

A Marketing Assessment Tool: Where Are You Right Now?

Can you find yourself in any of the scenarios below?

1. Your marketing works, but you're inconsistent. You're like a brilliant freelance editor friend of mine who, when she lands a job, puts her head down and does great work. But when she finishes, she looks up and notices she has no other work coming in. She then markets fiendishly, gets more work, puts her head down....

Her income varies widely month to month which creates stress and desperation, causing her to cut her prices and take work that isn't a good fit for her skills. The peaks aren't big enough to cancel out the valleys and she is consistently short of funds.

2. Your marketing used to work, but doesn't anymore. Another friend of mine who owns a carpet cleaning business has included flyers about carpet cleaning in a free paper delivered to selected zip codes, weekly. He used to book a lot of jobs each week around the day the paper was delivered, but lately this marketing isn't working. No calls, no jobs.
3. Your marketing doesn't work at all. You could be me—taking the addresses of all the new businesses registered in Phoenix from the local business weekly and sending them postcards about your book and business plan services—and not getting a single phone call from anyone.

You could be trying to make cold calls from a list of people who aren't your perfect clients (or for whom cold calling is a turn-off instead of an invitation to learn more); or you could be blogging, but only posting something once a month, if that often. You could be running one or two ads in your neighborhood newspaper, then stopping because you run out of money. The list of failed marketing activities is endless.

4. Or, you're lucky. Your marketing is working, just not well enough.

As you look over the examples of the two businesses below, and fill in the worksheet that follows, keep your mind open. You are marketing right now. Even if you're like a coach friend of mine who says "I don't market," you, and he, are marketing. You just may not notice it.

What you consider a social event (taking clients to lunch or dinner), or a sporting event (watching a game with clients, or even playing one with them), is marketing. What might look like simple courtesy to you (sending thank-you notes to new clients or to people who refer business to you) is marketing.

You might be “visiting” your existing clients. You talk about their businesses with them, and they refer you to other companies who need you. Then you go and visit those people. That’s marketing.

My coach friend who doesn’t market lives in the same town he grew up in, so when he sees the people he’s known all his life and they ask him what he’s up to, he tells them about his coaching business, and they refer people to him. That’s marketing.

You may be talking to people in line at the coffee shop, using your business skills on a non-profit board, sending out Thanksgiving cards to clients, or a host of other things that you don’t currently consider to be marketing, especially if they’re effortless. But they are marketing.

What you’re going to do now is figure out what marketing you’re currently doing, how well it’s working, and how you want to change it. Once you know what you’re doing and you see whether it’s working or not, you can do what’s already working in a more systematic way, or change your marketing to something that you like and that has a better chance of attracting your perfect customers to your business.

On the next four pages, I’ve listed the marketing activities of two different businesses, along with a description of the owners’ and their clients’ personalities. Note how certain kinds of marketing fit specific personalities (and certain kinds don’t!).

After you read these examples, use the blank worksheet that follows to assess your own marketing success (or lack thereof). What works, and what doesn’t? What do you need to do more of? What do you need to stop doing altogether? And the big question: do you need to start marketing in a completely new way?

Example One: Website Developer who designs and implements (with a team) sophisticated, interactive websites with on-going search engine optimization and e-commerce.

Business owner type: Gets energy from being with people. Enjoys understanding exactly what’s going on with the Internet and how his clients can use it; able to distill complex technical concepts into simple explanations for non-technical business people. Relationships are important to him, and he is able to adapt to change very quickly.

Client type: Predominantly business people who are somewhat technically savvy, but who don’t necessarily grasp the details about the Internet (and don’t want to). They want to understand the high-level details of the job, they want to know that the job will get done, and done right, and done quickly.

Type of marketing	Does it attract new clients? Why or why not?	Does it attract enough new clients?	Are things changing (is it still working as well as it did)?	Is it congruent with your personality?	Do you enjoy it?	Does it use your strongest assets?
Blogging	Yes	Not yet-need a longer track record	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes- uses his internet knowledge
Search Engine Optimization	Yes	Not yet	Yes- working better and better	Yes, also congruent with the business-doing what he wants the clients to do	Yes	Yes
Video blogging	Yes	Not yet, also need a longer track record	Yes	Absolutely	Yes	Yes
Twitter	Some	No	Yes- working better and better	Yes	Yes	Yes

This is a happy example. The owner of this business enjoys internet-based marketing, needs to show his clients that what he advises them to do also works for him, and his marketing also forces him (in a good way) to keep up with the latest technical advances, which he also enjoys. He is a natural teacher, so both regular and video blogging give him the opportunity to educate while demonstrating his own expertise.

Example Two: Coaching business helping people write their own books.

Business owner type: Enjoys and needs alone time, gentle, gracious, cares about how people feel as they do their work.

Client type: Predominantly people who also enjoy and need alone time, and who also can be very sensitive about their writing and need a light touch on the criticism.

Type of marketing	Does it attract new clients? Why or why not?	Does it attract enough new clients?	Are things changing (is it still working as well as it did)?	Is it congruent with your personality ?	Do you enjoy it?	Does it use your strongest assets?
Promoting services to agents and editors	No- wrong audience	No	Never worked	No	No	No
Hanging Flyers in bookstores	No- too anonymous, no personal connection between owner and client	No	Never worked	No	No	No
Teaching classes at a local independent bookstore	This attracts many new clients	This alone doesn't attract sufficient numbers, but a large majority of people who take the class become clients	Still working	Yes	Yes	Yes
Holiday party	Yes- existing clients and previous clients bring friends, previous clients remember how much they loved	Not by itself, but it does attract some new clients	Still works very well	Yes	Yes	Yes

	working with the coach					
Monthly newsletter	Yes-existing clients print it and give it to other people, also forward it to friends	Not by itself, but does attract new clients	Works very well	Yes	Yes	Yes
Business Card (yes, this counts-her card has a conversation-starting graphic)	Yes-when people ask for her card, or she gives it to them, it always starts a conversation	Not by itself, but does attract new clients. Many people want to write books and don't know where to start	Works very well	Yes	Yes	Yes

Here's how this marketing plan actually evolved. The coach began her marketing with the first three activities (promoting services to agents and editors, hanging flyers in bookstores, and teaching classes). She noticed only the teaching was actually attracting new clients, so she dropped the other two activities that weren't working (not coincidentally, she also didn't enjoy them).

Then one of her writing students wrote a book about a brilliant marketer who threw giant client appreciation parties. That actually sounded like fun, and would also give her clients (all like-minded writers) a great way to meet each other. So she started hosting a yearly holiday party. What began as a way for her to appreciate her clients became an unintentionally-successful marketing activity. People who hadn't attended her classes or worked on their books in awhile remembered how satisfying those activities had been in the past, and many signed up to do them again.

Next she began to receive email newsletters from other businesses, and realized she wanted to send newsletters also. She wanted to share her information and expertise with a wider audience, whether they were current clients or not. The newsletter (with a little technical help on the side) was born. She uses it to disseminate new data about writing and publishing, which is a service for her clients; they forward it to their friends, and new clients show up.

In hindsight, had our writing coach filled out this grid before she started doing any marketing, she would have seen how ineffective the marketing at the top of the form would

have been, and how effective the other activities would be, even before trying them. The ones that work best (and continue to work) use her strongest assets, fit both her personality and that of her clients, and most importantly, are activities she enjoys.

Now it's your turn. Fill out the grid below. Don't be too hard on yourself if you see your marketing is ineffective, or you've been doing the same things over and over and seeing no results, or you altogether hate what you've been doing. You are not alone. The first step to change is realizing that change is needed. By the time you finish this book you will know what marketing to do that you will enjoy *and that will actually work*.

Now It's Your Turn:

Type of marketing	Does it attract new clients? Why or why not?	Does it attract enough new clients?	Are things changing (is it still working as well as it did)?	Is it congruent with your personality?	Do you enjoy it?	Does it use your strongest assets?

What do you notice? Is what you've been doing working for you, for your clients, for your business? If it is, lend this book to someone else. If it isn't, read on.