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**5 Tips To Discourage Tire-Kickers And Attract Serious, Paying Clients**

**By Cathy Goodwin**

Do you feel that you're wasting valuable marketing efforts on tire-kickers: a large and growing market segment? They subscribe to all your free offers -- but leave their credit cards behind.

Early in my business life, I talked to anyone and everyone, enthusiastically. I gave away classes, e-books, articles and more.

But soon I was forced to confront the reality of opportunity cost. While I was chatting happily with the freebie-seekers, I lost the opportunity to update my websites, create new products and write more articles. -- activities that would most likely bring "real" paying clients.

1. Communicate "professional" and "commercial" on every page of your website.

Like many professionals-turned-marketers, I was nervous about sounding too sales-y. But when I began learning more about copywriting, especially copy for the web, my style became more direct. As soon as you arrived on my website, you knew: Sales were happening here.

What I learned: Serious buyers rarely got turned off. They want to be sold. Freebie-seekers and tire-kickers got the message quickly: You have to pay to play.

2. Create low-cost or no-cost products that deliver bite-sized portions of your expertise.

Serious buyers want to assess your style and expertise before buying. They may want to develop a relationship before handing over their credit cards.

So you need the basics: website content, ebooks, ezines and audio. You may even offer one-time consulting sessions so prospective clients can get a sense of your style.

3. Donate services for everyone's benefit – not to help a single needy visitor.

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Back in the early days, I felt sorry for everyone who called. But soon I discovered a hard truth. These "needy" folks were paying large sums to more experienced consultants who knew how to say "No!"

If you genuinely want to help others, donate your services through nonprofit and charitable organizations where you will get recognition, testimonials and possibly future referrals.

Sounds self-serving?

When I volunteered with a pet adoption center, many years ago, the coordinator warned, "Those who volunteer for selfish reasons will do better in the long run than those who bring dreams of saving the world." She was right.

Clients will get better service from a non-profit agency dedicated to filling their needs than from a reluctant but sympathetic consultant.

### 4. Clarify your business status as soon as anyone calls.

Some folks will call before they visit your website. Maybe they've seen an article or heard you speak - and they're psyched. But often they're confused about what you offer.

Typically, your caller begins with, "I need help! Can you advise me about my career change?"

If you're a career consultant, your best answer will be, "Probably yes. Please visit my website and review my schedule of programs and fees."

Serious buyers will appreciate this message. "How much does it cost" is a signal of intention to buy.

### 5. Turn discount services into promotion tools.

Every so often clients present unique, interesting problems. They can't pay -- but you'd enjoy the challenge of finding solutions.

You may be tempted to offer scouted service in return for a testimonial or referral. These clients rarely value what you offer, so they deliver lukewarm testimonials.

Instead, get permission to record a call, which you can use as a demo on your website. Or ask to write up their stories as a case study, which can be sold as a Special Report.

Finally, pay attention to the way you choose your own services. Most of us unconsciously send messages that attract people with similar attitudes.

Recently "Ernestine" asked me how to network with coaches she admired. "I've seen their websites," she said, "and I'd love to chat with them as colleagues."

I advised Ernestine to subscribe to their ezines instead. "Then maybe buy an ebook or two," I

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suggested, "and perhaps take a class. But the days of free mentorship are long gone."

One of Ernestine's role models sent a warm thank-you following an ebook purchase. Ernestine responded and they had a brief email exchange. Another coach encouraged participation in a Q&A class.

Most of all, Ernestine's ebook purchases helped her decide how to choose her paid mentor. She didn't waste her time - and theirs - and she presented herself as a professional, not a needy person.

Cathy Goodwin, Ph.D., helps solo-preneurs, professionals and small businesses increase sales, attract clients and create a community of raving fans – without turning themselves into techies or pushy salespeople. Download: 7 best-kept secrets of client-attracting websites.

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### **How to Get the Right Clients and Avoid the Wrong Ones**

**By Charlie Cook**

If you are like most service professionals and small business owners one of your primary concerns is generating as many leads as possible. And that may be your biggest mistake, resulting in wasting time on unqualified prospects and working with too many clients you wish you didn't have to.

Bill is a financial advisor looking for clients. Working from his stack of leads he picks up the phone and starts making calls. The first person he gets on the phone has lots of questions and it turns out is just looking for free advice. After a half hour Bill finally gets him off the phone. Bill's next call finds a highly interested prospect. After forty-five minutes, he's ready to sign her up, when he discovers she only has a couple of hundred dollars to invest.

At the end of the day, Bill has spent eight hours on the phone and still hasn't signed up any new clients.

Do you ever spend time chasing leads that are just a waste of time?

Martha is a graphic designer who has plenty of clients but her profits have been shrinking instead of growing lately. One of her long-term clients calls her daily with a question or a complaint. Just when Martha thinks a project is done, this one client changes her mind and wants it redone. And while the customer is always right, this customer's lack of respect and professionalism is starting to get under Martha's skin.

Have you ever had to deal with clients who waste your time or are unrealistic in their demands?

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A common mistake is to try to appeal to everyone, with the result that you attract too many people who don't want to pay for your services and clients you'd rather not work with. A more profitable marketing strategy is to position yourself and your firm to attract just those clients that want to work with you and who you'd enjoy sharing your expertise.

Imagine that every lead you pursued turned into a client, one who you could be honest and direct with, a client who you looked forward to working with. You'd make more money and have more fun.

Wouldn't it be nice if you could pick and choose your clients?

While you can't completely control who contacts you, you can use your marketing to position yourself to attract promising prospects and people who would make good clients. Here's how.

### Define Your Ideal Client

If you want to attract the perfect client, you need to know who they are. Take out a piece of paper and write a couple of paragraphs describing their characteristics. What business is your ideal client in? What is their role in the organization? Where are they located? What type of person are they? What

is their situation? What are the problems they want solved? What are other characteristics that are important to you?

### Use Your Marketing Message

People are far more likely to contact you when they have a clear idea of who you help and how. Increase the number of qualified prospects who contact you with an effective marketing message and you'll reduce the number of "tire kickers" who waste your time.

### Use Articles

Write and distribute an article and/or provide it on your web site, to help people understand your approach, who you help and how you can help them. Prospects who like and agree with your thinking will want to contact you and work with you.

### Use questions to Qualify Prospects

You can't be everything to everybody and it's a waste of time to try. Create a short list of questions to qualify prospects. Use these questions when you call them on the phone and in the service inquiry forms you provide on your web site. If prospects don't meet your criteria, you can keep them on your mailing list, but avoid wasting your time by calling them.

If you've called one of them and they don't seem like a good prospect, get off the phone in 3 minutes or less and move on to a more promising prospect.

### Clarify Expectations

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It is tempting to want to sign up every prospect that wants to work with you. This is particularly true when you are just starting up your business or when business is slow. But before you close a deal or sign an agreement, make sure they clearly understand what you will do and when. You don't want them emailing you every five minutes or expecting you'll answer their phone` calls at two in the morning or provide additional services for free.

Make a short list of questions to ask that will help clients define what they are looking for. When you talk with clients use these questions to clarify their expectations. If you can meet these requests, use their answers to provide a summary of services. That way you will both be working from the same script.

### Get Rid of Problem Clients

With only a limited number of hours a day and years in your life, you'll be happier and more profitable if you focus your marketing on clients that understand and appreciate your expertise. They'll be far more likely to return and refer you to others. If you have clients who are unpleasant to work with or are taking up too much of your time, find a way to tactfully get them to look elsewhere.

Use these marketing strategies to position your firm to attract the prospects you want so you can pick and choose your clients. You'll have more fun, increase your profits and be more successful.

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Charlie Cook helps service professionals and small business owners attract more clients and be more successful. Sign up for the Free Marketing Plan eBook, '7 Steps to get more clients and grow your business' at

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