



Samantha Hartley is the founder of Enlightened Marketing based in Conway, Arkansas.

Samantha works with successful, socially responsible small businesses that are still experiencing peaks and valleys in their business. Samantha helps these small businesses identify and communicate their unique benefits so they can attract perfect clients, deliver their value and increase profits.

Samantha, tell me a little bit about the clients you serve.

I work with a lot of one-person businesses. My clients typically have a totally different approach to their business. I have a lot of clients who are nontraditional businesses. For example, it may look like a financial service or a fitness coach, but they put their own unique spin on it. The reason they come to me is because it can be very difficult to say exactly who they are. They need to know how to communicate that to their clients. That's where branding comes in. I'm helping people identify and communicate that thing which is unique about them.

Services businesses are difficult because you can't say, 'Do you like it? Do you want it? Then try it out'. It's very hard to try out a service. It's hard to describe a service that's an intangible thing that you have to experience. So identifying and articulating that unique differentiator is the opportunity. The benefit is once people have done that, the ultimate outcome is you attract only perfect clients or customers. Exactly who is most suited for your product, and who is the best fit for you? You attract and work with only those people who need exactly what you deliver. These clients will appreciate you more, they'll give you referrals, become friends, pay premium prices, become raving fans, and bring you joy. It's a wonderful upward circle.

When were you first introduced to the Action Plan Marketing approach to marketing?

I was first introduced to Action Plan Marketing when I read an article by Robert Middleton on Guru.com. I believe it was in 2000 and was about how to put together your guru profile. It was really long and it really demonstrated one of the principles, which is giving away a lot of valuable information. After I read that I thought, this guy is a genius so I went to his web site and signed up for his eZine. Eventually I bought the InfoGuru Marketing Manual. The reason I bought it was because I had just left Coca-Cola where I learned everything about marketing, but realized I didn't know anything about marketing myself. I could market a product but not a service, or myself as a product.

With your strong background in marketing, what was it that appealed to you about this approach?

What appealed to me was that it was so practical. When I looked at the InfoGuru Marketing Manual, I thought this is something I can really do, like writing a 'one-pager' about my business.

The Action Plan Marketing approach is incredibly practical and simplified. The other thing that I think is awesome about these materials is there are so many templates. You just have to fill in the blanks. From my “complexifyer” point of view I really wanted to complicate things. But the InfoGuru materials take it from making everything complicated and filled with jargon to step one, step two, etc.

I believe a lot of people think if something is simple and not complex or doesn't cost a lot of money it is not as effective. Have you found that to be the case with these materials?

A lot of people want to reject it. When they see it, they feel like it is too simple to work.

That is the beauty of the intuitiveness to it. I am working with a client right now that is a very sophisticated financial services organization. They are very good at their business. I'm always nervous the first time I show this material to more sophisticated businesses, because I think they will look at Marketing Ball and think ‘What, are you kidding’? But this client had a HUGE epiphany.

They called me afterwards and told me how excited they were because they realized they were having no problems from 2nd base to Home (the selling process). They had almost a 100% close rate from 2nd base to Home. However, they had nothing from Home to 2nd (the marketing process). It was awesome for them in terms of a paradigm for thinking about what they need to work on. It's a model or a structure that allows people to focus their work.

I thought it was very interesting to know that not only did you use these materials yourself, but you were so impacted by them you decided to become certified and teach these materials yourself. That says a lot.

Definitely. The main reason I decided to become certified, was because I was using this with my clients already. I don't think anybody has a good marketing planning process. I've said this over again and again. What I would do (before becoming certified) was go in with my clients and work with them on a brand, deliver what that message would be and we would do that interactively.

I had a banking client I was working with soon after I became certified. I led them through the Fast Track process. In the end, they had a marketing plan that they created. The thing was, that was something I thought the client couldn't do. I thought I had to do it myself. Initially, I had pitched the client in terms of pricing as if I was going to do all the work. And when I led them through the process and they did all the work, the profitability just skyrocketed about 500 times!

I used to spend hours and hours writing marketing plans for people and when I would write them they would be less effective because they wouldn't understand why they should do this, or why they should do that. There wasn't ownership there. I had to *teach* them the plans that I wrote. This was much more tedious and I would have to remind them that ‘I'm not going to be around to implement your plan. You're going to have to do that yourself. So in the end, don't agree to put things in your plans that you aren't going to do’.

As far as the 7-Step process, Marketing Ball was something that I thought I wouldn't need. But it totally transformed my clients. I really learned more about Marketing Ball by teaching it to my clients, but I didn't realize how impactful it would be for them. I've really seen it rock people's world. It's amazing for them. They really get it and they have a terrific time learning that. I can really see that it has been very impactful for them and it has really transformed my own point of view.

The Action Plan formula, ‘Target – Problem – Outcome - Story’ is just awesome and helps people over and over again. “Core Marketing Message” is Action Plan Marketing's version of branding. With my clients I've found for most people, if they just do that, they will be communicating so much better than they were before. For a lot of people, that may be all they

need. When people come to me they usually need a more specialized form of communication. If they do, I will do more of an in-depth brand project with them. But for most people, if you just follow the steps of Core Marketing Message, you will probably be communicating better than you ever were.

Was there a point where you felt your business was shifting or changing because you had been applying these principles?

What really turned my business around was getting an Audio Logo, getting my butt on the street, networking, speaking, and writing. Networking, speaking, writing, repeat. For the first 5 or 6 years all I had was a business card and sometimes an Audio Logo. I did put together a 'one-pager' (Executive Summary) and I spoke. For the most part that's all I did. When I finally put together my web site, my Core Issue Article and a signature speech around that article, I started getting out there and doing that. That's what worked.

Another thing I would say is amazing is the selling process and the proposal process. I've always done value-based pricing. However, I didn't know how to price consulting services so I went to the InfoGuru Marketing Manual and used the template. And my very first projects were multi-thousand dollar projects I got using the proposal template in the InfoGuru Manual.

What the Action Plan Marketing 7-Step process does is it puts this all together in a more organized way. The structure of knowing where people are in the game of Marketing Ball, the structure of limiting beliefs, the structure of Marketing Syntax and creating an Executive Summary are all key components of the program. I would say that it makes me so much more efficient. There are so many templates in the Fast Track to More Clients Program. If I just follow the template or the structure, it just writes itself.

Are there any last comments you would like to share?

I have a favorite Audio Logo story. There was a time when I needed to get more clients and knew I had to get out there. Networking is not my favorite thing, but I've always forced myself to do it. I had a bank that I had been trying to get hired by for a long time. The President invited me to their Christmas party. So I went to their party, even though it was brutal, and practiced the Action Plan Marketing approach to marketing conversations.

I saw somebody I knew from my town and she was there with this big guy who asked me what I do. So I say my Audio Logo and they're dazzled. And he says, 'Hey, how do you do that?' So I gave my 'how I do that' answer and he said to come and see him on Monday, which I did. Within 2 weeks I had a \$44,000 project. The time line on that was 2 weeks from networking to the first check.

When people say, this is too hard, I say, "Listen, make yourself do this stuff, get a little out of your comfort zone, set measurable goals to talk to 5 people before you leave a networking event, perfect your message and have a structure, so no matter how nervous or tired you are you can say it and then you can do anything."

ACTION PLAN MARKETING

For more information on the products and services of Action Plan Marketing, go to www.ActionPlan.com

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