because they're trying to hide it).

**Option B:** To sit through an hour of someone sharing a powerful message that you need to hear at this point in your life – a message that both affirms and uplifts.

I can't think of anyone that would want to be in Option A – either on stage or in the audience.

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## **REASON #2: Your message is relevant to people.**

People might not see how your product or service is relevant to them immediately, but it's hard to miss the relevance of a message.

When people are struggling with something in their life, or craving something badly, they are very open to hearing a message that can affirm, clarify and encourage them.

## **REASONS #3: People are more likely to share (and discuss) a message than a product or a service.**

Imagine you sit through that hour long presentation where the person is selling, selling, selling. And then you go for lunch with some friends. What do you talk about? Do you talk about all the features and benefits of their wares?

Unlikely.

There's a better chance that you talk about how gross it felt, or you pick apart their presentation for what you liked and what you didn't like in it.

But what if you sat through someone talking about a message they were passionate about and that was meaningful to you?

My guess is that you'd keep talking about that same message and how you see that it relates to your life. And that you might keep talking about it over the coming days. "You know, I went to this talk and the speaker had this really powerful notion that I'd never really considered . . ."

And that, months later, when a conversation wound itself around to the same topic you might bring up that same speaker you saw. And people might just say, “What was the name of that speaker? I’d love to check out their work.” and write it down to check out later.

Word of mouth is the dominant engine of marketing. It’s how most of us hear about things and decide which things to buy – recommendations from friends. So, it makes sense that we’d want to make as much of our marketing word of mouth friendly as possible. And few things are as sharable as a simple, easy to understand message.

#### **REASON #4: It builds trust.**

Few things are as unattractive as someone who is constantly, shamelessly promoting themselves. No one trusts the used car salesman.

Few things are more attractive than those working selflessly to change the world – people who are about something bigger than their own success.



People with hustle and shameless self promotion might gains *status*. But people who live to promote a message gain *stature*.

#### **REASON #5: It gives you more attractive things to share.**

If your agenda is to promote yourself then all of your social media posts and emails to your list will be that. They’ll be some iteration of “hire me! buy from me!” And people will, more quickly than you’d think, tune that out. And, there’s a good chance you’ll only share your original work because you only want people to buy your stuff.

But, if what you’re really passionate about is a message then you’ll have so much more to share. You’ll share anything that could help boost that message in the world. You’ll share TED Talks on the theme, cartoons and images you find, articles and interviews you come across. Anything. You go from seeing yourself as simply a content creator to actually being a *curator*.

Suddenly, you’ve become a hub for other people who are passionate about that message. People share what you put out which leads more people back to you.

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## **REASON #6: Your message is a good “client filter.”**

If people don't agree with your core message, if it doesn't light them up then there's no point in talking further.

If you share a core message that lights you up and they sit there blank-eyed . . . there's a good chance that they're not your ideal client. There's a good chance that they will be trouble down the road.

On the other hand, some people's eyes will widen and they'll burst out in smiles when you share your message. They'll say, “Yes! I've always thought that! That's been my experience too! Thank you for saying that!”

Having a clear message attracts clients who are a good fit.

## **REASON #7: A message will get you invited to speak.**

No one wants to invite you to pitch yourself.

But many people might want to hear you share your unique message with the world.

## **REASON #8: A message is something you can become known for.**

Perhaps the most important reason of all.

A message is something you can develop a reputation around. Being known for an inspiring idea that uplifts people is powerful.

Imagine you meet someone at a party who's struggling in a particular way who you can tell really needs to hear a particular message. As you're talking you can see how discouraged they are and then you remember seeing a TED Talk all about that message. You whip out a piece of paper and write down the name of that TED Talk so they can check it out. The person thanks you, goes home, watches it and feels some hope for the first time in years. And then maybe they buy the book of the TED Talk person and join their email list, even go to a workshop of theirs.

This happens all the time.

## **REASON #9: A clear message makes you more flexible.**

My colleague and friend Rebecca Tracey of The Uncaged Life had this to say about the importance of developing a clear message.

“I see it so often – people starting businesses but having no idea what their purpose is, other than that they want to work for themselves and travel the world. Which clearly is not a good enough reason to start a business. Being connected to your message is so key for building a business that’s a right fit for you.

I also see a lot of people who started with great intentions, but have totally lost touch with why they’re doing it in the first place. So business starts to feel hard and un-motivating. So I’d add that not only is it a good way to connect with your audience, but it’s the only way for you to build a business that will feel sustainable in the long run for you. Something you won’t get bored of next month. Your message gives you something to connect back to when things are feeling hard or stuck or not quite right.

Being super clear on your message also gives you the flexibility to change what you do in your business fairly seamlessly. I think of it as being like a flower, where the centre of the flower is your purpose/message/why, and each petal is a different way that you would bring that message to the world. So the petals might be different services you offer (coaching, workshops, retreats etc), OR they might be different business ideas.

If your message is about empowering women to step into their power, you might do that through adventure retreats, dance classes, coaching, or copywriting . . . when your message is clear and consistent, it gives you the ability to offer different things in your business, and the power to change your business up as you go without totally confusing people. Building your business around your message is so important!”

\*

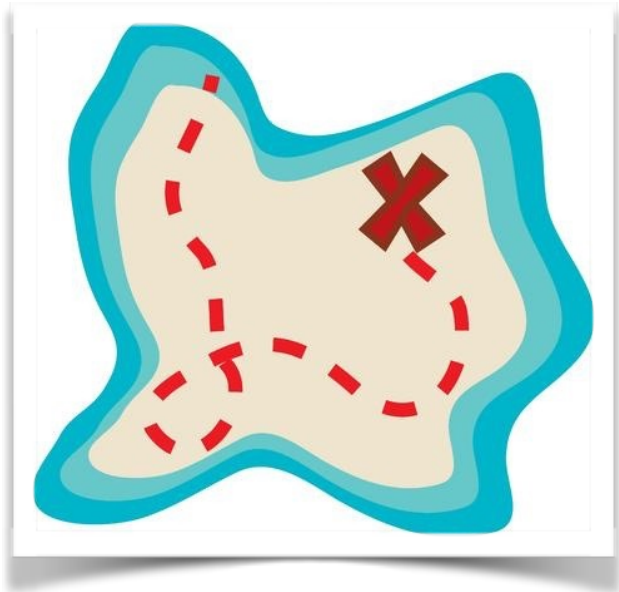
If you get this, you’ll be amazed at how much easier and more exciting everything in your business gets.

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**REASON #10: A clear message helps you get found.**

All of these reasons weave together into a rope that people can follow to find you.

Seth Godin's example of Al Gore is appropriate. There were people who already shared his point of view and resonated with the message of his film "An Inconvenient Truth" on climate change. When he began speaking that message loudly, those people found their way to him.





# The Six Kinds of Messages

A few years ago, I was chatting with my friend Casey of [worthyandwell.com](http://worthyandwell.com) about her work as a nutritionist and the whole notion of message.

**Tad:** I've been thinking a lot about the importance of having a "message" in our businesses. What is your message you're wanting to spread?

**Casey:** LOVE! Love your body, soul, people, food, things, pleasure, pain, earth . . . #DoEverythingInLove

**Tad:** And why do you think most people need to hear this message in particular?

**Casey:** From love comes contentment with the whole human experience, not to mention joy, optimal health, and a better world.

**Tad:** So you're saying that only when we love everything will we feel content?

**Casey:** Having a loving appreciation for the way things are will allow people to become more content.

That conversation is the beginning of where a message comes from.

Notice that it's got nothing to do with food. It's got nothing to do with her modality or how she helps people and the tools she uses. Right now it's got something to do with a loving and enjoyment of the material, earthy world. It's a bit fuzzy but it could be honed down and connected to physical health and diet.

As you narrow it down, I think you'll find you end up with one of six major types of messages, likely with some overlap.

## Type #1: Directional Messages

These kinds of messages are based in “What You Should Do.” They tell your people, “The best way to achieve \_\_\_\_\_ (goal) is \_\_\_\_\_ (approach).”

These messages are directional.

Christians around the world have been moved by Jesus’ message of forgiveness.

Muslims have been moved by Mohammed’s message of mercy.

Buddhists have been moved by Buddha’s message of equanimity.

Rebecca Tracey of The Uncaged Life believes that, “life is meant to be lived (not spent in a cubicle), that you have a choice about how you spend your days here on earth, and there’s no sense spending your days living by someone else’s rules.” If I had to sum up this message it might be “live by your own rules.” Simple. To the point. Clear.

Imagine that you’re a woodworker and hate IKEA and mass produced things. A message you might want to develop would be “buying quality that will last forever is the best investment you can make,” or, in brief, “buy quality,” or “craftsmanship matters.”



**The message isn’t about making your case.**

**It’s the case you’re trying to make.**

It’s the point you’re trying to get across. The message doesn’t need to say everything, but everything you say needs to relate back to your core message. **Don’t market yourself. Market your message.**

Nike’s core message for a long time has been “just do it.” Pretty darn clear.

There used to be a clothing brand called “No Fear” that was all about extreme sports and going for what you want with no fear. Perfect for their niche market.

A client of mine, Monika Denes, said this: “My passion is finding the root of health problems and – yes, sounds airy fairy – helping people be happier, because that is the best way to be and stay

healthy.” If I had to summarize, I’d say, “if you want to be healthy, be happy.” That could be her refrain for her TED Talk that she could repeat again and again and again to drive her point home.

Apple’s message since it began has been some version “Think different.” Everything it’s done has reinforced that message from it’s original 1984 commercial, to it’s “Think Different” ads featuring cultural icons, to its design. Check out that 1984 commercial here: [youtube.com/watch?v=2zfqw8nhUwA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zfqw8nhUwA)

Or life coach Tony Robbins who used to sign off all of his programs with, “Live with passion!”

These kind of messages help people find a sense of direction in their life.

## Type #2: Messages of Possibility

Another kind of message is the kind of message that says, “something else is possible.”

I think of the hymn sung by many in the American Civil Rights movement, “We Shall Overcome.”

One of my favourites of these is from one of my dearest colleagues Mark Silver of Heart of Business. Right on his homepage it says, “Every act of business can be an act of love.” Wow. So clear. So provocative. It immediately has me think about all the different aspects of business and how each might become an act of love.

I think of Carrie Klassen of Pink Elephant Communications whose core message used to be, “Marketing can be happy,” and shifted to, “Marketing can be quiet, gentle and kind . . . and still be marketing.”

Mark’s and Carrie’s messages inspired what has become the core message of Marketing for Hippies, which is, “**Marketing can feel good.**”

The Obama campaign of 2012 had the core message, “Yes we can.” which came to symbolize so much of what the campaign was about.

Another client of mine wrote me this, “No matter how stuck or hopeless or helpless we feel, there is always a pathway to reclaim our power with mindfulness, love and simplicity. Always.” Which I might distill down to, “No matter how stuck you feel – there’s always a way.” A powerful message. Especially if she backs it up with real life stories.

Years ago, I was in Thailand at Pun Pun, a sustainable living centre where I met a fellow named Joe who had done a TED Talk where the core message was, “life is easy.” He was passionate about sustainable living and how overly complex our lives have become. You can read my thoughts on this on my blog at: [marketingforhippies.com/life-is-easy](http://marketingforhippies.com/life-is-easy)



The World Social Forum was created over a decade ago out of the realization that, for all of the anti-globalization protests that were happening, there weren’t enough solutions and visions being presented. So they put out the call for progressive and radical thinkers to attend. They expected 400 people but got 14,000 in the first year, which was 2001. The next year, the year I went, they expected 20,000 and got 60,000. They had a very simple message. The message was a response to Margaret Thatcher’s message that “There Is No Alternative” (a message she successfully repeated

and built her case for). There message was “Another World is Possible.” I remember being at one of the events at the forum where people were singing the theme song of the conference. That’s one way to know you’ve got a solid message, if you could write a catchy song about it.

One of my colleagues Julia Kious Zabell sums up her message as “do awesome by doing good.” The idea that you can make a living by doing the right thing. It’s a similar message that my friends Billy Parish and Dev Aujla have shared in their new book Making Good.

In fact, speaking of books, think of any best selling book you can think of, fiction or non-fiction. Wasn’t there a core message to it? Wasn’t there a point it was trying to make?

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People was making the point that to succeed we need to go back to a “principle centred approach” vs. what author Stephen R. Covey deemed the “personality ethic” of tools and techniques we use on people.

Geoff Lawton created a simple five-minute video that has done more to grow the permaculture movement than just about anything I can think of. If you ask a crowd of permaculturists how they got into permaculture, a large chunk of them will tell you it was from this video. The power of the video is that it told a simple story, but it also had a simple message, “You can solve all the world’s problems in a garden.” You can watch that video here: [youtube.com/watch?v=sohI6vnWZmk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sohI6vnWZmk)

Russell Scott, who is a client of mine, teaches meditation retreats with the twist that most of it is dyad work. Meaning you do the meditation in pairs. You sit together and your partner asks you a question which you answer. Then they ask you the same question. And the same again. And again. And again. With each answer you go deeper. His take is that doing meditation with another is actually more powerful. His message? “You have to do it by yourself, but you don’t have to do it alone.”

These kinds of messages brings hope and clarity. They are a refreshing and liberating perspective.

## Type #3: Messages of Reality

Sometimes, the message is about how things really are.

They are clarifying messages – mini-maps that help direct people from confusion to clarity.

Sometimes we suffer because we don't really see the world for how it is, and someone who can tell it like it is and reset our expectations about the possibilities and limitations of certain approaches will always engender trust.



Billy Blanks who created the cardio and martial arts hybrid of Tae Bo would repeat again and again the message that, “it’s hard. it’s going to take effort.” His honesty about this built a lot of trust.

Gandhi’s oft quoted words, “Your life is your message” is in fact a message inviting people to pause and look back into their lives and the message it might be sending.

Simon Sinek’s brilliant book *Start With Why* had the simple message, that he repeated over and over in his popular TED Talk, “People don’t just buy what you do, they buy why you do it.” I’ve written a number of blog posts exploring this.

Byron Katie wrote her book *Loving What Is* around the core message that, suffering comes from our unquestioned thinking.

A core thesis of Derrick Jensen’s work is that, at its heart, civilization is violent. Not humanity, but the system of civilization we live in. And he makes his case compellingly.

Michael Shuman in his book *The Small Mart Revolution* makes the case that the strongest ways to strengthen our local economies is not bring in big box stores but to “shop local first.” A simple, three word message.

One of my favourite, and certainly the most provocative, mini TED Talks I’ve ever seen was called, “Make Love, Not Porn.” The message had to do with the notion that most men have grown up watching porn and think that that’s what all sex should be like. Her point? Some women like that. Some women don’t. Don’t assume. Make love, not porn. Simple. Extremely provocative. To the point.

Life coach Rick Tamlyn's core message is "It's All Made Up" (that is actually his company's name). It's a simple mantra that contains a whole worldview inside of it.

I've known people whose core message could be summed up in the words, "We are happier and healthier when we spend regular, unstructured time in nature."

David Deida's has built his relationship work on the simple idea that the sexual zing in relationships comes the strength of the polarity of masculine and feminine in that relationship. I'm honestly not sure how to sum that up. Perhaps, "Polarized relationships are hotter"?

A core message of my colleague Michael Talbot Kelly's is, "Life isn't a problem to be solved, it's a mystery to be embraced." A simple statement that is rife with complexity.

Much of the field of anti-oppression is based on the simple idea that privilege in society tends to run along lines of race, class and gender (and other things) and that these privileges are often invisible to the people who have them. If it had a message it might sound something like, "Question your privileges."

I've heard many new age teachers speak about the message, "What you resist persists." A simple yet powerful idea.

A colleague of mine Sue Anne Willis, who does work with body movement in a therapeutic and empowering way, came up with this: "How you move changes how you feel and that changes everything." A clear and strong message.

One of my clients Mary Choo points out in her work that, "kids pick up on how you *feel* not what you say." So parents need to focus on feeling good themselves. And Mary helps them to figure this out. Brilliant.

I remember reading a book on Non Violent Communication in which the author laid down this piece of reality: "There are two ways to live. One is 'how to get what I want?' and the other is 'how do we all get our needs met?'" My friends Mark and Craig Kielburger distilled that into their more directional message of "Me to We."

These kinds of messages aren't telling people where to go or what's possible. They're turning people's attention to how things are.

## Type #4: Messages of Necessity: “We need to . . .”

Another kind of message is more of a call to arms for people. It’s not just a message of what’s possible, or what’s real but what’s required of us to get what we want. These messages are mini-manifestos.

One of my clients wrote me about her belief that, “Business needs to evolve to create a brighter future.” Simple.

Rob Ford, controversial Mayor of Toronto from 2010-2014, had a single message he repeated again and again. That Toronto needed to “Stop the gravy train.” A simple message that worked to gain many supporters.

A project I founded in 1999 called the Jams is based on the idea that, not only do we need to make change in the world but that we actively need to “change the way we do change.” You can learn more about that project here: [yesworld.org](http://yesworld.org)



Some spiritual teachers might tell you that if you truly want inner peace you must develop a regular spiritual practice. That’s a message.

I think of the title of Kelly Bryson’s book, “Don’t Be Nice. Be Real,” which suggests that being nice and being real are two different things (a fine conversation starter) and then states a clear opinion about which one is preferable.

Chris S. Babcock crafted his message as, “I help people stop being cool so they can be real instead.” which does a similar thing and suggests that being cool is not the same as being real and that it’s better to be real. It’s saying, “Stop that. Do this instead.”



## Type #5: New Idea Messages

Some messages are based on ideas that people may never have considered before.

Nicole Daedone, the founder of One Taste, had the belief that female orgasm will change the world. I won't say anymore but leave you to explore that on your own.

My colleague Alex Baisley of Big Dream Program has the more message to "start with lifestyle." A simple idea. Instead of thinking, "One day, I'll make enough money that I can retire and have the lifestyle I want." you can actually start with weaving the lifestyle you ultimately want into your life now and, hey!, it might even save you money and make you money.

I once met a relationship coach who came from a polyamory point of view and her message was that, in order for a couple to move forward in their relationship after infidelity they had to get rid of the words "cheating" and "affair," and come to see other relationships outside of their own in a different way.

These messages are based in bringing in ideas that are so outside of most people's frames of reference that they would never have even considered them before.

## Type #6: Reframing Messages

Some messages are about taking aspects of our life that we might have framed as weaknesses or “bad” and framing them as strengths and assets.

They are about helping us see how something we thought was bad is actually good, or something we always thought was good is bad, something we thought was ugly is actually beautiful.



Nicole Moen does a lot of work with people around the theme of Pilgrimage.

She often asks people if they’ve ever had the experience of looking at the front door of their home and having the urge to just walk out. Leave. Not come back. Even though they have no idea where they’re going. Many people feel incredibly guilty about this experience. How could they want to leave their loved ones and job responsibilities! Terrible! But Nicole invites them to see that urge not as something pulling them away from their own lives but deeper into a more true and authentic life – something that’s vital to pay attention to. If I had to sum the message up as “the call to walk out is a call to go in.”

The book *The Highly Sensitive Person* by Elaine N. Aron was written for people who have spent their entire lives feeling ashamed of how sensitive they are. Her book could be summed up in the phrase: “sensitivity is a strength.”

A message that has been incredibly meaningful to myself and to many of my clients came to me from Jeffrey Van Dyk. It was the notion that our truest niche is often a younger version of us. His particular wording? “Your deepest wounds might be a doorway into your truest niche.” People walk through their lives with these emotional wounds and struggles unsure what to do with them, and here Jeffrey is saying, “not only is this not a bad thing, it could be the doorway into your truest work in the world.”

# How to Identify Your Own Message

Sounds nice, but how do you identify what your message even is.

You sit with and do your best to answer the following questions.

I strongly recommend that you do this both on your own but also with a friend who's willing to interview you on each of these questions.

I'd also recommend they ask you each question at least five times to go deeper and deeper into what's true for you. Answer it once. Then sit in silence. Then answer it again, trying to take a deeper cut at it. Then sit in silence. Then answer it again.

# Worksheets

## Directional Messages – What You Should Do:

Fill in the blanks: “The best way to achieve \_\_\_\_\_ (goal) is \_\_\_\_\_ (approach).”

What matters most when working to achieve the result your clients are craving?

If you could just say three words to the people you most want to help and they’d instantly “get it,” what would those three words be?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Messages Of Possibility:

What do you see as possible that others don't?

What do your people see as impossible that isn't?

\_\_\_\_\_ can be \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. niching can be easy, marketing can be warm and honest)

\_\_\_\_\_ doesn't need to be \_\_\_\_\_ (it doesn't need to be this way, relationships don't need to be painful)

## Messages Of Reality:

What's the tough love, "real talk," wake up call that your people need to hear to snap them out of it?

Where are you people's expectations wildly out of whack with reality? What are the expectations they should just let go of entirely.

What are your people missing that prevents them from succeeding?

## Messages Of Necessity: “We Need To . . .”:

What do you think is required of your people, or the world, to really create what we want?

What’s the work that hasn’t been done that needs to be done?



## New Idea Messages:

What's the new, contrarian, out of the box idea you have that might blow people's minds if they heard it?

## Reframing Messages:

What's something that your people are most ashamed of that you actually see as a potential strength or resource for them?

## Other Questions To Ask Yourself To Identify Your Message:

If you could go back in time, what's the message you want to give the earlier version of yourself – what's the message that would have made the biggest difference for you to hear?

If you had to distill that message to the younger you into three words, what would it be?

What do you know about being human that, once you really understood it, made it easier?

What are you daring your clients to try?

Having lived through your story, and knowing the issues you most want to help these people with – what is the one message you MOST want the world to hear?

What are your favourite proverbs, maxims and aphorisms and quotes? Which ones do you keep coming back to that most deeply resonate with you? Might these hold a key to your message?

What's the truth about the nature of the problems they currently face?

What's the truth about what it will take to get what they want?

What do you most want people to know, to “get” deep down inside that it could almost change their DNA?

## The Core Message Of Your Business:

After sitting with all of these examples and questions, what would you say is the central, core message of your business? Use this page to brainstorm as many versions as you can think of.

## List Your Top Five Products And Services And The Core Message of Each

Each of your products and services, while under the umbrella of your business's core message, will likely have its own message. The core message of my business is "Marketing can feel good." but the core message of my Niching Program is "Niching doesn't have to be a struggle." and the core message of this book is the title, "Don't Market Yourself. Market Your Message."

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

## Worksheet: What To Do With Your Message

Once you've honed in on a message that you think works, it's time to put it to work. Here are a number of options of places you can employ it.

One of my colleagues, Janina, said it this way:

"I think I speak some form of my message with every client I talk to. My message influences every object I produce, and how I relate to people at work. A cornerstone, an essential assumption, a nucleation site forming crystals out of a random solution. My message goes deep, it's foundational. It's a reference point to use as a comparison — a way to check — am I staying true to my message? I just realized this: People don't have to understand my message in its entirety, all at once. That would be impossible. But that doesn't mean keep it a secret. It's compelling if they can experience at least one layer of it from the get go. It's quite a neat trick to find a way to express a taste of the message in one pithy line. Done well, that one line/first layer will resonate throughout the entirety of the work. That's why Mark Silver's statement has a special feeling to it: 'Every act of business can be an act of love' I'll bet you can ride that statement through all the levels of the Heart of Business experience, no matter what the program, that sentiment is still there, ringing true."

So, it's true that your message is a thread that weaves through everything, but here are five specific ways you can use it.

1. **Use it as the title of just about anything:** you could use your message as the title of a blog post, a book, a talk, a workshop or an email subject line
2. **Make it a refrain:** consider repeating it over and over in whatever medium it's in. Think of how Martin Luther King Jr. repeated the phrase, "I have a dream." in his talks. Another fine example of this can be found in Simon Sinek's TED Talk on How Great Leaders Inspire Action: [ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en)
3. **Find stories to back it up:** this is vital. If your message has any worth, then it has to prove itself and be demonstrable in the real world. Your message is the case you're trying to make. Your stories make the case.
4. **Find other content that expresses it:** certainly you can and should create unique content that expresses and embodies your message. But don't stop there. Find content created by others (e.g. memes, videos, articles) that expresses the same message and share that too.

5. **Create conversations about it:** a message can be something you invite a community to explore together vs. you trying to prove it. Engage everyone you know in conversations about it by posting questions about it on Facebook or Twitter. Ask people about their experience of it.

## Additional Recommended Reading:

*Point Of View Marketing: The Subtle, Underestimated & Credibility-Building Power of Articulating Why You Do What You Do The Way You Do It* - Tad Hargrave [marketingforhippies.com/povbook](http://marketingforhippies.com/povbook)

*The Niching Nest: Insights, Strategies and Unconventional Wisdom to Help You Find Comfort and Clarity in Your Niching Journey* by Tad Hargrave - [nichingspiral.com/nest](http://nichingspiral.com/nest)

*How to Craft Tweetable Quotes That Spread Your Content like Wildfire* - [boostblogtraffic.com/tweetable-quotes](http://boostblogtraffic.com/tweetable-quotes)



# Final Thoughts on Messaging

**Don't market yourself. Market your message.**

Your message is like the front door of your house.

It's the motto you'd paint on the side of your boat.

It's your coat of arms.

Your message is the mantra you repeat over and over again.

Your message is your distillation of a much broader and more articulated point of view.

Your message is the thing you never tire of speaking about.

Your message is the conversation you keep initiating with everyone you meet or steering towards in conversations you join.

Your message is the direction you want to see the world move.

Your message is the thing that you wish every one of your ideal clients could hear over and over again as they fell asleep at night.

Your message is what you wish you could whisper in the ear of your ideal clients when they are struggling the most.

Your message is the idea you're so passionate about that you can't help but want to plant its seeds everywhere.

Your message is the string you use to tie together the bouquet of wildflowers that is your business.

And it's so much more attractive to listen to than self promotion.

I remember years ago, I had a friend who would introduce himself to people, within thirty seconds, as being a shaman. Something about it always felt forced, flat and self-promotional. The beauty underneath it was that he was wanting to claim something. He was wanting to stand in the truth of this role. But it seemed to be driven by the need to be seen that way. He was leaning in on others hard and they would lean back. If you push, others will tend to push back or leave.

This is what happens when you market yourself. You're trying to make an impression on others and people don't want that. They want to discover you for themselves.

So lean back.

**Don't market yourself. Market your message.**

Stop talking about being a shaman and start talking about how everything is alive.

Stop talking about being a light worker and start talking about how everything is light.

Stop talking about being a life coach and start talking about how passionate you are about people designing their lifestyles more consciously.

Stop talking about being a permaculturist and start talking about how we could build our world to work more like nature.

Stop talking about being a massage therapist and start talking about how important self care is.

Stop promoting yourself and start talking about the message that lights you up.

If you do this, you may find that people are drawn to your passion, clarity and wisdom on this topic and that they, naturally, ask you, "This is all so interesting! So, what do you do?"

Take the time. Discover it. Hone it. You'll be glad you did.

**Don't market yourself. Market your message.**



## About the Author: Tad Hargrave

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

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

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

You can learn more about Tad and his work at [marketingforhippies.com](http://marketingforhippies.com) and [nichingspiral.com](http://nichingspiral.com)