

# The Art of the Full House

67 real world, zero-hype, proven ideas  
on how to sell out your next workshops,  
retreats and events

*"Gathering places have played a major role in building the relationships that have given birth to movement organizing. From coast to coast there are examples of thriving places that facilitate new levels of relationship building and community dialogue, places where voices are heard, spirit felt, and powerful new directions forged. Some spaces are a twist on the familiar; others are the result of radical re-visioning of what walls and a roof can provide for the community."*

— Claudia Horwitz

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# Introduction

Your situation: you've got a workshop coming up soon and you don't have the numbers to make it fly.

Maybe you've already put money down on the space. Maybe you've sunk a lot of time and money into this event and you're counting on it for revenue. To make things worse, you've done everything that you can think to do to fill it. And your room is still, basically, empty.

This shit is stressful.

What difference does it make if you've designed a brilliant workshop if no one ever attends it?

I know, I know . . . you're not in it for the money — you just want to make a difference. But make a difference to whom? If no one comes — are you really making a difference? And if no one comes and you go so broke you can't keep doing it . . . you feel me?

Have you had this experience before?

I've been there and it's incredibly disheartening. I've done workshops that no one showed up to. I've done workshops that only two people showed up to.

I've hosted parties and events that oversold the venue so hard we weren't allowed to accept anyone else and I've hosted event where twelve people I didn't even like showed up and I couldn't leave because I was the host.

Writing this ebook has been a tremendous relief.

If you're reading it then, you're either an entrepreneur whose income relies on promoting your workshops, seminars and retreats or you're a society, non-profit or community group who advances their mission using parties, conferences, gatherings, summits or festivals.

Either way, you need to get people out to your events.

So, who am I to say anything about this all?

Frankly, if there's any area in which I feel qualified in the world of marketing, it's this.

Ever since High School, I've been putting on and promoting events.

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For over 20 years, since 1995, I have had a direct hand in promoting well over 400 events that have reached thousands of people both locally and from all over the world.

This wasn't something I realized until a few years when I looked back and saw how, through so much of my life I've been involved in the hustle of promoting events.

In High School it began my becoming **Student Council** president, running pep rallies and doing our best to hype up the school dances so that people would actually come.

In Grade 10, I got involved in a **sketch comedy troupe** called Gordon's Big Bald Head and we'd hustle to get people to our Fringe Festival shows.

When I graduated from High School, I started a business called **The School Revolution**. I led day long, leadership workshops around Alberta for members of high school student councils that were all about how to increase the school spirit in their schools. I ended up leading 80 of them. Doing these I learned about writing good sales letters, offering upsells and downsells, how to talk to potential customers on the phone, and how to promote events.

Then I moved to Santa Cruz, California in 1995 where I worked with a non-profit and helped them promote their **youth environmental and social justice oriented summer camps** all around North America.

In 1999, I founded **the Jams** program with yesworld.org which brought together leading young changemakers from all around the world to gather in groups of about 25 for a week. This taught me a tonne about how to reach and fill events with people who are already in high demand.

Somewhere around 2001, I began my business **Marketing for Hippies** and began to learn how hard it was to promote workshops. But, in doing this, I learned a tonne about touring and taking workshops on the road. I learned a lot about what it took to actually fill rooms and about how crucial it was to identify and court the support of local hubs and influencers.

It also showed me the power of **hosting parties** for clients, potential clients and local influencers as a way to grow my business. I had up to 70 local movers and shakers at some of my parties.

In 2007, I realized that all of my favourite people, somehow, didn't know each other. And so I invited them all together for a potluck at my place. It went so well that I've been doing them once per month since. These days, **my potlucks** have between 40 and 50 people in attendance. This has taught me a lot about how to curate a crowd and how to use judicious texting and handbiling to promote events.

In 2010 or so, I co-founded **Green Drinks** in Edmonton. It was a monthly event bringing together progressive, forward thinking, local loving, sustainability minded Edmontonians. This taught me about how to promote regular social events that aren't workshops. Myself and my friend Hannah packed the house with 150 people month after month, selling out those events. Some months were up and some were down. Doing these nights showed me the importance of building up your email list and having niched themes for ongoing events.

Doing Green Drinks gave me the idea to found **Indigo Drinks** in 2012, a monthly mixer for folks in the holistic scene where I was able to apply the same practices to get monthly events of 60 to 80 people at a local elixir bar.

In the summer of 2012, I started up a secret project you had to be on my text list to hear about – **StreetcarShows.com**. The idea was simple: I would rent out a 100 year old, wooden streetcar (with a capacity of 32) and host a local musician to play on it at sunset while it was parked on the 100 year old High Level Bridge over the Edmonton river valley. I sold out ten shows the first summer, fifteen shows the next summer and then passed the project onto a friend of mine who did 18 the summer following and twenty in the summer of 2015. Doing this taught me about the power of a cool and unusual venue as well as the power of making events secret.

Also in the summer of 2012, I co-founded **The Good 100 Experiment** with my friend Nadine Riopel which was an annual community building event for local leaders and change makers in Edmonton. I applied everything I'd learned from the Jams and Green Drinks and led four events with an average of 70 local heavy-hitters at each.

On top of all of that, this past twenty years has seen me consulting with dozens of others directly on how to get full houses at their events, sharing notes with colleagues on their best practices and attending hundreds of events and taking notes on what they were doing that worked and didn't work.

### **The Three Keys to Successful Events:**

There are three aspects you need to have in place to make good money doing events.

**Marketing:** getting people into to the event.

**Content:** making sure it's a really good event.

**Sustainability:** Figuring out a business model of how your events can financially sustain over the long term.

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So many workshop facilitators focus entirely on improving the workshop and making it better – when they should probably be focusing on the marketing. They go to get more certifications. They learn different modalities. They get more education. They do a Toastmaster’s training. They attend a facilitation training. If you focus on facilitation and sustainability – sure, you’ll have a great thing but no one to show it to.

The marketing somehow gets left out of this.

This eBook isn't a complete system.

There's no such thing. I have had so many clients sign up for programs that promised to give them turn key systems for promoting their events only to, eventually, be asked to turn from a therapist into a business coach (because the person running the training was a business coach and that’s all they knew how to teach).

There's no such thing as a turn key system that works for everyone. There’s just a commitment to fill your events backed up with hustle and a commitment to create systems to make it easier every time.

Having said that, it’s always good to get some additional perspectives and real-world ideas.

So, The Art of the Full House is a collection of my best ideas on the marketing side of running events (with a few ideas here and there on content and sustainability).

I hope this is helpful.

Warmest,  
Tad

### Additional Resources:

[marketingforhippies.com/intro](http://marketingforhippies.com/intro)

# Section I: Marketing Foundations for Workshops

## Idea #1: Slow down and get centred

My colleague Jason Guile offers this, *“Slow yourself down enough to be creative and to listen. Creativity and guidance will arise, if you’re a space for them.”*

This is a big one and is a core premise that my program The Meantime, a 30-day cashflow crisis challenge, is based on. If you’re in a crisis, the first thing to do is to create space.

The first kind of space I recommend creating is physical. Tidy your office. Get your things organized. And then create as much emotional, social and financial space as you can. Get some breathing room. Exercise, meditate, get out of every commitment you can. Clear your calendar so you can focus. Coming from a place of desperation and panic is a bad idea when you’re marketing something.



## Idea #2: Make a promotional plan & calendar

This is, perhaps, one of the most important practices to ensure your event fills: having a plan to fill it.

In fact, to quote my colleague Callan Rush, “Don’t do an event you don’t have a plan to fill.”



Hoping and praying that your event will fill is not a plan. It’s likely better to do fewer events that go well than to try and do a bunch of events that have only a few people. For a lot of reasons. Doing fewer but fuller workshops means you’ll save time, have more fun, feel more successful, make more money and just seem a like a bit more of a big deal. I have often been guilty of this one: booking an event and then giving a half assed attempt to fill it.

If you’re going to do it – why not do it right?

Less is more.

But let me take this a step further. I wouldn’t suggest doing an event that you don’t have a plan to *over* fill. When you take the time to sit down and craft such a plan, you may be surprised with how confident and how your neediness vanishes.

The challenge with this is that most people have no idea what it actually takes to fill and event and so often their plans are inadequate which leads to their feeling like failures.

How much time do you need to promote an event?

I suggest that from the moment of finalizing the date and venue that you will want a *minimum of six weeks and, ideally, three months to promote your event*. For some events even more lead time is needed.

That will depend on how much ground work you have already laid. If you already have your sales letters written, posters made, social media plan laid out and prewritten, hubs database created, intro workshops scheduled etc. then six weeks might be solid. But if you’re having to create everything, I wouldn’t even consider less than three months.

Make sure you give yourself enough time. Make sure you lay it all out and think it through so that, when you look at your plan, you can feel totally confident that you will fill the event.

## Idea #3: Don't rely on passive word of mouth

Okay. A big one here.

So many workshop leaders just sort of “hope” that people will talk about their workshops. When I ask them how people hear about their business they say, “Word of mouth”. But what they mean is that they do stuff and hope people will talk about it. But hope is not a strategy.

There's an important distinction to be made between active and passive word of mouth. Passive is the above. Active word of mouth means getting strategic about how to *support* people in spreading the word.

Now, this gets into the very sticky waters of affiliate marketing which is a bigger conversation — but suffice it to say that ending your workshop with, “I'd be grateful if you spread the word,” is not a killer marketing strategy.

Many of my colleagues uses the terms “word of mouth” and “affiliate” marketing synonymously. And I think they're totally different.

What makes Word of Mouth work is the *independence* in it. As soon as someone's getting paid to say something, it's no longer word of mouth. It's a sales job. You're bribing people to spread the word.

If you pick a few hand-selected hubs (I'll speak about my idea of hubs later in this book) to help you promote your event and you offer them an incentive to help you promote the event then you've created an affiliate or joint venture relationship. It's a business to business strategic alliance. Beautiful.

But that's not word of mouth. And word of mouth is vital. It must be central to your marketing plans.

That doesn't make it bad or wrong — but it does make it *different*.

Now, how do you support them in spreading the word? You'll learn plenty of practical approaches in the pages to come but for now it's enough to know that relying on passive word of mouth is not the answer.

### Additional Reading About Hubs:

[marketingforhippies.com/top-hub-marketing-posts](http://marketingforhippies.com/top-hub-marketing-posts)

## Idea #4: Give tools to your promoters

People love you. They want to spread the word for you. Don't make them do all the work. The less work they have to do, the more likely they are to do it. Make it easy for them. You want to give them tools they can use to help spread the word about you and your events.

These tools could include:

- **pre-written email copy:** something they can cut and paste and send to their friends.
- **give them phrases to say (and not say):** Sometimes your clients will want to talk about what you do but won't, because they don't know *how*. Or worse — they think they do and they say the wrong things. Help them understand what to say and what *not* to say. Support them so they don't scare business away from you — especially if you do edgy exercises in your events. You don't necessarily want a client running around saying, “*Oh my God. Everyone totally gets naked at one part in the workshop!*” or “*My husband and I had such a breakthrough – we were screaming at each other and beating each other with these pool noodles!*” Might just scare the shit out of people. Sometimes this explanation can be done one on one or at the end of the workshop.
- **website:** a simple, easy to remember website to send people to
- **flyers:** a simple, trifold flyer or postcard or handbill they can hand out
- **posters:** something they can put up in their shop or holistic centre
- **tickets:** and if you fully want to turn your whole crowd into affiliates (really not my thing) then you can get printed tickets that you give to your affiliates one to one (you can go to Ticketmaster to get cheap and great looking tickets). At Callan's intro workshop — you could either pay \$15 at the door or attend for free with a ticket from one of her affiliates.

Make sure they know how to use the tools you've given them. For example, “*When you pass out this ticket – make sure that they call this toll free number – otherwise they pay \$15 at the door.*” Or “*When you go to this web page make sure you click on the PURPLE box.*” Again: make it easy for them.



## Idea #5: Give your promoters rewards

Here's where things get a bit edgier and controversial.

My colleague Callan Rush (a genius at workshop promotion) feels that you must have a simple reward based system to encourage your affiliates to promote for you otherwise the “word spreading” starts to dwindle. Her belief is that intrinsic motivation will only go so far.

There's a discussion to be had on that but here's where I totally agree with Callan.

We need to remember our graciousness and our human nature.

If we're asking for people to spread the word for us and they do and they never get any acknowledgement from us whatsoever . . . that feels so terrible. No one likes to be taken for granted. If someone is putting out a vibe like they're entitled to get all of this support and feel no need to thank people – that's just arrogant.

Callan emphasizes that these treats and rewards don't have to be cash and sometimes they shouldn't be.

But consider just a few of your options:

- **Cash:** if your work and your crowd is all about money, business etc. you might just want to give them money. They might feel totally fine about that. If you're into the health, holistic healing, spirituality or relationship track – watch out – offering your people money might totally backfire and have them feeling really uncomfortable to tell people. Also, you can then give them a bit of coaching on how to talk about the reward. That could sound something like, *“so I get paid if you go – and I'm totally willing to do something else with this money. We could split it, give it to charity etc. I just wanted you to know how they set it up. What do you think we should do?”*
- **Discounts on Your Program:** maybe they might want to attend some of your workshops but not have the money. But, if they got \$100 per referral from you towards their participation in your programs, then they might be more motivated knowing that, if they refer ten people they can come to your weekend workshop for free.
- **Personal Phone Call to thank and give support:** *“Hey you just referred five people and I'd love to give you 20 minutes of my time on the phone whenever you want it.”*
- **Free workshops for affiliates:** What a lovely idea! *“You've been such a huge support that I want to invite you to an intimate little workshop coming up just for yourself and the others who've been such a support. Just my way of saying thanks.”*

- **Personal Email:** You know, especially if you're a bit of a personality sometimes the biggest reward for people is just a bit of personal connection with you.
- **Personalized gifts in the mail:** Sometimes a little thoughtful something (e.g. little candle with a card *"Thank you. You really light up my life."*, or buying someone a gift certificate to a local shop can go a long way)
- **Surprise free coaching days:** Every once in a while, I surprise my favourite clients with a free coaching day. *"Call in and get 30 minutes of free coaching today!"*
- **Surprise them with a free session:** What if, at the end of a session, when they went to pay you, you said, *"no charge for today's session, you've sent me so much business. Your money's no good here today."*

The key: pick some form of acknowledgment that feels appropriate, meaningful and exciting to your people. Something that will have them feel really honoured and appreciated.

My colleague PJ van Hulle gives anyone who stays to the very end of her workshop two super classy gift certificates that expire in two months that they can use to re-attend her workshop or pass onto friends.

Tammy Johnston of Calgary's Financial Guides built her business mostly on one simple move. She would lead her day long, content rich Financial Journeys workshop which would leave her students utterly floored and impressed and then she would give them each two free passes to a future one. Her workshop cost \$50 per person or \$75 for a couple. So, at the end, she'd say something like, *"I hope this workshop was useful to you. If you got value from this workshop and you can think of a couple who might benefit from it, I'd like to give you two free tickets to pass onto them to come to this workshop in the future."* She wasn't begging. She wasn't giving them ten each and asking them to spread the word. She just gave two. Eventually almost everyone at those workshops was coming on free passes. And, given the fact that at least 70% of them would become clients of hers, she did just fine.

Paddi Lund, a maverick dentist from Australia, built his private practice in the following way (and there's so much more to this story which you can learn at [PaddiLund.com](http://PaddiLund.com)). Once he'd seen a client enough times to form a real opinion of them, he would give them two "golden tickets" and explain something like the following to them, *"As you know, I don't advertise my practice. The only way that people hear about me is they have met me personally or been referred by clients I trust. And so I'm giving you these two golden tickets. They are each worth a space in my practice. You will only ever get two. The only thing I ask is that you give them to people of a similar calibre to yourself."*

## Idea #6: Don't just market to the 3% who are ready to buy right now

Here's a notion from Chet Holmes' company Empire Research that I heard from Callan Rush as well:

Think of your ideal clients. The people in your niche. Your target market. Now think of all the people in your town (or wherever you want to tour your workshops) who fit into that group. There are likely a lot of them.

But here's the bad news (and consider these statistics as, perhaps, not entirely precise for your situation but likely suggestive of the general trends).

97% of your ideal clients are *not* looking for my product, program or service right now.

**Only 3% are actively looking for your solution.** They're googling it at 3am. They are super, actively looking for a solution to their problems. And everyone is fighting over this 3%. Every other workshop leader is trying to reach these same people.

And so they put their marketing out to reach these people.

*"Hypnosis workshop!"*

*"Buy our technology."*

*"All 2010 Model Cars Must Go! 0% Financing."*

*"Non Violent Communication Workshop."*

*"Learn Reiki."*

And it's not that this kind of marketing *doesn't* work. It does. It absolutely reaches and works on that 3% of your ideal clients. But it's ignored by everyone else. Ouch. This means your marketing might be being totally ignored by 97% of your target market.

**7% are open to your product, program or service.** They've heard about the kind of thing you do. They're genuinely curious about it.

**30% are aware for future.** They know they need you or someone like you — but it's sometime down the road. They tell themselves, *"I'll need a new car when we have kids."* But that time hasn't come yet. Or they think, *"When this crunch time at work is over I'm going to get back into yoga."* Or, *"When I stop traveling I'm going to buy a house."*

**30% are totally unconscious.** When you meet them it's clear that they have a problem you can help them solve – but they have *no* awareness they need it. They might not even know they have a problem. It's like someone with bad breath. *You* know they need a tick tack but they have no idea. Or someone with anger issues who's convinced their problem is everyone else.

They may or may not have any overt symptoms but those symptoms are likely not understood. Like, they know they have stomach pains all the time – but they don't realize that it's because they're celiac. Or they notice that their romantic partner has lost interest in them but they don't see how this loss of interest was triggered by their domineering nature and inability to communicate.

In short, they lack the proper context for their symptoms. And so often they ignore them entirely.

**30% are just a “NO!”** They're just closed to it. Maybe it's because they live too far away, they'll never be able to afford it or they've already hired someone else. With these people you need to just bless and release.

**The Bottom Line:** 67% of these people are not really being marketed to. They're being ignored by everyone else leading workshops.

But the way you market to the 67% who are open, aware or unconscious is very, very different than the way you market to people who are totally ready to buy. It's a slower turn around. It involves more trust building and more being a generosity based business to start.

Callan has some bang on perspectives on how you reach these people (and you'll learn some as you read on). They were so good I was actually shocked to hear them because it's a rare perspective that most marketers don't understand. You can learn more about her and her work here: [callanrush.com](http://callanrush.com)

**The Bottom Line:** your marketing must start building a relationship with people well before they're at a place where they are ready or wanting to buy (from you or anybody). If you can begin the process of building trust now – when the time comes for them to spend their time and money with someone, you have a decisive advantage.

## Idea #7: Identify your hubs and ask for their help



The notion of hubs has, since the beginning, been my core understanding of how marketing works. Instead of reaching out to people cold, can you find people who already have warm connections with the people *you'd* like to reach and have them support you in connecting with them? The clearer your niche is, the easier this will be to do.

So, if someone was doing a workshop on how to get over heartbreak, I'd be wanting to reach out to all of the counsellors, therapists, holistic practitioners, yoga teachers, relationship coaches etc. that I could find to see if they could help me spread the word.

If someone was doing a workshop about how to make more money, then I'd be wanting to reach out to all of the financial advisors, business coaches, marketing workshop leaders, small business networking groups, local chambers of commerce and people who run those types of meet up groups.

Again: the clearer the niche is, the easier it will be to hone in on the right hubs.

My colleague Tova Payne, who knows a lot about the best way to approach hubs, says, *"If it was me – I'd write every person I know personally to help me spread the word and tell their friends about it. We all need help sometimes, and it's ok to ask for it."*

Jason Guille of Sunset Labs makes a point that is transferable to many of the other ideas, *"be transparent – don't be afraid to let your community know where you're at, why you're there, and the difference their participation makes for you and your work."*

My dear friend and colleague Carmen Spagnola put a different twist on this, *"In addition to calling or emailing people to personally invite them, I've contacted leaders of community organizations to see if there's anyone they know who'd benefit but can't manage the fee. I've then gifted them a ticket to sponsor that person. (So they'd contact the person and say, hey our organization would like to give you a scholarship/ sponsorship to attend this workshop that looks like a great opportunity for you). I let that leader know I'd love them to attend and asked if they could invite their team and members of their community. Sometimes they've even offered to send out an e-blast on my behalf and it's worked for me every time. There are so many benefits this way: sponsorship for those in need, greater exposure for me, the glow of endorsement from a community*

*organization, the ability of an organization to help someone out at no cost to them. It's always felt wonderful for me."*

An important piece here is to not only ask them to spread the word but to ask for their advice on how they think you could best spread the word. They will likely have gold to give you.

And, with hubs especially, this is a very good place to offer an affiliate fee or commission for anyone who signs up as a result of their efforts. This doesn't have to be fancy or formal. You don't need affiliate codes or some intricate online tracking system. You can just ask participants how they heard about it when they sign up and make a note of it. The more worthwhile you make it for a hub, the more likely they are to make time in what I can promise you is there already very busy schedule.

Don't write off sending, snail mail to important groups with a personal note and some fliers for them to post.

When promoting Stephen Jenkinson's talk and workshop on death and dying in Edmonton, hubs that got approached were long-term health care facilities; assisted living; hospices; home-health providers; libraries; and churches. That way they could post the info for their staff. Cemeteries and monument people; funeral directors; nursing and social work schools; teachers; students; churches too (such as First Unitarian, First Congregational, etc. — social justice folks); and the local holistic scene were also approached to share the news with their staff and communities. You'll be able to read the actual email series I sent out to them to promote the event at the end of this ebook.

## **Additional Reading on Hubs:**

[marketingforhippies.com/top-hub-marketing-posts](http://marketingforhippies.com/top-hub-marketing-posts)

## Idea #8: Risk reversals and guarantees

This is a big one that deserves more space than I'm going to give it here, but the nutshell is this: one of the major reasons people aren't signing up for your workshop is that they perceive certain risks to doing so. If you can accurately identify and effectively deal with those risks you will see an immediate spike in enrolments. The big question is, "how can you make it safer for them to sign up?"

The principle idea is this: whenever someone buys something, they are being asked to take on some of, all of, or more than all of the risk in the interaction. It's not the seller who's taking the risk, it's the buyer. As the old saying goes, "Caveat emptor."

The more clearly and powerfully you can identify what the risks are, real or imagined, that people perceive in doing business with you, the better.

Your capacity to identify and reduce, eliminate or even reverse the risks they perceive in attending your workshop is central to the response you'll get.

But it begs the question, "What are the risks people perceive in attending your workshop?"

**Here's a list to start you off:**

- It won't work and won't be worth the time and money
- I'll be embarrassed
- My friends or colleagues will find out that I went to it and make fun of me
- It'll make things worse
- I'll be forced to do things I don't want to do
- I won't like the other people there
- It'll be a waste of time
- I'm already going to know everything
- Is this a cult?

Once you've identified the risks that people perceive, then you need to figure out ways to address them. The strategy will take depends entirely on the risk but here are some ways to go about it. It's worth noting that many of the other strategies in this ebook also directly or indirectly address this.

However, to distill it down, let's dive into some specific approaches to consider:

- **Running a 2-3 hour intro workshop:** this is, hands down, the most important, direct and powerful way you can reduce the risks people perceive in signing up for your weekend or other multi-day workshops. It gives them a taste.

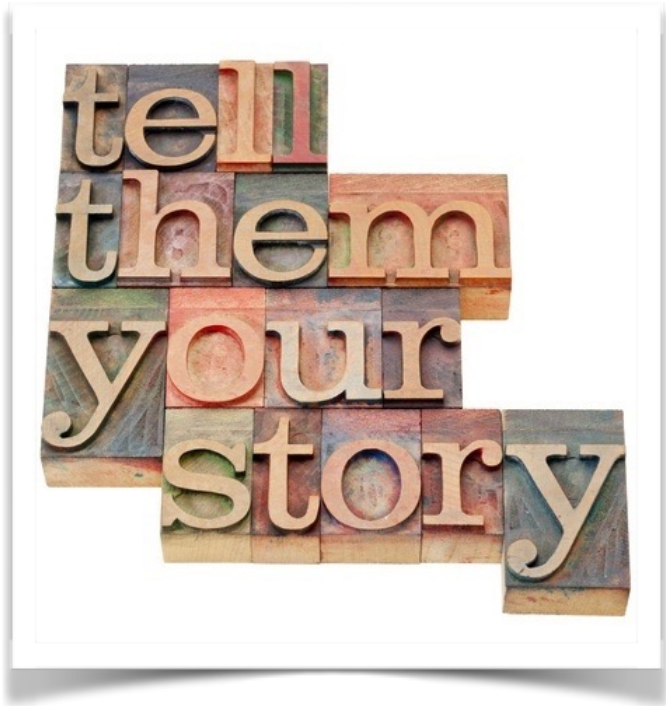
- **A strong sales letter:** a strong, well written sales letter will do more to alleviate anxiety and fear than most things, and the best guide I know of to writing sales letters is Carrie Klassen's ebook *Selling Sweetly* which you can find at this link: [pinkelephantacademy.com/how-to-write-a-sales-page-the-sweetly-selling-workbook/](http://pinkelephantacademy.com/how-to-write-a-sales-page-the-sweetly-selling-workbook/)
- **Speak directly to the risks:** this one is a thread that can weave through all of the others, but the idea here is to not speak to how you handle these risks in the footnotes of your sales letter but in the headlines. Tackle these directly. Don't pretend they don't exist. Name them and tell them everything you're going to do to address them. Be specific.
- **Your website:** having a strong website with a lot of free content for people to check out.
- **Payment plans:** if your workshop is on the pricier end, consider offering the possibility of a payment option where they can spread their payment out over time.
- **Public speaking:** if someone sees you speaking live at an event and like you and what you have to say, it will be much easier to get them to sign up for your longer workshops.
- **Testimonials from past participants:** this is so standard but it's vital that people can read example after example of the tangible impacts your work has had on people. These testimonials will be especially powerful if they voice the fears and concerns that the reader is feeling (e.g. "I was so scared that I was going to be forced to do things I didn't feel comfortable but I've never been treated with such respect and dignity in my life.")
- **Video:** a 2-7 minute video of the workshop that gives people the feel of the event and some of the content.
- **A story-based write up of the event:** you can see one in Idea #10 (the next chapter!) section of this ebook.
- **A strong guarantee:** if people know that, if it doesn't work they'll get their money back, it's a powerful incentive for them to be willing to take the risk. It lets them know that you stand behind your work.
- **A better than money back guarantee:** For my Meantime program (a 30-day cashflow challenge) I offer people an unconditional guarantee if they ever, for any reasons, feel like that they didn't get their money's worth. And, if they complete the program and it doesn't work for them I not only refund their money but also offer them \$100 on top of that out of my own pocket. You can learn more at [marketingforhippies.com/meantime30day](http://marketingforhippies.com/meantime30day)

- **Running the workshop on a pay-what-you-can basis:** I've run most of my live day-long or weekend-long marketing workshops on a modified "pay-what-you-can" basis where people put down either a \$25 deposit (day-long workshop) or a \$100 deposit (weekend workshop) and then they would pay me whatever they want to on top of that at the end of the workshop. However, this isn't totally risk free, it just changes the risk to a more manageable one of, "What if I pay him too little and he's offended?"
- **A strong referral/word-of-mouth program:** this is different than an affiliate program where you, in essence, pay people to talk about you. This is where you invite your friends, past clients and workshop attendees to help you spread the word (often by providing them with pre-written emails and social media posts).
- **Make your promises more believable:** make sure that you're not promising anything you can't deliver. Promising things that sound like hype will immediately make people suspicious and reticent about signing up for your workshop. The more specific and honest the results you're offering are, the better. Offering, "Total transformation," or "enlightenment" does not land as anything real. I recall one holistic nutrition workshop that had, as one of its bullet points, "come and learn the possibilities and limitations of holistic nutrition." I loved the honesty of that.

## Idea #9: Tell them a story

So, you need to describe your workshops to people. But they are . . . complicated. One of the best ways to do this is to tell them a story. Help describe the experience in such rich and vivid detail that they really, really “get” what it’s going to be like to be there.

It’s not about just listing features and benefits and what you’re going to give them – but what they’re going to *receive*. Not focusing only on the content you’re giving them, but on the context they’ll be *experiencing*. It’s about immersing their imagination into it before they have to risk spending their time and money. It’s about humanizing it.



There are so many seminars and workshops available. There will be more and more every year and, being real, many with the virtually identical content. So, focus on the “experience” pieces. Who else will be there? What kind of food will be served? Are there any parties included? Morning yoga? What could make it so special? What makes it memorable? If you pick a cool and unusual venue this can help draw people. Don’t focus on the content alone.

When you tell stories like this it warms your marketing right up. It’s like serving your marketing with a nice, wool sweater and cup of herbal tea.

Years ago, I wrote up something for my weekend Marketing 101 for Holistic Practitioners workshop and I shared it with one of my favourite marketing colleagues, Carrie Klassen of Pink Elephant Communications. She read it and said, *“All day long, I am telling clients, ‘tell me what to expect . . . tell me what it will look like and what it will feel like . . . make me already there . . . be kind and set me at ease. Tell me a story!’”*

Here’s what wrote:

### Here’s what Your Weekend Might Look Like:

Let me paint the scene . . .

## The Art of The Full House

On **Friday night** you arrive from a busy day excited about the weekend. The workshop space is naturally lit, beautiful and casual (maybe a community hall or funky university classroom or a room at a local arts centre – definitely not a Hotel Meeting Room). Slowly people start to arrive. And they're all people like you. They're quirky, fun, open-minded and excited to meet you. You grab a seat at a table where you're joined by four others and you all start chatting right away. You like these people.



The facilitator (that's me!) grabs a seat at the front of the room and warmly welcomes you to the weekend. "For this weekend," he says, "Your marketing is my problem." You immediately relax.

You then take about a minute each to introduce yourselves to the whole group – who you are and what you do. You're happy it's done in a casual and relaxed way instead of those forced and lame icebreakers some people make you do. And, not once are you asked to high five your neighbour. Thank. Goodness.

This is followed by ten minutes in small groups where you share where you're struggling. You're surprised to hear your story being repeated by everyone at the table. All of the problems you're struggling with, they're also struggling with. It feels so good not to feel alone or crazy. It seems everyone's got the same issues.



Then the facilitator gets up and starts to go over The Journey (watch the nine minute video above to see it for yourself now). And things start clicking into place for you. Suddenly years of fuzziness around marketing start to come into focus.

With that framework in place, you're invited to find a partner and "interview" each other. It's still early in the weekend – so you pick someone safe to work with. You find a quiet area of the room and begin the interview process. Over the next thirty minutes, your partner asks your four questions: where do you want to be with your marketing? Where are you now? What's in the gap? What do you already know you need to do? They're such simple questions but as you speak, you

begin to realize, “No one’s ever really asked me these questions before! I’ve never really, really thought about all of this.” You start to answer but the more you speak the deeper you go.

Thankfully your partner has been instructed that they’re not allowed to give you any advice. They’re just there to listen and ask questions that might help you get clearer about the nature of your own situation.

By the end of the 30 minutes — you’re not where you thought you’d be. The things you started with only half an hour ago were only the surface — and you’ve had the chance to go several levels deeper. You’ve actually never felt so clear.

Wow. It feels good to be listened to.

The evening wraps up some leisurely time to talk about the exercise and ask any questions that are on you mind. You go home — your mind feeling clearer but stimulated. You have a great sleep.

You show up at a very civilized **10am on Saturday** morning (you’re so glad he doesn’t start his workshops at 8am) and the day starts with a casual conversation to see if there are any questions since the evening before. You’re really enjoying the casual but focused pacing of the weekend.

Over the day, you learn about the Top Ten Must Have Tools for any practitioner to grow their practice. You’re happy to discover that you already have some of them! And some you never even thought of. But it feels great to at least know what’s missing and where you can improve what you’ve got.

In the morning you talk about the first four tools: Specialization, Website, Photo and Bio. It all makes sense and you can begin to feel the gears turning. Already, you feel like you’ve learned more about marketing than you have since you started your career.

Lunch comes at 1pm and you’re delighted to find it’s an hour and half. You hate rushed meal times at lunches. You all trundle out to that local, organic cafe that you love. The one with the great soups. You enjoy a relaxed meal together — the conversation shifting easily from what you learned this morning to good old fashioned getting to know each other. And . . . these people are amazing. Even that person you were secretly annoyed by on Friday night — you’re warming to. What a story she has!



## The Art of The Full House

You enjoy a leisurely walk back to the workshop space and are invited to sit with some new people.

**Saturday afternoon begins.** And then for the next ninety minutes you delve deep into that thing that's been frustrating you for years. How you articulate and describe what you do. You've pulled your hair out over this one for a long time and seen a lot of people go glassy eyed and say, "that's interesting . . ." They didn't get it.

You learn the two main things that make people confused and then you're given a simple, six step, fill in the blanks template to articulate what you do. And it makes sense! You really like it.

So, you go around your table with everyone doing their best to fill in the blanks for their business. And people start nodding. You find yourself looking at that new age practitioner across the table and thinking, "oh! NOW I get what you do." (of course – you never told her you didn't understand her explanation on Friday night – no one ever does). When it comes to you, you do your best and you see a similar reaction. Oh my god! People are actually getting it!



To make it better, after each person goes – you're invited to take a few minutes to share what you noticed worked and didn't work. When it comes to you, you're nervous. But to your delight much of the feedback is really positive, "I loved this part of your story!" says one fellow. "I love how clear you were about the problem you solve," says a woman across from you. And then they also share where it didn't work for them – and you have to agree. They give you some suggestions on how to improve it and you begin to feel excited to try this out on your friends.

You take a 15 minute break and when you come back, someone from the group has been invited to lead a 5 minute energizing stretch.

Over the rest of the day you cover the remaining five tools: your database, your hubs database (don't worry you'll learn all about what "hubs" are a little further down in the letter), testimonials and case studies, email newsletters and sales funnels. It's a lot to take in, but it all makes sense.

The day ends at 6:30pm and you trundle off to dinner with some of the new friends you've met. Your brain feels full – but in a good way.

Then **Saturday evening at 8pm**, you grab a bottle of locally made, organic wine and make your way over to this cool, local community space for that evening's Indigo Drinks. It's a casually catered

party for the participants of the weekend plus other local leaders in the holistic field. You've wanted to meet a bunch of these people for years now: there's the woman who runs the local holistic magazine, the fellow who opened up that new centre everyone's talking about, the fellow who runs the local holistic association and even your favourite yoga teacher will be there! You wouldn't miss it for the world.

The evening is filled with delightful people, sparkling conversation and new connections. You really enjoy the time to just hang out with your classmates without having to talk about marketing or business. At around 9pm, everyone gets into a cozy little circle and has thirty seconds to introduce themselves and what they're up to. And that quiet lady who you hadn't met yet ends up sharing a project that is exactly what you'd been thinking of yourself! As soon as the circle breaks, you make a bee-line for her and discover you're kindred spirits.

You stay up a little later than intended but eventually make it home and go to sleep excited for the last day of the workshop.



On **Sunday morning at 10am**, you show up so excited to begin the day. Again, it starts with some open time for questions. And then you dive into the part of the weekend you've been most excited about: The Top Ten Marketing Paths. Tad explains that there are really only ten ways he knows of to get clients. And that they ALL work. They only question is: "which one is the best fit for you?" This is a huge relief for you. You've been to other workshops and teleseminars where they spent hours telling you, "You have to use social media!" or "You have to start doing workshops." And that had you feeling horrible. After all, you hate doing those things.

Over the day, you learn about the different paths available to you. You learn about: writing, presenting, networking, PR, social media, advertising, online presentations, client care, hosting and doing free sessions.

By **Sunday afternoon** three of those jump out at you as the most exciting. To your delight, you're encouraged to mostly forget about the other ones and focus on those three. "I can do this!" you think to yourself. And for the first time in years, marketing. feels. fun.

By the end of the day, your brain feels full. And thankfully, the day ends with you taking some time to review your notes and plan out your next steps. Immediately, you feel less overwhelmed and a clear sense of direction. You've made such wonderful connections with people and you make arrangements to follow up with some of them to work on your marketing together.

You decided to attend on the pay-what-you-can basis and you're nervous that what you're paying isn't enough. You'd like to give more — but you're reassured that whatever you pay is perfect. And you get that Tad really means it. You slip your payment in an envelope and put it in his bag at the front like he asked you to and, after a few hugs, make your way home.

What a great weekend.



## Additional Resources:

For Events, Promote the Why by Corwin Hiebert

[eventbrite.com/blog/ds00-guest-post-for-events-promote-the-why/](https://eventbrite.com/blog/ds00-guest-post-for-events-promote-the-why/)

## Idea #10: Rework your sales letter

When I first met Verge Permaculture and they were struggling to fill up their summer Permaculture Design Certification, the first thing I did was to see if they could do some intro workshops.



Their schedule didn't allow it but they told me that their sales letter was, in fact, getting some traffic on their website. The challenge was that no one was buying.

And, looking at their sales letter, I could tell why. It was full of jargon. It was them talking about their boat but not about the journey it could take them on.

We sat down and rewrote it and, since then, as you'll see below, they've taken it much farther.

If you are running a workshop, the work on your sales letter. This ebook isn't a definitive course on sales letters but there are some helpful resources for you below to get you started.

### Additional Resources:

The best resource I know of to do this is Carrie Klassen's Sweetly Selling ebook on how to write sales letters: [pinkelephantacademy.com/how-to-write-a-sales-page-the-sweetly-selling-workbook](http://pinkelephantacademy.com/how-to-write-a-sales-page-the-sweetly-selling-workbook)

You can also read my blog post A 14 Point Outline of a Solid Salesletter: [marketingforhippies.com/salesletter](http://marketingforhippies.com/salesletter)

And I urge you to read Verge Permaculture's new and amazing sales letter here: [vergepermaculture.ca/blog/events/permaculture-design-certificate-invermere-intensive-2016](http://vergepermaculture.ca/blog/events/permaculture-design-certificate-invermere-intensive-2016)

## Idea #11: Make a video explaining your workshop and inviting people to come

Sometimes people will watch a three-minute video rather than reading a long sales letter. The video might grab them where your sales page and Facebook event didn't. It might actually be the first thing they even notice.

All too often we can focus solely on the intellectual reasons why people might want to go to our workshops and we leave out the overall experience of it. We forget about the importance of giving people a sense of the vibe and aesthetic of the event.

A video can help capture your personality, the tone of your workshop and help highlight some of the extras you might be including.

A video is a particular relevant and useful idea if this is a workshop you plan to repeat many times and even tour.

A video can include words from yourself, from participants and footage of the audience having a good time.

Here's an example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOrQQKGpTbc>

## Idea #12: Reschedule

If you have an event that's not filling and seems like it won't my biggest piece of advice would be to reschedule the event if at all possible.

An important reality around programs: People tend to RSVP last minute. That's just how it often is. My first Meantime program (a 30 day cashflow challenge for hippies) had 115 people in it. 70 of those people signed up in the 48 hours before the event. This is not uncommon. I suspect this is more true of online programs than live ones where a deposit must be paid and travel plans made. But, given this, a final email 48 hours before can often work wonders.



My colleague Morgana Rae expressed her familiarity with this dynamic when she said, *"I've been doing this for so long that I'd say that's NORMAL – to have only one or two people the week or two before. People make decisions at the last minute."*

But that's not likely.

What's more likely is that you're missing some very important things that may take some time to fix. I'd bet big money that there are some big things about your offer and your marketing strategy that are simply "off."

My colleague Jason Guille of Sunset Labs in Victoria pointed out that, *"It totally depends on the situation. When we arrive to this state, it's likely that there's something that we've been doing to express our offering – and we would want to start by acknowledging that it isn't working. Here is where we deeply reflect and ask a few key questions to help craft our next moves. At minimum, we need to know: A) is our offer reaching people at all? Where? Who? B) does our offer communicate? does it make sense? C) Is there a specific unknown obstacle – price? competing event? location? over-communicated/burnt-out audience? Armed with this information as a starting point, we can take intelligent next steps to fill seats. Do we need to rework our marketing language? Do we need to change dates or locations? Do we need to ramp up social media? Do we need to reach totally new prospects?"*

If you don't have a plan to fill your workshop, stop, regroup and create a plan that will work.

And this isn't something you want to do very often, because, as Betsey Garland points out, *"I've had this happen. I continue to hold the space because if I am consistent then my clients/students will and do*

*rely on me. If I flake out and cancel repeatedly because of delays, not enough enrols, sick partners, etc, then others get the impression that my events are not solid.”*

There’s no shame in rescheduling and regrouping as long as you use that time well to explore why your programs aren’t filling.

The truth is that you might be very good at what you do and not very good at marketing your workshops. And you likely didn’t sit down to craft a solid plan that would guarantee it was full by the time it arrived. This might not have struck you as possible and, even if it did, you likely had no idea what it might take to actually sell out an event.

I’ve cancelled a few events over the years because it felt like going ahead would cost me too much money or, with so few participants, be a worse workshop for the participants.

### **Additional Reading:**

The Five Things to Check When An Offer Doesn’t Sell by Mark Silver  
[heartofbusiness.com/2012/the-five-things-to-check](http://heartofbusiness.com/2012/the-five-things-to-check)

## Idea #13: Move to a smaller, cheaper venue

I don't know if it's true, but I heard that, early on in the days of the circus, they would set up their shows in town in a small tent and sell those shows out. It wasn't hard. The tent couldn't fit many people. And so people would leave, thrilled with the show and telling people, who might not have appreciated how small the tent was, that it was a sold out show. Then they'd move the show into the medium sized tent and sell it out, letting there be line ups outside the door. And finally, they'd move to the larger tent. But, throughout the whole process, two words were attached to their shows: SOLD OUT!

This is the kind of reputation you want. I see too many events happen in venues that are too large and it gives the strong impression that you were hoping for more people and failed to get them. It conveys a message of an unpopular event which has people question their own good judgement for being there.

When you're just starting out, consider starting small.

This will do two things. First, it will save you money. Second, it gets a natural scarcity working in your favour. A week before your event you can announce there are only ten spaces left rather than 50. If people see there are 50 tickets left, they say to themselves, "Ah! No problem. I'll just get tickets at the door." And this means they're less committed to coming. If people see there only 10 ticket left, they will make a decision faster. This means your events are more likely to sell out in advance which is the whole goal: sell out your events as quickly as possible with the best people.

It's the strange way that scarcity works — the faster your events sell out the faster they will sell out. And if your events get a reputation of selling out, people will want to attend them more. It gives your events an aura of exclusivity that is compelling. Turning people away at the door is to your advantage. Those are the people who will be most likely to get their tickets in advance the next time.

And a smaller venue means you have less tickets to sell. This means that you can shift your attention from marketing to making your event better sooner and since the long term success of your event is based more on the quality of your events than you skill in marketing your events, this is a fine thing in the early goings.

A smaller venue means that your venue will be cheaper. This is welcome news when you're just starting out.

My colleague Morgana Rae said to me, *"Develop a business model in which you can have only 2 people and still make money. Then everybody else is frosting."*

It's good advice.

It's tempting to want to start big. And, because it's new and exciting and your friends will want to support your launch, you might pack the house your first time. That success might seduce you to keep going large. It's a temptation I would suggest avoiding as much as possible.

In Edmonton, I lead most of my daylong workshops in my living room. It means I sell them out quickly and without much fuss and, if I don't get enough people I can cancel with ease. Not everything needs to be "big."

We used to run Green Drinks out of the back room of a place called The Common in Edmonton. The room's capacity was 80 people and we sold it out more often than not. At our final event we had 140 people there and one of the managers pulled me aside and said, "You can't have any more people now." I had to turn away one of the biggest hitters in town. I both hated and loved turning her away. I hated it because I really wanted her in the room but I loved it because if a VIP tells the story that they couldn't get into an event, even with all of their local status and cred, this will impress everyone else who hears it. But we realized we'd outgrown that event and moved to the Yellowhead Brewery. This moved coincided with our email list being cut in half and Facebook making big changes that cut out capacity to invite people to events by about 80%. This has meant that the events no longer sold out. And, once you have a reputation like this, it becomes much harder to sell tickets in advance because they know very well that they could just wait and get them at the door. It becomes a self fulfilling prophecy.

So, I urge people to err on the side of a venue that's a bit too small rather than one that's too big. It will let you sell out, develop a rep for selling out and move your attention to making your event better sooner.

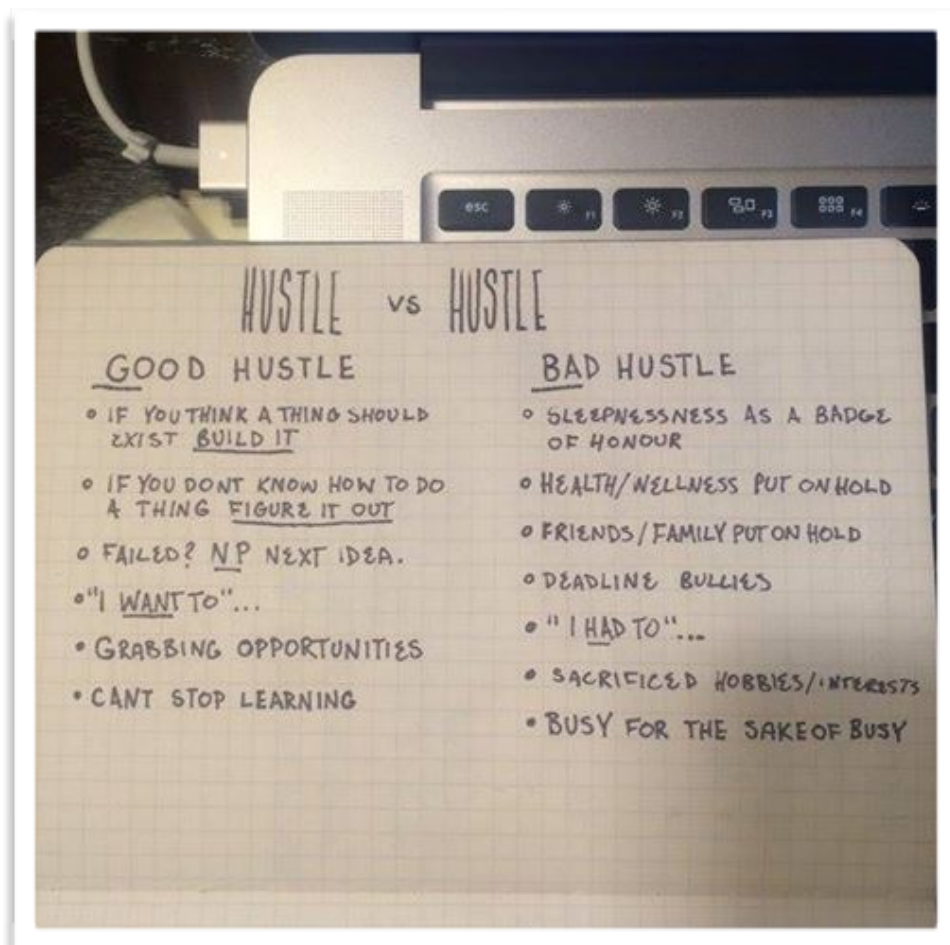
# Section II: Hustle for Workshops

## Idea #14: Hustle

This is the bottom line. More than almost anything, you need to be willing to get busy and hustle to make it happen.

### Additional Reading:

<http://marketingforhippies.com/hustle/>



## Idea #15: Host as many intros as you can before it arrives

This is so huge.

Again, years ago, Verge Permaculture came to me needing to fill up their two-week-long Permaculture Design Certification.

“Do live 2-3 hour intro workshops.” I told them.

They didn’t have the space in their lives to do that. But they were getting some traffic to their website’s sales letter for the course. So, we fixed that and it seemed to help a bit. But, the next year, they did the most brilliant thing. They reached out to the key hubs in western Canada and invited them to host an intro workshop for them. This was their pitch, “Charge whatever you want. You keep all the money. Just pay our gas to get there.”

So, I hosted their Edmonton workshop via our network The Local Good. We made about \$800 that evening. Which was an incredible gift to us. And they sold out their PDC.

I encouraged them to make it a 50/50 split the next time they did it.

A key noticing here is that they didn’t try to fill these workshops themselves. No. They arranged to have themselves hosted by local hubs.

The more live intros you can do in the lead up to a big workshop, the more likely it is to fill. There is no better way to do it. At a live workshop, people get to meet you, get a sense of your vibe and point of view and see if they’d really want to spend more time with you.

If you are able to do 3-9 of them in a row, you will get a ramping up effect. People who go to the first one will tell their friends who will come to the third one who will tell their friends to go to the 7th one etc.

Also, if you have intro workshops, this is what you should be inviting hubs and ticket purchasers to send their friends to. It’s a much easier and more effective pitch to send their friends to a free or cheap workshop than a more costly multi-day event.

My colleague, George Huang shared this experience, *“In 2005, when I first started my business coaching practice, I had two weeks to promote a workshop. But I had no email list, referral sources, or list of prospects. In fact, I had never had any paying clients before. At first, I cancelled my workshop in a moment of despair. Then a couple of days later, I decided to give it a shot. So I printed out flyers on legal-sized paper and*

*went to every networking breakfast I could find for the next two weeks. 18 people registered. 19 people showed up. That event jump-started my coaching business. Within 73 days of scheduling that event, I had enough clients to be bringing in \$10,500/month; I've grown that revenue ever since."*

## What do you do in your intro workshops?

Well, there could be a whole book about this but my general sense of intro workshops is that they are there for three reasons.

**Reason #1: Point of View.** The first purpose of an intro is to help people figure out if you are a fit for them or not. They're there for people who hear you lay out your perspective and point of view. This is 90% of what I do in my intro workshop you can check out at [marketingforhippies.com/intro](http://marketingforhippies.com/intro)

An intro workshop is a chance to give them the overall map of how you see things. When you're just starting out, this map is not as clear as you'd like it to be and your intros also won't be as good as you might like. But that's just how it is.

*"Nobody tells this to people who are beginners, I wish someone told me. All of us who do creative work, we get into it because we have good taste. But there is this gap. For the first couple years you make stuff, it's just not that good. It's trying to be good, it has potential, but it's not. But your taste, the thing that got you into the game, is still killer. And your taste is why your work disappoints you. A lot of people never get past this phase, they quit. Most people I know who do interesting, creative work went through years of this. We know our work doesn't have this special thing that we want it to have. We all go through this. And if you are just starting out or you are still in this phase, you gotta know its normal and the most important thing you can do is do a lot of work. Put yourself on a deadline so that every week you will finish one story. It is only by going through a volume of work that you will close that gap, and your work will be as good as your ambitions. And I took longer to figure out how to do this than anyone I've ever met. It's gonna take awhile. It's normal to take awhile. You've just gotta fight your way through."*

— Ira Glass

Sometimes in intros you'll just talk. Sometimes you'll give them a simple exercise that always seems to have an impact. Sometimes you'll get someone from the audience and do a hot seat and work with them in front of the group. Sometimes you'll review stories and case studies with them. There are a lot of options.

Your intros are a low risk way that people can check you out which is more qualified people and less buyer's remorse. Show footage from past workshops of you hot seating someone. Case studies.

None of this is done to convince anyone of anything. You're not trying to persuade them that you're right about anything, just laying out how you see it.

You could do worse than taking the advice of actor Bryan Cranston in this: [youtube.com/watch?v=v1WiCGq-PcY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1WiCGq-PcY)

**Reason #2: Vibe.** The second purpose of an intro is to give them a chance to see if they like your vibe in person. You'd better believe that they won't spend much money with you if they don't. And if they signed up without knowing your vibe and then met you and it wasn't a fit? That's a recipe for drama and refunds.

**Reason #3: Value.** The third reason is to give them some immediate, tangible, take away value that they can use in their life. That might take the form of some tricky wisdom to meditate on and it might be as tangible as a step by step formula you give them. They came to you for help, so make sure you honour the time they've spent.

That's really it.

Does that mean that you don't also want to give a solid offer to them at the end for a next step? No.

### Some thoughts and bits of finesse for this.

- If you are doing an intro workshop, there's a good chance you're being hosted by someone. If so, make sure you're positioned really well by the host. Make sure they are set up to give you a good introduction.
- It's also wise to be prepared for what happens next after you make your offer – and to make sure that your host isn't making a bunch of offers right after you speak. Ideally you want a 5-10 minute break after the talk. Ask the host what will be happening before and immediately your speech.
- Be wary of the urge to constantly “give more.” Give yourself enough time to share what you came to share and make your offer without rushing and in a way that honours the offering you're making. If you're going to take questions, do so after you make your offer.
- Consider giving them a reason for them to sign up at that event, some really powerful reason to sign up if they're interested *that isn't a dollar drop in price* (e.g. “yes you can go online and apply for a scholarship but it's guaranteed here and it's kind of a hassle to apply online and we'll let you know within a week or so.” Or “\$50 goes to the host/charity if you sign up today.”).

## Idea #16: Ask those who've bought tickets to help

This is a simple one that can have a big impact.

The people who've bought tickets to your event clearly already dig and trust you enough to have spent money. So, they're some of the most likely people to help spread the word. Consider reaching out to them. One on one will be ten times more effective but, in a pinch, a group email could work.



**If the registration is too low:** You can be even more candid and direct and tell the people who've bought tickets that the registration is too low to go ahead but that you're giving another week in case there are people who they know they want to invite. "I need to know by \_\_\_\_\_ date or the event won't happen." Watch people hustle and spread the word when they want to make sure that the event will happen. You can harness their own self interest to make the event happen.

**If the sales are good by not good enough:** If ticket sales aren't where you want them to be, you might email the ticket buyer's list and say, "Holy! We're 50% sold out! If you've got friends who you think might want to come, now is the time to get them to buy their tickets."

Ideally I wouldn't do it before the event is 50% full (unless it's a situation, as above, of it being on the edge of happening or not). I think 60-70% full at least a week before the event is the sweet spot for this email. Ideally, you're sending them an email that says, "This might sell out!" and that you're doing them a favour by telling them so their friends can make it.

Many of them have been thinking about telling their friends but haven't gotten around to it and this might be the nudge that gets them to do something.

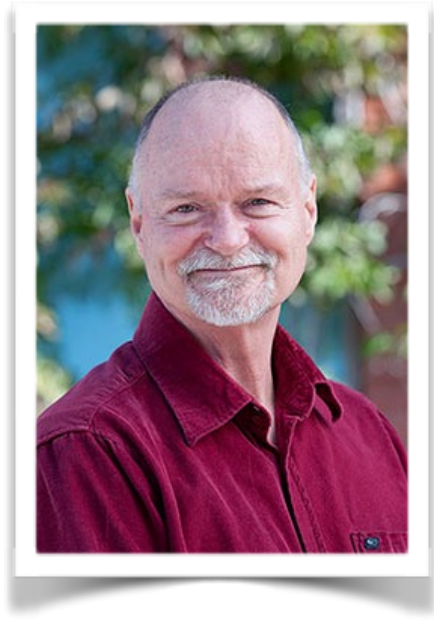
However, the one on one approach will always work best. If you're able, I recommend sending them a short, personal email saying something like, "Hey there John, Looking forward to having you at the workshop this weekend :) And I'm wondering if I can ask a five minute favour of you in terms of helping to spread the word on it. The numbers are a bit lower than I would ideally like and I thought perhaps you might know some folks who would be interested in checking it out. I'd be able to give you some pre-written things to make it easy. No pressure on this at all."

And then, if they respond, you can give them more of the info they can use to spread the word (e.g. pre-written emails, tweets and Facebook).

## Idea #17: Make personal invitations

This is maybe more of a principle than an idea. It will show up in most of the ideas here. When you really need bums in seats, a mass email is not going to cut it. You need to start emailing people personally or calling them.

One of my favourite clients and colleagues is Russell Scott in Guelph (the handsome fellow pictured here). He is kind, gentle, genuine and just the realest deal when it comes to spiritual mentorship for those with allergies to gurus and dogma. If you're an independent spiritual seeker, I can't commend him highly enough. A genuine elder.



But, it's also a challenge. For someone with such an aversion to selling, how does one sell?

Russell spoke about his regular living room Wisdom Circles that he hosts for past clients and community members. He has 6-12 people at them every week or so. The evenings sound really lovely. Sharing circles and gentle partner work. And, of course, he has services he'd like to offer them. But how, and when, to do that without it feeling pushy, awkward or gross? How indeed.

For those of us who hate the pitch, how do we share what we do in a way that isn't pushy but also not apologetic . . . and yet still effective. After all, what's the point of having these wonderful offers if no one knows about them?

It can be a sticky wicket.

As we spoke, a thought came to me about how he might do it that could avoid a feeling of pressure in his living room.

What Russell doesn't want is to end a lovely, intimate evening with people feeling like he was trying to "hard close" them to sign up for his workshops or mentoring. That would be the worst. And turn everyone off. But to not ever mention his work would be a betrayal of himself and a sure expression of collapsing.

But, as we spoke, I was remembering how many people I've gotten to sign up in my workshops and coaching simply by inviting them directly.

I recall once hosting a party at a loft in London, England. It was filled with local hubs, past clients and their friends. I met four people at the party who I'd not known before who I really wanted at my workshop. They seemed like the coolest people.

So I said, "Can you come to my workshop this weekend?"

"What workshop?" they would ask.

"It's a marketing workshop for hippies. It's pay-what-you-can. I would love to have you there! I can email you the info if you like." And I did. And I think all of them signed up. There was no clever technique. I just felt a connection. Expressed that. Was sincere in my expression of wanting them to be at the workshop. Was unattached to that happening. And it happened.

I've had other moments of sitting with someone as they described their marketing woes and said to them, "Hire me. Let me help you with this." And they said "Yes." No games. No leading questions. No tricky business. Just a sincere expression of the desire to help. And yet so effective.

So, I said to Russell, "Here's what I would do . . . First of all, mention your workshops after the break in the middle or at the end. No pressure. No pitch. Just, 'Here's what I've got coming up if anyone is interested.' But then, because you only have 6-12 people I would send them a follow up email after they've left. And I would sit and meditate on each name and ask yourself what you might have to share with them. Perhaps it's just an email that says, 'I really heard your struggle tonight about what to do with your marriage and it touched me. Thanks for coming.' or maybe you'd send a link to an article that you or someone else wrote. Or a youtube video."

Part of the idea of slow marketing is to take a pause and sit with things for a bit to see what really feels right. I remember a moment where the right thing for me to say to someone was, "Don't be an asshole. Sign up for this thing. You need it." and they totally relaxed, laughed, signed up and were so glad they did. Being conscious and coming from our heart in our relationship to sales doesn't mean we always speak in hushed, new-agey tones. Your style can be much more in your face and still totally authentic.

Or maybe Russell could say, "I really heard your struggle tonight about what to do with your life and that lost feeling and I would love to have you at my upcoming retreat. I'm not sure it's a fit but I think it could be just perfect for where you're at. Would you be open to chatting about it?" Or something like that. It can be done with no pressure. No guile. Just a heartfelt, considered offer. They might say "yes" and they might say "no." Both are okay. The role of marketing isn't about convincing people of anything. It's about giving people the information they need to make a clear choice and see if what you're offering is a fit for them.

In truth, he might invite them *not* to come back to the circle if it's really not a fit.

But each offer would come from a prayerful place, holding their best interests in mind and sensing for what, if anything, he might offer that would be a fit for helping them.

Selling can be about closing deals. But it can also be about opening conversations.

It doesn't have to be a high pressure, powerful presentation from the front of the room. It can be a personal email after the workshop too. It's good to be mindful of our context. Were it an intro workshop, I would urge him to make a direct offer and invite people to sign up then and there if it felt right. But this is a lovely living room, drop in session. Context matters.

You can read another example of this kind of thing in action in another post I wrote recently.

Getting new clients doesn't have to be sneaky or hard. Sometimes you just have to ask.

\*

A while ago I was trying to fill up a marketing workshop I was hosting in Edmonton with my colleague Mark Silver.

Numbers were lower than I wanted and so, instead of just relying on the Facebook event, email lists and such, I decided to do some personal outreach to key people I thought might want to come. Honestly, I tend to avoid this because it can take so much time. If I can fill a workshop by sending out a few emails, I'd rather do that. But, in this case, it wasn't happening. One of the people I messaged on Facebook was someone we'll call Jane Doe. I wanted to share the conversation we had (irrelevant bits deleted) because I thought it was telling. It shows how a very direct approach to marketing and sales can actually feel really good.

Sometimes an old fashioned, personal invitation goes a long way. Here's our conversation:

**Tad:** Jane, can you come to this? I think you might dig it and I would personally love it if you were there. Not 100% sure its a fit for your situation but i think it might be. <https://marketingforhippies.com/mrx/> — The Mr. X Experience a one time only, three part experience for conscious entrepreneurs serious about growing their businesses

*Hey there, On Sept 23-24th, 2014 in Edmonton, I will be hosting the most unusual marketing workshop I've ever hosted. And, before you decide if you want to come, I'm go . . .*

**Jane:** You might be right . . . I will have a look.

**Tad:** Cooooool.

**Jane:** It's a Tuesday-Wednesday thing? I'm just checking to see if I can get someone else to get my kid to football, Tues-Wed are practice days.

**Tad:** Mr. X is Mark Silver. Have you heard of him?

## The Art of The Full House

**Jane:** No but even his name feels good and I feel good about you, Tad. One of my friends took one of your Marketing for Hippies courses and really liked where you were coming from she said you were very real and it was a great workshop

**Tad:** So glad check out his site! I think you'd love him so much.

**Jane:** Thanks Tad, I'm going to recommend this to my co-workers one of them is just starting her business so its perfect timing.

**Tad:** Thanks so much!

**Jane:** Okay. I signed up. thanks for the heads up. See, this is what I like about you . . . you can send a message selling something . . . and it doesn't feel like pressure . . . it feels like you are doing me a favour . . . that's how I want my marketing to feel.

**Tad:** I'm glad it felt good. And so happy you can make it. Is there anyone else you can think of who should be there? I feel like I've invited all of the usual suspects but I know there are scenes within scenes I know nothing about.

**Jane:** I will spread the word to people I know who will be interested.

**Tad:** Thank you so much! Huge help. Oh boy. So excited. It's Mark and my first time meeting in person. So many Skypes. And now I get to introduce him to my community that I love so much.

**Jane:** By the sounds of it . . . the community loves you back.

**Tad:** #mutualadmirationssociety

**Jane:** :-)

## Idea #18: Let people bring a friend free (or for a discount)

My colleague Allison Rapp had this gem of an idea, *"I generally tell my clients that if it gets down to the last few days and the workshop isn't full, let people who are coming invite a guest. Looks great for them, helps someone else, gives the presenter better energy, more credibility and greater word of mouth."*

Plus, if you offer any higher end programs, they might buy something from you after even though they haven't paid.

And, if you suddenly have another 10 people sign up your workshop is more full, more momentum is created and you have a natural scarcity of their only being so many spaces left. Plus the weekend is more useful because now they get to share it with someone who's in their life.

My friend Kate Stenson in Calgary emailed me recently about a workshop she'd been struggling to fill up: *"I want to extend a huge thanks for your blog post in early December (for the workshop I was struggling with). I put into action as many of the tips that you gave as I could and our registration more than doubled in 2 days!"* Two of the most important things she did to fill it were that she emailed the people who had registered and asked them to bring a friend and told people who had registered and had previously attended workshops or have supported other programs of ours that they could bring a friend for free.

I recently led my annual, 30-Day Cashflow event called The Meantime and used this approach there. Here's the email my assistant sent out.

Dear Meantimers,

So we're about to embark on this month-long Meantime adventure tomorrow of clearing and focussing and increasing cashflow.

Perhaps you have a friend you think might benefit from this process too, and we'd like to help you to invite them along.

Here is a discount code that will allow your friend or colleague - or even a couple of friends or colleagues - to join in The Meantime for \$50 off the full price of \$300: MeantimeFriend50

You can send them to the sales page to learn all about the program. Give them this code to use at the checkout to get this \$50 discount: MeantimeFriend50  
<http://marketingforhippies.com/meantime30day/>

## The Art of The Full House

Even though we start tomorrow, we're happy to accept new participants throughout the first week, before February 23rd (the day of our second call), as it's entirely possible to get caught up on the first week using the call-recording.

If you choose to share this and your friends or colleagues have any questions, feel free to direct them to me, Susan at [admin@marketingforhippies.com](mailto:admin@marketingforhippies.com)

If you can't think of anyone you'd like to share this with or don't feel comfortable sharing it, please don't, it's a no pressure offer. Use it if it feels right for you. We'd love to have more like-minded folks along for the ride.

Looking forward to getting rolling tomorrow!

Best wishes,  
Susan

~

Susan Kendal  
Administrative Assistant, Marketing for Hippiess  
[admin@marketingforhippies.com](mailto:admin@marketingforhippies.com) | [www.marketingforhippies.com](http://www.marketingforhippies.com)

If I were to redo this, I would also have included a pre-written message they could have emailed their friends or posted on Facebook and tagged people on saying something like,

“Hey entrepreneur friends, I’ve signed up for a 30 Day Cashflow challenge led by Tad Hargrave of Marketing for Hippiess. If you’d like to join me you can get \$50 off the price. I don’t get any money if you sign up. He’s offering it because there are still a few spaces left and wanted to make it easy for our friends to join in. You can learn more at [marketingforhippies.com/meantime30day](http://marketingforhippies.com/meantime30day) and use this code: MeantimeFriend50 if you want to sign up. #meantime30day”

Pro tip: adding a hashtag helps you track if they post it on Facebook.

Corwin Hiebert ([twitter.com/corwinhiebert](https://twitter.com/corwinhiebert)) offers this helpful tip: *“Offer deals to event registrants only. When trying to increase attendance, focus on the people who have already registered for your event. By providing a discount on additional passes, they’ll be motivated to bring their own friends.”*

## Idea #19: Make the best use of your Facebook event that you can

I have so much to say about this that it could, and likely will become it's own blog post. But here's the down and dirty.

First thing, Facebook is the best/worst.

Facebook events are great but I wouldn't rely on them. The vast majority of people don't ever even look at them. Like, ever. And Facebook keeps changing the rules of how many people you can invite. Facebook is 100% out of your control. So I would never do an event without a Facebook event but I would never, ever rely on a Facebook event to fill an event.

The most important thing I can say about a Facebook event is that the RSVPs are *not* real RSVPs. They're not actually committed to coming.

What you want is people buying tickets or getting their free ticket with their email address.

I use Eventbrite for so many things. Of all the event promotion tools I've seen online, Eventbrite is (from what I've seen) hands down the best.

And, when you create your event, you want to have the link to get actual tickets right at the top (you don't want for them to have to click "See More" to find that). See the example below.

**A Bonus Tip for Facebook events:** put all of the basic info in the banner itself. So you have the date, time, location and pricing in the banner image (that conveys the vibe of the event) and set up in a way so that it's not covered by the Facebook event title.

You might also consider putting the name of the city the workshop is in within the banner. Remember, people are getting invitations from all over the world — don't assume they know which city your event will be held in. They won't always know. And if they don't, they'll pay it no mind at all.

## Facebook Event Example #1: My own workshop

Three things to notice. The name of the event has EDMONTON in it. I do workshops all over. I want people to see, immediately, if it's in their city or not. The second thing is that the link for tickets is at the very top of the event description. Third, the event write up is very brief because what I really want them to do is to click the link and buy tickets.

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook event page. The event cover features a red heart, a greater-than sign (>), and a dollar sign (\$) on a textured background. The event title is 'EDMONTON: Marketing for Hippies - How to Grow Your Green & Holistic Business', dated 'DEC 07'. Below the cover, it says 'Guests and Friends · Hosted by Tad Hargrave'. The event details include the date 'Sunday, December 7 at 10:00am - 5:00pm' (Next Week) and the location '10927 89 Ave'. A link for more info or to RSVP is provided: <http://decembermarketingworkshop.ventbrite.ca/>. The description reads: 'A pay what you can daylong workshop where you can learn the marketing secrets of North America's most successful green, holistic, community-minded entrepreneurs to attract more of the clients you want (without ever sacrificing your integrity or spending a fortune)'. On the right, there are buttons for 'Hosting', 'Invite', 'Edit', and a menu icon. Below these, it shows 'Daria, Kerstyn and Holly are going' with their profile pictures. The 'GUESTS' section shows '4 going', '5 maybe', and '372 invited'. At the bottom right, there is an 'INVITE FRIENDS' section with a '+ Add friends to this event' button.

DEC 07 **EDMONTON: Marketing for Hippies - How to Grow Your Green & Holistic Business**

Guests and Friends · Hosted by Tad Hargrave

Hosting ▾ Invite Edit ...

Sunday, December 7 at 10:00am - 5:00pm  
Next Week

10927 89 Ave

For more info or to RSVP: <http://decembermarketingworkshop.ventbrite.ca/>

A pay what you can daylong workshop where you can learn the marketing secrets of North America's most successful green, holistic, community-minded entrepreneurs to attract more of the clients you want (without ever sacrificing your integrity or spending a fortune).

Daria, Kerstyn and Holly are going

**GUESTS**


4	5	372
going	maybe	invited

**INVITE FRIENDS**

+ Add friends to this event

## Facebook Event Example #2: Practical Skills for an Abundant Life

I like the name of this workshop. The writeup is crisp, clear and to the point and the sign up URL is visible right away (though I would, personally, still put it above the fold) and name which city it's in. Some people will have no idea where Patterson Springs Farm and Sage HQ is. I like the photo.



The image shows a Facebook event page for "Practical Skills for an Abundant Life". The event is scheduled for January 22, 2016, from 7 PM to 4 PM. It is hosted by Evonne Smulders and Louise Patterson Bruns at Patterson Springs Farm and Sage HQ. The event is private and invited by Evonne Smulders. The description mentions a winter weekend with activities like dreaming, creating abundance, seed catalogues, garden planning, and homestead creativity. The URL for the event is provided. The right side of the page shows 10 people going, 9 maybe, and 206 invited. There is a section for inviting friends with a list of three friends: Laura C Botsford, Joey Hundert, and Cayleigh Mackay Nunn, each with an "Invite" button.

**Practical Skills for an Abundant Life**

Private · Hosted by Evonne Smulders and Louise Patterson Bruns

Join Maybe Invite ...

January 22 - January 24  
Jan 22 at 7 PM to Jan 24 at 4 PM

Patterson Springs Farm and Sage HQ [Show Map](#)

Invited by Evonne Smulders

10 going 9 maybe 206 invited

**WINTER WEEKEND**  
DREAMING - "Living under the Wolf Moon"  
Creating abundance with our winter stores  
January 22, 23, 24, 2016  
Dark nights and the anticipation of the returning light.  
Dreaming time, warming the hearth and filling our well  
Seed catalogues and exchange. Garden planning.  
Creativity on the homestead. The pantry, eating local in winter  
sourdough, winter ferments, cheese making.  
<http://www.eventbrite.ca/o/sage-folk-school-and-patterson-springs-farm-4452783817>

**INVITE FRIENDS**

+ Add friends to this event

Laura C Botsford [Invite](#)

Joey Hundert [Invite](#)

Cayleigh Mackay Nunn [Invite](#)

[Show More Friends](#)

### Facebook Event Example #3: Refuge

A beautiful event for a good cause. Obviously, the name is cut off at the top. But the write up is simple and directs people to where to buy tickets. Boom. Since the write up was so short I could see taking that first sentence of it and putting it on the banner itself.



**REFUGE**

JAN 24

Public · Hosted by David Jan Jurasek

Share Invite ...

David Jan Jurasek invited you Interested Going Ignore

Sunday, January 24 at 2 PM - 4 PM in EST  
Tomorrow · -3—-1° Overcast

Beit Zatoun  
612 Markham St, Toronto, Ontario M6G 2L8 [Show Map](#)

Created for Inspired Playback Theatre Co.

An improv performance + fundraiser to support the sponsoring of refugees coming to Canada.

A collective of inspiring actors and musicians will "playback" the true stories of audience members who share stories of seeking and finding refuge.

Tickets and registration --> [https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/refuge-performance-fundraiser-to-sponsor-refugees-coming-to-canada-tickets-20303119176?utm\\_term=eventurl\\_text](https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/refuge-performance-fundraiser-to-sponsor-refugees-coming-to-canada-tickets-20303119176?utm_term=eventurl_text)

David and Kelli are going

23 interested 13 going 754 invited

INVITE FRIENDS

+ Add friends to this event

	Laura C Botsford	Invite
	Joey Hundert	Invite
	Cayleih Mackay Nunn	Invite

## Facebook Event Example #4: Book Launch

I love this. It's so clear and excellent use of the banner space. It tells you what it is, where it is . . . boom.

# Book Launch



**Thursday, January 28**  
**3:30 to 6 pm**  
**H.M. Tory Building, B-87**  
**University of Alberta**

**JAN 28** **"Apartheid in Palestine" Book Launch**

Public · Hosted by University of Alberta Press (UAP)

Share Invite ...

 **Scott Harris** invited you 

Interested Going Ignore

Thursday, January 28 at 3:30 PM  
Next Week ·

H.M. Tory Building, B-87 University of Alberta

Ghada Ageel sought leading experts—Palestinian and Israeli, academic and activist—to gather stories that humanize the historic processes of occupation, displacement, colonization, and, most controversially, apartheid. The result is "Apartheid in Palestine: Hard Laws and Harder Experiences".

Free event. Talk and Q&A. Reception.

All are welcome!



Scott, Makere and 3 other friends are going

26  
interested

40  
going

177  
invited

INVITE FRIENDS

⊕ Add friends to this event

 Laura C Botsford 

Invite

## Facebook Event Example #5: Anniversary Party

So, this is for a project I founded called Indigo Drinks, a monthly mixer over drinks for people in the holistic scene but the name changed to Indigo Drinks Talkabout and then Talkabout Holistic. I think the name change has confused everyone. We used to get 60-80 people and now I hear they only get a dozen. The banner photo is beautiful but the title doesn't tell me who it's a 4th anniversary for or what the event is exactly. Nor does the banner. The write up clears things up a bit but they're only accepting money at the door which I generally tend to think is a mistake.

**Celebrating Life! Celebrating YOU!**  
**Celebrating 4 Years of Community Creation**

**JAN 28** **4th Anniversary Celebration - Save the Date !**

Public · Hosted by [Llandrah Hardnail](#) [Share](#) [Invite](#) [...](#)

[Llandrah Hardnail](#) invited you [Interested](#) [Going](#) [Ignore](#)

**Thursday, January 28 at 7 PM - 10 PM**  
Next Week · -2—5° Overcast

**SOAL House**  
9945 86 ave, Edmonton, Alberta T6E [Show Map](#)

**Created for Talkabout Wholistic**

Because you have shared in the creation of this glowing community of Wholistic and Alternative Health, Healing and Wellness practitioners and service providers, we invite you to join us in our 4th year celebration! We have so much to celebrate!

SOAL House is throwing open its doors for the night, offering us so much space to mix and mingle, while we enjoy tasty treats over great conversations with Talkabout Wholistic members.

To celebrate YOU, our dear members, a table will be set up for you to share your leaflets, posters, and handbills about your upcoming projects, workshops and events.

Tickets are \$10 at the door - please bring friends!

**30** interested **10** going **304** invited

**INVITE FRIENDS**

[+ Add friends to this event](#)

	<a href="#">Laura C Botsford</a>	<a href="#">Invite</a>
	<a href="#">Joey Hundert</a>	<a href="#">Invite</a>
	<a href="#">Cayleih Mackay Nunn</a>	<a href="#">Invite</a>

## 55

I love this. The banner kicks ass. This is a popular event in Edmonton and it sells out every time. Tickets are available easily. The write up is clear. Simple.

**EDMONTON FOOD FIGHT**

FEBRUARY FIRST | BATTLE COLD WAR

**DOREEN PREI**

**STEVEN BROCHU**

**Edmonton Food Fight 7: Battle COLD WAR**

Public • Hosted by Edmonton Food Fight

**Mike Hudema** invited you

Interested Going Ignore

**Monday, February 1 at 8 PM**  
-16—-9° Partly Cloudy

**Get Cooking**  
Located at MacEwan University, Student Residence, 11050 104 Ave... [Show Map](#)

**Tickets Available**  
[edmontonfoodfight7.eventbrite.ca](http://edmontonfoodfight7.eventbrite.ca) [Find Tickets](#)

2 chefs, 3 ingredients, 1 hour of Cooking Time  
Get Cooking Presents: Edmonton Food Fight 7: Battle COLD WAR

Doreen Prei vs. Steven Brochu, Monday, February 1st, 8:00 pm

Get Cooking's Studio Kitchen Located at MacEwan University, Student Residence, 11050 104 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta

Buy your tickets Thursday at 5:00 pm at: <http://edmontonfoodfight7.eventbrite.ca/>

On Monday, February 1st watch tableside as two of Edmonton's premier chefs go head to head in a one-hour culinary face-off. This Edmonton Food Fight will pit two of Edmonton's top culinary goliaths against each other in a one hour, three ingredient cold war battle!

Kathryn is going

95 interested	37 going	735 invited
------------------	-------------	----------------

**INVITE FRIENDS**

+ Add friends to this event

- Laura C Botsford [Invite](#)
- Cayleih Mackay Nunn [Invite](#)
- Jenna Mackay [Invite](#)

[Show More Friends](#)

**RELATED EVENTS** [See More](#)

## Facebook Event Example #7: Yoga and Meditation Workshop

This is so simple. The photo is clear and beautiful. The name tells me exactly what this is and the location is clear. Beautiful.

The image shows a Facebook event page for a yoga and meditation workshop. The main header features a large photo of a person in a white robe sitting in a meditative pose. Below the photo, the event title is displayed, followed by the date 'FEB 14'. The event is marked as 'Public' and hosted by 'Its Time To Bloom' and 'Myrah Penalzo'. Below this, there are buttons for 'Share', 'Invite', and a menu icon. The page is divided into two main sections. The left section contains details about the event: it is on 'Sunday, February 14 at 3 PM - 5 PM' at 'The Mosaic Centre' (2003 91 St SW, Edmonton, Alberta T6X 0W8). It also mentions 'Tickets Available' on 'www.picatic.com'. The right section shows a list of people who are interested, with a small photo of a woman. Below this, it says 'Lacy, Shanti and 5 other friends are interested'. At the bottom right, there are three large numbers: '83 interested', '16 going', and '333 invited'.

**FEB 14** Moving into Grace: A 6 Week Registered Kundalini Yoga & Meditation for Woman Workshop.

Public · Hosted by Its Time To Bloom and Myrah Penalzo

Share Invite ...

**Robindra Mohar** invited you Interested Going Ignore

Sunday, February 14 at 3 PM - 5 PM

The Mosaic Centre  
2003 91 St SW, Edmonton, Alberta T6X 0W8 [Show Map](#)

Tickets Available [Find Tickets](#)  
[www.picatic.com](#)

Lacy, Shanti and 5 other friends are interested

83 interested 16 going 333 invited

## Some Additional Thoughts on Facebook Events:

**Facebook Event Updates:** The next thing you want to do is regularly post useful things and updates in the event. Everyone you've invited will get notifications which might have them notice your event for the first time (even though they hadn't noticed it when they were invited).

You can see a good example of how I did this here: [facebook.com/events/384702955070229](https://facebook.com/events/384702955070229)

**Announcing Participants:** But what kinds of updates should you post? Here's a sweet one. This one is actually hugely effective but needs to be used with sensitivity. For reasons that will become obvious, doing this for a sex addiction workshop would not be a fit but for a business or marketing workshop it could be.

Every time someone unrolls, make sure you get their photo and their bio. Make this a part of the registration process. And then, in the Facebook event, post a welcome where you say something like, "Amazing! How lucky are we to have John Smith with us this weekend?" and then paste their bio and upload their photo and post it on the wall. This will come up as a notification to everyone who has been invited to the Facebook event and begin to increase the F.O.M.O.

If you post a new person each day, it starts to wear down the resistance.

I recall at the first ever Nova Scotia Gael's Jam [novascotiagaelsjam.com](http://novascotiagaelsjam.com) we did this (in addition to listing the photos and bios on the website) and one of the participants announced that he was there purely because he couldn't resist hanging out with such fine people. He ended up being one of our dearest participants. Do not underestimate the power of this kind of thing.

**Personal Invites:** The most important thing you can do with your Facebook event is to sending personal message those saying they're coming (but haven't actually registered) and the maybes to see if they are, in fact, coming.

## Idea #20: Email your list again

This was likely the first thing you did, but, in case you missed it, remember that regular emails to your list can help numbers grow.

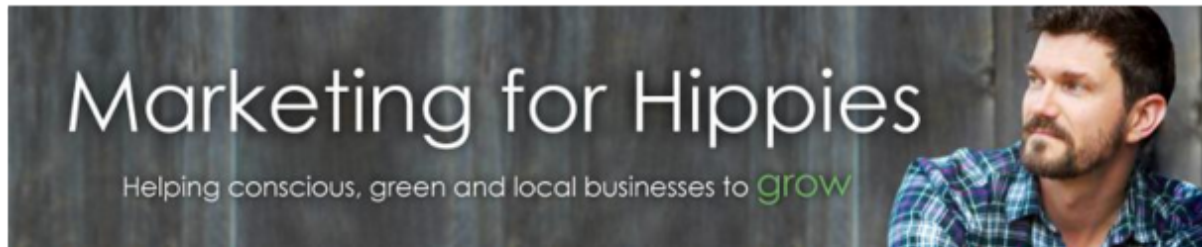
Key things to highlight in those emails are:

- who else will be there
- the number of spaces left
- the self serving reasons they should come to your workshop now vs. later
- answers to FAQ's
- directly addressing the risks they perceive

An example can be found in my blog post, Sales Letter Case Study: My Hollyhock Retreat Problems - [marketingforhippies.com/hollyhock-sales-letter](http://marketingforhippies.com/hollyhock-sales-letter)

Morgana Rae shares this idea: *"I remember sending one out years ago with the subject line 'Wrath of Morgana' declaring I was never going to do that workshop again (I meant it), and don't come complaining to me after it's over. I over sold-out my event the day before the event. (People were still showing up the day of, after I'd sold out.) Something about taking off the 'nice' mask and having a hissy fit can be really appealing."*

## Email Examples:



Hey there,

As you likely know by now my 30 Day Cashflow Challenge, The Meantime, starts up tomorrow.

If you're on the fence, five things to consider:

**Thing #1:** I'm not running this program again until January of 2017.

**Thing #2:** I'll never do it again with such low numbers (about 20 people have signed up so far) which means a lot more of my personal attention is available to you. My first version of this program has about 120 people in it.

**Thing #3:** This program is designed to *remove* stress from your life, not add it. True story. It will help you cut your to do list not just add new things to it.

**Thing #4:** This 30 Day program will not only give you over thirty real world, fast-cash producing tactics that you'll feel good about and help you get out of the rut of struggling but, more compellingly...

**Thing #5:** I personally guarantee you will at least make \$100 in profit. Fact.

You can learn more about it here: [marketingforhippies.com/meantime30day](http://marketingforhippies.com/meantime30day)

warmest,  
Tad

# Marketing for Hippies

Helping conscious, green and local businesses to **grow**



Hey there,

If you have opened up this email, there's a good chance that you're on the fence and considering attending my first ever Hollyhock Retreat. It begins on Sept 30th and I wanted to send one last, final reminder about it.

## Here's the reality:

I may never do another event at Hollyhock.

I may never do another five day retreat.

I will almost certainly never do another five day retreat at Hollyhock for such a small, intimate group of people.

Right now we have [10 inspiring folks](#) registered and this event is a rare opportunity in which my problem of smaller turn out than I'd hoped for you is your opportunity. You can read more about my sense of that [here](#).

If you are thinking of coming, please let me know as soon as possible as I'm building my curriculum entirely based on who is coming (another thing that may never happen again).

For more info or to sign up go to: <http://marketingforhippies.com/hollyhock-retreat/>

warmest,  
tad

p.s. In case you missed it, I recently sat down on my front lawn in front of my house to record a video for you in which you'll hear:

- **four solid reasons to consider signing up** (the last one is one a number of people have missed)
- **two things I see most entrepreneurs missing** in their business (it may not be what you think)
- an unspoken but important benefit to the world of you coming to Hollyhock

You can watch the video below:



## Idea #21: Get on the phone

Why not just call people and ask people to come? Why not just be personal and direct? My dear colleague Russell Scott came up with a way of doing this that felt incredibly warm and thoughtful.

My colleagues offered up these thoughts, below.

Allison Rapp: *"I usually tell people to get on the phone and if they can do it, get on the radio. If there were emails, write again to the people who clicked but didn't register, or if you can, call them – find out what challenges they're dealing with and let them know how the workshop is going to help. Call past clients, offer them a two-fer to bring a friend. On the call, help them craft the testimonial they're going to use to get that friend excited about going."*

Indigo Ocean: *"Personal touch. Time to get on the phones and start calling people to personally invite them and ask for a decision on the call."*

Dave Rowley: *"Until recently I would never have called people to invite them personally, thinking that was too pushy a move. Until someone I had done training with called me recently and did just that. It was a really pleasant experience and I earned a lot from it. We chatted about what was happening to me post-training, and she told me about her new thing, gave me the details, then offered a place if i wanted it. I wasn't able to do the training but after the call felt really good that the she had thought of me and probably would have signed up on the spot if I could have afforded it. My takeaway from that experience is that thinking of people who would be a great fit for the training and personally inviting them is not 'pushy' at all provided you are making a respectful connection and offering something that you genuinely believe is a good fit for them."*



## Idea #22: Offer free spaces to key people

I can't tell you how many workshops I've led where I've comped in people I really wanted to have there.

Sometimes there were people who'd worked hard to spread the word about myself and my workshops, sometimes they were influential local hubs and, much of the time, they were just people I really liked who I knew would make the workshop better just by being there.

For example, if I were in Toronto, you can bet I'd tell Carrie Klassen of [PinkElephantCommunications.com](http://PinkElephantCommunications.com) and Rebecca Tracey of [TheUncagedLife.com](http://TheUncagedLife.com) that I was in town and that I'd love for them to be there as my guests. Likely, they wouldn't be able to but having them there would lift my spirits.

Maybe it's past, favourite clients and participants who you don't get to see enough and either because they can't afford it or, just for the joy of seeing them, you ask them to come as your guest.

If there's someone you know who maybe couldn't afford it but would make the workshop better if they were there and would get value out of it bring them in. Once they've registered, you might find that they're very open to helping spread the word too.

If you comp someone into your workshop, one way they can pay you back for the favour (and I can assure you they'll want to) is to spread the word about your workshop. If they are planning on coming to the workshop, they will work much harder than others at spreading the word because they want their friends and colleagues to be at the workshop with them.

And, when it's the right people and you can tell others, "Guess who's coming to the workshop!" it makes it more likely that those others will sign up.

## Idea #23: Reach out personally to past clients who love you

Here's a simple one: Just do some personal outreach to your own favourite clients.

My colleague Erin Stephanie offered this, *"Personally reach out to past clients, and even friends who may be interested in taking part. Past clients who rave about you are always thrilled to share your work with the people they love the most."*

You might be amazed at how many of them hadn't even heard about your event until your personal outreach. Or that they'd heard about it and were on the fence but that your personal outreach had pushed them over the edge to coming.

The advantage here is that you'll have more of your favourite people there and this will make you more excited about your own events.

I recommend making a list of the people you most want there. Sit down. Go through your customer lists, Facebook groups, your phone, your database and think about it. Who would you most want there? Who would you be most excited to see in the room?

If I were you, I'd send out a mass email to all of them saying something like,

"Hey all,

As you might know, I've got \_\_\_\_\_ event coming up and, last night, I sat down and reflected on who I would most love to see there. I asked myself, 'Who would make me more excited about running this event if they were there?' and, if you're reading this email, you're one of those people.

You can learn more here: \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think? Can you make it?"

You'll get some immediate responses saying, "yes!", "maybe!" or "no."

And then, a few days later, after you've engaged with the "yeses," you reach out to the un-responded folks individually.

They will be touched by your care and personal outreach. No one does this anymore. It's all mass emails and Facebook events these days.

## Idea #24: The Backstage Pass

This is the coolest idea for event promotion.

Let's say you've got a multi-day workshop, gathering or retreat that you do on an ongoing basis and you're wanting to build interest in it.

Or maybe it's an annual party your business hosts.

But you're struggling. I mean, sure — you've got your sales letter up and you might even be doing some live intros — but you know there's a magic that happens at it that is just plain hard to describe. People who go are transformed, empowered, networked and excited. They love it. They rave about it! You know that once people experience it they "get it."

But . . . what else can you do to get them there?

My colleagues Jeffrey Van Dyk and Suzanne Falter Barns have a very cool idea: share video "highlights" from it.

Have someone film the event and then release some of the "best bits" online during the course of the weekend itself so people can be getting a "taste" of it in almost real time.

**This could include footage of you:**

- presenting some of your very best content
- getting prepped "backstage" and sharing what's on your mind
- debriefing what you learned at the end of the day
- coaching someone on stage and helping them have a breakthrough
- participants sharing a key lesson or idea that they got from your weekend that others might find valuable



If it were more of a party thing: it might just be some b-roll of the party and fun interviews with all of the wonderful people there.

You get the idea.

**A few other ideas to make this work better:**

- **It's free.** don't charge money for these.
- **Be generous.** Don't just give them a thirty second clip. Think 5-20 minutes long. Give them real value. Give them substance.
- **Send them out in "real time."** Set it up so they can subscribe to get them and send out three or four over the course of the day so they can sort of "join you" at the event. Make it a real, old fashioned "event." It's a happening!
- **Make sure each video ends with a next step.** Who knows, they might just love it! And if they do, they'll want to know what's available next. That might be a link to the sales letter for your next event. It might be a link to go to a place where they can buy the home study version. Or it might just tell them where to get more cool stuff.
- **Film your event and offer a "homestudy" version of it with video and workbooks.** You can offer this to those who attended and those who signed up for your "backstage" videos.

## Idea #25: Early bird special

This is not a new idea but it's often missed out on. Offer people a deal if they sign up early.

Why?

Because, and if you've tried to lead a few events already this isn't news to you, most people sign up last minute. This can be incredibly stressful for you as the promoter wondering, "Is this going to happen? Is anyone coming?" and also logistically overwhelming and you attempt to process seventy orders and all the accompanying questions, challenges and complaints that come with them, in the 24 hours before the deadline.

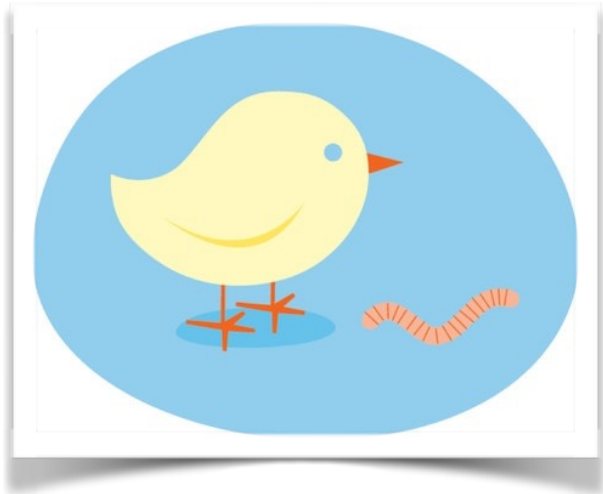
Ugh. It's the worst.

Having an early bird special can let you know how what ind of response you might expect. It also gives you cashflow you can use to pay for the venue or catering and such upfront.

If no one responds to your early bird, it may be a good sign that something is off with your offer, pricing or timing.

We do this with Green Drinks. We charge \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door. Simple.

For my Meantime Program, I recently offered \$200 in advance and \$300 for full price.



## Idea #26: Host a meet-up

There are a lot of ways you can go about this one.

I heard about this idea from my colleague Mel Cutler a number of years ago. He pointed out that, with 8 million visitors per month and 100,000 meet ups, [MeetUp.com](http://MeetUp.com) was the ninth most used social media tool out there. Those numbers have almost certainly gone up substantially since then.

So the idea is that you host a regular, two to three hour-long, free meet up event that isn't named after your business but based on your platform. Ask yourself, "who are my ideal clients?" and then host a meet up they'd want to attend.

You make sure that it's a "no selling" environment (so you get 5 star ratings) and you encourage people to leave comments.

This is such a smart thing to do because your sales funnel has to have something free anyway. Why not a free meet up event? If you have a solid business model and sales funnel then you can be happy to give value to people through your events.

So how do you make money from this? At the end of the meetup you offer them something else free that directly connects to your business, e.g. "Because you came to this meetup we'd like to give you a free ticket to our weekend long workshop on \_\_\_\_\_ topic."

This meet up group could also be an ongoing, in person, alumni networking group for people who've been through your events and worked with you. This event gives you a great way to launch something to your closest and most loyal clients. It's a great place to find local hubs for your work.

### Note:

**Other People's Meetups:** Though, it might be easier than that because you might just be able to find someone who's already got a meetup group that's attracting your perfect client. You might consider dropping them a line and asking if they need any help in running their event and if you might be able to sponsor it in exchange for a shout out.

**Time:** Give yourself twelve months to build this. There's no substitute for just showing up month after month with your event.

**Monthly Topics:** To give each of your meet ups a bit more of a hook. consider having a different topic to focus on each month, like 12 chapters in a book you might write about it that you can

## The Art of The Full House

speaking about. If I were to run one the topics might be things like: niching, hubs, social media, offers, removing pressure from sales etc.

**Locations:** libraries, hotels, real estate offices, cafes, bars. The amount you are able to pay for a venue will be determined by how much can you afford to pay based on lifetime value of your clients.

For more guidance on this from Mel, check out [meetupzoo.com](http://meetupzoo.com)

## Idea #27: Repeat your events

I have a colleague who ended up going into debt and disappointing a lot of his clients, including people I'd referred to him because he would run a six week online program but the money would run out before the end of those six weeks and so his attention would move to creating the next program. This meant the last two weeks of his program suffered in quality.

But he wouldn't go to offer the same workshop, he would create a brand new workshop. He did this a few times in a row, thinking he needed to have some new and exciting thing to market to his list (and thinking that his list was the only list to which he could market).

It burned him out.

Creating a new event is hard.

Every time you create an event you are picking up one end of a stick but the other end of the stick comes with it and the other end of it are the sales letters you need to create, the content you need to formulate, the marketing you need to do etc.

Creating a new event is hard.

Redoing an existing event is much easier.

When I ran my business The School Revolution, doing leadership workshops for high school students, my first iterations of my workshops were terrible. I mean, actually, terrible. But the more often I did it, the better it got. By the end, I'd done the same workshop about 80 times. It was such a pleasure to do.

I remember the first time I led my 30 day cashflow challenge The Meantime. The workbooks were always a bit late because I was making them as I was leading the program. This was a bit embarrassing but, thankfully, folks were forgiving. The second time I led it I was still redoing the workbooks as the course got started and so the workbooks were mostly on time but a few were a few days late. The third time, the workbooks were done in advance and the weekly sessions felt more focused. The fourth time I did it, people got all of the materials the second they signed up, the content for the calls felt tightly focused and worked out, the sales letter felt finely tuned.

Do an event. Learn from it. Systematize those learnings. Repeat the event. Why?

Creating a new event is hard.

## The Art of The Full House

The first time you do an event is so much work. It's like the amount of fuel a rocket uses to blast off and break out of the atmosphere vs. how much it uses once it's up in space. 90% of the fuel gets used in the first few minutes.

I would recommend, especially when you're beginning, to never try to have more than three different events that you do. Pick three and keep repeating them. Learn from them. Make them better. Each time you do it, it will be easier to do and higher quality. New doesn't mean better. Resist the urge to constantly be creating something cutting edge and focus that drive into innovating and improving your existing work.

And sometimes you can just rest in the work you've done. You might run a program a few times without doing any heavy innovating.

Your business is like a boat that takes people from Island A (where they're struggling) to Island B (where they've got some result they're craving). But the boat isn't just there to carry them. It's there carry you too. This is important. A boat is something you should be able to, when weather permits, rest in and, when weather is rough it should be able to protect you.

When you repeat and recycle events, they're like little boats that you keep working on and making more sturdy, streamlined and beautiful.

Some people get too busy making new boats to enjoy the boat they're in. This will burn you out hard because . . .

. . . creating a new event is hard.

## Bonus Ideas:

- **Let people in late:** If it's a weekly program, or program that is happening over a period of time, consider letting people sign up after the first session and telling everyone in the first session that their friends can still sign up before the second one. I've seen this used many times and to great effect.
- **Mail out event reminders:** You can use a service like [sendoutcards.com](http://sendoutcards.com) to send people reminders of your workshop before the event using live event photos and offering a special deal inside.
- **VIP Lunches:** At your events, consider offering VIP lunches with yourself with a \$97 early bird special, \$147 for the regular price before the event and then \$197 during workshops. This could involve coaching with you around the table, or a higher level of networking.
- **Make your events wheelchair accessible:** You can learn more about this here: How to Plan Accessible Meetings and Events: Experts offer their tips for accommodating attendees with disabilities. <http://bit.ly/1PoXRnT>
- **Place ads in the right publications:** I almost never do this myself, but the right ad in the right place can have a huge impact.
- **Attend mixers and meet up groups before your workshop:** If you go to [meetup.com](http://meetup.com) and do a search for local groups that might be exploring the same themes you talk about and then go to their mixers, it can be an excellent opportunity, especially when you're just starting out, to meet people and personally invite them to your events.
- **Tag people on twitter when they sign up:** "So excited to have @TadHargrave as a part of my upcoming marketing retreat. INSERT LINK." (as long as it's a non-embarrassing topic — i.e. don't do this for your sex workshop called "Blow Her Mind!"). There's a good chance they'll like it and reply and that others might notice it. A micro social proof generator.
- **Have a hashtag for your event:** If you're going to be sharing your event on social media, create a hashtag for your event (e.g. #GreenDrinksYeg, #Good100yeg). This allows you to keep track of the social media buzz and for others to see what kinds of conversations are happening about it before the event. You can also tell people at the event what the hashtag is and have it



prominently displayed at the venue so that you can track the posts people make about your event and so that their friends can follow the hashtag to find your group and follow you on social media. This is a tiny thing that, if done consistently, takes very little effort but can have a big impact.

- **Posters:** I am surprised sometimes how people don't use posters for local events. I'd never base a marketing strategy on having posters but I wouldn't want to not use them. You often don't need more than 20 of them. 10 to hit all of the key spots in town where your people are likely to see them and 10 to redo (others will have covered them up) the week before the event.
- **Ask everyone you know for advice:** I'm talking posting on Facebook about your situation and asking everyone to throw in ideas, emailing or calling every smart person you know for ideas on how to promote your event. Put it out there.
- **Facebook ads targeted to locals:** This is one I know very little about bit. But you can learn more about that in the posts below.
  - **The Basics of Creating a Facebook Ad**  
[qwaya.com/facebook-ads/create-facebook-ads](http://qwaya.com/facebook-ads/create-facebook-ads)
  - **How to Create Effective Facebook Ads — Social Media Examiner**  
[socialmediaexaminer.com/facebook-news-feed-ads](http://socialmediaexaminer.com/facebook-news-feed-ads)
  - **10 Examples of Facebook Ads That Actually Work (And Why)**  
[blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/33319/10-Examples-of-Facebook-Ads-That-Actually-Work-And-Why.aspx](http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/33319/10-Examples-of-Facebook-Ads-That-Actually-Work-And-Why.aspx)

# Section III: Workshop Content

## Idea #28: Go narrow and deep by creating a clear focus for your workshop

This is the heavy lifting of the success of your workshop.

What is it about?

I've seen so many generic workshops about "success" and "happiness." But your workshop is much more likely to succeed if the focus is narrowed down significantly. And this issue, of course, is intimately connected with the larger issue of your niche for your business as a whole.

Actually a niching issue which lifts up the simple and yet thorny questions of, "Who is it for? What's the problem it's solving? What result is it offering?"

If the topic of your workshop is unclear, the response will be unenthusiastic. If your workshop lacks focus then it will be almost impossible to identify hubs and write a decent sales letter.

This is the heart of the issue.

The more broad you are about your topic base the harder the workshop will be to fill.

A workshop called, "Empowerment for Everyone!" will get a much smaller response than, "Online Marketing for Massage Therapists."

Narrow your focus on who it's for — this allows you to go deep into tailoring the event for that crowd. Most workshops are Broad and Shallow in their focus. But the wider you go with your topic base the fewer people will come — ironic but true. Focus is power here. Focus on a particular group experiencing a particular problem and promise a particular result.

### **Additional Resources:**

[NichingSpiral.com](http://NichingSpiral.com)

## Idea #29: Give them something they can finish

Build the workshop around a central result.

Some promise of something they will actually accomplish by the end of the event.

This will keep your event from just being a data dump.

People are no longer satisfied with “more information.” They want results. So pick a particular result and then help them achieve that by the time the workshop finishes.

Don’t just give them ideas.

Give them time to integrate and work with those ideas during the workshop.

For example, if the workshop was about how to **lose weight**, by the end of it they would have created a customized plan, phoned people to build a support team, booked their times with a personal trainer etc.

If the result was about **financial management**, they would bring their laptops and actually create a spreadsheet of their finances there and a plan for the next 12 months on exactly what they can do.

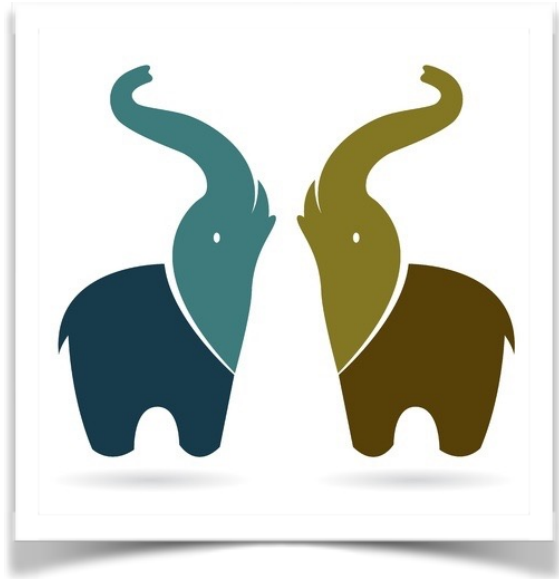
If the result was to write a **solid homepage** for their website, they’d be given a workbook and time to do the writing, share what they’ve come up with with others and, if the workshop is small enough, get your personal feedback on it throughout the day.

## Idea #30: Feed them the elephant one bite at a time

When we think of marketing as trying to fill up our whole business – it can feel overwhelming.

It's more useful to break it down.

One way to think of this is like an ice cream shop. When you walk in, they don't try to sell you an entire ice cream cake.



They let you try feel samples of flavours on pink spoons. If you like a flavour you'll risk a cone. If you like the cone, you might risk a double or triple scoop. And then a gallon. And if you're crazy for it – maybe a whole cake.

But it's step by step. You have options based on how much risk you want to take and how much money you want to spend.

So many entrepreneurs try to sell the big thing first. But they've not built the trust yet.

For example, if you've got a workshop you're trying to fill and you're sending out an email, let's break this down.

You write a good subject line which compels them to open the email. Then you write a good opening line or two in the email that compels them read more and finally to click on the link to sign up for your introductory workshop.

If you create poster for your workshop: first you think about the headline that will grab their attention. Then you focus on the rest of the text and images. And then you design a great call to action. To have the poster just say, "sign up for my workshop" and give the phone number would be appalling and unsuccessful.

It's a mistake to try and sell them on the whole thing in the subject line. Or even in the email. Think of bite sized chunks in your marketing. Think simple next steps. Make it really easy for them.

## Idea #31: Do it for them

People are coming to your workshop to achieve a particular result.

The more confident they feel the your workshop will help them achieve that result, the more willing they'll be to spend their money and time on it.

There's a lot to say about getting clear on a specific result (more than can be fit into this ebook) but suffice it to say that it should be something simple that you could articulate in seven words or less that they would hear and get excited about.

**I see too many workshops whose promises are vague and not compelling:**

- more success
- better health
- more love
- open your heart
- experience the oneness of all that is
- get aligned

**These kinds of workshops are almost impossible to promote.**

**Instead, see if you can aim for simple things like:**

- better sleep
- clearer skin — get rid of your acne naturally
- less painful menstrual cycles
- feel more confident approaching women
- forgive yourself for something you regret

**Or even more specific:**

- write a bio that gets you clients
- write a loveable, client attracting homepage
- create compelling packages for your business
- learn how to use Facebook Ads successfully
- learn how to sell out your workshops
- build your TED talk

The more specific, compelling, exciting and urgent the result is, the more likely people are to sign up for it.

And the clearer a path you can give people to that result the more excited they will feel. So the more you can offer people “done for them” templates, fill-in-the-blanks forms, checklists. The easier you can make it for them, the more likely they will want to be to sign up.

The reality is that people would often rather go to have their chiropractor adjust them than go to yoga. I’m not saying that’s a good thing. I’m just saying that’s how it seems to be. And, if that’s the case, sometimes that’s what we need to lead with – offering them a solution to a pressing problem that is more quick fix in nature (with whatever disclaimers and caveats we have to give) so that we can build a relationship with them and invite them into the deeper work that may be required to make this result more sustainable.

The other benefits of this are that, the more specific the result is, the easier it is to market and the more confident you will feel in promoting and running the workshop. There’s a profound difference between a client coming to you and winging it with them and them coming to an event to work on a particular issue through a process you’ve put a lot of thought into.

People will leave happier and more likely to spread good word of mouth.

When you’re designing a workshop, consider focusing more narrowly not more broadly.

## Idea #32: Give them value before they arrive

Another option that I've experimented with is to give people access to the core content of your workshop before they arrive.

For example, I have a weekend workshop that I rarely do anymore but the core content is relatively constant and set and I am, frankly, tired of repeating it. And so now when I lead this weekend workshop, the two-and-a-half hour video I created of that workshop is given to them the second they sign up. You can see the example of this here: [marketingforhippies.com/intro](http://marketingforhippies.com/intro)

They will then be asked to watch the videos before the weekend workshop to make sure that we are all starting on the same page and getting the most of our time together.

It can be a powerful thing to have people show up to a workshop already primed and knowing your core language and metaphors.

One of the most powerful offers I ever saw (and to which I responded) was Jay Abraham promoting a five-day event in which he offered to send \$11,000 worth of materials (in two boxes weighing 25lbs) to anyone who signed up, before they even paid. No joke. I signed up and got those books and audiocassettes. No joke.

But you don't have to and likely can't do that.

Can you mail them a small book to read before they arrive? Can you give them access to some videos or audio? Can you host a small coaching call for people who've signed up before the workshop?

If you're able to do this, people show up more ready, more deeply invested and more open to your guidance.

## Idea #33: A good name for your workshop

If the title and name of your workshop doesn't capture that focus in a tight way, the response will, all things being equal, be underwhelming.

And this is itself a large topic of conversation: how do you name things? What are your options even?



I believe your workshop name should, ideally, be simple, memorable and if it's not crystal clear what it is, then to at least evoke curiosity.

In truth, there are so many reasons why a workshop will succeed or not. How well known is the presenter? How strong is their marketing? How many hubs are endorsing it? etc. If you have a famous presenter with a solid marketing team and many people endorsing it then they could have a terrible workshop name and succeed.

Having said that, why make your life harder than it needs to be with a mediocre workshop name?

So, here are a number of options. I invite you to look over them and notice which ones resonate with you and which don't.

**Option #1: Your Personal Name:** There are absolutely worse options than simply going for "An Evening with Tad Hargrave." However, this banks on you have some degree of fame and notoriety so that people would care about this. I wouldn't recommend this for anyone starting out.

**Option #2: Speak to the Result:** This one can be really powerful. When you think about the ultimate result you offer your clients – could you sum that up into a few words?

**Here are a few I've seen that give you an immediate sense of what they offer:**

- Sold Out Seminars
- Get Known Now
- Build Your Practice
- Double Your Dating
- Fill Your Workshops With Ease!
- How to Parent in a Digital World
- Urban Garden Abundance
- Effective Grant Writing

## The Art of The Full House

- Hello Again: A Fresh Start for Parents and Their Adult Children
- Spring Cleanse: A Journey of Renewal
- Accelerate Your Enterprise
- Creating Teams That Trust
- iPhone Photography: Creating Great Photos
- Healing Families and Ancestors: Ritual and Resonance
- Money Mindfulness
- She Power: Sacred Sexuality
- Creating Conscious Relationships
- Your Soul's Plan: The Spiritual Meaning of Your Life
- Heart of Money
- 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
- How to Win Friends and Influence People

**Option #3: Speak to the Problem/Current Situation:** Another approach is to make sure the name of the workshop speaks to the struggles it's addressing.

- The Things We Can't Forgive Ourselves For: Dealing with Regrets, Shame and Guilt — A Workshop for Men
- Releasing Destructive Habits
- LifeForce Yoga for Depression and Anxiety
- Trauma, Body and The Brain
- The Myth of Aging
- Bad Boys, Nice Guys and Female Drama
- "If It's Not a HELL YES!, It's a FUCK NO!"

**Option #4: Name the Modality:** This approach had advantages and limitations. The advantage is that someone looking for that specific modality (I've underlined what I saw as the modalities here) will lean in. The limitation is that unless they know what the modality is and are looking for it, they'll lean out. That might be okay. It might not be. It depends who you're hoping to attract.

- Horse Wisdom
- Yoga of Deep Intimacy
- Alchemy of Group Facilitation
- Metta Vipassana Awareness as a Path to Liberation
- Cedar Weaving Then and Now
- A Practical Course in Gardening
- Presence Through Movement
- Artists Journey with Watercolours
- Discovering Whole Life Fitness
- Neurosculpting: Healing the Mind & Body
- Shamanic Breathwork Journeys
- Dance Your Bliss
- The Art and Craft of Effective Group Facilitation
- 5Rhythms Movement Medicine
- Joy of Ukulele
- Hawaiian Feather Lei

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- Dancing from the Inside Out
- Dance Our Way Home
- Dance of Oneness: Dance Your Passion
- Singing in the Vocal River
- Sing Yourself Alive!
- Building a Vocal Community: Singing in the African American Tradition
- Emotional Freedom Technique Level 1 & 2
- Energy Medicine Yoga
- Energy Healing Essentials
- Digital Photography: Capture the Light
- Painting Beyond the Ordinary
- Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy
- Healing Power of Yoga and Art
- Constellation and Empowerment
- Transforming Limiting Beliefs: The Work
- Canada's Voice Intensive
- Padma Meditation: The Freedom Workshop
- Yogic Journey Beyond the Matt
- Yoga and Mind Body Medicine
- Non Violent Communication
- Mindfulness Meditation: Be Who You Really Are
- Poetry and Contemplation
- Mushrooms Wild and Mysterious
- Writing from the Heart: Your Story
- Writing as an Awakening Path
- Writing Through Transformational Loss
- Write Your Life for the Page and Stage
- Writing to Awaken
- Writing for Wellness
- The Wisdom of Mindfulness
- Chop Wood, Carry Water: Mindful Action
- Business as a Spiritual Path

**I Have No Idea What These Workshops Are About from the Title Alone:** The following workshops might be amazing. They might be led by famous people who are drawing big crowds. And some of them might have a tagline that makes it all clear. All of them will likely be presented (whether on a poster, catalogue, email or website) with more context than this. All I can tell you is that, from the name alone, I have no idea what the following workshops are about. Some of them are evocative and some of them are just plain vague.

- Great Transition Stories and Skills
- Radical Brilliance
- Attitude Reconstruction
- Embodied Mindfulness
- Making Life a Story
- Inhale Wilderness, Exhale Stories
- Evolutionary Leadership
- Building a Nature Culture
- Time of Transition
- Embracing the Human and Divine Within Us
- Falling Awake: The Ecology of Wonder
- Science and Spiritual Practices
- Known, Unknown and Unknowable
- Dance of the Tides
- Radical Aliveness. Core Energetics
- Continuum and Water
- The Magical Family

## The Art of The Full House

- The Naked Voice
- The Art of Leadership
- The Happier Life
- Come Alive
- Your Emerging Future
- Soul Motion: Body as Living Presence
- The Nature of Leadership
- Opening to the Infinite
- Wisdomkeepers
- Memory and Myth: Transforming Personal History
- Irreducible Fundamentals

## Idea #34: Have them design your workshop

This isn't an ebook about how to design a great workshop but something about this does need to be said since it plays such a central role in the success of your marketing in the short term and long term.

But you can do worse than asking the people who you're seeking to help what it is they most want in the workshop – what would make it worthwhile for them.

Of course, the truth is, they likely don't really know. If they knew, they wouldn't be coming to you for help in the first place. Just because they need help doesn't mean that they are clear what would be most helpful.

But, even so, when you ask, you do learn something.

In 1995, I was starting a business called The School Revolution doing leadership workshops for high schools around how to create more school spirit.

And so I would ask the Student Council Advisors, the ones who were paying for these things, a series of three questions,

“What's going best for you all this year?”

And then they'd tell me and sometimes they'd describe a new event that other schools might be able to use and I'd take notes. There's always something to learn.

“What's your biggest challenge?”

The answer, almost 100% of the time, was “apathy.” So what do you think was the first thing I talked about in the headline of my marketing to them? Why would I talk about anything else?

“If you were going to design an event that was tailored made to your Student Council, what would it need to do? What would you want to make sure was in it?”

This usually came down to them leaving feeling inspired, empowered and with new ideas. They really didn't have a lot of thoughts here, although, every once in a while something new came out that was useful for me. But, given what they told me, guess what I promised in my marketing.

At a certain point, you don't need to ask anymore because you already know and, when you get to that point, your marketing materials have a fighting chance of generating the response, “Oh my god. This is perfect for me!” and your workshops have a fighting chance of being genuinely relevant and useful.

## Idea #35: Upsells and downsells

When I was running The School Revolution the Student Council advisors would call me to register and, just as we were wrapping up our conversation, I'd say, "oh! and by the way, we have a couple of booklets that we're offering on special to schools that enrol. One of them is called "249 Student Tested and Approved Events". It's a bunch of events I've gathered from students across Alberta over the past decade. The second one is about the behind the scenes of how to organize events. They normally sell for \$50 each but they're available right now for \$80. Would you like me to add that to your invoice?"

I'd say about 80% of the teachers said 'yes' without question.

So, for every ten teachers who enrolled I made an additional \$800 with ZERO hard costs (because I emailed it to them) and less than 10 minutes of my time on the phone all together. 10 minutes for \$800? That's \$80/minute. No bad at all.

So that's an upsell.

A downhill is really just an upsell that you offer to people who decide not to enrol or buy the full package. The thinking is this, if they're not ready to buy the full package, is there something smaller and cheaper that you could offer them instead? In many cases, the client does have a problem they need solved and they would like to buy but money or timing may be an issue.

If student councils couldn't make it to an event (e.g. because their Halloween Dance was on the same night) I would say "Oh you can't make it to the event? Well, would you like these booklets?" 90% said yes.

Instead of making zero dollars I made \$80.

I recently decided to run my 30 day cash flow challenge, The Meantime. It costs \$300. But the timing didn't work for everyone. So, for \$25, I decided to offer a 90 minute teleseminar covering the core content. I've already got 15 people signed up. I can't imagine that I'll get less than 20 people which means at least \$500 in additional money from the same content.

Could you do the same with your own workshop content?

## Idea #36: Take such good care of those who enrol that they tell their friends

Some questions for you to consider.



- What could you do before the event to impress the hell out of the people who are signing up?
- Could you have your assistant give them a personal welcome call to your program the second they enrol?
- Could *you* make that call? (Ari Galper of [UnlocktheGame.com](http://UnlocktheGame.com) used to personally call people within minutes of people buying his products. It would shock people, “This is Ari!!” they’d say and he’d let them know he just wanted to answer any questions they might have).
- Could you give them a surprise gift for signing up? (e.g. a bonus ebook, audio or video they weren’t expecting).
- Could you offer some free group calls in the lead up to your program? (e.g. you’re hosting a live workshop or retreat and you say, “I thought it might be a great idea for us to start connecting before the event so I’m hosting two 90-minute calls to see what questions you have.”)
- Offer free email coaching to help them get ready? Or a free one on one call to help them really design their focus for the weekend?
- How could you add so much value that they just can’t help but tell everyone?
- Could you host a party on one of the nights of your workshop? And invite past participants to it?
- Could you create a private Facebook group so they could stay in touch after the program?
- Could you give them homework to help them get ready for your workshop?
- How could you improve your level of client care after the event to help them integrate their learnings? How can you make sure you’re getting back to them more quickly?
- Could you be better at tracking the results people are getting from your workshops? If you promise they will get X then do you ever check in to see if that happened? Reality: if they feel confident you can help them produce the results they’re wanting then they’re more likely to refer their friends. If you know the results your workshops get then you can share these at your events to impress them. Don’t just focus just on being a better marketer of your weekends - focus on being better at what you do. How can you improve the results they get? This is the holy triad: Produce results. Track them. Share them. And, once you have impressed them in this way, could you ask their advice on how else to promote and if they might know anyone?

# Section IV: How to Fill Up Events That Aren't Workshops

## Introduction: Not every event is a workshop.

I'm talking about social events, concerts or galas.

Events that don't really have a strong educational component. There's no hot button problem you're trying to solve with it that you're selling people on. It's a bit of a different thing. Now, some of the following ideas will surely also be of some use when you are hosting workshops and many of the workshop promotion ideas will surely be a fit here but I set these aside and risk some repetition in the hopes that I might highlight some different facets of event promotion.

What's my credibility on this?

Again, outside of Marketing for Hippies, I also run Edmonton's Green Drinks (a monthly mixer for sustainability minded folks) which I've sold out at 150 people a number of times. There's Indigo Drinks (a monthly mixer for holistically minded folks) which I started and packed the house with. Then there are the Secret Streetcar Shows, which I've almost never not sold out. And then there are the six dozen or so potlucks I've hosted over the years which have consistently been packed with the finest folks in town and, recently, have begun to fill up in advance to the point where I've had to turn people away.

So, how do you fill up your shindigs?

Here are my best ideas.

## Idea #37: Know why people are coming to to your events

I think the reason so many people fail in promoting their non-workshop type events is that they don't really understand why it is that people want to come to them. They don't understand the real criteria people use in deciding if they're going to go to an event.

So, after twenty years of hosting events, here's what I've learned.

### **Reason #1: Because of who will be there.**

Hands down, this is the most important reason why people go to social events like parties, workshops, galas etc. The failure to recognize this is why I see so many fail.

It's not just about what, it's about who.

Here's something I've been on both sides of: someone shows up at a party and the first words out of their mouth are, "I can't stay very long, but I wanted to come by to say hi." Here's the candid truth – they could stay longer, and they hadn't planned to say those words but, when they arrived, they looked around and realized there weren't many people they knew or wanted to know and so they made an excuse? The proof of this? They're still there four hours later when other people showed up who they wanted to hang out with.

It's not just about what, it's about who.

When I was on the edge of signing up for the Orphan Wisdom School, the thing that pushed me over the edge was seeing how many people I adored and wanted to spend more time with were going and remembering how many people I deeply respected had raved about Stephen Jenkinson and his work.

It's not just about what, it's about who.

When I started the Jams program of [yesworld.org](http://yesworld.org), I caught on to this dynamic immediately. I was reaching out to young leaders who had, in many cases, become icons and heroes in their own communities. They were speaking at conferences and they certainly weren't going to attend my little event which I was pitching as a seven day event for thirty leading young change makers. That is until I got a few folks signed up and then went back to the people who'd told me, "Maybe" and "We'll have to see." Once they saw the RSVP list, I began to get emails saying things like, "Is there still room?"

## The Art of The Full House

It's not just about what, it's about who.

When people get invited to an event via Facebook, if they even notice the event, one of the first things they will do is to check out who else is coming. If enough people they know or want to know will be there then they will come.

It's not just about what, it's about who.

Green Drinks in Edmonton offers people a chance to catch up with old friends in the local sustainability scene but also to meet new folks.

It's not just about what, it's about who.

Night clubs know this and do whatever they can to get the most attractive women to their clubs. People courting politicians know this and they make sure their events are full of the most movers and shakers. Anarchists know this and attract people by having the most politically hardcore people at their events. My potlucks do this by being invite only and making sure that there are consistently excellent, good vibe people there.

It's not just about what, it's about who.

The Good 100 Experiment is invite only so that people can trust they'll be spending their weekend with a carefully curated group of other local, Edmonton based movers and shakers. Getting these kinds of people out to an event for a full weekend is incredibly difficult and requires a lot of individual invitations. But, even with that, the heavy lifting of the invitation is done by the Confirmed Participants page which you can see here: [thelocalgood.ca/good1002015/](http://thelocalgood.ca/good1002015/)

It's not just about what, it's about who.

When [TheLocalGood.ca](http://TheLocalGood.ca) hosted its first fundraiser, we got the Mayor of Edmonton to keynote it and a deeply respected indigenous leader in Edmonton to MC it. We also pitched the event as, "The who's who of the Edmonton change making scene will be there. It's worth it just for that."

It's not just about what, it's about who.

One of the main ways I've built my marketing business in cities like Toronto is to host parties for past clients and also local hubs. But they don't come to the party to see me or meet me alone. One of the main reasons people come is because I cater it and because of the guest list. How do they know who's coming? I tell them via the RSVP page. You can see two examples of that page here:

- [theradicalbusinessintensive.yolasite.com/gggtoronto.php](http://theradicalbusinessintensive.yolasite.com/gggtoronto.php)
- [marketingforhippies.com/events/ggg/](http://marketingforhippies.com/events/ggg/)

**Note:** this RSVP page not only entices people to come to the event but it also gives them an easy way to follow up with people they met if they forgot to get their contact info.

For many of my weekend workshops, I will create a similar, secret page where they can see the photos and read the bios of those coming.

You can see an example here: [marketingforhippies.com/mrx-participants/](http://marketingforhippies.com/mrx-participants/)

It's not just about what, it's about who.

## **Reason #2: Because of the location.**

There are a couple of levels to this. If your event is held in a central location, you'll likely get more people than if it's held in a remote location on the outskirts of the city in a dodgy neighbourhood.

But you might also be surprised at the impact that a cool or unusual location can have. I started [StreetcarShows.com](http://StreetcarShows.com) in 2012. The basic idea was to host a two hour musical concert from a local musician on the 100 year old streetcar in the middle of the 100 year old High Level Bridge at sunset.

I can't tell you how many people I've overheard saying to the people around them, "Who's playing tonight?"

Meaning: they had paid \$30 for a ticket to a show where they had no idea who the artist was. Why? Because it was on a streetcar.

I think of theatre shows hosted in old, abandoned subway tunnels, or secret parties hosted on floors of Hotels that had been shut down for renovations, I think of the house concert I held with the lumberjack theme in a legit log cabin in downtown Edmonton that very few people even know exists.

Do not underestimate the power of a cool and unusual location.

## **Reason #3: To support the host.**

Sometimes people come to your events just because they love you and want to show support. That is sweet but it maxes out around 150 people at the most. That is not a sustainable motivation. Do not build your strategy around this.

#### **Reason #4: Because it's novel.**

Sometimes people go to an event because it's new and they want to check it out. I think of The Yoga Loft in Halifax, Nova Scotia around 2004 when Robert Webber hosted a party. It was packed. The vibes were incredible. And then he tried to host it a month later and no one came. The event only worked once. There's something exciting about the first time. My guess is he could have pulled this off annual no problem and quarterly with a bit of work but, the way it was structured, it was never going to work once a month. He didn't have enough people in his community for that.

#### **Reason #5: The content will be good.**

This can't be ignored. I think of Edmonton's sweetest variety show The Culture Collective, or Pecha Kucha or TEDx. They are events where you can trust the content will be good. You know that some of the presentations might be bad and some might be amazing and some might be weird . . . but you count on that. I think of [StreetcarShows.com](http://StreetcarShows.com) too. The acts are carefully curated. People might come because, "Cool! A show on a streetcar!" once but, if the show is terrible, they will never come back again and they'll tell everyone they know it was bad. So, if your event involves some content (whether it be a presentation or activity), that content must be top notch to keep people coming back.

## Idea #38: Cool venue

This idea is underestimated in its impact.

If you have a music show at a bar . . . who cares. Meh. At a music venue? A bit better (depending on how hip the venue is). At a house? Cool (depending on the house). But all of those are fairly common. There's nothing that widens the eyes in any of those. When you're planning your next event, pay special attention to where you do it. The right venue can make or break an event. The chance for people to experience a venue they've never been to before and that, ideally, very few people have ever been to, can actually be even more exciting than the idea for the event itself.

For example, when I started hosting the Streetcar Shows, the idea was simple. A two hour music show on a hundred year old bridge, in a hundred year old, vintage streetcar, overlooking the river valley, at sunset. Simple. And compelling. The first show I did on the streetcar sold out in less than 24 hours. I thought because of the band.

But, what surprised me was how many times I overheard people say something like, "Who's playing tonight?" They'd just paid \$30 for a ticket. And they had no idea who was playing. They just liked the idea of a concert on a streetcar.

Location. Location. Location.

Edmonton had a sweet venue of questionable legality called the Baby Seal Club. It was a run down place. An old gas station or store as near as I can figure. Old furniture. Strange styrofoam art on the ceiling. But shows happened there from time to time and I never even knew about them. You just had to be cool enough to know. I was for sure never cool enough. But, one day, as luck would have it, I met the fellow who ran it. He told me they'd shut it down months ago do to certain conversations with the law but were thinking of starting up with some shows again. I pitched him on a band I'd been wanting to set up a gig for and it was set.

The concert had a nice hook of a strongly suggested, 1920's French dress code. Flapper dresses. Straw hats. Waist coats. The whole thing. But it was also at a cool venue. When I told people the idea, the band and the venue the reaction was huge and the show sold out quickly.



The next year, I hosted another show with the same band, The Tequila Mockingbird Orchestra, in an actual log cabin in downtown Edmonton with a lumberjack dress code. You get the idea. It sold out fast and was an amazing night.

I've heard of punk bands throwing shows on shut down buildings of hotels that you had to break into. Awesome. In London, England, there are shows thrown in abandoned underground tunnels. The location is more of a draw than what's going on sometimes.

## Idea #39: Build a Team

If you are doing a larger event or events that are going to be recurring and ongoing, I can't recommend strongly enough that you build yourself a team.

You'll be less stressed. You'll have better ideas. Your marketing will work better because more people are spreading the word for it.

It's insanity to try to do everything yourself. But where do you start? What kinds of people do you want on your team?



### 15 Roles To Consider for Your Event Team:

Very few events will need people in all of these roles. Many events will only need one or two of them. But it's good to have a sense of what roles are possible that you might never have even considered that could make your events even better. Of course, one person might be able to fill three or four roles themselves but I would be wary of trying to give one person too many roles.

- **Greeters and Registration:** a person or two to welcome people and make sure they are oriented to the event (e.g. where to hang their coats, get drink tickets etc) and invite them to sign up for your email list if they haven't already. Sometimes these people will be at a table (e.g. at Green Drinks which is an indoor social event at a bar) but sometimes you'll need them to be roving (e.g. at Cashmobs where people are gathering in a big crowd on a street corner and then hitting a local business) and sometimes they can even go into an audience and pass the email sign up forms down rows (e.g. when I took on marketing for Rapid Fire Theatre, I literally just grabbed a clip board and passed it with paper and pen up and down rows, inviting people to sign up for our email list if they wanted to).
- **Activity Table:** Perhaps you are inviting people to make names tags or there's a game you'll be playing throughout the night (e.g. a bingo card). These people make sure people are set up with what they need for the event to run smoothly.
- **Gopher and Trouble-shooter:** Someone who can put out fires and handle random things so that you, as the organizer and host can stay focused on your role.

- **Photographer:** This will be spoken about in another section to come. Important.
- **Social Media:** Someone dedicated to tweeting the event, posting to Instagram etc. before the event, throughout the night and after the night using your event hashtag and other relevant hashtags. This can remind people to come on down who might have forgotten about the event or not heard of it. It will also keep your events top of mind for the future. But, and this is crucial to understand, their main job is actually not to post themselves, that's just basic promotion. Their job is to get *other* people to share about the event. Their job is to get others, ideally local VIPs and hubs to spread the word about your event. This is the goal. If you tweet it, it's advertising. If the *public* tweets it, it's buzz.
- **Journalist/Documenter:** This is aligned with social media but with a different twist. Instead of just taking cool photos, they are actively interviewing people, capturing and sharing things people have said from the mic, in conversations, in micro interviews they hold. They're playing the role of a friendly journalist. They take videos of sessions and post them (that you pre decide on) and maybe interview people you hot seated from the front of the room after. They turn content from the events into blog posts and case studies during the event. They might take photos of the room before the event and during. I've seen make up artists have people around one days when they were working with a lot of people to take the before and after photos.
- **Videographer:** This is a role I wouldn't recommend for anything except quarterly or annual events. But collecting professional quality footage of your events can be used in creating a trailer for your events, or sharing key moments from it. Highly recommended. This kind of footage can be very powerful to show potential funders and sponsors if they haven't been to your events.
- **Connectors:** I got this idea from an event in Vancouver I attended. The idea is to have a few people who's only role is to actively be connecting people during the event. These are going to be people who are already well connected in the community. Basically they talk to as many people as they can, especially people who are standing alone, and asking them what they're up to and what kinds of people they're hoping to meet and then connecting the dots. This often involves politely interrupting conversations to steal people with an, "Can I borrow you for a moment? There's someone I want you to meet." These people are made known from the front of the room. Two or three of these people who are hustling in this role can do wonders for an event.
- **Host/MC:** Someone who can get on the mic, or stand at the front and make sure people feel welcome and guided through the flow of the event. A skill needed for these people is crowd control, especially if there are drinks.
- **Shushers:** If you have an event that requires someone speaking from the stage who needs to be listened to, it's a powerful support to them to have people in the crowd who are dedicated shushers. I will often, in pre-event meetings, enrol everyone who's involved into this role.

Everyone who's on the team should be a) silent when someone is on the mic and b) inviting those talking at these times to be quiet with a smile. Some venues are full of hard surfaces and a few people whispering in the corner can be a heavy distraction.

- **Caterer/Serving staff:** If you're going to be serving food then you'll need this.
- **Sound/Tech/AV person:** Always wise to have someone who knows how to work a sound board if you have a sound board there.
- **Graphic Designer:** Having a designer on your event team is huge. They can help make posters, memes, postcards, handbills, Facebook event banners, materials for your event.
- **Web Designer:** Given that your website will likely play some role in your event promotion, it's good to have someone on your team who is a web nerd to help you take the most advantage of your site as you can.
- **PR and Media:** Someone on your team who has a list of local media, knows how to write a press release and can hustle to get your media coverage in the mainstream and alternative local media.

### Compensation:

How do you compensate your team?

This is an important one to grapple with because, especially if you're going to be doing events with them more than once, things need to be sustainable otherwise people will burn out and the timing of those burn outs may not be convenient for you or the event.

Here's the cold hard reality: you will, almost certainly, never make enough money from ticket sales to pay yourself let alone the rest of your team properly.

This means one of two things. Sponsorship, grants or fundraising.

One of my friends Robindra struggled to make his beautiful Bloom events (sweet yoga + talk + dance party events) to make money. Year after year, he lost money. It was a labour of love. And then he discovered the magic of festival grants and now everyone is going to be able to be paid. It's a minor miracle for him.

Another friend of mine throws excellent upscale parties in town for the young professionals crowd and has been facing the same financial realities. His response has been to explore corporate sponsorship more deeply.

The Local Good in Edmonton makes \$1500 at each Green Drinks we do. But that's barely enough to cover the small honorariums we give team members (of \$200-\$400 per month). And so, in 2014, we hosted our first ever Raising the Good fundraiser that generated \$35,000 in multi year commitments. That's how we're hoping to keep things sustainable.

And you might decide to go for all four: ticket sales, sponsorships, grants and fundraising.

The more financially sustainable your project is, the more you'll be able to financially compensate your team members.

### **Other things to consider, beyond money, to keep things sustainable in your team:**

- free attendance of events
- free drinks
- using co-op students
- recent graduates who are hungry to get connected to the scene you're in and are young, full of energy and have something to prove
- arranging a barter
- mentorship
- honorariums
- gifts sponsored from local businesses
- making sure you personally let them know how valued they are
- setting up clear agreements up front so there's no risk of them burning out
- spacing out the events enough so no one is run ragged
- making sure you develop strong systems that make their jobs easier (and make it easier for a new person to hit the ground walking in their role)

### **Final Thought:**

It's so important that your volunteers have a good experience. Much of this comes down to them feeling like they are successfully contributing to something they believe in. If you give them a job and they fail at it, it's unlikely that they will try again. And this comes down to systems. It's your job to create the systems that make it easy to do well. It's your job to set them up to win. Once they have the taste of success, they'll want more. They will take more ownership. If you want people to stick around, make it easy for them to understand what their job is and to do it brilliantly.

A fine read on this is Ken Blanchard's legendary book *The One Minute Manager*. I can't recommend this highly enough.



## Idea #40: Have an event photographer

Just a bit more on photographers. Too few events have photographers.

There are so many benefits to having an event photographer.

It gives people who missed it a sense of what they missed out on which will have them be more likely to come to the next one as they look at the photos and say, “What? They were there? And them too? Oh man!”

These photos can also be used in social media as you promote the next event.

You can tag people and sometimes they’ll make it their profile picture and when people ask, “Where’s that sweet picture from?” they talk about your event.

This can also include having a photo booth where people can go to have their photo taken - this can include costume pieces appropriate to the event you’re doing (e.g. the photo above from our *Winter in Edmonton* Green Drinks event.

Sometimes this is a full on set and sometimes it’s just them standing in front of a banner with the logos of your group and your sponsors (e.g. the photo here from a summer Tastemakers garden party in Edmonton).



I heard of one fellow who hosted a party and had a photo booth where he had his friends think of a wonderful moment and close eyes and took a photo of them which he posted online after and invited them to share what they were thinking of in the photo. He emailed it to them afterwards.

## The Art of The Full House

Another friend of mine, David Jurasek, had a party with the theme of “the heart” and the had everyone make a heart from crafts and then got of a photo of it with the heart held over their chest.

You can see more examples of event photos from Green Drinks here: [on.fb.me/1UZbApY](https://on.fb.me/1UZbApY)

\*

There are two aspects of marketing your events.

There's the PROMO and there's the F.O.M.O. (Fear Of Missing Out). Good photographs can help with the promo but, even more so, when you share them on social media, they create a big sense of F.O.M.O. in people as they say, “Oh no! I can't believe I missed that event! I have to make sure to go to the next one so I don't miss out.” Promo and F.O.M.O. Your best marketing friends forever.

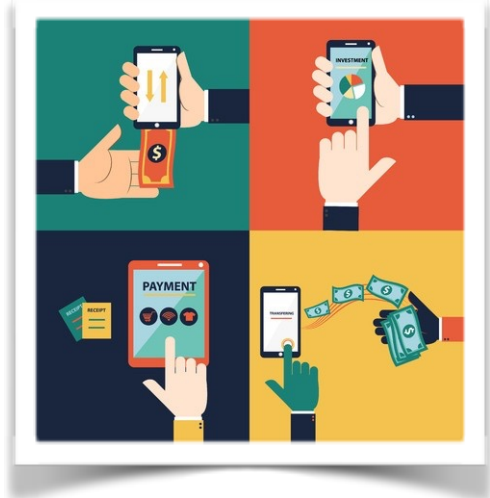


## Idea #41: Charge the right amount

What to charge for your events is one of the most mind bending things.

“What should I charge? Should it be free?”

There is, of course, no right answer or formula you can use to guarantee success, but here are some stories and ideas to keep in mind.



When I first started my Marketing for Hippiess business, I led a lot of free workshops. Maybe a hundred? I can't recall. But I would travel around and offer these free evening workshops and have anywhere from 10-30 people there. Those free workshops would be offered in conjunction with a weekend workshop I'd be offering in the area.

I did them for free because it was the best way I knew to fill my weekend workshops — getting people to the intros. That's still true. But I also felt uneasy charging for them because I was keenly aware that my point of view on marketing was still forming. Each intro I did, the content was a little different. I'd figure something out and then a few workshops later I would change it. At times I felt hopeless, like I'd never sort it out.

But then things began to click. I found my voice and my point of view and, as that happened, the workshops got better and people came up to me at the end writing cheques for \$50.

“Oh! This is a free workshop,” I'd tell them.

They'd stare at me, nod and say, “Uh huh.” and insist on me taking their money because they'd gotten so much value from it. After a year of that happening, I decided to start charging for them (\$30 in advance and \$40 at the door).

What shocked me was that I saw absolutely no drop in attendance.

I recall years ago when, wanting to learn the content more deeply, I began hosting workshops on Non Violent Communication in Edmonton. Not being certified in the content and not having really apprenticed with anyone, it didn't feel right to charge people money and so I was leading them for free. But then, somehow, I got connected with a local yoga studio. I expressed my reticence around charging money for this.

“We have to charge something or no one will come,” they told me.

They'd had the strange experience of putting on good things for free and no one showing up but then hosting the same kind of thing and charging money and people would. Perhaps people assumed that if it was free that there would be no value. Perhaps they felt awkward about getting something for free. Perhaps they imagined if it was free it would actually be a covert sales pitch for some bigger workshop. Perhaps all of those things. I don't know.

I agreed to let them charge \$25 per person and that they could keep all of the money. I led the workshop and they insisted on giving me half of it.

Years later, we would decide to begin to host Green Drinks in Edmonton. In the very beginning, we did it for free but with a basket where people could donate a dollar or two. After a few of these, we made it a suggested \$5 donation.

Around this time, I met a woman who had event organizing experience and was excited to be take on the event. The challenge was that her motivation came and went with it and she lacked hustle to get people there. So we only had 20 people per Green Drinks. The other issue was that she felt so uneasy around the question of money that she couldn't even welcome people at the door and receive the money.

Her solution to all of this?

"Let's make it free and do it every two months. I think once a month is too often."

I was shocked when I heard this.

Fast forward five months to the Fall of 2012 and my friend Hannah and I took over Green Drinks, raised the price to \$15 at the door and \$10 in advance and started getting 100 people out to the events.

I could tell you story after story of people starting to charge money and either seeing attendance go up or have no change.

Most people would think that the lower the price, the more people you would get. That is not always the case. Sometimes the cheaper an event is, the *less* people will come because they assume it won't be valuable. If your workshop goes narrow and deep in its focus with a specific, compelling result promised plus a higher price is more compelling and has people say, "Ooooh. This looks good!"

And, if the party has a compelling angle or hook, boasts a strong RSVP list and promises a unique experience, you can charge more.

I was just talking with an Edmonton based party promoter and he expressed to me that they'd charged everywhere from \$20 to \$50 per ticket and found no difference in numbers.

When I started [StreetcarShows.com](http://StreetcarShows.com), I was charging \$20 per ticket. The streetcar cost \$300 to rent and we could fit 36 people on the streetcar. So the musician got \$400 or so. I took no money for the first year because it was a labour of love in support of my friends who were musicians. The shows all sold out, many of them in less than 24 hours. I called the the “secret streetcar shows” because the only way you could hear about them was via texts from me.

But, the first year was so successful that the good people who ran the streetcar (a volunteer group named the Edmonton Radial Railway Society) raised the prices so it was now \$500 per show. This meant, to pay the performers anything and to take a \$100 cut ourselves (to make sure the project was sustainable) we had to raise the ticket price to \$30. This also meant we had to make the shows less secret. We built an email list, created a twitter account and a Facebook group and plugged them harder in public forums. I was sad about this because the shows lost a lot of their appeal to me. It was cooler when it was secret and you had to be “in the know” to find out about them.

The shows still sold out but not as fast.

However, two years later, Zizi Lievers, who had taken over running the shows, emailed me and said, “They’re selling out in two hours! The email list has grown large enough over those years that we no longer need to be posting it publicly anywhere. I think we should make them secret again.”

And so, with much joy in our hearts, we did.

\*

So, what should you charge for admission to your events?

Again there’s no right answer and it depends on a number of things. My best recommendation is to look at the following numbers and realities and ask yourself, based on this all, what amount feels right for you.

### **Costs:**

- cost of the venue
- cost of marketing the event
- how much of your personal time is going into this event?
- how much of your team’s time is going into the event?
- cost of supplies
- cost of food and catering
- cost of any staff needed

**Revenue:**

- do you have any sponsorship, grants or exhibitors also bringing in money?
- do you have a strong backend offer to make people (e.g. you're doing a free intro but offering a \$1000 weekend workshop to them and so you can afford to lose money on the intro or maybe you're hosting VIP parties that cost a lot more per ticket and the way you're finding the people is by hosting your modestly priced parties).
- how much would you need to charge per ticket to feel good?

**Please note:** I'm not saying don't do things for free. When you're starting and no one knows who you are and you're still figuring things out, I would recommend it strongly. When I began charging for my intro workshops, I had also developed more of a reputation that might draw people as well so that money wasn't as much of a barrier as it might have been if I was still a total unknown.

## Idea #42: Sponsorship, exhibitors and grants

This is not something I've done much of but it can be the difference between a profitable event and one that loses money.

There's an amazing yoga event in Edmonton called Bloom that mixes together yoga classes, workshops, TED style talks, vendors and classy dance parties in a way that I've never seen anyone else do. But, for the first three years, they were losing money on the events. Every year, I'd ask the organizer, an old friend, "Did you make any money this year?" and he'd shake his head and reply hopefully, "But we only lost a few thousand this year." The event was a labour of love for him and his partner but they were burning out.

I caught up with him in the late Fall of 2015 and asked him again. Once more, despite having Marianne Williamson as a headliner, they had lost money. But, he told me, things were turning around because they had just applied for and won some local festival grants which meant that, for the first time ever, everyone, including himself, were going to be able to be paid. This was a minor miracle.

Sometimes there's just no business model for events where they can sustain themselves at the level of quality you want without sponsorship or grants.

Could you raise ticket prices? Sure. But only so much before people stop buying tickets.

Could you just keep slogging and losing money? Sure. But, eventually, you will burn out.

But perhaps there are complimentary businesses who might be willing to sponsor you for the exposure it might get them. Perhaps there are local businesses who would pay money to have a table to sell their wares at your event? And perhaps there are local grants you could apply for that could utterly change the game for you.

Sometimes you can afford to lose money on an event if a portion of them then sign up for a next level event or workshop — then the event becomes a legitimate marketing cost and lead generator.

But, if it's a stand alone event that won't generate more clients for you, why struggle if you don't have to?

And here's another reason to consider this all. If you get sponsors and exhibitors, they have a vested interest in more people being at the event (sponsors because it means more people seeing how community minded they are and exhibitors because they want to sell more of their wares) and so, if you supply them with well crafted social media pieces and follow up with them on it, they are very likely to spread the word for you and help promote your event to just the kinds of people who would love it.

## Idea #43: Have an internal promotion contest

If you are a non-profit, theatre company, dance troupe etc. and you have a team, a board and volunteers who are involved, why not create a promotion contest to see who can get the most new people out to your events?

I see so many groups that have large built in teams and yet none of them participate in promoting crucial things.

Here are the steps I'd suggest.

**Step 1: Pick one event for your year.** The reality is that you'll be able to get away with this, at the very most, quarterly and I would suggest once a year. So, if you have an annual event you do, then I would suggest focusing everything on that one event. If it was for The Local Good, I would pick our fundraiser. If it was Rapid Fire Theatre, I would pick our annual fundraiser, Date Night. If it was for the Cash Mobs Project, I'd pick the first Cash Mob after summer. If it was for Green Drinks, I'd pick our October Green Drinks.

**Step 2: The List!** Draw up a list of everyone you think might want to be involved in such a contest.

**Step 3: Define your goal.** What's the number you want to reach?

**Step 4: Come up with sweet prizes for the top promoter.** Something they would really want. You don't want just one prize or people may get dispirited by seeing the person with the largest social network clearly winning.

**Step 5: Announce it.** Ideally in person at a pre-show meeting, AGM, team meeting etc. But, over email works too.

**Step 6: Make it easy.** Give them prewritten social media posts, emails and texts they can send out. Teach them how to spread the word. Don't assume they know how to send mass texts. Don't assume they know how to invite people to your Facebook event or make a tweet. Make it so easy for them to spread the word. They should, ideally, just be able to cut and paste things you send them. And this means sending them new things regularly through the campaign, at key moments, that they can share. I've seen groups with a social media person sharing regular updates on the events but not giving their own internal members things to share. This seems like madness to me. I'd rather they spent their time making posts for the members to share and not share anything themselves if they had to choose as that is one person sharing vs. ten or twenty. I've also seen social media people creating pre-written posts but they're in a document, in a Facebook group which is mentioned once and then forgotten. That won't do. You need to make an email list of those

involved and email them with posts and then, once or twice, send them a personal text to see if they need more support.

**Step 7: Track and Reinforce it.** This is crucial. Keep people updated on how the contest is going. When someone gets a bunch of sign ups, cheer them on publicly (e.g. at a meeting, in a Facebook group, or over email). You might even make one of those thermometers so people can see where the overall picture is. The reinforcement should be both for people's individual efforts but also to lift up how that all adds up to your group's progress. You can find out who sent them when they register online and/or when they register at the event. Or you could just have people raise their hands in a crowd. This doesn't have to be so structured and formal.

**Step 8: Celebrate and Reflect.** When the contest is over, make a big deal of thanking everyone who participated personally and publicly. Make sure people know that their involvement was recognized and appreciated. And then, review your contest as to what worked and what could be improved and make it better for next year.

## Idea #44: A good idea

This sounds too obvious. If you have a good core idea for an event, if the kernel is there, then it's easy to sell. But if the idea is vague, confusing, generic, lacklustre etc. then no matter how much hustle you put in, it likely won't fly.

How do you know if it's a good idea? The people it's for want in. They should ask you, "How do I find out about this?" If you aren't getting this reaction, then it's probably not that great an idea.

Another way to look at this is that it's got to fill a particular niche. There's something missing in the scene that this is the answer to.

Sometimes the idea is something that solves an issue in the community that no one has had time to solve (e.g. Green Drinks solved the issue of a fractured environmental scene by bringing folks together, across silos of green business, NGO's and academia etc., once a month over beers).

So, Green Drinks? A good idea.

A generic party? Meh.

Secret Streetcar Shows? A good idea.

A pub crawl? A good idea (if you're 21).

A party where you rent out all the bedrooms on one floor of a dingy, dive hotel? A good idea.

A meet up for people who feel stuck in their lives? Blah.

The Nova Scotia Gael's Jam? A good idea. It really is. You can read all about it here: [www.novascotiagaelsjam.com](http://www.novascotiagaelsjam.com)



## Idea #45: A good hook or theme

I've hosted potlucks for years. But recently, I've been experimenting with the theme of a +1 Potluck. When I invite people I say something like this, "So, it's a +1 potluck. That means you have to bring a guest. You can't bring two guests. You can't bring no guest. You must bring a guest. And they have to be someone who inspires you. If they bail, you can't come. During the potluck, you'll have one minute to introduce them and brag about them to everyone else to make sure we all know how amazing they are." And, as I'm saying it, people's eyes widen and they often say, "Wow. What a great idea! I'll have to figure out who to bring." In the past when it was just a regular potluck, people thought it was really nice, but the +1 hook seems to have people respond more strongly.

Having a party is great. Having a theme party will generate more interest and excitement. People immediately begin to imagine themselves in it and how they'd play into the theme.

Years ago, my friend Scott Harris and I, both hip deep in organizing anti-globalization protests and rallies organized a We Have Won The Revolution party. The hook was that, during the party, you could only speak about the revolution in the past tense and you had to bring a piece of evidence about how the revolution was won. And people went off. It became the best kept secret, "What evidence are you bringing?" and no one would tell anyone until the revelation moment at the party. The Raging Grannies came with a song. People brought poems, crafts and my friend Trevor said, "You know . . . I was walking here and I found piece of an old menu so I framed it. It's from restaurants still served meat! Can you believe it?" The entire evening was filled with beauty and charm. It was wonderful.

## Idea #46: Create a film trailer for your events:

A simple idea.

Why not create a sweet little 2-3 minute video that captures the vibe and essence of your event?



These kinds of videos are great for first timers who are on the fence about going or not and they are great to use for social media shares.

Here are some fine examples:

**Green Drinks Edmonton:** [youtube.com/watch?v=pd2vRCSwu1o](https://youtube.com/watch?v=pd2vRCSwu1o)

**The Good 100 Experiment:** [youtube.com/watch?v=FwBtKleAafg](https://youtube.com/watch?v=FwBtKleAafg)

**Tastemakers Garden Party:** [youtube.com/watch?v=Qe0IrMMjq-0](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Qe0IrMMjq-0)

**Intervivos: Citizen Edmonton:** [youtube.com/watch?v=LQmSkIE5d0](https://youtube.com/watch?v=LQmSkIE5d0)

If you have other examples, please send them my way.

## Idea #47: Pre-sell tickets

I can't speak strongly enough to this notion.

One of the biggest pitfalls I see is people only selling tickets at the door and hoping enough people will come. To me, this is crazy.

And there's the whole other conversation to have about the upsides and downsides of running "free" events.

But, if I'm hosting an event, I want to have a sense of how many people are signing up as we go along so I can know if more promo is needed or less. I want to know if we need to cancel the event or do we need a bigger space. You will never have an accurate sense of this by Facebook RSVP's or people telling you, "I'll be there" or RSVP'ing via an email. Until they've paid you money, they aren't really committed to coming (and even then, not all of them will show up).

The old and reliable approach to this is to have tiered pricing or early bird specials.

So, for our Edmonton Green Drinks events, we sell tickets at \$10 in advance but \$15 at the door as a way to incentivize them to get their tickets in advance.

Remember to include the link to buy tickets prominently on the Facebook event page.

And when you share it up on social media, use the link that sends them to the place to buy their tickets, not to the Facebook event. If you use that, they'll RSVP and feel complete. Don't chance it. Direct everything to people buying tickets. Once they've signed up, in the welcome email they get, you can ask them to invite their friends on Facebook and to make a comment in the Facebook group saying they're attending (which will build up the buzz around your event tremendously).



## The Art of The Full House

When I host my potlucks, there are no tickets being sold. But I absolutely do not trust Facebook RSVP's and so I require people to text me to confirm they're coming. If they "no show," I make sure to let them know that it would mean the world if they'd give me a heads up next time. Slowly, over time, people begin to RSVP like they mean it.

This strategy is truly kinder to yourself as an organizer. It gives you a ballpark range of how many people are coming which allows you to know when you need to hustle and when you can relax.

But this is the key idea: Pre-sell tickets. Hope is not a strategy.

## Idea #48: If limited tickets highlight that

Pretending that there are a limited number of tickets when there aren't is the worst.

But not letting people know there are a limited number of tickets when there are isn't much better.

If you're running an event and you can only accept 25 people, make sure that's clear up front or you'll deal with upset friends telling you they would have signed up earlier if they'd known and what were you thinking anyway.

And, even if you're running a larger event, if you're half full, tell people that. Announce that. If there are only 20 tickets left on a 150 ticket event, I would personally be posting updates in the Facebook group for every five tickets that get sold.

There's a big power in doing The Countdown as your event gets closer.

"Only 20 tickets left!"

"Only 15 tickets left!"

"Only 10 tickets left!"

"Only 5 tickets left!"

"We are SOLD OUT!"



## Idea #49: Figuring out the best frequency

If your event is a recurring one, then it's important to sort out how often you will do it.

There are four basic schedules worth considering.

**Weekly:** Know if you do a weekly event, your numbers are likely to be small. Ten or less for the first while, while you build up your list and the reputation of the event. I wouldn't recommend weekly events for most things except perhaps a yoga class, meditation groups, improv comedy shows etc.

**Monthly:** This schedule can work really well for social events as there's enough space between them that people start missing each other and when an event falls on the same day of each month it's an immense help in word of mouth as people can say, "Oh yes. I think Green Drinks Edmonton happens on the first Wednesday of every month." Many [MeetUp.com](http://MeetUp.com) groups work on this schedule.

You can also do a modified monthly schedule. With Green Drinks Edmonton we run events February through May and then October and November. We take summers and the holidays off.

This can be important as a monthly event is a great deal of work to pull off and it can become a grind. Plus, without any breaks the events can get "old." Letting them miss you is good and it lets the organizers take needed breaks. In our case, it also allows us to come back with a launch twice per year.

**Quarterly:** There are some events that are larger and more involved that work better done four times per year. I think of Edmonton's Culture Collective — an incredibly multi-act, variety show. The production requirements are enormous and they would have an impossible time doing it weekly and it would be very difficult to manage it on a monthly basis.

**Annually:** This is for those larger events like a gala or anniversary party or a fundraiser. These events boast the best chance of having larger numbers. An annual event is special. It's an occasion.

## Idea #50: Individual hub outreach

There is so much to say here. Let me tell you about Edmonton's best variety show, The Culture Collective and what they are doing right: [culturecollective.ca](http://culturecollective.ca).

Whenever there is a show, and I do what I can to promote their shows (sometimes texting friends and always on Facebook), they send me a text to let me know that I am on the guest list.

It means a lot to me. And I think it's really smart.

Here's the reality of marketing. Almost all of marketing, in the long term, boils down to word of mouth – people talking to people about stuff. That's the realest I can be about marketing.

However, there are some people who are better connected and more respected in each community – those people are what I call “hubs.”

The more of those people you can get speaking about your events, the more buzz you will get.

But, hubs are busy. And they know they are hubs.

Let me repeat that: they know they are hubs. They know they're well connected and respected. This is not a mystery to them and so your manner of approach needs to acknowledge this. These people have put in an inordinate amount of time to develop such a reputation and deep trust from their community. If you come to them with an entitled vibe, templates approach or spam them, you run a heavy risk of them blowing you off.

But if you want you event to develop a good reputation, especially if it is a recurring event, it is worth doing whatever you need to do to get the hubs there in the room and to make sure they have a good experience. If they do, they'll talk it up and speak favourably of it for years to come. Even if it's a one time event, their attendance will mean something to those on the fence. So, inviting them to come for free as guests of honour is a fine idea. Giving them a +1 (meaning they can bring someone with them) is advised too.

So, let's say you've invited a hub to come for free and they've said, “Yes.” If you want to invite them to spread the word for you on your event, make sure you send them something prewritten that they can simply cut and paste (and edit if they like).

Let me repeat that: make sure you send them something prewritten. Do not expect them to spend 15 minutes crafting a Facebook post that perfectly captures what your event is all about. Do not expect them to use the right hashtags unless you give it to them. Make their life easy. Write it as if it's from them. Something like:

*EDMONTON: Join me at The Culture Collective Variety Show on Jan 21st at The Metro Cinema. This show is one of my favourite things about Edmonton. Get your tickets while they last. [http://www.metrocinema.org/film\\_view/5634/](http://www.metrocinema.org/film_view/5634/) or at [www.culturecollective.ca](http://www.culturecollective.ca) Who will I see there?*

Remember this always: Hubs are busy. If you want their help in spreading the word then make it as easy as possible for them to spread the word.

By the way, even if they say “no” you can still get their help in spreading the word. You just send them a message saying something like, “So sorry to hear you can’t make it. Would you be willing to help spread the word about it? I can send you something prewritten you can just cut and paste.” They will, almost always, say yes. Then you can modify it to be something like:

*EDMONTON: I wish I could go to The Culture Collective Variety Show on Jan 21st at The Metro Cinema. This show is one of my favourite things about Edmonton. Get your tickets while they last. [http://www.metrocinema.org/film\\_view/5634/](http://www.metrocinema.org/film_view/5634/) or at [www.culturecollective.ca](http://www.culturecollective.ca) I can't make it but you should!*

I would also recommend creating an email list, a Twitter group and a Facebook friends list for these hubs so that reaching out to them and inviting them is easy.

## **Additional Reading:**

<http://marketingforhippies.com/classy-cold-approach>

## Idea #51: The Thunderclap Approach

I have used this many times to great effect.

Imagine this: one week or two days before your event, Facebook and Twitter are overflowing with dozens of people announcing that they're coming to your event or expressing their regrets that they can't but that others should go.

This has a big impact. Especially if those people are local hubs and VIPs.

You can engineer this to happen.

It starts with create your Hubs Database, which is, basically, a spreadsheet of the local movers and shakers with whom you have some sort of relationship and who you think would be open to this sort of solicitation from you.

You send them all an email saying something like:

Apologies for the mass email. We are hosting XYZ event and it would mean the world if you could help us build up the buzz in the two days before it happens to help us sell it out.

We've prewritten some social media posts for you below (feel free to edit as you like).

If You're Able to Come:

EDMONTON: *Excited to check out #GreenDrinksYeg event tomorrow night at @YellowheadBeer - Who will I see there?*

If You're Not Able to Come:

EDMONTON: *Sad to miss out on #GreenDrinksYeg event tomorrow night at @YellowheadBeer. Go and have a pint for me.*

Thank you again so much for any support you're able to give.



The result of this is wonderful as, over the next 24 hours, social media is filled with comments like this, providing vital social proof that your event is the place to be. It creates buzz and awareness of your event. And, even if people can't make this one, they'll be more likely to notice it the next time you promote it because they'll remember that people they trusted were talking it up. And there's something more powerful about everyone posting at the same time than a steady trickle of comments. It's the difference between 100 people clapping once throughout the day vs. them all clapping at the same moment in the same location. The second is much more powerful and attention getting.

If you want to get fancy you can even use the official Thunderclap online tool at: [thunderclap.it](https://thunderclap.it)

**Note:** This is not an approach I'd ever suggest using more than four times per year. No one will blink at you doing this once per year. Four times a year is the furthest edge you'd want to push. Monthly is too much, especially when you're talking about hubs and VIPs.

## Idea #52: Announce date ticket sales go live

If your event has a reputation for selling out, here's an approach you can use to keep that going – tell people a few days in advance about when your tickets will be going on sales.

The other day, I got a Facebook invitation to an event that did just this:

Edmonton Food Fight 8: Battle COLD WAR

2 chefs, 3 ingredients, 1 hour of Cooking Time

Get Cooking Presents: Edmonton Food Fight 8: Battle COLD WAR

Doreen Prei vs. Steven Brochu, Monday, February 1st, 8:00 pm

Get Cooking's Studio Kitchen Located at MacEwan University, Student Residence,  
11050 104 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta

Buy your tickets Thursday at 5:00 pm at:  
[edmontonfoodfight8.Eventbrite.ca](http://edmontonfoodfight8.Eventbrite.ca)

On Monday, February 1st watch tableside as two of Edmonton's premier chefs go head to head in a one-hour culinary face-off. This Edmonton Food Fight will pit two of Edmonton's top culinary goliaths against each other in a one-hour, three-ingredient cold war battle!

And you can bet that people marked their calendars for 4:59pm on that Thursday to go and get their tickets.

## Idea #53: Segmenting your list into A's and B's and offering it to the A's first



If your event is of the kind that will likely sell out quickly, you can do an advance notice message to your A List. The A List is for all of your favourite people, biggest supporters, most regular attendees, local hubs etc. If you give them first dibs on tickets, it will have them feel special and that their contributions are actually being noticed and not taken for granted.

But, it also has the added benefit of having some local heavy hitters already on your guest list by the time you announce it to the remainder of your list. That might be visible on your RSVP page, the Facebook event page, your Eventbrite page (if you enable it to be visible) etc.

You can also announce it on the Facebook event page each day in the lead up to it by sharing the photos and bios of those who are coming with a little, "Guess who else you'll get to meet at this event . . ." I would likely only use this tactic for an event that happens annually or quarterly.

I've had times where I've had an A, B and C list and worked my way through it.

Another advantage is that it means you will be more excited about the event because you know who's going to be there and you are excited by the guest list.

## Idea #54: Use online listings

This is an obvious but often overlooked approach.

If your event is a public event then it's a wise idea to make sure it's as visible as possible. Most communities have a number of online, community event listings. There are a few places to look at it's well worth asking around about them.

### Things to look at are:

- radio stations
- local weekly papers
- Facebook groups where your people congregate and where you'd be allowed to post some promo for your event.
- Eventbrite and other online event platforms have their own local calendars you can check out that tell you about local events going on.
- consider creating a [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) group and event through that so it can be found easily.

Some smaller communities have *one* online forum where everyone looks (e.g. if you live on Salt Spring Island, BC then you'll use [saltspringexchange.com](https://www.saltspringexchange.com)).

It takes only a few minutes to throw these up and could bring you a few people each time.

## Idea #55: The Handbill Strategy

This strategy has been used by punk kids promoting their house shows since punk shows were a thing. You basically create a mini poster, the size of a postcard and carry 20 of them with you wherever you go. When you meet someone who you think might be interested, you hand it to them.

This is so simple and yet so few people do it and I don't know why.

You could literally just create something in Word or Pages. Or handwrite it. The main thing is that people have a tangible reminder of your event.

At Green Drinks, when people arrive and register, we have a stack of post card sized handbills for the next Green Drinks event coming up. We encourage them to take one so that they will leave with a physical reminder of the next Green Drinks event.

I have hosted monthly potlucks since 2007 or so where I have brought together my favourite people in town. I primarily promote it via texting to a list that is, as of January of 2016 about 200 people. But, when I'm out and about, I'll often meet someone who I want to get to know better, or who I think would be a good fit for the potlucks and I'll hand them out my potluck business card. People are usually floored and charmed by these.

"You have a business card for your potlucks?"

On the back, the date and time are left blank so I can handwrite it in for them.

It's so simple. It takes seconds. It's brought many people to my potlucks.

A tweak of this tactic is to actually carry physical tickets with you so that you can sell them directly to people when you're chatting. Why send them to a website? Why chance it? Get their money right then and sell a ticket! Bam. Done.



## Idea #56: PR and media

I have so little experience with this that I feel almost ridiculous writing about it, but it must be said.

If you're hosting an event that is unique and on a topic relevant to what's going on in the news, then why not write and submit press releases to local TV, Radio, and Newspapers? Why not reach out to local bloggers to cover it. Why not do what you can to set up interviews about it in the local press?

In his book *The Fall of Advertising, The Rise of PR*, Al Ries makes the case that paying for advertising is not half as effective as generating genuine good press.

The huge upside to getting in the mainstream media is that your events will be discovered by new people. Your own network has its limits. Even the hubs you're aware of have their limits. If you want to bring in new people, get yourself on the news, get yourself featured in the paper or interviewed on the radio.

It's worth bringing someone who's savvy in these matters onto your team who has a local media list and who knows how to write a professional press release that will get noticed.

And, it's well worth offering your media contacts free tickets to come and check your event out. They might get inspired and decide to cover it or know someone you should talk to about it.

## Idea #57: Email those who've bought tickets to spread word

Who might just be your strongest supporters in getting people to your events?

The people who have already bought tickets.

I'm surprised at how rarely this occurs to people.

A simple message before the event asking people to help spread the word and providing them with pre-written social media posts can go a long way to getting some buzz going for your event. You can make it the focus of the email or simply put it in the p.s.

You can also ask them to announce their attendance in the Facebook event.

If they have bought tickets, it means they like your event. It means they've already, to some level, bought into what you're doing.

Another approach is to offer those who are coming either a free ticket or two half price tickets as a surprise bonus. They will be delighted and it makes them look good. You're giving them social capital.



## Idea #58: The day before email

It's always a wise idea to send out a reminder email the day before your event. Here are some things to consider including and why they might matter.

- **Remind them of the event and timing:** the basics. Even if they've bought a ticket, it's so easy for them to forget about the event.
- **Remind them of location and parking considerations:** this will help your event start on time if people don't have to spend 30 minutes looking for parking or no showing or arriving late because, "I didn't realize how far it was!"
- **Give last exciting updates on what will be happening there:** sometimes you can save a big surprise for the day before (e.g. "Our secret guest speaker is going to be the Mayor!") or the fact that it's sold out, or something like, "The first ten people at the door tonight get a free pint of beer on us!"
- **Invite their last minute help in promoting the event:** it never hurts to ask them to announce their attendance in the Facebook event (as likely the only comments will be people saying, "So sad I can't make it!" which can create a really downer energy and make it seem like no one is coming. You can also give them three cut and paste options social media posts they can use to spread the word.

## Idea #59: The day after email

The day after the event, there's still some momentum and there may be things you need to send out. Here are some things that might be in that email.

- **Thank everyone for coming:** after my potlucks I text those who attended a simple text, sometimes with a little more, saying something like this:  
*"Thanks for coming last night and gracing my home with your good vibes. What a group! What food! I hope you met some good people. Next potluck date coming soon."*
- **Invite them to sign up on your email list and to follow you on social media:** sometimes people will sign up for your event and specifically not opt in to be on your email list. They will also not sign up at the door but, after having such a fun evening, they are then open to signing up on your email list. If you give them the reminder in a post event email, you'll like gain a few more people.
- **Give them the link to sign up for your next event or tell them when tickets will go on sale:** use the day after email to keep momentum going.
- **Give them the link to photos from the event:** If you took photos, give them the link to the album (e.g. in your Facebook page or group) where they can see the photos of themselves and their friends and tag themselves in them (thus spreading the word about your event further).
- **Direct them to any next steps or deliver on anything you promised:** maybe you mentioned an article, video or link to a campaign you were going to send. From a recent potluck:  
*"Hey all, thanks for coming last night and gracing my home with your good words for each other and the fine work you do in this world. what a night. I'll keep you posted on the next potluck dates. And again, I extend my earnest invitation to explore how you can support this good woman, Nav Kaur, in her Ward 12 campaign with your time, your skills and your money. This is a rare and beautiful moment in local politics to bring a much needed diversity onto our City Council. You can learn more here: [votonav.ca/join-us.php](http://votonav.ca/join-us.php)"*

## Example of a Follow Up Email Sent After a Green Drinks Event:

Note: I have underlined everything that would have been linked to the appropriate place:

Greetings,

Thank you all so much for joining us at last night's sold out Green Drinks.

What a night.

We hope you'll consider joining us at our next Green Drinks on April 2nd. The theme is Celebrating Local Literature and it's our newest theme. You might get to rub elbows with local authors, get autographs, write a haiku – this might just be our most fun and creative Green Drinks yet.

So get your tickets soon if you plan to come. This last Green Drinks sold out ten days in advance.

If you'd like to follow us on twitter you can do that here: @LocalGoodYEG

If you met one of the experts but can't remember their name or how to reach them, you can read this handy blog post.

And did the lovely Monika Pa take a classy photograph of you whilst you were unawares? You can find out in our facebook group soon.

You can always find out when the next Green Drinks is by going to www.GreenDrinksYEG.com.

warmest,

The Whole Team at The Local Good  
www.thelocalgood.ca

p.s. You should also check out our sweet events listing to find out what else is happening in town.

p.p.s. Here is the first of the promised recipes from last night.

p.p.p.s. Want to read more about what's happening in the Edmonton local food scene? Here are all of the local food related blog posts from our blog.

## Idea #60: Make it a secret

This is one of the truest things I know.

If you make your events secret, more people will want to go.

There used to be a venue in town called The Baby Seal Club. It was an old gas station turned club house. It had a makeshift bar, weird styrofoam art on the ceiling and old carpets. The weirdest. But, every once in a while, shows would happen there. It had been around for years before I ever heard about it. My first time there, I asked if there was an email list I could get on. I was informed there was no such list. I just had to be cool enough to find out about when shows were happening. This immediately disheartened me as I knew I was, in no way shape or form, cool enough to find out about most of the shows happening there. But, just the fact that it was secret made me want to go to shows there.



In 2012, my friends were releasing their first album for their band Picture the Ocean. I recalled hearing of how my friend Sarah Sharkey had had a birthday of hers on the Edmonton Streetcar – a 100 year old, wooden streetcar that is operated on a limited stretch of track by a volunteer society of lovely old men. And, when she told me about this, she mentioned that it could be rented out and that a friend of hers had hosted a music concert on it. This seemed like the coolest thing in the world.

And so I pitched my friends, “Want to do a show on the streetcar to plug your album release?” The plan was to board the streetcar and then drive it onto the also 100 year old Highlevel Bridge at sunset and to park it in the middle and do the concert there. They agreed and the show, announced via text to a select group of friends, sold out in a matter of hours.

The next month, my friend Justine Vandergrift was releasing a new album as well. I made her the same pitch. That show sold out in 24 hours.

In the end, I hosted ten shows that summer with all of the money going to the Edmonton Radial Railway Society and the artist. This was before the did research on the liquor laws and so people were bringing on beers and bottles of wine with them. It was a time alright.

And the buzz began. Everyone I told about these shows wanted in.

“We’re doing these secret Streetcar show . . .” I’d say and, when they asked me how they could be in the loop I told them that the only way was to get on my texting list. It wasn’t going to be shared on Facebook or Twitter. There was no email list.

People insisted on giving me their numbers.

Eventually the streetcar folks decided, buoyed by the success of our shows and the uptick in interest in brought them, to raise their prices, which meant we had to increase our ticket prices from \$20 to \$30. This meant the shows weren’t selling out as fast. Hoisted with our own petard. This meant we had to promote the events harder. So we made them public, used social media and built an email list.

But the summer of 2015, it was being run by my friend Zizi Lievers and the shows, promoted by our email list of well over a thousand people, were selling out in two hours again.

“I think,” she said. “That we should make these shows a secret again.”

And I agreed. So now the shows, which you can learn about at [streetcarshows.com](http://streetcarshows.com) are exclusively promoted via the email list and social media is used to show people what they missed out on by not being there and to promote other shows.

While it’s not always appropriate, there’s something very powerful about an event being top secret. It speaks to an exclusivity of who will be there. It tells people you’re not desperate for people to come and that you’ll prefer quality over quantity. It gives the impression that you have something of such high quality that it needs to be protected a bit.

## Idea #61: Have a sweet afterparty planned

For many events, people are enjoying connecting and then you have to leave because you've only rented the workshop or performance space for so long and yet people still want to keep connecting. If you arrange an after party, this can facilitate that. And, as the host of the event where spending quality time with anyone is impossible, it's wonderful to be able to say, "Are you coming to the after party? Ok. Let's connect more there."

If you're doing an event that wraps up by 9pm at the latest, consider hosting an afterparty elsewhere. You can book a table at a local bar or lounge. It can even be offered as a part of the registration process for a small add on fee if you'll have exclusive access to a particular venue.

For some events, you might want to take everyone out dancing for a more raucous vibe but you can also host these things at someone's home, apartment or loft space for a more chill vibe.

The afterparties can have a more VIP vibe to them where you only invite certain people who you're most wanting to connect with more. This is a huge time saver. Instead of saying to each of them, "Hey, let's get together for coffee sometime." You can have the conversations you need to have with them all in one night.

## Idea #62: Systematize your events

If you are hosting a recurring event (and it's something I strongly encourage) then it is vital that you systematize the logistics of the event as much as possible.

This means checklists. This means clear job descriptions and roles for people. This means having someone who manages all of that. This means, when something goes wrong, you don't just complain about it, you sit down and figure out a system to make sure that issue will never happen again.

This isn't difficult but it takes discipline.

If you're running an event, you need to think about it as, if I were to go travelling for a year and had no internet or phone and just couldn't be reached at all, what would need to be in place for this event to continue? What would people need to know?

I *highly* recommend the use of Google Docs and Spreadsheets to you as they allow yourself and your fellow organizers to edit documents together and share them with new people who are involved.

In 2013, when it became clear that Hannah MacDonald, my co-conspirator in Green Drinks would be leaving town, we sat down and we made systems for everything in Green Drinks. We made sure that it was as simply laid out and easy as possible for someone brand new to do. When I sat down with Kerstyn, the new Green Drinks coordinator, I made sure she knew that a primary job she had was to make these systems better — to keep improving them.

When Green Drinks first began, Hannah and I did everything. We marketed it, got door prizes, greeted people at the door, MC'd the events and tidied up after. It was exhausting. But we were the only two who really knew what to do. Having systems means that others can step in to support. Having systems means more people can be involved. Having systems means mentorships that are set up for people to have "wins" rather than fail at their attempts to help you. You can take a peak at some of our systems in the Case Study at the back of this book.

## Idea #63: Design your events to foster interactions

Many events are made better by people interacting with each other.

The trouble is that a lot of people are incredibly shy.

So, how do you get a room full of shy people to talk to one other without bullying them into it?

There is an incredible art to this that has to do with designing your event in such a way that interaction naturally happens without feeling forced.

A simple example: at Green Drinks we give everyone who arrives some sort of “Bingo” game to play where they have to find a certain number of people who meet certain criteria. You can google “icebreaker bingo games” and find a lot of these.

So, that helps foster connections. People can play it or not.

But then we also ensure that we don’t have enough pens that night so that people have to talk to each other to say, “Can I borrow your pen?”

At Green Drinks, we also invite people to have name tags. This makes conversation less intimidating already but then we ask people to write a topic of conversation on their name tag so that people could say, “So, Tad, tell me about Marketing for Hippies.” or “So Susan, tell me about straw bale homes.” This means that conversations jumped right into something juicy and meaningful for both people.

At Green Drinks we also have two to three people per event who play the role of being “connectors.” Before the event I tell them, “Ok. Your job is to create at least ten new connections between people tonight. For the first hour, your job is to meet everyone you can. Short conversations where you ask them what brought them here tonight, what they’re up to and what kind of person they’d like to meet. Many people won’t know. That’s okay. Keep meeting people. If you see someone standing alone, introduce yourself and then introduce them to people standing nearby. At a certain point, you’ll start to see connections that should be made. When you do, go up to one of them and say, “Can I steal you for a moment?” and then walk them over to the other person and explain the connection you see. Once they begin talking, walk away.”

Having a few people formally in this role is a game changer. If you introduce them from the stage it’s a bonus.

Canadian musician Craig Cardiff carries around his Book of Truth when he tours. It's a blank journal. During shows, he passes it around with a pen and invites people to write something true in the book. It could be a quote. It could be a story. It could be anything. This has people passing the book around and reading what their friends and fellow audience members wrote.

I used to attend a five-day New Years party every year. One year, when I arrived, I was given a playing card. I think I had the nine of hearts. Everyone else was also given a playing card. "The goal of the game is to have the highest possible card by the end of the five days. The way you get higher cards is to trade with people. The way you trade is by giving or receiving dares from people. Those dares will be based on the difference in value between the two cards and the nature of what's appropriate between the two of you given your relationship. So if you have a two and they have a king and you're close friends, the dare might be able to be a bit more intense. If you have a ten and they have a Jack and you're total strangers, then it will likely be a very mild dare."

Besides being reminded occasionally about the game, this game just ran gently behind the scenes of the event and led to many hilarious moments. The game was a part of the design of the event and fostered interaction.

I remember going to TEDx Edmonton one year and, before lunch, they asked people to go for lunch in groups of six with people they have never met. As we walked out I shook my head. This was an example of terrible design. I could see that no one was doing it or interested as we made our way to get our bagged lunches which were included in the event fee. Perhaps people were too scared or shy. Regardless, no one was doing it. But then I saw the brilliance. Lunches we packed into wood crates that were about one foot cubed. Those crates were stacked artfully. Each crate had six lunches in it. You only got your crate when you were in a group of six. Genius. Myself and five others quickly got into a group and headed off for a wonderful meal together.

In 2006, I began hosting potlucks. I hosted my first potluck because I realized, one day, that my favourite people didn't know each other. This realization shocked me. I hosted a potluck for them to meet each other. But at the night of the potluck, I saw that people were sticking to the people they already knew. Very few new conversations were happening. So I called everyone into my living room and asked them to make a circle. At first, people were cranky about it because they were enjoying connecting but I insisted. Once we were in the circle, I invited everyone to share about themselves for one minute. "Just let people know who you are, what you're up to, what you're passionate or nerdy about, what's coming up next etc. Whatever you want people to know." And we did that. Of course, by the end of the circle, people were approaching new folks wanting to know more about what they had said in the circle. I've done it ever since and done over one hundred potlucks. It's clear to me now that there are two potlucks. There's the potluck before the introduction circle and the potluck after that circle. The potluck after the circles is ten times livelier.

## Idea #64: The 70% rule

One of the things that holds people back from passing jobs on is the fear that the next people probably won't be as good as them.

And that's almost certainly true.

But it's always good to keep The 70% Rule in mind: if someone else can do the same job at least 70% as well as you can, pass it on.

People who refuse to do this suffocate their events. They become the bottlenecks for everything. No one else in the community is able to get involved. And then those people burn out and the events stop.

If you want your events to become community institutions over the long term (and it takes about three years for this to truly settle in if you're doing your events monthly) then that's going to take a team of people and that means clear agreements and strong systems.

This means choosing your team carefully and being willing to let go of control (which can be the hardest).

But it's worth it.

In February of 2016, I found myself attending a sold out Green Drinks event in Edmonton that I had nothing to do with organizing. Two young women, Kerstyn and Leila, had taken on the project (and our carefully honed systems) and made it happen.

I spent the evening walking around, giving suggestions here and there for things that could be improved and offering mentorship when asked (e.g. "How do we get the crowd to listen to us when we are on the mic?!") but, for the most part, I just couldn't stop smiling.

Hannah MacDonald and I had been willing to invest the time into developing systems for organizing and promoting the event and that, combined with two well picked leaders, had led up to my enjoying an event I'd started as a participant.

Note: If you're willing to play with The 70% Rule you might discover, as I did that night, that there were many things they'd done 130% better than I would have ever done on my own. If they start off at 70% as good as you, they don't stay there. They will grow and bring their own style to it.

So maybe that's another reason why to hand it off at 70% and not wait until 100% - to make sure there's room for them to grow and find their own approach to it rather than being trapped in a checklist and aesthetic that isn't their own.

## The Art of The Full House

That night, Kerstyn and Leila had set up a photo booth. But it wasn't just any photo booth. They'd spent an afternoon crafting winter themed props that people could hold. They'd even, though you can't see it in this photo of our team at The Local Good, managed to get a fat tire bike. I'd never have put so much work into this and it never would have been so magical.



## Idea #65: Track your stats

If you plan to do your events for years to come, it's very wise to track your numbers. Here are a few things I would commend you keep an eye on.

- how many people directly marketed to via email?
- how many people opened those emails?
- how many invited on Facebook?
- how many RSVP's on Facebook?
- how many tickets sold in advance?
- how many tickets sold at the door?
- how many people showed up?
- where did people hear about your event (specifically)?

Having these numbers can give you the peace of mind from knowing what's happening.

If you know, for example that you email 100 people and 20 people read those emails and 2 of them buy tickets, then you realize that, to sell out an event of 100 people, you would need 10,000 people on your email list (if that's all you were relying on). This can be sobering to see, but it's also empowering because then you can go about doing the work you really need to do rather than being full of stress in promotion and disappointment at the event that not enough people came.

If you know how many last minute cancelations and no shows you have (for example, I consistently get a 33% drop off in attendance of my potlucks in the 24 hours before). So, if my home can hold 50 people, I can accept 70 RSVPs. If I wasn't tracking this, I would keep being broken hearted that I was only getting 35 people or so and that I'd turned people away who could have come. At Green Drinks we have about a 20% no show rate.

Knowing these numbers shows you where your gaps are. Do you need to focus on selling more tickets? Reminding people? Adding more people to your email list? Where are the gaps?



## Idea #66: Create a wait list

Even if you oversell an event, there are many reasons for people to no show. Sometimes the weather is terrible. Sometimes a whole group cancels together.

So, even once you've sold out an event, it can be a good idea to give people the option to sign up on the Wait List to be the first ones to be told if more spaces open up.

You'll sleep easier knowing you've got this list in your back pocket if you suddenly realize that you have a competing event that night that might steal people from your event.



## Idea #67: Playing the long game and sticking around

If you're doing a recurring event, then it behooves you to play the long game and stick around for years. It can be easy to get discouraged about numbers but I can't tell you how many times I've had people come up to me at Green Drinks Edmonton and tell me, "I've been meaning to come for years! But the dates have just never worked out."



I think it takes about three years for an event to become an institution in a community where everyone in the know, knows about it. Most people give up or lose interest well before this ever happens.

If you stick around long enough, word of mouth begins to work in your favour and people begin to invite their friends or send them there. At each Green Drinks event, we will ask the crowd (of anywhere from 100-150 people), "How many of you are here for the first time?" and half of the hands go up.

Consider the implications of this. If we were to ask the new people how many of them heard from us, I imagine the answer would be about half again. So that means a quarter of the people there came because of word of mouth. It means that, the week before, over beers a friend was complaining, "Where do you meet good folks in town who are into local food, sustainability, alternative energy etc?" and their friend pointed them to Green Drinks.

This will happen more and more the longer you stick around.

# Section V: Don't Mess With People's Rice Bowls:

Seven Business Lessons from Ten Recent  
Workshop No-Shows

I want to tell you a story.

I know that, on this blog, I share a lot of “how-to’s” and philosophical pieces and there can be the risk of people thinking that because I generally post positive things, I must never mess up, I must have everything together and I must never get frustrated with clients.

Which is certainly not true . . .

This story has to do with something I heard Stephen Covey speak of years ago which was to never mess with someone’s rice bowl. It was an Asian proverb he’d heard. It meant, in essence, don’t mess with someone’s means of sustenance. Note that the aphorism isn’t “don’t mess with someone’s rice.” It is don’t mess with the bowl. The rice is one meal, but the bowl is the thing that carries their food and makes it possible to eat. In modern times, people’s businesses or computers are a sort of rice bowl. They are the things that make sustenance possible. If you run a workshop, it’s your rice bowl.



And recently, my rice bowl got messed with by ten people.

So I want to tell you the story of this and what I learned from it.

\*

At the end of February, I hosted a workshop in my living room in Edmonton.

My living room isn’t very large. It can accommodate about 12 people.

This means that my Edmonton workshops tend to sell out quickly.

And that means that once it’s sold out, people don’t bother asking about spaces or if they do, I have to turn them away and hope they might make it to a future workshop.

It means that, if people no-show without telling me, I lose money. On a day-long workshop, where the price is a \$25 deposit and pay-what-you-can (PWYC) by the end, I tend to make about \$100/person (in addition to the deposit). Because the workshop is PWYC, my only expectation is that you show up. Not that you pay a lot. Just that you show up. That’s it.

On this day, five people no-showed. They didn't come and they didn't, for the most part, tell me they weren't coming.

And then again, just a month later, it happened almost identically. Five no-shows for a workshop of twelve.

Of course, most of my blog posts are trying to help you look at your business through the eyes of your potential customers; helping people see how their marketing might come across as gross or disrespectful.

But this one is also about helping you look through the eyes of the entrepreneurs you might be doing business with. I'm hoping to lift up the impact of your own conduct as a customer.

And . . . perhaps also to commiserate with you a bit, my dear reader, about shitty behaviour you've had to deal with from your clients and to offer you seven lessons on how to deal with it.

### **Here's the story:**

Both workshops started at 10am but in both cases, only six of the 12 people registered were present so I asked everyone's patience to wait until more folks arrived. By 10:15am we just got started anyway. And the others never arrived.

After the first workshop was done, I realized that I had accidentally left the "pay at the door" option on Eventbrite on and a few of the registrants had chosen that option. Which means they hadn't had to pay the \$25 deposit. It's a rookie mistake on my part, and not the first time I've done it. Whenever people don't show up for my workshops, it's almost always the people who've not put down a deposit because they "promised" to pay at the door.

Classic.

So, that wasn't great, but that was my bad. It's not good behaviour on no-shows' parts to not let me know, given how few spots there were in the workshop, but it's predictable and I know better. I learned this lesson first in Seattle, when 36 people signed up for my PWYC weekend workshop and only 12 showed up because there had been no deposit asked of them. Since then I've required \$100 down for the weekend workshops and no-shows have vanished. When I began doing day-long workshops, I asked for a \$25 deposit, and hadn't had an issue with no-shows . . . until these past two workshops.

Then I noticed that one of them had actually been on the waiting list and I'd forgotten to tell that person that they could now come as someone had dropped off the list. My bad again.

But, by the end of it all, there were still five people who had paid their deposits for the second workshop and simply not shown up. Ten people in total. Not even a courtesy message the night before or the morning of.

## Here's What Was Particularly Frustrating:

This was the first workshop in which I'd decided to give everyone my \$80 Marketing for Hippies 101 video in advance of the workshop.

The pitch was that, before participants showed up, they'd get all of the content of the workshop and our day together could be 100% question and answer focused on applying the content to their own particular situations. It was, I knew, an experiment. It was my attempt to be generous with my people and also avoid my having to go over the exact same content again and again in my workshops. I'd hoped it might be a win/win.



And yet, it is the workshop with the highest percentage of no-shows I have ever had since instituting the deposit system.

Most generous offer = most no-shows?

What gives?

I was left with a sense of having been taken for granted at best or, at the worst, taken advantage of.

For someone who operates their business largely on trust (and is most often rewarded for that), it felt brutal. It's the worst I've felt in business in years.

Looking through my email after the workshop I saw one message had come in that morning from a couple, but via Facebook and it landed in my "Other" inbox:

*"Morning Tad! My partner and I are registered For your workshop today. We are sorry we aren't going to make it, our jobs at a show last night went much later than expected. We are happy for you to keep our donation of course and will keep an eye out for more of your workshops in the future. Our apologies again!"*

I felt grateful they'd let me know. And apologized. And . . . there was still a hint of . . . the fact that they'd not set themselves up well enough to be able to keep their word on attending the workshop. That if, let's say, it had been a friend's wedding, they either would have shown up, even if tired, or made sure they weren't working so late the night before.

And so, after the workshop was done, I messaged those who had no-showed to see what had happened.

One of the responses felt 100% good. Some others felt mixed. And some, though well intentioned, felt downright awful. I will share their words here anonymously and my reactions candidly.

### **The words that didn't feel good:**

*"Unfortunately we were unable to attend. Feeling worn out and tired after to much travelling, we felt it was best for us to rest. We have been told wonderful things about your class and would love to attend in the future. Do you be having anymore classes coming up? We are located in Medicine Hat which is in the south eastern corner of Alberta. We are always open to travel to Calgary, Edmonton or Lethbridge. Would you ever consider doing this class in Medicine Hat? We look forward to hearing back from you."*

Unable to come. Because they were tired. That felt not great to read because it felt like a shirking of responsibility. It's not that they were "unable" to come. They chose not to come because they were tired. They were tired because they arranged their travel schedule in such a way that it had led them be tired. If it had been important for them to make it, they would have made it.

Sure. Maybe it was best for them to rest. But what about me at the facilitator and host? And the other participants? What about the people who weren't able to come because their spots had been reserved? Void in their note is any sense of the impact their behaviour had on others.

Also, the light tone that assumes I would even be excited, in that moment, to have them sign up for another workshop. Or that, having just bailed on me, I'd be so thrilled come to their corner of the world.



And most of all, why didn't they email me the night before to let me know they wouldn't be coming so I would, at least, have a fighting chance of filling the space. Or even the morning of. No. I had to email them to even hear that. Which feels deeply disrespectful.

**Another:**

*"I was so stoked for the workshop but sadly I have been so sick I wasn't able to attend today. I hope everything went well and I hope to meet you one day as I loved the video and get a lot of inspiration out of it."*

Ugh. Again, "wasn't able to attend." How about you just let a brother know as soon as you think it's likely? So glad you enjoyed that video I put thousands into producing and that I sell for \$80. Glad it entertained you. And again, this light tone of "hope to meet you someday" as if I'd be really excited to meet someone who totally bailed on my workshop and didn't even think enough of me or the other participants to let me know.

**Yet another:**

*"Everything is ok. I was up late working and needed some sleep. It's been a crazy work week for me."*

So, they chose to stay up late working and then decided the need for sleep trumped the need to keep their word, my need for income from my work and someone else's need to learn what was offered in the workshop. At a certain point, this is the inescapable algebra that they had to wrestle with. I understand having crazy-busy weeks. For sure. But I'm not okay with using that as an excuse to no-show. Especially with no notification.

**And then this one:**

*"Hi Tad, sorry I missed this . . . Two of my kids are sick and I hardly slept last night. : ("*

I get not sleeping. But, you can still let the workshop facilitator know you won't be coming. You can set your alarm to wake you up to send an email. You could send me an email before going to bed. I didn't get that message from her til 1pm. Three hours after the workshop had begun. And it was only in response to a message I'd sent out asking, "Are you coming?"

**And:**

*"Yes, I was going to come with two others. Sadly it didn't work out. I really do appreciate your words. So passionate and inspiring. Keep up the great work Tad. (Another time I hope.)"*

This one might have felt the worst. Again, it only came after I had written this person. And . . . it just "didn't work out." Huh. Not their fault. And who knows — this is me being extraordinarily cranky. There are, of course, all manner of reasons that would be entirely justifiable to not attend to my super duper important workshop at the last minute. I get it. I know it's pissy. But it's also how everyone feels when you break your word to them. This is desperately important to get. You

can tell me, “I really do appreciate your words,” but if that’s not backed up with some sort of action, the feeling I’m left with is, “the hell you do.” Because, no-showing for a workshop and costing the facilitator hundreds of potential income dollars and others the chance to attend . . . that’s not how you treat someone you actually appreciate. And again, the assumption that I’d be so happy to have her come another time given her behaviour.

**And, finally, my personal favourite:**

*“I can’t make it today. Please pass my ticket on forward. Thanks :)”*

Yes! You’re welcome! I’ll totally pass it onto that lineup of people I asked to be waiting outside of my door this morning just in case you canceled. I wonder who the lucky person will be!

**The Words That Felt Mixed:**

There were some participants whose words felt better because they were willing to actually do something to make amends and pay for their spot.

*“Sorry my friend, we didn’t make it today for your workshop. we live in white court (2.5 hrs away), and it was just too treacherous a drive with all the snow this morning. really i just feel sorry for myself, for having missed it! i only moved to alberta a few months ago, before that i lived in toronto and that’s where i first heard about you, through a friend. so i was pretty excited when i realized i’d be able to take a workshop with you in edmonton! maybe next round - please keep me on your mailing list for workshop announcements. in the meantime... i have two questions: of your online materials, what would you recommend as most relevant for a yoga teacher/massage practitioner? also, is there a way that i can send you a bit more money towards these amazing downloads that you provided as part of the workshop? i can’t give a lot, but i would like to give something. thanks for being such a cool dude and doing what you do.”*

What didn’t feel good here was that I didn’t get this message until 3pm and only, so I thought, in response to an email from me. Which had me feel cranky. But, it turned out that, even though the email was later than I would have liked, it was sent entirely on her own initiative which feels good to know. The road conditions were very bad that day and I am glad they stayed safe. And they could easily have emailed me three hours before the workshop began. That would have felt really good. But, one of them sent me \$60, unprompted, to make up for it which was incredibly gracious. So, overall, this felt good. The only part that didn’t feel good was it coming later than I would have liked and that I’d thought they were only emailing after I’d emailed them. Knowing it was sent unprompted is touching to know. It strikes me how much of this all comes down to feeling valued by people. Which, by the end, I did.

*“You probably already know, but I missed your workshop today. I really loved the video series that you sent out a few ago though and I know your event was pay-what-you-can, so I’d like to send you a cheque. Where should I mail it and who should I make it out to? Hope the day went well!”*

What didn’t feel great was they sent this after my workshop was over. What felt great was that they offered to pay something for having no-showed and to acknowledge the material provided. That’s incredible integrity. And then they saw my Facebook post from the morning of the workshop, “No showing workshops is bad behavior. Period.” and they wrote:

*“Oh gosh, I just saw your fb post about no shows. I’m now feeling super embarrassed . . . sorry to have caused any negativity today.”*

And that felt good to me, to feel like they were getting it — but also not-so-great because it seemed to be news to her that no-showing might cause some negative feelings. This is often our culture — woefully unaware of the impact of our actions on others.

But then she sent me \$175. Which, I admit, felt better.

## **The Words That Felt Good:**

Of all of the messages I received, this one felt best:

*“I’m registered in today’s class although I’ve come down w/ something, I was hoping it would pass and I could still attend. Do I pay for the video w pay pal? Although I was sick I don’t want to flake out. Any idea when you will offer this again?”*

It felt better because they sent it at 4am. That’s incredibly considerate. As soon as they knew they wouldn’t be coming, they let me know and offered to pay for the \$80 video that was provided in advance. I get that things come up. I do. Life happens. If you just let people know as soon as you can, that’s all most folks want or need. In the end, even though they’d missed my workshop due to illness, they sent me \$240 for my work, which felt . . . incredibly good and honouring.

Given the fact that the average PWYC donation was \$197 per person that day it also meant that nothing was lost financially for me due to that person missing the workshop. And, because of their graciousness, you can bet I’ll be available to them for questions here and there and am excited to meet this person in a workshop when they finally make it to a day-long workshop as my guest (I won’t charge them at all as in my books, they’ve already paid). I did my best to be as generous as I could in communicating and they returned the generosity to me which made me want to give her more. I did the same with the person who sent me \$175. The truth is that, while those amounts feel good and fair for the work and materials provided, it’s not really about the amount. It was that they wanted to send me something. They sent what they could. If it had been \$20 I would have felt wonderful too because . . . that’s why I do PWYC. So this work can be accessible to whoever needs

it. If they'd come, maybe they could only have paid \$10. That's fine. What is not fine, for me, from my perspective, is no-showing and then doing nothing to make up for it.

### **The Email I Would Have Loved to Have Received:**

In my perfect dream world, this is the kind of email I would have loved to have gotten and, therefore, the kind of email I am committed to sending should I need to cancel last minute for a workshop. Imagine you're a workshop leader and I'm bailing from your class but you get this email from me.

*"Something has come up and it looks like we won't be able to make your workshop. We wanted to give you as much heads up as we could, and wish it was more, in hopes that you might be able to find someone to fill our space. We feel awful because we know there were so few seats and that our missing the workshop means that others were turned away and might not get the chance. Of course, we know you'll keep our deposits but we also got this video from you and we were wondering if we might be able to pay you for that to make it right. It's not your fault we can't make it. If there's anything else we can do to make things good, please let us know because we respect your work in this world so much and wouldn't want our inability to keep our commitment to come to take away from your ability to do your work in the future."*

I would have felt so good about that.

### **So, What's The Solution?**

One woman from England, upon reading an early version of this post said, *"This man doesn't make what he is offering important enough for people to respect him, pay in advance and make sure they show up to his workshops. That's what he needs to be addressing."*

So, her stance is that, I don't value what I'm doing enough and need to command more respect.

And this is where things get tricky.

The reality is that, again, until shifting the offer to add the video, I got very few no shows. Negligible. Adding the videos was an experiment and it turned out differently than I'd imagined it might. That's life. This is not an endemic pattern in my life or business.

And aside from the arrogant tone of her knowing what I need in my life somehow, this whole idea of making what we offer "important enough" for people to respect us is fraught with peril. First of all, it's very connected to the troubles of the notion of charging what we're worth and the way that many people walk around trying to command respect from others by posturing.

I run my workshops on a pay-what-you-can basis. So, I don't get all the money upfront. There are a lot of reasons I do this (some strategic and some altruistic), but a lack of self respect isn't among them.

I want to suggest that the way forward isn't a one size fits all approach but about finding a way of structuring your business and offers that feels good without needing to puff yourself up so that others value what you do and it's more subtle than simply making what you do 'more important'. I have no idea what that actually means.

## Seven Business Lessons to Pull From This:

### **Lesson #1: Don't Tolerate Bad Behaviour From Clients**

Sometimes your clients behave badly. They do things that won't work for you. It's ok to be upset with your clients. When your clients do things that break agreements you have or are unkind or thoughtless, it's okay for you to speak up and address the issue directly.

Too many entrepreneurs put up with it because they think, "the customer is always right." But this is not true. This feeds the bizarre, spoiled, community destroying and toxic entitlement in which we are constantly swimming as a culture. They collapse and say, "Oh. It's okay. Don't worry about it. It's fine. No big deal." because they don't feel like their needs matter at all. They're trying to be "nice."

It's far worse that this though because this niceness actually robs the other person of something. It robs them of their humanity. When we refuse to let people know that their actions impact us, for better or worse, we turn them into a ghost. When we refuse to be real with them we contribute to them being less real; we contribute to their loss of understanding of what real is.

Sometimes we don't speak up because we know we're guilty of the same things too. We know that if we speak to their lack of integrity, we are suddenly incredibly vulnerable to have ours pointed out to us too. So, it can feel easier and safer to let it slide with them in the hopes that they'll give us the same pass when we drop the ball and flake on them. And if they don't? Well, then at least we get to feel morally superior about how chill we were about them bailing and how uptight they are. Soon . . . that's something.

It's easy to tell ourselves the story that, until we get our own integrity sorted out and are 100% consistent that we have no right to expect it of others. But I want to flip that all around. Yes, work on yourself. But let's make part of that work about having good boundaries, about letting yourself respond honestly. When we hold others to a higher standard, it also calls up and galvanizes that in us. The more we consciously do it with others, the more likely we are to do it in ourselves. The act

of holding someone accountable is a more visceral and real reminder about the importance of keeping our word than a year or meditation on the subject because it makes us vulnerable.

And, if, out of laziness, fear or just low standards, we don't hold others accountable to their word, we won't be able to court something better from the other, and that robs not only our business but the community of a more mature person.

This isn't about punishing clients or calling them out. It's about courting the possibility of a more whole village in which all of us could live.

## Lesson #2: Set Up Clear Cancellation Policies

Giving away all of the content in advance was a small experiment (which we'll talk about later). What I learned from that experiment was that, for whatever constellation of reasons, it dramatically increased the rate of no shows. That was reality. Adding those videos was literally the only thing I changed in the arrangement. I imagine a small part of the no showing may have been the guilt of them having not watched the videos and not wanting show up and be embarrassed by this but I think a big part of it is, even if unconsciously, the sense that, "Well . . . I've already gotten all of the content so . . . there's no real need for me to show up."

I'm open to doing this same offer in the future. But, if I do, I will have an iron clad cancellation policy that says: "If you cancel within 48 hours of the event, your credit card will be charged \$100 as I won't have the possibility of filling the space. If you no-show without letting me know in advance of this workshop, your credit card will be charged \$200 for being an asshole." Or something like that.

This is a common policy. My dentist does this for missed appointments. Many therapists and massage clients do this. I think it's wise to have a cancellation policy because, without it, you leave yourself open to being taken advantage of by those raised in a culture that only ever taught them to worship at the altar of what-works-for-them.

Someone recently shared her version of Alexandra Franzen's brilliant cancellation/no show policy wording (students have to tick the box indicating they have read this before payments are made):

*"When you register and make your first payment, that's my cue to block out a seat – and shoo other folks away if the class will be full. I prepare your 40+ page manual. I start crafting your name tag and graduation certificate. I start brewing and meditating on your journey that's just beginning and holding you in my mind while I'm stuck in traffic.*

*I invest in you – just like you invest in yourself, by investing in this class. And that's why, with exception of tsunamis, earthquakes, tornadoes, avalanches and unforeseeable grief-stricken situations, I do not offer refunds for cancellations –which, to my delight, are fairly infrequent.*

*If you are in dire straights and need to reschedule your training to a later date, please please get a hold of me (via email or phone) as soon as possible – out of respect for me and my time to re-jig the class, and most importantly out of respect for those other fine souls I may have to turn away if a seat is not available. If a rescheduling happens in advanced, I will hold your payment until you are able to join me again. Because commitment is sexy, and extra time + energy goes into the process, an additional fee of \$50 is charged to reschedule to another class. If less than 48 hours (2 days) notice is given, you will forfeit the entire \$225 and rescheduling will happen with another full payment. That, my friends, is my Karma-Friendly Cancellation Policy.”*

### **Lesson #3: “It Matters That You Come” – Get Payment in Full Before or Set Up Deposits on PWYC Events. Be wary of Free Events**

If you decide to run a pay-what-you-can workshop, I beg of you, get a deposit for it when they sign up. If you let them pay at the door, they’ll likely never end up arriving at the door at all. Make sure the deposit is enough that, if they cancel, you still feel good and you’re not out too much money. I used to not require a deposit and the no show rate was huge. Ever since adding it, until this recent experiment, it’s been negligible.

A colleague, Audrey Seymour wrote these words about an earlier version of this blog:

*“Tad wrote a great blog post yesterday about how no-shows increase for workshops when you don’t require prepayment. This matches my experience, and when you look at it from the perspective of parts of the psyche, you can see the part that signed up and the part that is resistant to the shift that the workshop is likely to create. Requiring prepayment supports the part of the client that wants the shift. I found this to be particularly true when teaching Speaking Circles, helping people get past stage fright. I offered a prepay discount for a package of sessions, and I remember one client saying “I’m SO GLAD you offered that prepay package, because if I hadn’t prepaid, I never would have come back the second time. My fright was still so strong, and I would have missed this incredible transformation that has happened! Thanks for doing that.”*

One of my colleagues Sue makes sure new clients read this before booking with her:

*“Please provide payment prior to your session, via PayPal (Internationally) or Interac Online (in Canada). If you encounter an emergency that requires you to cancel a session, please just let me know and we’ll schedule another at a time that works better. If you need to change an appointment time for any reason OTHER than an emergency, again, please contact me asap and we’ll find a good time for both of us.”*

Corwin Hiebert, an entrepreneur from Vancouver, Canada, who specializes in strategic event design, marketing, and creative talent management drops this chunk of knowledge in his piece, “When it comes to events, ‘Free’ is a dirty word:”

*“I’m convinced that the most offensive word in the event business is ‘FREE,’ specifically when it refers to free admission for an event. Unless you’re new to capitalism, I think you’d agree that the word ‘free,’ more often than not, communicates a lack of value. Whether or not an event can handle a zero-dollar ticket is often beside the point. What is, in fact, being communicated when no monetary commitment is required for an event is that expectations should be low.*

*When someone registers or plans to attend an event that is free they automatically assign that activity the category of ‘maybe.’ If they are not liable for not showing up then it’s no big deal in their eyes. But it’s a big deal for you, the event planner. Your event plan can be seriously impacted when attendance is such a variable.*

*Consider the poor success of a Facebook invitation. I haven’t seen any official statistics but, in my experience, it’s a miracle even if 1% of the confirmed attendees from a Facebook event actually show up. Sure, there are the exceptions, such as mass bike rides and water gun fights, but event promotion via social marketing tools invokes little to no commitment. And when the commitment level is low it is that much easier for someone to bail.*

*Discounts are dangerous too. I come across this one all the time. As an event planner you know that fear, that gut-wrenching feeling, of having empty seats and you’ll do anything to fill them. Too often, prices are hacked and slashed to get people in the room. If you discount remaining tickets, you’ve got a couple liabilities on your hands. First of all, you’ve just filled the room with people who have lowered expectations. These low-paying people can skew survey results, create a negative vibe in the room, and may not be the right people for the event. The second liability is that your pre-existing registrants will go berserk on you and demand refunds, thus lowering your overall revenue and negating the funds you just earned by bringing in the cheapies. It’s a trap. Don’t discount. Add value, don’t lower it.”*

Note: Be sure to read his event planning eBook, [Eleven and a Half Ways to Help Make Your Next Event a Huge Success](#).

### **Lesson #4: Overfill Your Workshops**

No matter what you do, there will always be some no-shows at your workshops because “shit happens.”

People get sick.

Blizzards happen.

Peoples' cars won't start.

In my experience, unless they pay everything in advance, you're looking at a 10-20% no show rate. You'll learn what it is in your own situation through experience. But, if you notice that you keep having 10% of the people not show up, then make sure you consistently sell 10% spaces than you need. If your workshop has a limit of 30 people, sell 33 seats.

Doing this is an immense relief.

And if everyone shows up? You've got three extra people. No big deal. And if, predictably, three people no show you or cancel so last minute that you can't fill their spaces? You're prepared and harbour no bitterness towards them because you already filled those spaces. If I'd done this in this situation, I wouldn't have felt half as bad. How do you fill up your workshops? Read this, son.

## **Lesson #5: Take Responsibility for Your Business**

This ties into all of the other lessons but the heart of it is this . . . as much as I bitch above about people no-showing and kvetch about their overall lacklustre responses, my business is my responsibility, not theirs.

The truth is that they are doing exactly what they need to be doing.

They're just being themselves. They're responding perfectly to the parameters of the offer I made. In their shoes, I might behave the same way. How they act is their business. My business isn't to change them. It's to notice how they're being in response to what I'm offering and adapt to that. My business is to take care of myself while loving them as they are. But if I don't do the former, the latter will prove impossible.

I have seen clients deal with clients showing up late or not at all for years and never do anything about it beyond whining and complaining. And, the longer that goes for, the more it becomes a story like, "People are inconsiderate" or "There must be something wrong with me." etc.

My colleague Joseph Riggio who wrote the guest post for my blog *Are You More Comfortable Being "Salesy" Or "Subtle"* had this to say:

*"I do charge in full before people can attend my program and I have a very generous refund policy before the program begins, but they need to initiate it, because I don't want to become responsible for them showing up and I make my living this way. If I want to give something away because I think someone needs it or I simply want them to have it I do that too. Currently I'm running a major certification training program (4 modules of 3 1/2 days, \$9000 regular investment) and I gave away 12 spaces in it as a scholarship, and make another 6 available at a huge discount as a sponsorship. All the spaces were taken and I had zero no-shows. What I did was establish the*

*importance of what the commitment I expected was up front and assumed responsibility for making sure my clients got it, 100% on me. IMO my clients are only able to treat me as I allow them to, and I never, ever take it personally. I work this way now because I totally get it. I been there before ... i.e.: in a room 'full' of no shows. I've also been the 'no-show' in a room and while I pay for the space I haven't occupied when I do that, I don't feel guilty for not being present if the presenter hasn't indicated that it's important to the program and/or others who will attend for me to be there. When I get that, i.e.: my presence and not just my money is significant, I make a much more informed decision about what I need to do if I decide to register."*

You have people no-showing you consistently? Do something about it.

You have clients who don't treat you right? Say something.

You have clients not paying you? Change something.

This is your business and your responsibility.

Whining and blaming your clients is a dead end street that will leave you broke, bitter and full of resentment to the very clients you profess to love and want to serve. Don't blame others for your own laziness or miscalculations in creating systems.

### **Lesson #6: Reminders**

If you have a workshop, send a reminder about it 48 hours before the event. You'd be surprised how many people forget it's coming up. Sometimes these emails will actually prompt people to email you and say, "I can't make it." and then you'd at least got a fighting chance of filling those spots.

### **Lesson #7: Start Small**

On a recent tour I led eleven workshops. Only one of them got the same "here's all the content free" deal because it was one of the first ones I set up. Thank God I didn't plan out my whole tour like this. I decided I would test it in Edmonton and see how it went. But then I got so excited about it that I decided I would do my whole tour that way. Luckily, I led my first attempt at it a month before the whole tour was planned and noticed that half of the people no-showed. That was all I needed to decide not to do the whole tour that way until I understood the dynamic better. Then, just before going on tour, was the second workshop where the exact same thing happened. I felt annoyed and really frustrated, but also relieved that I'd been able to test small before going big.

Business and marketing are not guaranteed things. You're always taking risks and experimenting with things. Every time you make a new offer, explore a new niche, change the name of something or try a new activity in a workshop – it's an experiment. That's unavoidable. The only thing you can control is the scale of the experiment. Too many people go big with every experiment.

In business this is called doing your due diligence. Any time you're going to invest your time, money, reputation or energy in any significant amount, it's vital that you investigate and test to make sure it's worthy of it and will work. Too many entrepreneurs fail because they don't.

To be clear: If I'd set up my whole tour this way, I'd be looking at half of the money for the same amount of effort. That would have been brutal.

I encourage you, whenever you're thinking of changing something significant about your business or what you're offering, start small.

## The Community Lesson

*“Everything we do and don't do makes a wake, a legion of waves and troughs that pound the shores at the edges of what we mean, grinding away on the periphery of what we know. This goes on after the years of our private lives are long past. If we don't learn that simple, devastating, and redeeming detail of being alive – that what we do lasts longer than we do, that the past isn't over – then the parade of our days stands to indict much more than it bequeaths.”*

– Stephen Jenkinson, *Die Wise: A Manifesto for Sanity and Soul*

The business lessons above are important, but the lesson in community here is even more important.

Every action you make builds the village up or tears it apart.

If there's a most important lesson that I'm taking from this it's not to no-show other people's workshops. That feels most important. Because I can be out of integrity all over the place. So this blog post, while coming from a cranky place, isn't coming from any place of moral superiority.

I just had this chat with a friend on Facebook about this:

**Friend:** There's some sort of illusion of busy = I'm a good person and you should understand . . .

**Me:** Interesting ... Wow. Totally. “You should understand” gets said as this non-verbal, “awww. but you understand what it’s like, right?” with a wink as the charm pours on and the accountability rolls off their back.

**Friend:** Ya, like that. I’ve done it myself.

**Me:** It’s most of my life.

**Friend:** Sigh.

And I’m not being cute about it. I’ve really done that most of my life. Learned how to be charming as a way of avoiding responsibility for the consequences of my actions. If I had to sum up immaturity into six words, they would be “trying to get away with things.” That was me. Learning how to be likeable to protect myself from the impact my lack of integrity was having. If integrity is so important to me today, it’s because I’ve had times where I personally had so little of it. And when we let others off the hook for doing this, we hurt the community. This is so important to understand. When we don’t honestly share the impact that others have on us, we make them less human.

Every time you make a promise and break it, it tears at the fabric of trust in your community. This is just as true as a business or as a customer. We all have a role. When businesses overhype their products and services and ultimately let people down, trust in the marketplace is diminished. And when customers behave poorly, it is the same. When customers lie to businesses or business owners lie to customers that “everything is okay,” trust slowly drains out of a hole in the bottom of the marketplace that’s approximately the size of that lie.

At a recent workshop I had a participant ask me what was being covered in the last part of the day because, “I really want to leave early to go to satsang. What time does it end? 5? Oh I thought 3:30pm. Can I pick your brain before I go?”

It felt so gross. Like I was just a tool for her to get what she wanted with no thought that her leaving early might impact the vibe in the room, that her holding my workshop so casually might impact me and that she was entitled to get what she could out of me before she left early. I stood there feeling sort of stunned by it. In her mind, this whole day seemed to be all about her getting what she wanted and then leaving as soon as she’d gotten it. It felt awful. I nodded and told her that we needed to get started soon and I wouldn’t have time. It wasn’t the most honest answer, especially since I then went to the back of the room to answer someone else’s question from whom I felt a sincere level of respect for what was going on. If this woman had said to me, “Tad. I am loving this workshop so far and I’m going to have to leave early which I’m sad about and I was wondering if I could ask you a quick question.” I would likely have sat down and given it a shot. But she hadn’t even valued the day enough to know when it ended. She seemed to place no value on my accumulated knowledge. She just wanted to pick my brain.

Ugh.

At minimum, both entrepreneurs and clients are called upon to keep their promises. Keeping our word is the basis of trust. Trust comes from people being trustworthy.

*"Gealladh gun a'choimhghealladh, is miosa sin na dhiùltadh.Chan eil fealladh ann cho mòr ris an gealladh gun choimhlionadh. (Promising but not fulfilling, is worse than refusing. There is no deceit/fraud so great as the promise unfulfilled.)"*

— Scottish Gaelic Proverb

**A small story:** I recently created a project in Edmonton called The Social Yogi which creates monthly social events for local yogis.

But, being as overwhelmed with things as I was, I asked a friend to help me launch it. This friend then proceeded to bail on scheduled meetings fifteen minutes before because he was too busy. Each time he bailed he would use charm and good vibes to deflect the consequences. After the third time, I sent him a terse email letting him know that this could never happen again. He received the words well but then subsequently, and unsurprisingly, stepped down from the project.

You can't build a project, a business or a community on the shattered remnants of broken promises. You can't plant the seeds of new initiatives in depleted soil.

The hippie scene, in which I operate, is full of flakes. They bail on commitments all of the time without ever really "getting" the impact it has on others.

I think that this has a lot to do with our culture. If we have a culture of selfishness, I would submit that it's because it's rooted in the Cult of the Self.

We worship individualism.

An important point to notice: most of the emails people sent me were them expressing regret that they had missed the event and that this was a loss for them. While I appreciate this expression on one level (them letting me know they really wanted to go and were sad they couldn't) what's utterly missing is an acknowledgment that anyone else was impacted at all.

There's no meaningful sense often that they understand the impact their actions have on the world around them as they trudge through the woods scaring all of wild nature and the spirit of goodwill away from them and anyone close to them. They proceed as if their needs are paramount rather than proceeding as if they are needed.

Author, elder and teacher Stephen Jenkinson once shared a story about his work with a therapist. Each time he would see the therapist, he would pay him the money for the session. But, on this day, things were tight and so Stephen casually told the therapist, “So, things are tight right now. I’ll pay you for this session next time.” Not thinking much of the impact this might have on his therapist in the same way that most of us don’t think of the impact of our actions on others.

“Why me?” were the words that came from his therapist’s mouth after a long and considered pause.

Those two words eviscerated the shroud of myopic complacency of Stephen’s excuse. It asked something important of him. There was no blame in the words. No shame intended. Just the honest and, until then, ignored consideration of how he had come to decide that his therapist should be the one to bear the consequences of his lack of money. Why not his parents? Why not him? Why would the therapist be made to wait?

Why indeed.

I get my haircut at Barberha (best barbershop in Edmonton). Three times since starting to go there about a year ago, I’ve been too late and missed my appointment. Each time, I’ve insisted on paying for the appointment I missed. Then, one day, I was speaking with Linda the owner and she said, “You know Tad, you’re the only one who does that.”

I was incredulous. “What? What do they say? That’s ridiculous. They wasted your time and cost you money.”

“They just sort of say, ‘Oh man . . . I really can’t afford it right now . . .’”

My response was, “Fuck them.”

And if I were behind their counter when they pulled that, I would look them in the eyes, pause and ask them, “Dude. Why us?”

## The Five Impacts of The No-Show:

When you no-show someone’s event you promised or committed to attend, it has an impact. Sure, you miss out on the workshop and that’s a bummer, but that’s too easy. That’s only the lense of the “self” this culture so celebrates. More profoundly and importantly, looking at it through the lense of the village, we see that there is an impact on many others.

## Impact #1: Money Lost

These five people no showing mean a loss of at least \$500 of potential revenue for me. And maybe more if those who might have come in their place might also have spent money on other follow up products and services.

## Impact #2: Time Wasted

Now I need to follow up with the no-shows and deal with them individually. If they want to send me more money to make up for their absence, as generous and unlikely as that is, I will have to arrange payments for each of them. And there's also some time wasted at the start of the workshop waiting to see if they'll show up. Just 15 minutes of time wasted? No. That's 15 minutes times seven for the seven people there who waited. It's 15 real minutes of each person's life, including my own.

One reader shared this: *"I can so relate as I worked 20 years for Canadian Blood Services, just retired a couple of months back and in the past year 2014, the no shows were at their highest ever. People commit an hour of their time to give blood to save peoples lives . . . we, CBS, rely so heavily rely on those units and commit those units to the hospitals for people who are in great need in order to survive. To just blow it off as its nothing and say I will go another time and not even call in advance so that they can find a last minute donor to fill the seat, is so disheartening and also so frustrating and discouraging! Staff spend countless hours understanding exactly what is required for the hospitals and then all the time spent to book donors all across the country. Then each day a dedicated team drives to locations all across Canada, through bad weather, and work long hours to ensure they get the necessary units needed to reach the daily goal. We go to the donors! A lot of time and money is spent to pack up a team of health professionals on a bus to go to a town that has committed, say 100 units and only 30 show up . . . can't describe the daily frustrations they all feel. The people I work with, especially out in the field, are beyond committed and do this job because they deeply care and most of the donors are deeply committed too . . . but I am not sure if it's a generation thing or people are just so busy these days that they don't even realize that by backing out and not informing in advance that they can't make their appointment that someone's loved one, a child, a sibling, a parent are lying in a hospital, with their only hope of survival, is by receiving those precious units of blood!! People need to be conscious of their actions when they commit to something and don't follow through."*

## Impact #3: Someone Else Can't Make It

If the workshop is a sell out, it means that, very likely, someone else wasn't able to be there. Someone who really wanted to attend. And who was able and willing to be there.

## Impact #4: The Workshop is Changed

I plan my workshops for a certain number of people for a reason often. When people no-show, I have to change my plans and, sometimes, whole exercises need to be cut because there just aren't enough people to carry them out.

## Impact #5: Impact on the Facilitator

My colleague Russell Scott said it so well, his words capturing the visceral essence of the thing I experience every time people no show me.

*"At the beginning of the event I've been so pumped and excited anticipating the numbers and then 1/2 the people don't show. Imagine going into a room of people with your heart totally open and then someone punches you in the stomach. That's what it feels like right at the beginning of the workshop. The presenter has to deal with the excitement of doing the workshop and the disappointment of the no-shows at the same time. Its not a great way to begin."*

It's so easy to forget that the facilitators are human beings too. That we're not vending machines for wisdom that aren't impacted by the group with which they work.

But it's also important for us to remember that most people won't see things this way and so, it's good to consider how you can institutionalize and systematize the education and elucidation of this into your marketing and registration systems so the importance of their attendance is lifted up to them.

Crucially, we're no longer talking about the importance of their attendance to them. Whether or not coming is important to them is literally none of my business or concern. I have no interest in making it important to them. I have interest in setting up the agreement, boundaries and payment structure so that it's fair for both parties but I have no interest in trying to position what I'm doing as vital and therefore that, should they decide not to come, that they're missing out on something important. None of my business.

Trying to get people to love or respect us in their hearts is a huge red herring; a false thread to follow. It looks like a good path to follow but it only takes us further and further away from where we need to be. In the end, it actually doesn't matter if they love or respect you. What matters, very much, is how they behave. How they feel about you? Not so important. How they act around you? Very important. You have literally no control over how they feel, but there's a lot you can do to create the conditions out of which good and courteous behaviour will grow.

Now, I will, of course, share what I have to offer as clearly and compellingly as I can. I want to help them see not only what I'm offering but the benefits it could have to their life. Of course. But that's done with the offer to help them see if it's a fit, not to convince them it is.

This is huge. If you don't establish, with crystal clarity who your work is fit for and for whom it isn't a fit, people will tend to see what you do as a commodity. They'll see it as something generic and common. And that won't engender respect. If they see that you do some things but not others, if they see that you have a scope of your work outside of which you'll need to refer them to other people, they begin to get this sense of respect for what you do because they actually understand what you do. The clearer you are about your point of view and perspective, the more clear what you do becomes.

Respect begins with clarity and relevance. It deepens with trust and credibility and solidifies when they understand the value of it.

When I say, it's good to lift up the importance of their attendance, I mean lifting up how and why it matters to other people besides themselves.

### **This can show up in:**

- the contract they sign when they sign up
- a welcome video you make
- a box they check where they say, in essence, "I agree not to be a dick and no show because I know that impacts other people, costs you money and is a general buzz kill."
- a personal welcome call
- a welcome email that they get

### **But it also shows up in . . .**

- the way you treat them with the kind of courtesy and respect you'd want from them
- the kind of welcome they get in your programs so that they actually have the experience of knowing their presence is noticed and mattered
- the way you carry yourself and speak about your work with the kind of respect and reverence you want from them (which has to have its roots in a real and meaningful respect you have around it)

— if you don't respect the work you do, your own time and energy — they will smell that on you like a horse smells your nervousness and backs away)

- your willingness to check in directly with them when they do something that doesn't feel good to you

There are so many ways to do this and so many ways of wording it.

You can't build a village out of a group of people who only think about themselves and what's in it for them. To hell with the invisible hand of self interest.

And we can't build a village out of people who think that beautiful words are enough or that saying something is the same as doing it.

What was present in most of the words I received was the sentiment "I value you" and what was absent is any meaningful action about it. It is jarring to have someone utterly no-show a workshop and then say the words, "I really value you and your work." To which my honest response is, "No. You don't. If you actually valued it, you would have behaved differently. You just showed me how little you valued me. Now you're trying to manage me and have me not be upset with you."

During the lunch hour of the second workshop of the no-shows, I was venting my frustration with my friend Megan. She'd worked in the restaurant industry for 10 years and she related how, on big days like Valentines Day, people would often make reservations at three or four restaurants so that, on the day, they could choose whatever worked best for them. But that meant that the unchosen restaurants found themselves with too many staff and a lot of empty tables, costing restaurant thousands.

Cab drivers deal with this when people call a cab company to book a cab but end up hailing one down later and never calling to cancel their booking with the original cab company. They justify it by saying, "Everyone does it. It's just how it is. No big deal."

All too often, people make promises to others to do things not because they intend to do them but because they want to keep their options open and so they use their promises like a credit card that accrues the interest-based debt of resentment from others as the cost for buying more possibilities and time than were actually available to them without it. Instead of feeling the real human grief of our limitedness and all of the things we can't say a real, solid, genuine "yes" to, we pretend that maybe we can say "yes" to everything and everyone and then, at the last minute, if things don't work out for us, we can just bail and walk away.

Responsibility is a bigger thing than just trying our best to do what we say we will. It's also about taking responsibility for making sure we'll be ready and able to deliver on what it is we've committed to. It's about creating the conditions we know we'll need to succeed. If we promise to be somewhere and then choose to stay up late the night before . . . we chose to do that and, in that

moment, we made our own comfort, productivity etc. more important than our promise to that person.

There's nothing inherently wrong about that. But, at least, let's be honest that that's what happened.

If you need to bail, then own that that's what you're doing. Don't pretend to have been a victim of something so much smaller than you.

Most of our lives are dramatically over committed (as a result of a desperately sick culture that creates this, which is a topic for another blog post). Most of us are barely scraping by as we sort out how to live a life of integrity in a larger system that utterly lacks it, how to enjoy the natural cycles of community in a culture addicted to linear growth and how to give our gifts in a culture that only values gifts if they add to the GDP. All of this can add up to overwhelm and burn out. And, unless we're deeply committed to village mindedness, we can draw a straight line from this overly committed life to broken promises, hurt feelings and shattered rice bowls.

The task before us is immense: to tear down this failing culture, to build something new, and still – in the midst of it all – have the space and support we need to be there for each other in a good way. Before us is a hard road to learn to balance taking care of our needs and the needs of the community. And there's a lot for us all to learn in the process. This process is guaranteed to be messy and woven together with the threads of our own self righteousness and hypocrisy until enough thread has been stitched in that we can see its sickening colour but, instead of tearing it out, we leave it in so that we remember that even our approach to solving the issues of community was, itself, tearing the community apart. I don't know all of the answers in this, but I do know that it's worth the mess of being real with each other.

And I do know that, as entrepreneurs, we have the opportunity to not only sell people things but to be a part of re-educating people on the etiquette of graciousness and courtesy through our own example.

*"Let's treat each other as if we plan to work side by side in struggle for many, many years to come. Because the task before us will demand nothing less."*

— Naomi Klein, address to Occupy Wall Street

## **Additional Reading:**

There's a Modern Affliction Ruining Our Friendships – And We're All Guilty of It  
[mic.com/articles/113138/there-s-a-modern-problem-afflicting-our-friendships-and-it-s-time-to-talk-about-it#.f3uBnLBJD](http://mic.com/articles/113138/there-s-a-modern-problem-afflicting-our-friendships-and-it-s-time-to-talk-about-it#.f3uBnLBJD)

# Section VI: Bonus Content

## Case Study #1: Bringing Stephen Jenkinson to Edmonton

In 2015, I had the chance to bring Stephen Jenkinson of [www.OrphanWisdom.com](http://www.OrphanWisdom.com) to Edmonton.

Stephen was not known in Edmonton and so, unlike a Deepak Chopra or Neale Donald Walsh we couldn't rely on name recognition at all. This means it was a "cold pitch" to the Edmonton community.



And the only way to do that is through local, existing hubs who people in our community already know and trust. I knew I needed to find people who were respected in connected in the Edmonton holistic, conscious and alternative scene who might resonate with what Stephen would be speaking about.

And so I sat down and made a hubs database, a spreadsheet of 85 people I figured would be alright with being recruited into these promotional efforts and I began sending them emails.

The organizing principles, as I hope you'll see, of these emails was to not waste their time. I wanted each email to be clear, to the point and make it incredibly easy to promote. I wanted to each email to ask them to do one thing and one thing only. I didn't want them to feel overwhelmed and so I spaced the emails out over four months, asking for *one* thing at a time.

In the end, we got 150 people to his evening talk and 60 people to a day long workshop which is pretty good for a first time in town.

**Note:** What I could have done better, given that much of Stephen's work is around death and dying, would been to have reached out more in depth to those working in the death trade: death doulas, palliative care workers, nurses, hospices, grief counsellors etc. Some outreach was done but more could have been done.

February 19, 2015

**Subject Line:** regarding an email i'll be sending you Saturday

hey there,

If you're getting this email, you're one of 85 folks in Edmonton who I'm wanting to reach out to about an event I'm helping make happen in June.

On Saturday, you'll be getting a longer email about it and it would mean a great deal to me, personally, for it to have a brief drink of the very precious waters of your attention.

best wishes to you and yours. more soon.

\*

February 21st, 2015

**Subject Line:** A favour and a question - 3 minute email

Hey there,

If you're getting this email, you're among a small cadre of people in Edmonton of whom I think very highly and of whom I'd like to ask a big, big favour that could take 5-10 minutes of your time. I ask it knowing how busy you are.

The nutshell: I'm planning to bring Stephen Jenkinson to Edmonton on June 13-14th. Stephen, to quote his bio, is, "a teacher, author, storyteller, spiritual activist, farmer and founder of the Orphan Wisdom School, a teaching house and learning house for the skills of deep living and making human culture. It is rooted in knowing history, being claimed by ancestry, working for a time yet to come."

I think you would very much enjoy and resonate with what he has to say. You can learn more about him here: <http://orphanwisdom.com/>

I've been participating in his Orphan Wisdom School and, although we've only completed one of the four sessions over the two years it spans, it's left me with not only a great deal of good things to wonder about, a full belly from heaping portions of some of the most life affirming education I've ever received but also with a deep affection for this man. You can learn more about the school here: <http://orphanwisdom.com/school/>

And nothing would make me happier than to see him grace our little town with his presence and for you all to meet this fellow about whom I speak so much and so highly.

## The Art of The Full House

There would be two parts to it:

Part I: Large Public Event: This would either be...

- a screening of Griefwalker the National Film Board of Canada film of which Stephen is the subject. You can watch the trailer here: [youtube.com/watch?v=xLQWM2j3AVg](https://youtube.com/watch?v=xLQWM2j3AVg) or...
- a reading from his new book, Die Wise: A Manifesto for Sanity and Soul. You can see the video trailer here: [youtube.com/watch?v=H3daU3ZrNpw](https://youtube.com/watch?v=H3daU3ZrNpw)

I'm thinking because the good Rayne Johnson has already screened Griefwalker, that I would opt for the book reading.

Part II: Daylong Workshop:

Which would look something like this: [orphanwisdom.com/event/dying-wise-2](http://orphanwisdom.com/event/dying-wise-2)

The Favour: Will you help spread the word when it comes? Once we've got all of the details sorted out, would you be willing to send an email to whatever local lists you might have (that feel like a fit for this sort of thing whether a formal list or informally hand picked for this) to help spread the word about this event?

If so, click reply and let me know (as well as how many people you might have on said list so I can get a sense of the promotional capacity of this). And click reply knowing that I will provide you with all of the pre-written materials and images you need to make it as easy as possible for you.

The Question: Would you like to be on the team to help organize this event? I'll need a lot of help to make it happen. Know that most of the work won't happen until the month before.

And, of course, I hope dearly that you can make it to one or both of these events. I don't endorse things very often, but I give Stephen my fullest possible endorsement and you all my strongest possible encouragement to come to what might be his only visit to Edmonton ever.

I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

Warmest,  
Tad

p.s. Here are two more short film pieces (5-7 min) about him that could give you a good feel.

[orphanwisdom.com/making-of-humans](http://orphanwisdom.com/making-of-humans)  
[orphanwisdom.com/meaning](http://orphanwisdom.com/meaning)

p.p.s. If you can think of anyone in town that might be a good hub to help promote this event, could you let me know?

\*

**March 1st, 2015**

**Subject Line:** March 8th - Stephen Jenkinson film Screening

Since I've been inviting help with bringing Stephen Jenkinson to Edmonton, I thought I'd send you a quick note to let you know that the national film board of Canada film that features Stephen, Griefwalker, is playing in edmonton on March 8th. If you haven't seen it, i highly recommend going.

It's a part of Edmonton's First Death and Dying Film Series brought together by the good work of Rayne Johnson who this city is immensely lucky to have.

you can watch the trailer here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLQWM2j3AVg>

you can get tickets (which are free) here:

<https://www.Eventbrite.com/e/edmontons-first-death-and-dying-film-series-tickets-15118728524?aff=estw>

\*

**April 25, 2015**

**Subject Line:** 30 Second Favour - Invite Friends to Stephen Jenkinson on Facebook

Hey all,

Here's my one action request for today for Stephen Jenkinson's visit. Could you invite your friends to his events on Facebook. If you have to pick one - then please make it his Saturday event on the 13th as there's a capacity of 300 and it will be the biggest help in promoting the Sunday day long event.

Inviting your friends on FB is a huge help. It will mean the hear about the event asap and be notified whenever someone posts in the event making it much less likely they'll miss it.

We're not relying on Facebook for promoting these events but we wouldn't imagine doing it without them.

Evening - June 13, 7-9pm:

<facebook.com/events/384702955070229>

## The Art of The Full House

Daylong - June 14 - 9:30 - 3:30pm  
[facebook.com/events/1561243944142942](https://facebook.com/events/1561243944142942)

Thanks so much for any help you can offer here.

I'll write with your next action later next week. I'll do my best to keep these simple and bite sized so each promotional action takes no more than 2 minutes of your time.

\*

**May 3rd, 2015**

**Subject Line:** 30 Second Action to Promote Stephen Jenkinson in Edmonton - Post on Facebook and Tag Three People

Hey there,

I'm writing with the 30 second action you can take to help promote Stephen Jenkinson's events in Edmonton.

Today, it would mean the world if you could post something to Facebook and tag three people who you think it would be a fit for.

To make it easy, I've prewritten the Facebook post below - edit as you like.

EDMONTON: Canadian elder Stephen Jenkinson is coming to Edmonton in mid June to do an evening talk and lead a day long workshop. I've been hearing incredible things about him and his work and it may be the only time he ever comes to Edmonton. I urge you to check out his work. Here's a short bio: "Stephen is a teacher, author, storyteller, spiritual activist, farmer and founder of the Orphan Wisdom School, a teaching house and learning house for the skills of deep living and making human culture. It is rooted in knowing history, being claimed by ancestry, working for a time yet to come. He has worked extensively with dying people and their families, is former program director in a major Canadian hospital, former assistant professor in a prominent Canadian medical school, consultant to palliative care and hospice organizations and educator and advocate in the helping professions. He is also a sculptor, traditional canoe builder whose house won a Governor General's Award for architecture." You can learn more about the events here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/384702955070229/>

Many thanks and a hundred blessings on you and your house.

\*

**May 13th, 2015: Numbers Update**

**Subject Line:** Updates on Numbers for Stephen Jenkinson in Edmonton - Daylong Workshop 1/3rd Full

Hey all,

I'm writing from Nova Scotia where, last night, we just finished our third annual [www.novascotiagaelsjam.com](http://www.novascotiagaelsjam.com) - it was a remarkable five days.

I just wanted to write to let you know that ticket sales are going well so far.

June 13th - Evening Talk - it's 10% full already on a 300 seat venue. This is really good. 31 tickets sold.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/384702955070229/>

June 14th - Daylong Workshop - This is over one third full with 23 of 60 spaces taken.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1561243944142942/>

If you want to get tickets for the daylong workshop, I'd do that sooner than later.

I'll be writing more soon but just wanted to write to share the good news of how things are moving. Thank you for all of your visible and invisible efforts in all of this.

\*

**June 7, 2015**

**Subject Line:** Poster for Stephen Jenkinson Event

posters are going up this week. If you've got a printer and a place to put one or two, please feel free. The poster is attached. Hope you got to enjoy the incredible summer beauty of this fine weekend and wishing you the best for the coming week.

**June 11, 2015**

**Subject Line:** Final Push - Stephen Jenkinson This Weekend! Please Share

Dear Edmonton friends,

Thank you so much for your willingness to help spread the word about the upcoming Stephen Jenkinson event. He arrives this Saturday.

So far we've sold 94 of 300 tickets to the evening and 41 of 60 for the daylong. I suspect the numbers will go up quite a bit between now and then. Your sharing it up has made a huge difference in it happening at all.

Thank you so much.

Warmest,  
Tad

p.s. Could you help give one big, final push before the weekend?

Below is a prewritten Facebook post that you can share if you are able to (edit as you like):

FACEBOOK: (tag three people you think would be the best fit)

EDMONTON: Canadian elder Stephen Jenkinson is coming to Edmonton in this weekend to do an evening talk (June 13) and lead a day long teaching for which there are only 19 spaces left (June 14).


I have been hearing incredible things about him and his work and it may be the only time he ever comes to Edmonton. I urge you to check out his work. Here's a short bio: "Stephen Jenkinson has worked extensively with dying people and their families, is former program director in a major Canadian hospital, former assistant professor in a prominent Canadian medical school, consultant to palliative care and hospice organizations and educator and advocate in the helping professions. He is a teacher, author, storyteller, spiritual activist, farmer and founder of the Orphan Wisdom School, a teaching house and learning house for the skills of deep living and making human culture. It is rooted in knowing history, being claimed by ancestry, working for a time yet to come. He is also a sculptor, traditional canoe builder whose house won a Governor General's Award for architecture."

You can learn more about the events here:  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/384702955070229/>

**STEPHEN JENKINSON**  
An Introduction to Dying Wise

**Sat. June 13<sup>th</sup>**  
TALK 7-9pm

Centre for Spiritual Living  
7621-101 Ave, Edmonton, AB T6A 0J6  
\$23 Advance ticket price/ \$30 cash at door  
\$18 Seniors/ Students/ \$20 cash at door



Stephen Jenkinson, MTS, MSW  
Author, Harvard Educated Theologian, Founder of Orphan Wisdom and subject of *GRIEFWALKER*

If you love somebody, if you care about the world that's to come after you, and if you want somebody to be spared the lunacy of what you've seen - you've got to die wise.

**MAKING MEANING of the ENDING of DAYS**  
Sunday June 14<sup>th</sup> (9:30-3:30pm)



[watch video clip](#)

**Die Wise – A Manifesto for Sanity and Soul**

Stephen's new book about grief, and dying, and the great love of life. (March 2015).

Many among us now are crazy for meanings, and crazed by seeking them out. The meanings of life aren't inherited. What is inherited is the mandate to make meanings of life by how we live. Our work is to sort out what being human should be in such a time.

Host: Tad Hargrave, [tadlinton@googlemail.com](mailto:tadlinton@googlemail.com)  
\$100 Early-bird, \$130 cash at the door  
\$118 General Admission, \$130 cash at the door  
\$100 Seniors/ Students, \$105 cash at the door  
The Bennett Centre, 9703-94 St., Edmonton, AB, T6C 3W1

<http://orphanwisdom.com/events/list/>

## Case Study #2: Green Drinks Edmonton

Green Drinks has been running in Edmonton since around 2010, evolving as it's gone.

The main purpose of Green Drinks is to create a casual, social mixer where progressive Edmontonians can mingle and the fabric of Edmonton's progressive scene can be woven a little bit tighter. It's a place where veterans of the scene can reconnect and catch up and people new to the scene and the city can find out who's who and shave months off of their integration time into the community.



They've tended to get around 100 people at each.

In the beginning it was free and started at The Common on 124 Street. Then we charged \$5 at the door and grew out of even The Common on 109 Street. Now we're at The Yellowhead Brewery charge \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door.

In 2012, Green Drinks went through a significant reboot where we decided to make each Green Drinks a themed event with featured guests around that theme. We learned that 5-7 guests is great. More than that is painful to coordinate. In the 2014-2015 season, we received a lot of feedback noting that people wanted less talking from the stage. So, instead of each of the 6-8 featured guests having 60 seconds to speak (if they didn't run on), we have gone with one main featured speaker having 3-5 (max) minutes and the rest of the featured guests are highlighted both by the MC from the stage and using gold stickers on their nametags.

We have a sweet arrangement with Yellowhead where we have the venue for free, so long as we fill the room and make it worthwhile sales-wise for them. We have had slower nights, but they've been gracious and we've packed the room, so the relationship has been strong, but it's one to work hard

## The Art of The Full House

to keep that way. Based on the original agreement, if we do not pack the room, the Yellowhead can ask for \$250-500 for the rental. That's never happened.

What follows are some of the systems that we have developed to make sure that each even is packed and as amazing as it can be. These systems are stored in googledocs with more links than we can show here to make it effortless for whoever is organizing it to find the resources they need.

So far, the themes have been:

### **2012-2013 Season**

October - Local Food  
November - Arts and Crafts  
December - 5th Birthday Party  
February - Good Business  
March - YEG Hidden Gems  
April - Activism and Advocacy  
May - Local Food

### **2013-2014 Season**

October - YEG Elections  
November - #notinyeg  
December - 6th Birthday  
February - Alternative Energy  
March - Local Food

April - Literature  
May - Good Business  
June - Good 100

### **2014-15 Season**

October - Green Jobs  
November - Good Business  
December - {not a Green Drinks} 7th Anniversary: Raising the Good Fundraiser  
February - Local Resilience  
March - Local Food DIY  
April - Greening your Closet  
May - YEG Hidden Gems  
June - Good 100 {not a Green Drinks, organized by G100 team}

## **Venue Criteria:**

- central (downtown or Whyte Ave area)
- parking or good access to public transit
- exclusive use (sharing the venue with other events is not an option)
- licensed with booze and can sell it (e.g. bars, pubs and lounges work best to save us the headache of arranging drinks)
- can cater and serve some food (helpful for pre-event mingling/people can grab supper).
- good, down to earth atmosphere and vibes - natural light, wood interiors help.
- capacity of at least 120 and max 250
- seating for at least 50 people (we don't want everyone to have to stand all night)
- visual focal point for a welcome speech (and ideally a sound system with a mic, as well as a projector and screen we can use)

## Before the Season

- Set up a year of meetings with the Events Liaisons - ideally 1/event six weeks before the event which does a last check in before the near Green Drinks and allows a forward look at the next one. But more meetings at the beginning of the season if useful.
- Work with the Events Liaisons and the whole board and team to prepare the season's themes. In the past, a rough sketch of "must" themes were put into the year, and then the pared down best-of list of potential themes were put to the team to vote (via Doodle poll). Relevant events (e.g. the municipal election in 2013) can also influence the monthly themes
- Reach out to the venue to review the previous year and its learnings and plan the next year (confirm the dates), if Green Drinks will be hosted at the same venue
- Update the Green Drinks Poster working with Chelsea Boos. The previous poster is here (insert link) and her contact information is:
- Meeting with Social Media Coordinator and confirm roles/communication
- Meeting with Blog Coordinator and review how to blog and blog schedule for the year
- Meeting with Newsletter Coordinator to review the newsletter style and how to communicate content.
- Investigate the tools in Eventbrite Spectrum (a new suite of tools that came out at the end of the 2015 season) and may be very handy.

## Starting Six Weeks Before a Green Drinks Logistics:

- email core team to confirm prepared draft list of partners to confirm who should be emailed. ask for connections and leads for guests, presenters etc. from core team (e.g. 'Who do we know who should be a part of a Green Drinks of alternative energy in town?').
- create a new tab in the Green Drinks Contacts spreadsheet of all the partners involved in each new theme Green Drinks event (e.g. presenters, guests, featured groups).
- meet as scheduled with Events Liaisons to make sure you're on track and have access to any Google docs and spreadsheets relevant to your event. Prepare the draft agenda for this meeting and send it out to all attendees 24 hours before via email
- work with the Social Media Coordinator to confirm the event hashtag and to develop 3-5 pre-written tweets for sharing in all emails. See examples here.
- draft and email partners promo emails to send
- get volunteers and connectors booked and get them to invite their friends (see emails document)
- invite anyone involved to the 5:30 pm dinner before the event

- email photographer re: what we're looking for (see emails)
- design the mixers and activities for the Green Drinks and identify any materials needs
- email updates to The Local Good core team to ask them to invite friends to the Facebook event (as FB no longer auto-invites the E-SAGE group and each person can only invite up to 500 people) updates and any specific items where they can support.
- decide on and confirm final list of featured guest/orgs and the featured speaker

### **Starting Six Weeks Before a Green Drinks Promo:**

- create facebook event via the e-sage facebook group so we can invite everyone in the group to the event. This strategy might change (perhaps use the page) - decision with SM Coordinator.
- create Eventbrite event (you need copy the last one to keep the order form and formatting and make sure it's a public event in the right categories).
- Ensure the text include enticing information as to why people would want to buy advance tickets.
- Ensure the logo is included as well as the banner (so that when the link is shared on FB, the GD logo shows, not Eventbrite)
- Ensure you revise the URL on the Manage page (it creates a quick link for redirection) so that it's memorable for using in newsletter/blog posts and not an awkward long URL
- If you need to insert the banner again, go to Design ~> Custom Header/Footer and insert this link. ``
- work with Newsletter Coordinator to send out brief announcement to to constant contact newsletter and make sure s/he has all the information needed for the regular monthly newsletter.
- post event promote with Eventbrite link onto key online locations
- add the facebook page and Eventbrite link to the Green Drinks page on our website.
- email Tonia LaRiviere re: press releases for upcoming Green Drinks and any media potential
- confirm blog post schedule with Blog Coordinator for the three blog posts. This schedule should be set out generally for the whole year:
- first post: Green Drinks announcement/teaser

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- second post: Featured Speaker + Featured Guests
- third post: \_\_\_\_\_ Reasons Not to Miss \_\_\_\_\_ Green Drinks (exact same content as the newsletter)
- draft and send an “this theme is totally your field, and we love you, and here’s your personal invite and you should buy a ticket” invitation to key hubs. (Note: it’s important to clarify who comes free and who is not in direct wording the emails to avoid assumptions. )

### One Week Before Logistics:

- get props together (most of which will be in the handy Green Drinks case)
- create a floor plan if any specific tables or areas need to be designated or reserved or if there is an activity that requires a lay-out
- call/email venue to confirm
- create and print event specific signs for any activities you might be doing
- email updates to The Local Good core team with updates and where they can support
- check the localgoodyeg@gmail.com email account for any Green Drinks related emails - this is mostly monitored by the Newsletter and Events Listing Coordinator, but if s/he is unable to do so, this is your responsibility
- run last planning meeting with Green Drinks team, if needed

### One Week Before Promo:

- Work with newsletter coordinator to email to constant contact newsletter : “\_\_\_\_\_ reasons to come to the \_\_\_\_\_ Green Drinks”
- post the “\_\_\_\_\_ Reasons to Come to \_\_\_\_\_ Green Drinks” on the blog
- ask Social Media Coordinator to tweet the 'Reasons to come' blog post, featured guests, doorprizes, etc.
- daily post updates and teasers on the facebook event (e.g. who will be presenting, featured, doorprizes, drinks specials etc).
- send prewritten tweets to TLG team to post: GD coming in one week! and thanks to door prize people (on-going through the week), etc.

### **Last Minute Tickets Push (if ticket sales are still low):**

- prep tweetstorm: email key hubs in the community and ask them to tweet one of three prewritten tweets (or their own version) the day of the event. This includes event partners, key hubs in the larger progressive scene and key hubs in the particular theme of that green drinks. Who are these hubs? These people. Do not overuse.
- Ask The Local Good core team to help with the push to sell tickets through their networks

### **Three Days Before Logistics:**

- email everyone with a formal role (featured guests and volunteers) to check in and make sure they're clear and to give them any support they need
- include full evening schedule
- for presenters: what they need or can bring; what we will provide (e.g. table space, 1 max minute to talk, etc)
- that they are invited to the 5:30pm dinner before Green Drinks
- email updates to The Local Good core team with updates and where they can support (including clarifying MC duties/notes, help needed, etc.)
- check the localgoodyeg@gmail.com email account for any Green Drinks related emails, if unchecked.
- confirm with Treasurer to provide or bring the float (should be \$50 worth of \$5 bills)

### **Three Days Before Promo:**

- post reminder with Eventbrite link to the the Local Good facebook page and the e-sage group
- send prewritten tweets to TLG team, volunteers GD presenters to post re: “#GreenDrinksYEG is happening tomorrow night at @YellowheadBeer - who am I going to see there?”, etc.
- send reminder email to everyone who's bought a ticket via Eventbrite inviting them to spread the word with a simple tweet
- post “Green Drinks is tomorrow night” with Eventbrite link onto key online locations

## Day of Logistics:

- print off the Guest list (from Eventbrite) once ticket sales close OR use an iPad to check in people (recommended, iPad is usually borrowed from a team member)
- check the localgoodyeg@gmail.com email account for any Green Drinks related emails (the newsletter coordinator may not be checking right before the event and it's up to you to catch any event questions)
- print copy of featured guests names for yourself and MC's
- print out volunteer schedule for the front and for your reference
- print out email list where folks can sign up
- take photos of any activity props for documentation purposes (e.g. both sides of a two sided bingo card)
- set up the registration/welcome station
- set up the name tag and activities table

## Day of Promo:

- launch Twitter contest (work with Social Media Coordinator and Liaison)
- remind hubs of tweetstorm (if needed, use sparingly)
- email updates to The Local Good core team with updates and where they can support

## At the Event:

- arrive at event at least 30 minutes before any guests/volunteers. Check in with the bar staff and ensure all furniture is arranged appropriately and confirm volunteer tickets
- set up all signage, ticket/greeter area, activity table, stage area (for door prizes).
- welcome featured guests and volunteers as they arrive - direct them to a certain table and request TLG team to gather early attendees together for a pre-event mingle.
- facilitate a general pre-mingle welcome speech (done by yourself or other TLG member) to do a round of intros, review the evening schedule and remind guests to be quiet when people are talking on stage.
- prep MC with info they may need regarding change in featured guests, updates on door prizes, etc.

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- hold volunteer meeting at assigned time to get volunteers enthused and ready for their tasks.
- check in to be sure replacements come, have time to shadow and then old volunteers can leave their shift.

### **After 10 PM:**

- clean up all posters/activity materials and organize for next time
- provide the newsletter sign up sheet to the Newsletter and Events Listing coordinator
- check in with the bar and pay for volunteer drinks using the money from tickets at the door.
- take out the float and count the money accepted at the door. Have another TLG team member do a second count. Provide the money to the treasurer or, if not possible, let Treasurer know the amount via email and keep until next meeting.
- keep any paperwork that has information needed for the Numbers.

### **Day After Logistics:**

- email photographer to make sure you get the photos
- post photos and tag people in the e-sage group
- write blog post summarizing the event and activities and thank you to guests/door prize donors (planned recap or Storify) - connect with Blog Coordinator (note: often Deb does a Storify piece - ensure she or whoever does it, if not you, has all the required thank you's).
- send follow up message to Eventbrite ticket buyers (see Green Drinks Follow Up email)
- write comment on the completed Green Drinks event - 'thanks for coming. make sure to sign up to our email list :) at [www.thelocalgood.ca](http://www.thelocalgood.ca). Don't miss the next Green Drinks: {insert theme & FB event link}"
- ensure that the newsletter coordinator adds anyone who opted to our Constant Contact email list (Eventbrite - manage - event reports - download the latest event as a CSV).
- review any emails forwarded to you from the [localgoodyeg@gmail.com](mailto:localgoodyeg@gmail.com) for anything Green Drinks related
- upload photos of Green Drinks activities card to the Green Drinks Activities google doc
- update the icebreaker activity you used in the Green Drinks Activities google doc
- add any new online hubs and promo places you've discovered

## Green Drinks Evening Schedule:

Based on Green Drinks at The Yellowhead

### 5:00 pm

- Green Drinks coordinator arrives to set up signage, name tags, etc
- Station 1: Greeter – welcome sign
- Station 2: cover and newsletter – money basket, Guestlist (print or tablet), attendance tally, clipboards, newsletter sheet, pens
- Station 3: activity and nametags, colour markers, basket, waste-bin
- Check in with server - say hi, chat about the theme, numbers expected

### 5:30 pm

- Welcome volunteers and presenters (TLG core members can assist with this - ask to confirm attendance)
- Order supper and drinks as desired
- Introduce new folks as they arrive, welcome them to join
- Thank, accept and arrange door prize

### 5:45 pm

- with TLG core members, explain:
- flow/schedule of the evening
- volunteer roles general and how guests will arrive into the room
- door prize, speaking times (and limits)
- make sure everyone feels the love

### 6:15 pm - Volunteer Coordinator and Featured Guests

- meet with all volunteers to go into roles in depth
- make sure “Activities” volunteer and Connectors meet
- ask volunteers to help quiet the room during the talks
- help with connecting - if you see someone standing alone or a group that’s not met others, help out

### 6:45 pm

- first volunteer shift start

### 7:00 pm

- Green Drinks official start

### 7:45 pm

- remind with TLG MC and presenters to head to the stage for the speech

### 7:50 pm

- start speech
- see speech template (welcome, hands up, connectors)
- Twitter contest
- Activity start

### 7:55 pm

- activity start

### 8:20 - 9:00 pm

- note: activity end will dependant on the night

### 9:15 pm

- announce door prize, Twitter contest winners

### 10:00 pm

- Green Drinks official end
- tear down and make sure all supplies are accounted for

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### **The 7:50pm Speech:**

(NO longer than 5 minutes! Personalize it to the event, please MC!)

Welcome and Introduce Yourself

Mission of The Local Good

Talk about the theme

Tweet and check in: #GreenDrinksYEG and @LocalGoodYEG

Check out our website! Have a sweet event, submit it to the Events Listing!

Raise your hands:

- and meet three new people
- first time at Yellowhead?
- first time at Green Drinks?
- engaged in a project related to the theme?
- moved to YEG in the last year - "Please take care of the new people and make sure they meet folks."
- core members of The Local Good
- connectors - If you want to meet people connected in the scene please go speak to these people. Or see the Activities table
- volunteers - "they're the best!". If you'd like to volunteer to help with Green Drinks, please sign up

**Thanks to:** The Yellowhead, any partners, volunteers and photographer

**Announce Next Green Drinks Theme** - Come back regardless of the theme.

Short Shout Outs to Related Initiatives, Projects and Things:

"Now raise your hand one last time and use it to meet one more new person."

Tease the Door prizes

Introduce Featured Guests

Begin Activity! See you after 9!

The 9:30 Door Prize Speech

Meet one more new person.

Acknowledge who gave out the door prizes and give them out.

Reminders and dates and theme of next Green Drinks.

## Section VII: FAQ

## Learners vs. Experiencers:

*"I have been marketing for an audience of people who want to learn something about the message, which doesn't draw out the learners (low attendance, having to cancel from no sign ups). Another kind of audience who I have not designed a program for is people who want an experience. Can you speak to marketing to these two kinds of participants and any other kind who might need a specific approach in marketing?"*

So, one crowd of people wants to learn something. They want content. The other crowd wants to experience something directly. They don't want to talk about it. They want to experience it directly. The first crowd wants "how to do \_\_\_\_\_" and the other one just wants to have fun doing it.. The former might be drawn to a workshop where they learn about the philosophy of tantra. The second might be drawn to a couples tactic massage workshop. The first one might want to learn how to make electronic music. The second one might just want to party at a festival. One group might want to learn about ayahuasca and the second group might want to do ayahuasca.

So how do you market differently to them?

In the end, it's not so different. The important thing to ask is, "Why do they want this? What do they want it for? What are they hoping to get? What problem are they hoping it might solve?"

This gets to something I speak about in my eBook *The Art of Relevance*, the notion of being on a journey from Island A (where they have some symptoms they don't like) to Island B (where they have a result they're craving). It's crucial to understand what this journey is. And, even if they're really interested in buying the boat, then why?

It's also important to make sure the workshop is offering them something they *want* to learn instead of something we think they *should* to learn.

In some ways, selling an experience is easier because it's more likely to be something they crave (e.g. bungee jumping, an adventure tour, a meditation retreat in Thailand, swimming with dolphins etc). But, even when it seems so obvious, it's good to wonder: What do they want? Do they want peace and solitude? Do they hope to meet some new people? Do they want to come back with stories to make their friends jealous? Do they hope to increase their social status? The more clearly we speak to what they want, the more relevant and compelling our offers will be.

If I were marketing an "experience," I'd want a tonne of photos and videos of people having an amazing time. I'd want a boat-load of testimonials. I'd want to write about the experience in a way that puts them inside the experience as they read it.

And, it's good to know that, even when you're marketing a "how to," education-based workshop, people still hope for a good experience or they are walking in nervous about what their experience might be. So make sure your sales materials let them know what to expect, as we laid out in Idea #10: Tell Them a Story.

## Free vs. Paid Events:

*"I'm curious about marketing free events vs. paid events. I myself sometimes RSVP for free events but then slack off and don't go last minute. How to get people to show up for free events?"*

An important question. First of all, when people aren't showing up at all, the first place I look is not at pricing but if the event is a good idea that's been marketed well. This is the main thing.

But yes, I've heard many people struggle with filling free events for just the reasons you've laid out here. It's so easy to cancel at the last minute with no financial consequences. I recall leading a Non Violent Communication workshop for a yoga studio and telling them I was happy to do it for free since I was still learning. She shook her head and told me they would charge \$25. I asked her why. "Because," she said. "No one shows up if it's free."

Now, that wasn't entirely my experience as I toured with my workshops, but what I also had going for me was that it was a hot button topic of "how to make more money" (which I think is the easiest topic to sell) and I was from out of town which instantly turns you into a minor celebrity and you are seen as more of an expert because you're not from there.

So my first question would be, "Why offer it for free? Is it because you're afraid no one will come if you charge?"

In my experience, when it's in the \$10-\$20 range, no one is deterred by paying. And they show up more often. Though you'll likely still see a 15% no show rate even with folks who've bought tickets.

When we started Green Drinks in Edmonton there was a basket at the front door where we accepted donations but otherwise, the event was free. Then we took the big step to ask for a "Suggested \$5 donation" (which almost everyone gave). But then, due entirely to a lack of hustle and poor promotion, we were only getting about twenty people per event. The organizer suggested that we do it once every two months instead of monthly and that we make it free. Instead, we replaced her and tripled the price to \$15 at the door (\$10 in advance) and began to get crowds of over 100 people. The previous organizer thought it was about the money. It wasn't about money.

I did free evening-long workshops for years before people began to insist on paying me. Then I began to charge.

I think part of the reason people resist going to a free workshop is because they assume it's going to include a high-pressure pitch to sign up for a more expensive retreat, workshop or coaching program. "That's why it's free!" they think. "They don't make money on the intro. They make it free, to get people there to pitch them." And those folks have a lot of experience to back that up.

There's no right or wrong way to do this. But I would say that it's true that people are more likely to show up at an event they paid for.

## Competing with Sharks:

*“This one is huge in the UK: you run a 2 year course, and then someone comes along and does one for 5 weeks . . . you run a 5 week course, and then someone comes along and says they have a course which can offer same in a weekend. We see people offer Diploma courses lasting 1 weekend. It's the whole 3 Reiki levels in a weekend thing . . . and people go for it. What would you say is best way to counter such negative marketing, so that the quality of your offering stands out?”*

Huh. That's a big one. I've never heard of “all three levels of reiki in a weekend.”

Right. So you offer an in-depth course and someone says, “You can learn all of that content in a shorter period of time!” so why pay more and take more time? There seems to be a better value proposition in the shorter/cheaper version!

My response here is that, in your marketing, you have to do your best to establish what's called the buying criteria. The best books I know that dive into this are *Monopolize Your Marketplace* by Richard Harshaw and *The Ultimate Sales Machine* by Chet Holmes.

They speak about the importance of not just trying to sell something but educating your buyer as to what they should be looking for when they're buying it. Richard Harshaw calls this the “Need to Know” question. The question is, “What do people need to see or hear to know they're getting a good deal when buying what you sell?” The question guides us away from convincing them to buy them to buy from us and onto the industry we're in.

If your best friend called and said, “I can't hire you but I need someone who does what you do and . . . man, it's a zoo out there. There are so many options! How do I even choose? I'm overwhelmed. What criteria should I look for? What do I need to know when making this decision? What are the important and relevant issues to be aware of?”

Remember, most people who are thinking about buying what you sell (whether from you or someone else) aren't experts in your industry. They have only vague notions of what a “good deal” might be. They have only a shadowy notion of what constitutes top quality in your industry. The point here is to teach them how to judge quality *by themselves*. To give them the criteria they need. Part of your job is to help them become the discerning expert they need to be to find a good deal.

If it was your best friend, you would teach them; you wouldn't try and sell them. You would educate and then allow them to make their own choices.

Give the public readily available measures of quality they can use for their own purposes and pass along to others.

Chet Holmes speaks about education based selling in his book, *The Ultimate Sales Machine*:

“. . . here's a line you should write down: you will attract more buyers if you are offering to teach them something of value to them than you will ever attract by simply trying to sell them your product or service. I had a client who sold lawn care services, and every year some of his workers would break off on their own and steal his clients by offering to do the same work they were already doing for less: "Just pay me personally instead of my company." The research team turned up a case in which the state of New York actually sued a homeowner, forcing the homeowner to pay worker's compensation on the lawn care person who hurt himself while working on the homeowner's lawn. Take that piece of data to a customer who's switching for 5\$ less a month and ask them "Are you sure that your new lawn care person has worker's compensation insurance? Because if he doesn't and he gets hurt on your property, you could be actually responsible for his workers compensation payments for as long as he's injured." That is definitely a smoking gun - a single fact that makes it unlikely that any client would want to switch to a single worker who didn't have all the proper licensing and insurance."

And this from the marvellous book, *Marketing Without Advertising*:

"No matter what your business, you can offer a descriptive brochure about your goods or services, extensive descriptions on your label (if that is appropriate), guide books, instruction manuals, or handouts containing basic information about your goods and services. Remember, if your business is truly a good one, the more your customers know about your field, the better you will stack up. The best way to let your customers know your business is good is to provide them with the information they need to judge for themselves. For example:

- a **wine store** that displays graphically attractive material telling customers how to judge a good wine and then gives them a list of ten "good buys" and asks them to judge how they stack up
- a **real estate** company that demonstrates with a bar graph that it outsells other companies in the area and places this information in the local real estate guide and in the office
- a **brake shop** that distributes information sheets explaining the various types of brake jobs it does and how long each should last
- **Rollerblade**, an inline skate manufacturer, which lays out a course and brings a van full of skates to announced locations so customers can try before they buy

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- if you run a **garden shop** and know the EPA has listed several types of pesticides as being particularly dangerous, you would be wise to post a notice to this effect along with a list of the substitute products you recommend to accomplish the same pest control purpose.
- "The following is a list of five negative traits associated with religious cults by Time magazine- please judge for yourself if our spiritual center has any of them."
- 'Following are the important characteristics of a fine woolen sweater as established by the National Wool Bureau. Notice how our sweaters compare.'
- Tennis International magazine has published the following criteria for a well-strung tennis racket. Please check to see that we meet or exceed all of these requirements.

Bruce Nelson of Local Color Inc. in Mill Valley, California, specializes in **exterior paint jobs** for older houses. He has developed a one-page checklist that details the elements of a quality house-painting job. He gives this form to all prospective customers when he bids for a job. This gives them a chance to understand all that his work entails so they can have a sensible basis on which to compare other painters' bids. More to the point we are discussing here, it also provides them with the background information necessary to evaluate the quality of Nelson's work when the job is complete. Local color also gives potential customers a list of buildings it has painted. Divided into 'Driving Tours' of different neighborhoods and house styles, this provides a convenient way for anyone interested to check out Local Color's work in advance. Local Color painted two houses on the famous Post Card Row-a street in San Francisco lined with historic Victorian homes-and won first and second place in the 'Picture It Painted Professionally' contest sponsored annually by Painting and Decorating Contractors of America."

## Do I Have to Resort to Manipulative Marketing Tactics as a Healer?:

*“These days everyone and their dog is a healer, or has a healer. If you're offering healing – even stuff that sounds really amazing – it's like watering soil that's already quite damp. But in my not-so-humble opinion, most of that water is like London water – devoid of healthful trace minerals, with traces of plastic and drugs (seriously, our water has lots of cocaine in it haha), and frankly has been excreted and then chemically recycled way too many times. I hope that what I have to offer is more like a sweet fresh tapped spring water. BAH HUMBUG. But yeah, in all of my spiritual career I've received only a single client for sessions through my website/Facebook etc. and only a single client through all the events I've done. I know I'm not the best at marketing and doing the stuff I "should" do for marketing, but I'm not the worst either. And it kinda feels that if I have to resort to tactics I don't really wanna use (even relatively harmless ones, that are mostly just psychology derived tricks rather than manipulative), then it isn't something that should happen. I'm definitely with Charles Eisenstein on that. (I'm really happy to take the tack of promotion through education, but if even after education people still don't wish to avail themselves of the relevant service, then it's a service that isn't needed).”*

This is a mighty fine wondering.

If we do workshops and teach people and no one signs up for more work with us, is it a sign that our work isn't needed?

Is that what it means?

This is an important wondering to be very open to because the answer might be “yes.” That might be heartbreaking to realize but it's better to realize it than to spend ten years beating one's head against the wall.

But it might mean other things.

It might mean that it's needed, but not yet. That it's ahead of its time.

It might mean that it's needed, but that they don't realize it yet.

It might mean that it's needed, but that it might take people a few years to decide to deal with it.

It might mean that you're focused on your analysis of what people need (e.g. “people need to be more grounded”) and you're not focused on what they want (e.g. to be able to ask for a raise, or approach someone they're attracted to without melting down). It might be that you've not identified a real, urgent need yet; that the problem you're solving and the result you are offering are still fuzzy.

## The Art of The Full House

It might be that your point of view about how to make the journey from Island A to B is not clear to people.

It might be that you've not found "your people" yet and that, when you do, they'll be all over this.

It might be the way you describe your work and the titles you give to your workshops.

It might be your pricing.

It might be that you haven't found a compelling package or offer yet.

It might mean that you're still playing it safe and not really speaking up.

It might be that you're not ready to do that teaching work yet and need to keep a day job while you deepen in your practice.

It might be a lot of things.

But it's hard not to get discouraged when you work so hard and put in so much effort and get no results. It's hard not to take it personally when you put yourself out there so vulnerably and no one seems to want you.

I just looked at Facebook and saw my colleague Paul Zellizer post this:

OBSERVATION: If you are mindful of doing good work at a price that's fair and you stay with your own inner work, you earn a reputation over time. That reputation will do lots of heavy lifting in terms of filling your programs.

So part of this wondering has to include a consideration of time frame too. It often takes longer than we wish it would.

What does an experience like this ask of you?

To learn. To sit still and quiet for a while and reflect on what you've seen and what's going on in your city and people's lives and to wonder about the best role we might play in it all.

It might be asking us to go to the people we want to help and to ask them, "What is it that you most need help with right now?" and see if we can offer that.

It might be asking a lot of things.

It might mean a lot of things.

## Marketing Spiritual Work Feels False and Hollow:

*"I'm still at a loss to apply conventional (if hippy) marketing for spiritual stuff. Spiritual stuff doesn't really solve a need, except for something existential and hard to define (and that if it is defined, it sounds general, like a niche for 'people who are stressed' or 'going through a change'). I don't know how to market stuff apart from in an exceptionally straight forward and honest way that just describes what it is/what happens (and can include the point of view and other things like that), without any marketing magic of niche or tribe. When it comes to spiritual stuff, even that harmless level of strategizing feels so false and hollow."*

This is a question I wonder about a lot too.

We live in a culture that doesn't particularly value wisdom. Old folks are put away into old folks homes while the culture continues its obsession with the young, rich and famous, guided by it's desperate fear about getting older because we can see how they're treated and how little inspiration there is to be found in a culture full of elders on drugs rather than elders giving out medicine.

In traditional culture, the elders would be fed and taken care of by the community. Medicine people would have been given gifts often and never would have had to 'market' their work. They would have been constantly employed by their people. I know many people, connected to indigenous cultures, who are horrified by the thought of ever charging for their ceremonies. There are some things that money should not touch.

And we don't live in that time now.

So, what do we do?

Part of this inquiry is rooted in the questions, "Who am I to teach and charge for it? Am I ready? Will I ever be?" I'm working on a larger eBook on this topic.

And part of it is, "If I feel ready to teach, how do I market it in such a way that it is an expression of my values? And, how do I market it when marketing itself seems anathema to spirituality?"

I think a lot of this comes back to niche. But I think niche is often understood differently than I mean it. When most people say niche they seem to mean target market. I mean niche as, "Your role in the community." I don't see niche as "magic marketing." And I hate the use of the word "tribe" in marketing. What it's pointing to is that you can't be everything to everyone. It points to the reality that there will be differences in your work from the work of others. Those differences might be in what you do, how you do it or for whom you do it. And point of view is at the heart of defining our niche. It's not a separate thing.

So, I think it still comes back to this. We can't not have a niche. We can't not have a role. We can't not become known for something in particular. That's out of our control entirely. It's happening if

we want it or not. The only question is, “Is our reputation attracting the kinds of people and opportunities we want?”

I know that some people get a full or part-time job and then do spiritual work on the side. Many of the most famous poets in the world never quit their day job. They didn’t want their poetry to be a “business.” Some people are drawn to learn a craft and then get their income from that that. Then they express their spirituality through that craft.

But, if you’re making the choice, and it is a choice, to hang up your shingle as a spiritual guide in the business world, then it’s a business. And a business, to survive, has to make money. Cashflow is its lifeblood. That’s the reality. A business must solve real problems for people and offer them real tangible results.

And I think it’s a mistake to assume that “spiritual stuff” isn’t a real issue. Max Simon, a colleague of mine, once pointed out that there are four “tracks” in business that people seem most ready to pay money for. They are: Health, Money, Relationships, Spirituality. I write more about this in my eBook *The Art of Relevance* but the point is that this is a legitimate track.

Byron Katie, Neale Donald Walsch, Eckhart Tolle, Wayne Dyer, Deepak Chopra, etc. have all done very well for themselves in this track. So it’s clear that it’s possible to market this work.

Island A in this track could be a lot of things, but I’d generally categorize it as a deep feeling of something being “off” in one’s life. It’s feeling lost, stressed, anxious, confused as to what it’s all about, terrified of dying, nihilistic like, “what’s the fucking point?”

Island B is that feeling of being on track, things making sense in the world and feeling right. It’s feeling at peace, clear, open and having a clear sense of one’s role in this world.

These are very real experiences. People are willing to pay money to get help with these things.

To me, there’s also something worth questioning in the notion that being strategic is somehow not spiritual or that it’s tainted. It could be true. But I think this deserves some questioning around, “strategizing for what?” Are we talking about strategizing to get people to buy no matter what? Okay, then that will be manipulative. If it’s strategizing on how to attract enough perfect fit clients to sustain yourself? That might be different.

So then, how do you market workshops about them in a way that honours the work for what it is?

I don’t know that I have the perfect answer but, beyond the other things I’ve already mentioned, here are some things I’ve noticed:

- **Touring:** A reality of this work is that we are rarely prophets in our own country. Many teachers get a better response when they travel to other cities and countries. At home, no one takes them

seriously — but then they end up huge in Japan. So, touring can help get you to places where people take you more seriously.

- **Clear, Unique, Articulated Point of View:** a huge step in this process is having a nuanced but lucid point of view on spirituality. You see it differently than others. How? You are weaving together strands of many different traditions and life experiences. What are they?
- **Wounds:** If you're looking for a niche in this area, it's often wise to go back to where you have struggled and build your niche around that. If you used to be overwhelmed with shame for the way you treated people in the past and you've healed that, you could focus on helping people overcome shame. If you were trapped in addiction but aren't anymore, then you might want to focus on that. This keeps your work authentic and connected to your personal story.
- **Get Hosted:** Instead of trying to fill all of your intro workshops, see if you can find others to host them for you and bring their people to them.
- **Next Steps:** Work on your packages. See if you can design the program, package or products you needed when you were younger. Maybe that's a retreat. Maybe it's a two year school. Maybe it's an online community with free weekly calls. Maybe it's a meet-up group. Maybe it's a day-long workshop. It could be so many things. Create something beautiful and needed for the community and charge a price that feels fair to you.
- **Find Your People:** Maybe you could be the one to bring a certain kind of spiritual perspective to your people. Maybe that's the queer community, the punk community, the vegan, activist or anarchist crowd. Maybe your strength is in delivering messages in ways that feel good to those people.

Is it possible to make money teaching spiritual things? Maybe. It's likely different based on where you live in the world, what you're offering and how you're offering it.

There's so much more to say here but I'll leave it at that for now.

## Real Life vs Online:

*“I read somewhere (from some ‘expert’) that one should never try to teach an online workshop or course without doing it in real life first. I’m skeptical this would be true across the board, in every case. The type of workshop I would like to do could be delivered either way. Co-presence would not be a limiting factor. But do you think marketing will vary dramatically based on whether it is a live event or an online workshop one is talking about?”*

I disagree with the idea that you can’t teach an online workshop without doing it live first.

I think what happens is that someone tries this and they see how useful it is to do a live event and learn from it before doing an online event and so then they make the leap to say, “Aha! This is the best way to do it. This is how it should be done every time!”

I’ve done it both ways.

They can both work.

The main thing is to learn from whatever you do.

To me the core principle is to not assume you’ve got it all sorted out the first time out of the gates. This is why it’s good to beta test or to release your book in sections on your blog to get feedback, to do live workshops where you can see people’s reactions or online workshops where you can interact with people and read their homework.

The marketing fundamentals are the same online vs. offline but the form will change. For a local event, you might use posters and for an online event you wouldn’t. But the fundamentals don’t change.

## Marketing Intangibles:

*“If you are marketing an intangible, say a meditation course, how do you make it sound tangible in terms of benefits? For instance I can give a list of medical benefits, but that doesn't always come across sexy and appealing. Basically, a lot of hippy stuff is selling an intangible, even if once discovered, that is the missing piece of someone's life.”*

A good question. How do you sell the invisible?

But this gets back to the question of what we are marketing. Are we marketing the your service or the result it offers?

Where people get into trouble is trying to sell the boat to someone who has never heard of it.

If someone is looking for meditation then, sure, sell them on your style of meditation but, if they've never heard of meditation, then what do you do?

The mistake most people make is to sell them on meditation. “This has so many benefits!”

But, instead of selling the boat, you could sell the journey. I talk more about this in my eBook [The Art of Relevance](#).

And much of this gets down to the thorny question of niching. You can explore my thoughts about that in my eBook *The Niching Nest* at [NichingSpiral.com/nest](http://NichingSpiral.com/nest).

But let's get particular here. Meditation could help a lot of people with a lot of things. It's a boat that could take people to a lot of islands. But all I care about is if it can take me where I want to go. When we miss this truth, we take it personally when people aren't interested in our fantastic boat – or we push harder.

Nobody wants to meditate just to meditate. They want the benefits it brings. But not all benefits are equal to everyone. Why might people meditate? Here are just a few.

- To help them overcome their addictions
- So they don't lose their temper at their children
- To be a better spouse and not get caught up in reaction so much
- Because they had a heart attack and want to de-stress
- To soothe their anxiety attacks
- To sleep better

So, we need to contextualize what we offer into the real lives of people. Imagine a meditation course for recovering addicts. What if there was a meditation course for stressed out executives? There are so many niches available within meditation.

This is done with Yoga all of the time. You can read examples of this here: [nichingspiral.com/articles/yoga](http://nichingspiral.com/articles/yoga)

Also, Harry Beckwith wrote a book about this (which I've not read) called *Selling The Invisible* which might be worth reading. I've heard good things about it.

The main idea is to not sell the boat but to sell the journey or, if you're intent on selling the boat, boat, then find out where people who want that boat are already spending money and go there (e.g. new age book shops, yoga studios etc).

But, like yoga, there are thousands of meditation courses and teachers in the world, so it begs the question, even if I want to learn to meditate: Why you? Why should I study with *you*? What's unique about *your* perspective or approach that would have me want to work with you vs. someone else? I write more about this in my *Point of View Marketing* eBook essentially it's looking at what you do differently from others (or what you'd like to begin to do differently) and then to ask yourself, "Why do I do it this way?" Sometimes it's not *what* you do but *how* you do it that intrigues people. For example, imagine someone who taught meditation classes but only outdoors, or if someone taught a "how to meditate on The Tube. Turn your ride to work into your spiritual practice." Or if it was about how to do walking meditations, the possibilities are endless.

There's so much generic "meditation" stuff out there.

So, "how does one sell meditation?"

If it's generic, good luck. It's like saying, "How do I sell my tomatoes that are grown identically to everyone else's at the annual tomato fair?"

If they're all the same, then you'd better hope your booth is favourably placed.

Maybe you teach a different kind of meditation or you teach it in a different way or you focus on a particular group of people. Whatever you choose to do, something has to distinguish it from the other meditation courses out there.

## Marketing on a Stigmatized Topic:

*“How to market an event that has an uncomfortable or stigmatized topic such as Suicide. A workshop for those that have experienced sexual abuse would be another example of something that needs more delicacy in how it is marketed. Lots of people with mental health issues don't want to just join a Facebook event and share with the world that this is something they have experienced.”*

This is such an important question.

I could add more to the list.

How do you teach men about dating if they're mortified to admit they're clueless?

What if you have sexually abused someone and it's torn you up inside?

What if you've been the victim of incest?

These are so hard. It's hard to imagine marketing these with big headlines making outlandish promises and big, red “Buy Now!” buttons, isn't it?

How do you market something that no one, including (and perhaps especially) people who need it most, wants to even talk about let alone show up at a workshop for and thus to “out themselves” as someone who struggles?

Imagine you lived in a virulently and violently homophobic town and a workshop came to town saying, “Are you secretly gay? Having trouble coming out of the closet? Come to our fabulous workshop and learn how you can be free!” Would you go? The hell you would.

If you struggled with any of the issues mentioned above, do you think you'd be excited to join a Facebook group and out yourself there? Of course not.

So, what do we do?

### A few thoughts:

- **Anonymity:** Make sure that you go out of your way to allow them to attend anonymously. This might mean backdoor entrances or that the location is announced last minute via texting to those who sign up so they're not scared someone they know will see them go in. It likely means not using a Facebook group but some other online forum that allows people to participate in conversations under a pseudonym.
- **Widen the Door:** Instead of having a workshop only for “People struggling with depression,” you might add the words “. . . and those that love them.” Then, if people come, you don't know if

the person next to you is depressed or simply there to learn how to support a loved one who is struggling with it.

- **Reach Their Supporters:** Instead of trying to reach them directly, consider offering a workshop for their caregivers and loved ones. “Is your child suicidal?” or “Was your partner sexually abused as a child and it’s causing problems in your relationship but you’re not sure what you can do?” or “Are you dating someone with mental illness and struggling to support them?”, etc. If you can help the people who are connected to them and offer them tools and strategies, they will very likely refer them to you directly as the trust gets built.
- **Lots of Free Content:** The higher the wall of risk, the more trust you’ll need to build. If they’re dealing with huge emotional realities like suicide, abortion, miscarriage, infidelity . . . you better believe they want to tell as few people as possible, but you also better believe that they are desperate for help from someone they trust. So the more free videos you have on your site, the more articles, blog posts, memes, downloadable audio etc, the better. Give them a lot of ways to get to know you on your website where there is zero risk for them. Allow them to move towards you at the pace that feels best.
- **Hub Marketing:** I’ve got an entire eBook on Hub Marketing but the essence is to build relationships with those who might come into contact with people struggling in those areas and let them know you *specialize* in this. So you might speak to therapists, holistic practitioners, yoga teachers, doctors, counsellors etc. If they are referred to you by someone they trust they’re much more likely to be willing to take the very real risks to come and see you.
- **Become a Known Expert:** Talk about this topic everywhere you can. Be a lighthouse. Let yourself be seen. Become a public figure and then let people, in their own quiet ways, find their way towards you in emails and Facebook messages.

These are some good first thoughts on the topic anyway.

## Creating a Marketing Schedule:

*"I'm curious about marketing schedule if there is magic in the hips and hoorays ahead of time, and if so how long ahead of time? There is a grace in the 'save the date' ~ trying not to be annoying about asking someone to save the date a million years in advance, perhaps adding in the graceful early bird discount, perhaps running a series of 'get excited' e-mails, 'early bird gets the worm and gets to the party,' 'the bus is going by . . . time to hop on!' kind of schedule? Thoughts on the alchemy of 'date' and 'registration PR' magic?"*

A big question.

There's no right answer to this and perhaps no answer at all.

I think three months is the furthest in advance I'd want to go generally and no less than six weeks. Somewhere in there for your Save The Date. But it depends on the frequency of the events. If you're doing it annually, then you might tell them a year in advance the dates of the next one (e.g. think of your favourite summer music festival). If it's monthly, you can unveil your calendar for the year all at once and remind quarterly. If it's a quarterly event? Three months in advance is fine.

The main thing is to do the least amount possible. The Law of Minimalism. That's the general guideline.

When you marketing your events, do less.

Send the least number of emails you can, not the most.

Have an off season in your promotional schedule where you let the fields go fallow. Your people will thank you for not always hammering them with promotions. Let them miss you sometimes. It's a gift to both of you.

It can be easy to burn an audience out by going all the time. You can tour a city too many times too soon. You can run the same workshop too many times for the same crowd.

Good event promotion will always be the marriage of hustle and minimalism.

But they don't contradict each other.

We hustle so that we can do less.

The faster you sell out your events, the more of a reputation you will get for selling your events out. That reputation will drive people to get tickets as early as possible, rather than waiting to get them at the door (when it might be sold out). This will result in your events filling up faster, which means people will see they need to buy tickets sooner and thus your events will fill faster. This is setting yourself up to need less hustle.

## The Art of The Full House

The faster you sell your event out, the more time you'll have to make the event amazing (because your marketing is already done). The better your event is, the more word of mouth you'll get and the easier it will be to sell out the next one. This sets you up for ease.

The better your systems get, the easier it will be to do that same event in the future. This sets you up to not need to do much.

The stronger your team gets, the less work you'll need to do to make your events a success. This is setting yourself up to not need to do much.

We hustle to create such a strong foundation that we need to do less and less to get the same result.

To me, the dream is to be able to do what we've done with [StreetcarShows.com](http://StreetcarShows.com). We send out one email and we sell the show out. The goal isn't to learn all of these promotional tools so that you use every single one of them for every event. The principle is minimalism. The goal is to do as little as possible and still have a sell-out event.

This means a willingness to, eventually, find a focus on the kinds of events you do. It means finding a groove. It means the willingness to, at some point, find yourself a niche. It means the willingness to stop reinventing the wheel with every event and to, instead, master the craft of doing the events you do best.

## On Selling People After They Attend an Intro Workshop:

*“My biggest challenge is the people who I actually get on the phone typically say they don't have the money even when I try showing them the value. I am sure I can improve on my value conversation with them and how to go there perhaps before we get to the money part, but often people ask about the cost before we get too far into it when they are interested. I have a list of emails and phone numbers of people who have attended our free preview events (or signed up for them but never showed) that I contact via FB message to try to have a conversation with, I make phone calls and send emails. Typically when I make phone calls I end up leaving voicemails and don't get called back. Perhaps you'd want to include voicemail direction in your ebook – when wanting to talk to a potential client about free or paid workshop trainings?”*

When I was 18, I worked for a leadership development franchise and I would spend all day calling people who had who had attended our live seminars, and ask them to enrol in our weekend workshops.

It never worked that well. By the time I was calling them it had often been months since they had attended our intros and they had gone “cold.” Maybe they hadn't liked the intro workshop. Maybe they had, but, even if the intro workshop had changed their life, they'd already forgotten and were back into the moving parade of their life.

That's just how it was.

Every day was a slog.

When I look back on it, I realize that it wasn't me that was the issue. I wasn't a bad sales person (though, at 18 years old, I likely wasn't very good either). The whole marketing and selling process was broken. It didn't work.

There's so much to say here.

One critical thing that was was getting permission from these people to call them. I was making cold calls. They weren't expecting my calls. They didn't know me. There was no relationship there.

In my *Hub Marketing* eBook, I speak about three levels of marketing: cold, warm and hot. The hot level is where you have become a hub. You're well known for what you do and word of mouth is working for you well. The cold level is where you approach people as a stranger with no trust built up. The warm level, in between those two, is where, instead of approaching people directly, you look for hubs who already have a strong relationship with their clients and you get them to introduce you (e.g. an endorsement email from a chiropractor to their list about a particular yoga teacher). The warm level is also about staying in touch and fostering a deeper relationship with people over time so that, when they're ready to buy, they naturally consider you as an option.

So, those calls I was making were operating at the cold level.

And to call someone cold and try to sell them into a \$1200 program is a poor strategy.

If I could go back and do it again, I'd have our franchise throw a monthly meet-up event where alumni could get together and bring friends. We'd have a 20 minute talk with 20 minutes of Q&A each time with socializing on either side. We'd work to foster good relationships between the alumni and, if we did any cold calling, it would have been to invite them to one of those.

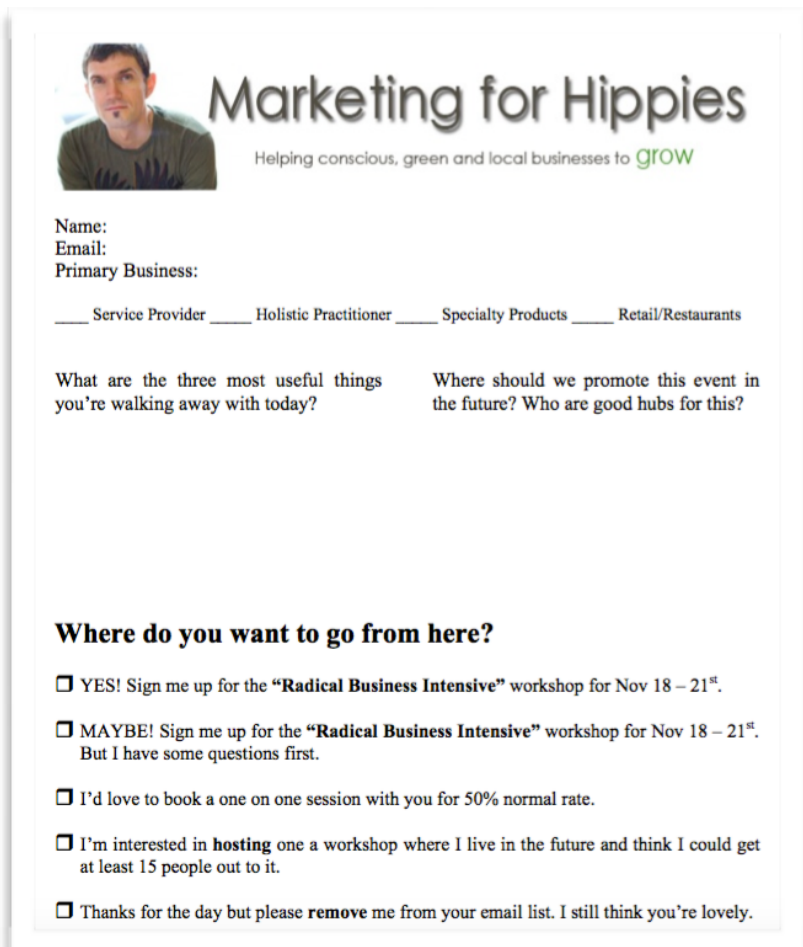
My colleague Mal has a great program about that called [MeetUpZoo.com](http://MeetUpZoo.com)


When I began to do my own free intro workshops, I thought about phoning people afterward to follow up and it felt so uncomfortable for me to call them up and try to sell them.

So, the main thing is to make it easy for people to sign up for your workshop in the moment so follow up isn't required. But only a fraction of the people who come to your intros will be in the right time and place in their life to want to sign up for your advanced workshops or coaching programs. But, in a few years, they might be. So developing ways of staying in touch with these people is crucial. That could be through your social media presence, your email newsletter, your blog, free or low cost tele-seminars or meet ups and parties that you host for your past and potential future clients.

And, if you're going to do any follow up, then it's important to make sure you have people's explicit permission to do so and that you know the kind of follow up they want. So, at my intro workshops, at the end, I'd pass out a card like the one you see here where they could check one of five boxes to say how they'd like me to follow up with them (if at all).

There's a world of difference between following up with someone who checked the MAYBE! box and calling someone who attended my workshop just because I have



 **Marketing for Hippies**  
Helping conscious, green and local businesses to **grow**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Business: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Service Provider \_\_\_\_\_ Holistic Practitioner \_\_\_\_\_ Specialty Products \_\_\_\_\_ Retail/Restaurants

What are the three most useful things you're walking away with today? \_\_\_\_\_  
Where should we promote this event in the future? Who are good hubs for this? \_\_\_\_\_

**Where do you want to go from here?**

☐ YES! Sign me up for the "Radical Business Intensive" workshop for Nov 18 – 21<sup>st</sup>.

☐ MAYBE! Sign me up for the "Radical Business Intensive" workshop for Nov 18 – 21<sup>st</sup>. But I have some questions first.

☐ I'd love to book a one on one session with you for 50% normal rate.

☐ I'm interested in **hosting** one a workshop where I live in the future and think I could get at least 15 people out to it.

☐ Thanks for the day but please **remove** me from your email list. I still think you're lovely.

their number. The former is a service to them. The latter is a sales job.

I think it was Peter Drucker who said, “The purpose of marketing is to make selling redundant.”

This is the goal to me. Make your marketing so good that you don’t need to sell. That’s not always possible, but it’s the direction to move in.

And again, if you find yourself calling people who attended your workshops in order to sell something, and you’re and you’re not getting many calls back or much response, this is an example of an upstream problem. My guess is that there are other issues like a fuzzy niche, an unclear point of view, poorly designed packages (if you even have packages), un-compelling offers, or that maybe you were feeling uncomfortable with offering next-level services at your intro workshop and people felt that.

It could also be — and this needs to be said — that your workshops are not that good and no one wants to tell you that.

It could be so many things.

Instead of trying to sell everyone, try shifting the focus to building long-term relationships with the people on your list and offering them a range of options to buy from you.

## How Do I Find Hubs?:

*"I understand the importance of hubs, but how do you find hubs in the first place? When I ask myself 'Where do these people hang out?' I tend to draw a blank."*

If you live near a river and you see that the water is polluted, you can be sure that the problem lies upstream. If you try to solve the problem of a dirty river by cleaning the water that's rushing by you, it's too late.

It's the same with this.

If you struggle to find hubs who could help you promote your work, then the problem is almost never with hubs. It's upstream with your niche. If you struggle with niching, you might find my eBook [The Niching Nest](#) of use.

If you draw a blank when you ask yourself "Where do these people hang out?" then I would ask you, "And who are 'these people'?"

We usually don't even realize how fuzzy we are being with this. We assume we've got this nailed. We assume our target markets are crystal clear but, when pushed to name them, we can't.

We assume that what we do is really clear but, when pushed to articulate it, it's a big, fuzzy mess.

I see this at workshops all the time. When someone has an unclear niche it's impossible to brainstorm ideas for them. It's pointless. And I'm not just talking about ideas for hubs. I'm talking about everything. Without a niche, how can you help them identify packaging possibilities, blog post topics, offers they might make, business names, etc.

Everything hinges on your niche.

But, when someone has a clear niche, people can't stop giving them ideas. Someone will talk about their business and their platform is so solid, their niche is so lucid, that people across the room will shout out, "You need to talk to my friend!" or "Have you ever gone to \_\_\_\_\_ event?!" It's hard to shut it down.

If you struggle with your hubs, look to your niche.

## Working With Workshop Hosts:

*"I want to market mini-retreats I facilitate to home yoga studios after successfully holding these retreats in private homes. How can I market to the home studio owner for a win-win situation? Without raising the costs of the retreats, how can I make a profit and have home studio owners desiring what I offer without asking for so much compensation (on their part)? Feeling frustrated . . . yet eager to teach and spread the wonderful experience women have in my mini-retreats!"*

This is an age-old challenge.

George Kao speaks about the need to address the three wins in any joint venture.

- 1) It's got to be a win for you. If it doesn't sustain you, then what's the point?
- 2) It's got to be a win for the hubs you're asking to promote it. If it doesn't sustain them, what's the point?
- 3) It's got to be a win for the hub's people. If the hub's people have a terrible experience, the hub will never endorse you again.

All three have to win in this.

Another colleague asked, *"How do you market an online course or offering if you don't already have an email list and a following? I imagine you would need to harness the power of someone else's following . . . but how would you do that? I guess this gets into joint venture partnerships, but if you don't want to charge a lot for your class, is that feasible?"*

Another asked, *"How do you get interest from possible joint venture partners to do an online course launch (or beta test) when you don't have a list of your own that would benefit the potential partner?"*

It's the same question in essence. There's no short answer to this question. I speak about it more in-depth in my eBook [Hub Marketing](#).

But the short answer is that you don't need to have your own email list to promote anything. If you don't, then you'll need to have others, with their own followings, promote you. And that means they need to win and their people need to win as well as you.

What that "win" looks like can vary.

But all three must be addressed.

In your situation, with the home retreats, it seems like it's a win for you and a win for the people taking it, but you haven't found a way for it to be a win for the host. I'm not sure what advice I have except to say that this needs to be addressed.

You might find some home studio owners who love you and are happy to promote you with no need for a cut. If you do, count your lucky stars and don't take that for granted for even a second.

One option could be that you offer to lead a workshop at her home that isn't a full retreat. Perhaps it's an intro for the retreat and you let them charge whatever they want and keep 100% of the money.

Another option is, depending on the size of your list, you email a promotion out for them to your people.

Or you find a sponsor for each retreat and you use that money to pay the host.

Or you raise the price to make it worthwhile. A reality check here: if it's a business, it's got to be sustainable for you. This matters. So you'll need to spend something on your marketing (be that time or money). You could pay for an ad, pay for an assistant to promote, pay with your time and hustle or pay the host for promoting you to their people but some form of payment will have to be made.

It's on you to figure out what form that takes.

## How to Give Back to the Community With Your Events:

*“I would like to figure out how to enhance the win-win elements – how I can invest in the communities where I would like to offer my programs (and the community connectors who help).”*

Right. So you want to tour your workshops around and you want to make sure that your workshop doesn't show up in the community and take money out but that it also contributes back to the community beyond the good work you are doing in the workshop.

The possibilities here are many and will be determined by the type of event you're doing.

For example, the artist Prince held a number of concerts and, instead of having vendors, had community organizations put up booths as a way to help them get volunteers and petitions signed.

My friend Julia Butterfly Hill would do the same things on her speaking tours. She'd insist that the organizers had local environmental groups tabling at her events so that her presence there would benefit the local community more.

If you're only in town for a workshop, and numbers aren't high enough to support a bunch of tables and booths, then consider picking an organization to support. Have someone from that organization come and give a 30 minute presentation about their work and to sign up volunteers. Or, could you go to a community garden and do some work together as a part of your workshop?

There are so many ways to do this if you get creative.

## Marketing Luxuries in a Recession:

*“When the economy goes through a recession, which it does from time to time, what is the best way to market yourself . . . especially when people with less income start to see you and your offer as an unnecessary luxury (and you get more and more freaked out because you start to believe them and undermine your own efforts)?”*

That’s a very real question.

I speak a lot about what to do in these kinds of times in my program The Meantime — [marketingforhippies.com/meantime30day](http://marketingforhippies.com/meantime30day) but let me take a crack at a short answer here.

Reality: what you’re doing may be a luxury (meaning not something required for physical survival). We should name that right out of the gate.

The second thing we should name is that no one owes us anything. They don’t owe us their dollars. The world doesn’t owe us a living. Self-pity and entitlement do not make this party any more fun for anyone.

The third thing we should acknowledge is that what we offer is not necessarily going to be a fit for everyone at every moment. If money is tight and I need help, I’m more likely to hire a book keeper than a reiki practitioner.

The fourth thing I believe is that service-based businesses should exist to solve real problems or help people get some result that they are craving. Again, I’ve written more about this in my eBook *The Art of Relevance*. When people make vague and nebulous claims that, “This healing session’s effects will be very subtle and help to balance your whole system. It might take a couple of weeks for it to register on you,” I am unimpressed. It’s so nebulous. This doesn’t make me want to spend money on it in general and much less so when money is tight.

The fifth thing is that the global economic system and certainly the economic system in my corner of the world and very certainly how it is for Americans (especially if they aren’t middle to upper class white males) is a disaster. It’s monstrously inhuman. There is a much larger question here of, “Why aren’t people given a basic income? Why isn’t health care and college free? Why isn’t locally grown food affordable?”, etc. This question is rooted in the deep, institutional and systemic problems of our days. The real solution to this question will be found at that level.

But, given how things are unlikely to change in the near future, what do we do?

- 1) **Niche.** Don’t just offer a generic service like everyone else.
- 2) **Adapt.** The marketplace will change. What sold well last year may not sell well this year. We need to be flexible and agile in these times vs. stubbornly trying to find a strategy to sell VHS cassettes at our video rental shop in a Netflix world.

- 3) **Package.** If there's a recession then ask yourself, "What are my people needing most in a recession?" and bring it to them. Package and contextualize what you're offering so it's speaking to their real experiences and struggles. If you teach yoga and it's a recession maybe your classes could focus on abundance, stress relief, etc.
- 4) **Partner.** Maybe you can't even do it yourself but you could arrange a joint venture with someone who could. Maybe they're a tax wizard who can help your people save thousands of dollars a year, or a mortgage broker who is a genius at helping entrepreneurs refinance their home or a marketing expert who can help them. Perhaps you say to them, "Look. My people need you more than they need me right now. Why don't I host a workshop of yours for them and you give me 100% of the door for it plus 3% of any business that comes from it."
- 5) **Pricing.** In a recession, perhaps you could offer a portion of your products and services on some sort of a pay-what-you-can basis as a gesture of good will. Maybe you could offer a free weekend workshop to them as a way to connect and invest in your relationship. You might be surprised how many people decide to book more sessions with you after that or sign up for your longer retreats.
- 6) **Get a Job.** If none of this seems workable, why not take the pressure off of yourself by getting some part-time work so you're not relying on your business for income? If you get desperate, your clients will feel it and it's not attractive at all.

## Using Flyers and Posters:

*"I've not found that putting up flyers about local events has not been particularly helpful so far. I'm wondering if there is a way to design them that might have a bigger impact. Or whether it's because they need to direct people to a better sales page on our website than what we've had. Or whether putting up flyers everywhere is not a particularly good use of time and energy and we'd be better off doing something else instead."*

Right! Flyers and posters!

They can work really well but it's a vicious and cut throat business where others will cover your poster up with theirs without a second of regret.

What to do.

First of all, posters can work if they're placed in the right location. I know that I've heard about plenty of sweet events via posters.

The challenge many people face is that there aren't a lot of places to put them. Are there ways to design effective posters? Sure. But I won't go into that in depth here. You can google that. But some basic advice is:

- 1) Make sure the what, where and when are clear. I've seen so many posters that leave me with no idea what the event is or the venue or date it's happening.
- 2) Simple website. It should direct you to the simplest URL possible so they can remember it walking home.
- 3) Simple call to action. What do you want them to do after seeing it? Buy tickets? How? I'm a fan of tear away strips to help people remember.
- 4) Compelling visuals.

Those are some basics.

But this goes back to the reality that marketing events will, especially in the beginning, be a multi-pronged approach. For example, I would rarely host an event without a Facebook event but I'd also never rely on only that. There are some events I'd want to make sure I used posters for but I'd never want to rely on posters or flyers alone.

Posters can let people know something is happening but they can also be reminders.

The main idea with posters has more to do with where they are posted than how they are designed. I'd rather put up a poorly designed poster in the right place than a beautifully designed poster in

the wrong place. So, it's a question of hubs. It's a question of, "Where do my ideal clients hang out?" and then poster there if you're able. But this hangs on whether or not you have a clear niche to even know who those people might be and where they might be found.

If it's generic posters for generic events in generic places around town, I wouldn't bother. But if it's a local event and you have a well designed poster for a sweet event and know of some places to put them where your people would see them, then I'd insist on using them.

If posters aren't working, then I'd first wonder if the event itself was a good idea and well articulated. Then I'd wonder, "Are we putting them in the right places?" Then I'd wonder, "Is there a way the posters could be improved?" And then I'd wonder, "Are we relying too much on posters?" Those questions in that order.

## How To Stop Attracting Know-It-Alls:

*“Attracting clients who are open, receptive and highly interested in the subject at an intermediate level, without attracting know-it-alls that have tendencies to take over. I teach intuitive development.”*

This is a matter of filtering.

This is one of my favourite topics in marketing.

How can you set up your marketing so that those people never show up? So that those people are filtered out?

I wrote a blog post about one way to do this here: [marketingforhippies.com/are-you-sure](http://marketingforhippies.com/are-you-sure)

So part of it is speaking to it in your sales letters and confirmation materials so that those people are less likely to come.

The other thing to do is to speak to this directly and early in your workshop. This is known as pre-framing. It means you put a frame around a certain behaviour before it ever shows up so that people know not to go there.

If I were to do it, it might sound something like:

“I was leading this workshop a few weeks ago and this fellow came and sat there the whole time with his arms crossed as if he knew this all and had heard it all before. Occasionally he’d speak up and go on these long stories like he was the teacher. He had no idea how annoyed everyone was getting with him because they’d come to my workshop for my thoughts on it and paid their money and now this person was sitting there taking over and I was thinking to myself, ‘if you’re so smart, why are you here? Why aren’t you teaching your own workshops?’ Sometimes the biggest defence mechanism people have to learning is to act like they already know. Sometimes we get so insecure and scared that we cover it up with pretending we’re okay. Sometimes our need to seem smart trumps our desire to learn. Sometimes our fear of being really vulnerable, which is required for any genuine learning, is too big. I get it. I’m the same way. So, for today, I invite you to stay with what you don’t know. I can’t help you with what you already know. And I know it’s not comfortable. But let’s agree we aren’t here to seem smart together. We’re here to learn and that means being willing to not know. It means being willing to be a mess.”

If you speak to these things up front, it makes it a million times easier to deal with them if and when they arise in the group because you’ve already set a frame around what those things mean.

## Is Social Media Marketing Enough?:

*“Is marketing with social media enough? Or email and old school marketing necessary too? (newspapers, posters, etc.)”*

The bottom line here is that I don't know. This will be different in every situation. The main thing is for you to notice and pay attention to what's working and what's needed.

It's the Law of Minimalism.

If social media is enough, then just rock that out for a while until you need more.

For [StreetcarShows.com](http://StreetcarShows.com) we rely entirely on our email list right now. But it hasn't always been this way. There was a time when we were charging \$20 per person but then the rental fee for the streetcar went up and, to pay the performers, we had to charge \$30 per person. Suddenly the shows were much harder to sell out. And so we created a Facebook group, Facebook events and a Twitter account and began promoting the shows in that way too. Once they began selling out quickly again, we stopped using social media.

Do the least amount of promo possible.

If that's not enough, do more.

But always be on the lookout for the biggest return for the smallest effort.

## What Happens When Hubs Are Fending For Themselves?:

*"I think what I'm struggling with is because I live in London, which you might think would be great for something more obscure like spiritual teaching (and quite niche work at that), but here's the difficulty I've found: all potential hubs are essentially in competition with each other. So instead of, say, a town with one new age shop and one health food shop and one yoga studio and a couple of groovy ethnic/artisanal wares shops – potentially all of which might serve as hubs for the town – we have lots of such places and almost none of them are hubs in the way you mean it. So instead of being able to leave flyers in the relevant places (because it's a town with a community, and these places serve the community etc) it's a big city and these places are pretty much in competition and only display flyers for their own promotions (and if it's something like a yoga studio that offers venue hire – well let's just say that if, by hiring them as a venue the hirer would bring in students through the studio's mailing list, then these venues would be SOLD OUT for years to come! They'd be solid gold in London. Ah, the mythical unicorn of a mailing list that would guarantee you a well-attended workshop."*

I hear you. It lifts up a reality of big cities. When cities are small, you have one scene. And it grows and grows until it begins to divide into smaller scenes. Suddenly there's not just one electronic dance community, there's a dubstep scene, a psytrance scene, etc. And now those scenes are small again and so the people trying to build it need to be scrappy, fierce and protective to survive. And then those scenes grow and grow and hit a sustainable plateau for a while and then they either wane or they divide again into smaller sub scenes.

This seems to be how it is.

Of course, this lifts up enormous opportunities and creates niches for people who can step in and help those smaller scenes thrive by teaching them skills or connecting them with each other. For example, a project I'm trying to start in Edmonton is called [socialyogiyeg.com](http://socialyogiyeg.com). The idea is to have a monthly social event for local yogis. And it's being created, in part, to address this very dynamic you've just named here. These social events will be a way to help connect and grow the entire yoga scene in Edmonton, not just one studio.

So it's good to keep in mind that there are opportunities in these things.

And it's also important to put ourselves in the shoes of these seemingly negligent, selfish hubs.

They're really just trying to survive. So when we approach them with an attitude of, "You owe me" or "You should promote me and not just you," it's enormously off-putting. If, instead, we approach them with, "Wow, look at this amazing thing you've created," and then make them a solid offer that can help them, I promise you they're all ears. If you say, "Hey, can you let me use your venue for free and promote it to your list?" they will look up at you from their laptop, overburdened as they are with dozens of emails and voicemails on their phone and that stack of bills waiting to be paid and, in their head they'll say a silent, "Fuck you."

But what if you say, “Look. You’re swamped. I get it. Here’s what I propose. I have something that I think your people would love. Here are testimonials from some folks you know in town and I welcome you to email them to confirm this is legit. I have a three-hour workshop I do that people seem to love. I’d love to host it at your venue. Here’s my offer. You let me use the space for free. In exchange, you get to charge whatever you want for the workshop, I’d suggest \$25, and you keep 100% of that money. I’ll make all of my money from people signing up for my weekend workshop or one-on-one work. In addition, I have posters that are already pre-made and a graphic designer who can weave your logo in. I have all of the tweets, Facebook posts and emails pre-written so all you have to do is cut and paste.”

Then I can assure you they will be open to you in a new way.

Then, at the end of the workshop (assuming it’s gone well) you can tell everyone, “If you enjoyed this workshop, can I ask a favour? Would you be willing to tell that to the person who runs this studio? It would mean a lot to me if you shared that with them and to them to know they didn’t make a mistake in bringing me in.”

If the host hears good things about your workshop or event from their people, you’ll notice a marked shift in tone in your conversations with them. They may want to host you again to do another workshop down the road or to partner with them on something else. They might just adopt you as a part of their community and start sending referrals your way.

It’s about getting our foot in the door and we do that by putting our focus on what they’re wanting and needing rather than being trapped in desperation to make money and get clients.

In a city the size of London there are likely hundreds of potential venues. If you could do something like this with ten of them you’d be set.

## Final Thoughts

So, you've just read a book that contains my main thoughts around event organizing.

Becoming a successful event promoter won't come from a step-by-step template. I wish it could. It's not going to happen by going to one workshop and learning their template for event marketing success. I wish it would. It's not going to happen by you investing in some new online, push-button, event promotion technology. I wish that were real.

But what's real is that promoting events is about deftly weaving together a good idea, a commitment to filling your events and a good venue with some savvy marketing approaches, at least the basics of a plan (and improving it every time), with plenty of hustle and a huge chunk of minimalism.

It's that.

I hope you will keep me posted on how things go for you with the events you decide to promote. May they all be full with just the right people who need to be there. May they get better every time. May it be less work for you every time.

warmest,  
Tad

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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](http://TheLocalGood.ca), founded [streetcarshows.com](http://streetcarshows.com), [indigodrinks.ca](http://indigodrinks.ca), [socialyogiyeg.com](http://socialyogiyeg.com), and the Jams program of [yesworld.org](http://yesworld.org). He speaks Scottish Gaelic and helps to run [novascotiagaelsjam.com](http://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)