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

**By Charlie Cook**

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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?

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.

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

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

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

## **Three Big Barriers To Small Business Marketing Success**

**By Kevin Dervin**

When you feel like you're always busy working on your business, but not getting where you want to go, it can be frustrating trying to figure out how to get your marketing on track. It can easily become a "not seeing the forest for the trees" feeling.

Here are three big barriers I regularly come across with business owners and how you can avoid them.

### 1. No Clear Definition Of Success

For some, the word Success brings thoughts of fame and fortune to mind. But for small businesses, I'd caution against this definition being your guiding light. When clarifying your own definition of success, I suggest starting with success from your client's point of view.

What is it that you are trying to do for your clients? What is it that they'll have or be able to do as a result of buying your service from you? Match this up with what you are passionate about. What is it that you love doing for your clients? I'll know I'm successful when my clients no longer have to struggle with how to consistently attract more business.

### 2. Not Clarifying Who Your Ideal Clients Are

When you can clarify who your ideal clients are, you are better prepared to know where to find them and how to market to them. You can develop messages that will appeal directly to them.

What do you know about your best clients? Spend some time to put together as complete of a profile as you can on the clients you enjoy working with the most. What are the demographics and characteristics? How would you describe them to someone who has never met them?

Without clarity of your ideal clients, you're likely to waste time, effort, and money marketing to the wrong crowd(s) and/or not getting your message across.

### 3. Not Spelling Out Your Unique Value

You must be able to clearly define what differentiates you from your competitors. If your prospects can't differentiate you from all the competitive alternatives in the marketplace, then why would they come to buy from you?

Often for small businesses it's not that they're not unique, it's just that they haven't spent the time to evaluate and clearly describe how and why. What is it that you do better, faster, cheaper, or more effectively - whatever? Maybe it's a unique model you've developed or the unique niche of clients you serve. Maybe it's your satisfaction guarantee offered to clients.

Most important here is to spell out why your uniqueness is so important to your clients and prospects. Why should they care? What is it that they'll get by coming to you for services?

Spend some time critically looking at these items for your business. It will be time very well spent. If you find you can't see the forest for the trees, don't hesitate to get some outside help.

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Kevin is focused on helping businesses that are ready to grow, but struggle with how to consistently attract more clients. Visit

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information you can use to grow your business. Find Kevin's Kansas City based KPD Marketing practice at

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