



Heart of Business™

Mark Silver is the founder of Heart of Business based in Portland, Oregon (www.heartofbusiness.com). Mark works with small business owners who want to make a difference in the world and need to make a profit.

Mark, what I thought was very interesting about your business was that your clients are quite diverse. Give me an idea of who your clients might be or what they are like.

Yes, I do have clients in many different industries, but they have some things in common. What I've found is most of my clients are in business because they have an exciting passion- something they really love to do that can impact people but have a disconnect between making the business work and what is in their heart. That can be really hard because it sometimes is easier to work hard and struggle with that than to stop and really look at it for what it is.

I grew up around business. My father and my mother had a retail store so I know what it takes to run a business. But I found, like them, so often people start a business and then get lost in the day-to-day of making a living and really lose that they are trying to make the world a better place. They get burned out in trying to make the business thrive and then lose sight of that goal. I try to help them get rid of that burden. They are happier, their hearts are full and their businesses do better.

I know you participated in one of Action Plan Marketing's first Marketing Action Groups and like so many small business owners, there was a time when you really struggled with marketing. Tell me what was going on in your business when you were you first introduced to Action Plan Marketing's principles. Where did you find out about this process?

I started business in about 1999 or so, but it was probably about 2004 when someone I knew told me I should check out Action Plan Marketing. I had tried a lot of different things and struggled with a lot of the things that most people have struggled with in their marketing. I signed up for Robert's e-zine and started reading it. I don't know what it was, but I really felt I could trust him. I eventually contacted Action Plan Marketing about working one-on-one with Robert when he was still doing that. He told me he was launching this group approach (Marketing Action Group) and asked if I would be willing to try that. I totally trusted him so I decided to go ahead and do that.

As you said, you were initially looking to work with Robert one-on-one, however, decided to participate in the Marketing Action Group. Can you tell me a little about what that was like being in a group setting?

At first I wasn't sure, but I found the group process to be so effective that I rarely do one-on-one coaching myself anymore. Almost everything I do is in a group setting. Marketing and business happen in the marketplace. Your marketing has to bounce off a lot of people and when you are in a group situation you are getting feedback not just from the instructor, but from people's gut reactions. It's like you're getting a microcosm of what the marketplace is like.

I find group coaching provides a much more accurate form of feedback. I can teach my clients the principles of how to approach marketing, but sometimes I'm completely outside their target market and yet there is somebody in the class who is inside of it. You can get more accurate feedback for how powerful the marketing can be. I can go down the list and say you've got the pieces in place, but it's not hitting me really strongly. And yet somebody else in the group is saying, boy that's totally pegging me. You got me. That was what I experienced in the Marketing Action Group.

I also found there were some people that would resonate more with the spiritual message I was bringing. I had a heart-felt approach to how I did everything, but not everybody resonated with that. It enabled me to tell the difference between a marketing message that worked versus one that was completely on target but just wasn't speaking to somebody who was a natural client of mine.

The group approach also undermines the unhealthy way of sometimes putting a facilitator or instructor on a pedestal. When it is just me and a client if I'm not careful they can be taking everything I say as gospel, and that's not smart in any situation. That was something else I really liked about Robert. He was really clear about what he didn't know and he never set himself up as any type of a guru or a person who knew everything. It was just really a pleasure to work with him.

In your experience what appealed to you about Action Plan Marketing's approach to marketing?

It just made sense. It made sense because it reflected how I responded to marketing. It reflected how I responded to business and to how I hired people when I needed help or how I approached professional service providers. There was a deep truth that really clicked with me that didn't have to do with manipulation.

What I've come to understand as I've spent years studying and teaching marketing, even when I was in the non-profit world and fundraising all marketers basically say the same thing. You have to build trust. And there are different ways to build trust. The way that Robert talked about it, what he said in the Infoguru Manual and the way that he presented the materials in the Marketing Action Group, they just made sense. It just clicked into the universal truth of how human beings are with one another. You don't need to manipulate, you just need to build trust and here's how to do it. If you're solid with what you're offering, if you're offering a high quality service and really intending to do well by your client, here's how you can deliver that.

Mark, I know you personally come from a place of generosity and abundance – that is a huge component of your business and your philosophy. From the simplicity of Action Plan Marketing's approach to marketing and approach to building relationships, I take it they are a nice merge for you.

Yes. In fact before I had written my first book that we teach from now, I was making Action Plan Marketing's Infoguru Marketing Manual required text. We were requiring participants in our classes to buy the Manual because I was teaching from it - sold out classes by the way, very nice - even with my own individual approach. Yes, it was very compatible.

Was there any point where you said, wow, this stuff is really working or a time when that was significant to you?

I don't really remember a particular moment. I do remember looking back over the year after I had taken the program and I realized our courses were selling out really consistently, our revenue had basically doubled from the year previous, and that's pretty cool. I don't remember the exact moment, but I do remember that sense of, 'Huh! That works.'

The thing that I like about this kind of approach is that it just makes such sense. It's so matter of fact in some ways. It's how you connect with people. The business just starts doing well without shooting off a bunch of fireworks.

Thank you so much for your time today Mark. Are there any final comments that you would like to share that I have not touched base on?

The only thing I would say at the end is that I have a tremendous respect for Robert. I totally respect his sense of integrity and what he's doing and what he's bringing. Whatever he is standing behind I feel that I just want to support him. I'm happy he's taking the steps to make the materials even more widely available. That's exciting to me.

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Our first recommended program is the "Action Plan Marketing Club" and then the "InfoGuru Marketing Manual," followed by the "Web Site ToolKit."