

7 Things You Must Know to Attract More of Your Ideal Clients

By Robert Middleton – Action Plan Marketing

If you're an independent professional, you want to attract more clients to your business. An ideal client is someone you love working with, who pays you well and is someone with whom you can make a difference.

Whether you just started as an independent professional or are in your 20th year of offering professional services, there are always new things to learn about attracting clients. However, the problem can be that there are *too many things* you could learn. The question is, what are the *most important things*? What works, what doesn't, and where should you start?

This report is a summary of some of the most important things I've learned about attracting clients in my thirty plus years as a marketing coach and consultant. It contains the building blocks of my Action Plan Marketing System that has helped thousands of people be better, more successful marketers of their services.

This is a more than a collection of tips. Tips only get you so far. These "7 Things" are core principles you need to both understand and practice if you're going to attract a steady stream of clients to your business. They'll also help you to increase your income and build a solid independent professional practice that can sustain you for the rest of your life.

This report won't solve all your marketing challenges, but it is a step to knowing where to start with successful marketing.

#1 – Your Marketing Message

What do you say when someone asks you what you do? And what do you say in your written materials, such as your website, to explain what your business is about and how it can help your clients?

Ultimately marketing is 100% communication. Your job is to clearly and persuasively communicate about your business so that you get the attention and interest of your prospective clients and generate a positive response from those who could be ideal clients.

Developing a marketing message is deceptively simple. It starts with answering a few questions your ideal clients will want to know about your services and programs.

Here are those questions:

- a) Who are your ideal clients? (And am I one?)
- b) What issues, challenges or aspirations do your clients have?
- c) What solutions or outcomes do you deliver to your clients?
- d) What makes your service or program unique or special?
- e) Who else has gotten results from using your services?
- f) What additional benefits do you offer to your clients?

If you know the answers to those questions, you can use them in endlessly varied ways to get the attention, interest and response you want. Since this article isn't about theories, but practice, let's get into hands-on examples right away:

If someone asks what you do, you might answer in this way:

a) "I work with HR managers in manufacturing companies b) who are frustrated that their employees resist the feedback they get from their managers."

That kind of attention-getter will usually start a conversation.

When the person you're talking to asks how you do that you say:

c) "We teach managers to say the right things when giving feedback and show them how to work with employees if their feedback gets resistance."

And then if they say, "What makes your training different?" you say:

d) "Instead of just teaching concepts, we do a lot of hands-on exercises that are based on the day-to-day management situations they face e) and after they've completed the program, they get close to 90% less resistance than before. f) This increases productivity and harmony in the workplace pretty dramatically."

Could you answer so clearly and simply if someone asked you what you did? Perhaps not, and yet all you need to do is think about each of those six questions and find the best answers you possibly can. Then test those answers in real-life marketing situations.

Those answers then become the foundation of your marketing and selling conversations, service descriptions, sales letters etc.

This is only a starting point, but when you've mastered those answers, your confidence increases and you feel you are communicating with clarity and persuasiveness. And notice that no hype was necessary.

Marketing Exercise #1

Answer those six questions as clearly and concisely as possible.

#2 – Written or Spoken Marketing Materials

For Independent professionals, the most common marketing materials include the following:

Articles or Reports – Blogs and Ezines – Web Content

Presentations – Audios and Videos – Social Media Content

These are the marketing materials you send to prospective clients, and of course, some will find them on the web.

When you communicate your marketing message to someone or if they read it on your web home page, and you generate some attention and interest, what's the next thing they want?

They want more information. Always. They are not ready to buy yet. They don't want to be sold to. They simply want to find out more. What do they want to know? They want more answers to the same questions as I outlined in the Marketing Message.

You should think of most marketing materials as informational or educational. They don't need to be full of hype.

They want, above all:

Free information with useful ideas they can use. And that can be in any and all of the formats listed above.

If you offer this kind of information you can trade it for a business card (in-person) or name and email address (online).

You use marketing materials as tools to both inform and to start the process of prospective clients getting to know you and your business.

How it works in real life:

You meet someone in any number of situations, from a conference to a professional organization meeting or networking group. You communicate the elements of your marketing message and have a “marketing conversation.” In some cases you’ll generate interest in what you offer.

And then you say: “Do you have a business card? I have an article about management skills I think you’ll like. Can I send it to you? And I’d like to know more about your situation as well. Is it OK if I give you a call?”

And, of course, you follow up later.

How it works online:

Someone visits your website and on the home page you concisely answer those six questions – enough to generate some attention and interest.

And below that text you offer some free information – an article or report (perhaps something like this one) – maybe an informational video. And as a bonus, you offer a subscription to your twice-monthly email newsletter (ezine).

But you don’t just give that information away; you have a form that asks for a name and email address. A fair exchange, I think! And you make it clear that they can opt-out from your list at any time.

Over the past 20 years I’ve collected hundreds of thousands of names and emails this way. These connections then became prospects for my services and programs.

Marketing Exercise #2

Create that piece of marketing information to give away, such as an article or report. This will become one of your most important marketing tools.

#3 – Marketing as a Game

Now that you have the two foundational pieces of marketing in place – a Marketing Message and some Marketing Materials, you’ve got to get out there and play the game of marketing yourself.

Many years ago I created a game for successfully marketing professional services called “Marketing Ball.” It uses baseball as a model.

In baseball your job is to get around the bases and to home to score a run. In Marketing Ball, it’s your job to move a prospective client around the bases in order to win a paying client.

Here’s how Marketing Ball works:

You start at home plate ready to play the game. You prepare to play by a) having a service or program to offer, b) developing a good marketing message and c) creating some marketing materials to communicate with your prospects. Now you’re “suited up” for the game.

Your next aim is to get to first base by communicating with a prospective client about your services. You’re on first base when you’ve generated some attention and interest. It doesn’t have to be *wild* interest. Mild interest is enough for now.

And, by the way, you want to communicate to someone who is not a complete stranger. For instance, for most, cold calling is not the best strategy. But networking with members of an association or organization is better because of the shared affiliation.

Once you’re on first base you then want to get to second base. Second base is where the selling process starts. But you often have to do a lot more communicating to get a prospect to second base.

From first base, once you have the attention and interest of your prospect, you want to provide three things over time:

Information. Familiarity. Experience.

Information includes the articles, reports, blogs, ezines, audios and videos etc. mentioned in #2.

Familiarity includes connecting over time, either in person or phone, by email or via social media.

Experience includes presentations where the prospect gets more of a *taste* of who you and your business are about. And that's accomplished with talks, presentations, intro workshops, teleclasses and webinars.

A marketing game in person:

1. You met a prospective client at a conference and your message interested them. You're now on first base.
2. You send an article to provide some information.
3. You follow up and have a phone conversation to develop familiarity.
4. You invite them to attend a talk, which gives an experience.
5. Then you follow-up again to ask if they'd like to explore working with you.
6. You set up a selling conversation and you're now on second base.

A marketing game online:

1. You have your website set up to offer a free report like this one. And when someone opts-in they are then on first base.
2. They read your report and get valuable information.

3. They receive your email newsletter every other week and get both information and familiarity.
4. You offer a webinar and they attend and get an experience.
5. You send an email to all those who attended and invite them to meet with you. Some respond and you are now on second base.

These are just two ways you can play marketing ball. The variations are endless, depending on what service or program you are offering and the kind of clients you work with.

The structure of marketing ball is simple. But to master it takes some time and effort. The biggest obstacle to marketing ball is the resistance to follow-up. Follow-up is the glue that holds all your marketing together.

It's one thing to meet someone and exchange cards. People do that all the time and it goes nowhere. You need to keep the communication going. The ball is always in your court (to mix metaphors). You can't wait for a prospect to take action.

For instance, you can collect a lot of emails through your website, but if you fail to keep in touch, provide information and build that familiarity over time, nothing will happen.

Playing marketing ball means being proactive, not passive. You need to get out there in many ways and situations. You need to have those conversations, give those presentations and follow up. Over time this marketing activity builds marketing momentum.

Marketing Exercise #3

Every marketing ball game starts with communicating to a particular audience. Who is your audience and how will you first connect?

#4 – Marketing Action Planning

Now that you understand the basics of playing the game of marketing, we want to get more specific about your marketing activities and create what I call “Marketing Action Plans.”

One of the biggest problems with marketing is randomness. That is, doing marketing activities with no real direction or plan. Random activity doesn’t get you far, but planned activity can produce extraordinary results.

I define a Marketing Action Plan as “A step-by-step project plan to communicate to prospects with the intention of getting a response.”

A plan starts with clear goals of what you want to accomplish: What marketing activity will you use? Who is your target audience? What is your primary marketing objective? And what marketing materials, time and resources will you need to accomplish this plan?

Next, what are all the steps, in chronological order, you need to take to execute your plan successfully? Let’s put together a basic plan for giving live talks and presentations. I’ve found this to be a very effective way to get the attention of prospects who then become great clients.

1. Decide on the topic for the talk you want to give
2. Determine who your target audience should be
3. Develop a one-page write-up to promote the talk
4. Make a list of organizations where you could give the talk
5. Develop a simple “contact script” for calling these organizations
6. Contact organizations by phone and email until you reach them
7. Pitch the idea of your talk (using your script)

8. Send your talk one-pager along with a bio and perhaps an article on the same topic as the talk.
9. Follow up a few times until you get a yes or no for the talk
10. Repeat the above four activities to get more talks
11. Develop your presentation – write the whole thing out
12. Develop visuals or Power Points
13. Develop a handout or workbook for the participants
14. Develop a report to give to participants at the end (see #2)
15. Practice your talk out loud a few times until confident
16. Give the best talk you possibly can
17. Offer the report at the end in exchange for business cards
18. Collect business cards from the audience
19. After talk send a pdf of report to those who gave you cards
20. Follow up by phone or email and make appointments
21. Set up selling conversations and turn prospects into clients

That's a workable plan for getting clients from speaking. I've done it dozens of times. Do you see why trying to do this randomly is not likely to get you anywhere? Sure, it's a lot of steps, but most are pretty simple. And don't forget, you need to learn exactly *how to do* all of these 21 activities!

Marketing Exercise #4

Develop a simple, step-by-step marketing action plan for one marketing activity. I recommend you do some research on Google to learn what to do and how to do the steps required. I'll give you other resources at the end.

#5 – The Selling Process

If you play Marketing Ball well, you'll generate qualified prospects who are interested to explore working with you. Those prospects could come as a result of implementing any marketing strategy that you execute through an organized Marketing Action Plan.

However, marketing activities generate qualified prospects, not new clients. You need to go through a selling process to convert prospects into clients. However, if you do your marketing well, this can be the simplest and fastest part of attracting new clients.

Let me simply outline a step-by-step scenario for selling.

- 1. First, a qualified prospect emerges after a follow-up** from a marketing activity such as networking or a speaking engagement. Perhaps they contacted you by email or phone as a result of your website or ezine.
- 2. You know they are a qualified prospect because they told you so.** They are looking for the kind of help you offer through your professional services. But they need to make sure before they jump.
- 3. So you offer them a “complimentary assessment” or a “strategy session”:** “OK, I think I can help you, why don't we set up a time to speak in more depth and see if my services are right for you?” Before you know it, you have set up a selling conversation.
- 4. Next, ask your prospect to do something:** “Before we meet, I'd like to send you a link to some information about how my services work.” What you're talking about is a page on your website that gives a complete, in-depth description of your professional service or program. This page gives answers to all the questions from #1 plus information on how you deliver your services and work with your clients.

This step is essential, and almost everyone leaves it out. Even though your prospect has responded to your marketing, the chances are good they really don't know much about the details of your services. Tell them, "Please read this page completely before we meet so you understand exactly how I work. That will save both of us a lot of time."

5. Take one step further and ask them to fill out a brief questionnaire about their situation and challenges. This way, they know about you and you know about them. This speeds up the selling process quite dramatically.

6. When you meet, start with their answers to the questionnaire and go deeper. Find out everything about their situation, needs and goals. Learn about their expectations and willingness to take action. Don't talk about yourself or what you can do. Shut up and really listen.

7. When you really understand your prospect's situation, let them know you can help them (but only if you can). And then ask if they have any questions about how you work. No, you don't need to go into a long spiel; they already know a lot about your services. But they will have some questions. Answer them as best you can.

8. Finally, ask them if they think they can succeed with your service or program. If they say yes, then talk price and see if they can fit it into their budget, and then work out the details.

This process can be very successful and quite easy if you follow these basic steps. Sure, selling can take longer and is more complex when selling to larger companies, but if you have a great service and your prospect needs what you have, the selling process can be really fun.

Marketing Exercise #4

Script out and practice the whole selling process. Practice it out loud and then with a friend until it becomes natural and easy.

#6 Getting More Things Done

The key to getting your marketing into action is being organized. I've already showed you a few organizational tools – Marketing Ball and Marketing Action Planning, but you need to do a little more or your plans will all fall between the cracks.

The secret is lists. Three lists to be exact.

Your first list is your “All Projects List.” This is where you write down all your projects (not your small to-dos) in one place. It might be a long list. For instance, all the exercises in this article might go on this list, plus everything else in your business you want to get done.

Do NOT look at this list every day. It will drive you crazy. Only look at it weekly when you are creating your next list.

And that’s the “Weekly List.” Here you’ll write down only the projects (or steps of projects) that you are committed to completing that week. The items from this list come from your All Projects List. Don’t write anything down unless you absolutely intend to get it done. Better the list be small and get it all done than large and only get a few things done.

Finally create a “Daily List.” This is what you will work on today, only the things you are committed to getting done. Many of the items on this list will come from your Weekly List and others will just come up for that day.

It’s that simple and that hard! Commit to using these lists for a month. You will get a lot more done and you’ll be less overwhelmed. Promise.

Marketing Exercise #6.

Make all your lists and then use them as if your life depended on it. The more you use your lists, the less overwhelm and the more focus.

#7 – Getting Unstuck

Getting stuck is the biggest marketing killer. Learning how to get unstuck can be the most powerful marketing skill you'll ever learn. It's may also be the most important life skill.

What does it mean to get stuck? It's simply when your thoughts stop you from doing something. Circumstances don't stop you. You do.

Imagine if it was impossible to get stuck in your marketing. Then wouldn't everything in this report be easy to do? You'd put the things to do and to learn on your lists, turn them into projects and just get them done.

Imagine the power you'd have if you never got stuck. But why is it we get stuck so often? Why is it that our dreams, intentions, goals and plans get thwarted left and right?

Learning something and taking action is simple. Yes, it might take a lot of time, energy and thinking. But as its essence, it's simple.

Believing our thoughts is what makes things difficult. We believe the thoughts that say it's hard. We believe that something bad may happen to us if we take action. We may believe we are not worthy or good enough.

And thoughts like this trigger emotions such as fear, aversion, doubt, impatience, uncertainty, confusion and overwhelm.

The first step to getting unstuck is to realize that our beliefs are not reality. They are only projections from the past and future. They are made up or constructed based on past conditioning. If we could realize that these "stuck beliefs" weren't true (most of the time or all of the time), we'd be free of them.

So let's look at some of your most cherished beliefs about marketing:

People will reject me if I market my services to them

Nobody is interested in my services

I'm not worthy to offer the services I provide

All of this marketing is just so overwhelming

I don't know what to do or where to start

This is just a start when it comes to stuck marketing beliefs. All of these beliefs have the common denominator of inadequacy. And in that light marketing looks difficult, intimidating and overwhelming.

Here's how to get unstuck (based on the Work of Byron Katie)

1. Take a moment to look over those five beliefs above and ask yourself if they are really true, absolutely true. If these beliefs don't resonate with you, write down a few of your own and ask if they are true. Be honest!

2. Then look at how you react when you become identified with those beliefs. What do you do and say when you believe these things? Do you see how these beliefs constrain and limit you? Don't they make you avoid marketing and then justify the avoidance?

3. Next ask, "Who would you be or how would things be if you could no longer attach to or believe these beliefs anymore." Wouldn't you feel lighter, more free and relaxed? If you could no longer believe these stuck beliefs, you wouldn't be stuck anymore, would you?

No, you'd be free to just be. And you could approach marketing with a sense of freedom and possibility instead of dread and avoidance.

Marketing Exercise #7

Pick one stuck belief and do the 3 steps above until it starts to let go.

Wrap Up and Resources

If you've gotten this far, congratulations. You've received a condensed version of some of the most powerful marketing principles available.

They start with gaining clarity about what you're offering (Message and Materials), continue with outlining the way to play the game successfully (Marketing Game and Action Plans), and then demonstrate how to convert prospects into Clients (Selling Process). Finally we explore how to get out of your own way and into action (Getting Things Done and Getting Unstuck).

What I recommend next is actually doing those seven exercises. If you are experiencing doubt or uncertainty, you might want to do the last exercise on getting unstuck first. Look at those thoughts that have stopped you up to this point and explore them until you find the truth that you are actually capable and able to be very successful at your marketing.

Like mastering anything, becoming good at your marketing takes a certain amount of time and effort, but I want to assure you that it's more than worth it. Nevertheless it all starts with just one step that happens in the NOW.

About Robert Middleton

Let me introduce myself. I'm Robert Middleton, the owner of Action Plan Marketing since 1984 and online with ActionPlan.com since 1996. I've worked with thousands of clients and program participants to help them be better marketers of their services, attract clients more consistently and grow their businesses with less struggle and effort.

In 2000 I wrote the **InfoGuru Marketing Manual** that became an online **bestseller**. I sold thousands of copies. And that manual also spawned a huge industry of marketing consultants and coaches who work with Independent Professionals. Many of the marketing consultants and coaches out there either read my manual or were clients of mine!

Over the years I've gone on to create a number of programs, workshops and group courses to help Independent Professionals be more effective marketers. My most popular programs are the 10-month Marketing Mastery Program and the online More Clients Club with over 500 members.

You can learn more about the Club at this link:

<http://actionplan.com/fasttrack>

Since you opted into my website to get this report, you are eligible to take advantage of my offer for the More Clients Club. Just click on the link above to learn how you can get your first month's membership to the Club for only \$1.00.

Thank you for your interest and good luck with your marketing.

Cheers,

Robert Middleton