

Ignite

YOUR BRAND

LEADERSHIP & BRAND STRATEGY COACHING PROGRAM

MODULE 2 - WEEK 5

Client Desires:
Customer Research



Welcome to Module 2: Your Aligned Customers! In Module 1, we explored YOU, the foundation of your business. Your passion, purpose, why, mission, vision, guiding principles, values, goals, how you engage your time and strengths, and understanding limiting beliefs that may be holding you back. These are all important foundational components for understanding why you do what you do. It's important to look inward before looking outward at who your customers are and what matters to them. In Module 2, you will shift to deep-dive into better understanding your customers.

Building and successfully selling a product or offering requires providing solutions, or answers, to your customer's problems, for a specific target audience. Getting clear about who your most aligned customer audience is will be critical to sustainable growth.

In this module, you're challenged to go inside the feelings and mind of each of your customer personas to see the world through their eyes and understand the world from their feelings. This will help you to understand the type of experience they desire and what drives their buying decisions so you can better align your messaging to those customers. People buy based on emotions, so over the next few weeks we will dive deeper into understanding what drives your customers so you can more effectively communicate with them. This will help you know what to say in your marketing, your live streams, on sales calls, and more!

The lessons this week include:

- 1) Core target audience
- 2) Staying curious
- 3) Customer problem research
- 4) Prospective customer interviews
- 5) Past/current customer interviews

Amber

WHY FOCUS ON THE CORE?

The more you narrow your focus, the wider your message goes. If you ask a new entrepreneur or business owner who their target audience is, sometimes you'll hear: "We help everyone;" "I work with people of all ages - you can't narrow it down;" "I don't want to exclude anyone;" or "I don't know." You may have found yourself saying this.

In Module 1, you discovered your values and the reason you're in business. People buy based on shared values and shared beliefs. Your core audience will likely share some of your values and beliefs – it's what connects them to you or your product/service. Not everyone shares the same beliefs you or your brand stand for, therefore, not everyone can be your ideal target customer. Finding ideal customers leads to greater joy and ease in your work and to higher revenue as your ideal customers value what you offer.

It's important to remember your greatest risk is the loss of current customers. If you've been working with ideal customers and aren't shifting your target market, then your best short-term opportunities could be through current customers. You might not need a lot of new customers as you have the opportunity to maximize growth within an existing customer base or invite them to share referrals (you might develop a compelling referral offer/program).

Sometimes who your ideal customers have been may *no longer* be whom you desire to work with moving forward. As you work through the following exercises, consider the direction and path you have outlined for yourself in the first 4 weeks of this program. As you move forward, evaluate if your past/current clients are still the best match for whom you desire to work with to carry toward your future vision. Sometimes the clients you've worked with don't align with where you're headed, so it's important to identify who you've worked with, and if that is still who you are targeting.

TARGET AUDIENCE EXPLORATION QUESTIONS

- What is the average age range of your ideal customers?
- What's their phase of life? Young/newly graduated, career, family focus, retirement
- What do they do in their spare time/hobbies/interests?
- Average household income of your customers?
- Are they fashionable? Casual? Low Key? Dressy?
- Do they have children or pets?
- What is the average level of education?
- Are your customers blue-collar or professionals?
- What descriptive words describe your customers?
- What do they aspire to be?
- What does your ideal client desire?
- What problems keep them up at night?
- Do your customers tend to share political or social beliefs, If so, what are they?
- What do they value?
- What's their biggest fear?
- What holds them back from investing in what you offer?
- What are some myths or self-limiting beliefs your customers tend to have?
- Other common beliefs shared by them? (healthy lifestyle, family values, shop local, etc.)
- What are the common problems or concerns of many of your customers?
- What do your ideal clients WANT/DESIRE out of life / career?
- What outcomes would your ideal customer look for when purchasing your product/service?
- If you could wave a magic wand and solve the #1 problem/issue of your ideal client, with what you have to offer, what would that provide?

When you look at the data of who your customers have been, does it align with who you desire to continue serving, moving forward? How or how not?

Is anything changing about who you target as an ideal client moving forward?

In a short summary statement, who is your ideal target client?

STAYING CURIOUS - A SKILL THAT CAN LAST A LIFETIME

To develop your offers and your messaging (in the next module), **it's necessary to understand what problems your customers have.** This knowledge empowers you to develop messaging that makes the emotional connection between the challenges they are experiencing and how you/what you offer is the solution for them. It may help you to stay motivated by thinking of yourself as an anthropologist!

Maintaining a curious mindset helps you to:

- *Understand what your audience is going through/what they're struggling with*
- *Helps you make more authentic connections and enables your customers to open up and share feedback*
- *Staying curious helps you ascertain feedback and data that then helps you demonstrate to customers that you understand them & their needs by reflecting this language back in marketing and sales calls*

It's critical for business owners to understand their customer's true pain points and desires to solve the right problems, and to articulate your messaging so it has value to THEM as the customer. When you can solve and speak to the pain point as well as the outcomes the client seeks, you get their attention because they hear what's in it for THEM.

The first step to honing messaging is to do the work to talk with your customers (or prospective customers). It's important to go deep enough and learn from your customers to truly understand how they think and feel so that it can inform your services and marketing.

Learning how to engage customer research will continue to serve you and your business in many ways over the years. It can be risky to create things for sale without first validating that people want it and will pay for it. Anytime I think about offering something new, I first interview customers and the market to validate that it's something people want before investing tons of time/money in creating something the market may not be willing to buy.

IDENTIFY YOUR CUSTOMERS' PROBLEMS

Here's an example scenario for conducting customer problem research: *imagine your customer has the following surface-level issue - "they aren't getting enough leads in their business."*

You: Why do you want more leads?

Biz Owner: Because more leads means more sales and revenue for the business.

You: Ok, so I understand you would like more sales and to earn more money. Once that happens, will you be busier, or will staff handle the business?

Biz Owner: My staff can handle the business.

You: You would like more leads, which your staff can handle, and it brings more money into the business. Is more money coming into the business going to get you where you want to be?

Biz Owner: Yes, so I can afford to take more time off to spend with my family.

You: You've shared you'd like to spend more time off with your family, tell me why that's important.

Biz Owner: I want to spend more time with my kids while they're young. I feel like I'm missing their childhood - it's flying by. Also, I want to know all the work I have put in hasn't been for nothing. I want to make the business stronger so that I have something to either sell or hand over to my family someday.

From this, we've uncovered several pain points. The main issue is the customer wants more leads, but, that's not their pain point...

1

Their need is to attract potential customers, get more sales, and make more money.

2

Their desired outcome is to be more freed up so they have more time to spend with family and to create a legacy for their family.

3

Their true pain point is missing out on their children's life. More leads to their business should mean more money coming in, so they can afford to spend more time away from the business, with their kids (assuming their processes are in place to handle that incoming business)

With this information, someone who is marketing to a similar audience of business owners would know to use language such as, "Tired of ineffective marketing, working 50+ hours a week and wasting time searching for leads, preventing you from taking time off with your family? Our XYZ lead-driving success system can help you drive more qualified leads while cutting down on the time you spend on marketing lead generation, so you can get your weekends back!"

Do you see how the customer research informs the marketing messaging?

BE AN ANTHROPOLOGIST!

Homework: Customer Problem Research

Now you will begin **CUSTOMER RESEARCH!** This is the BEST way to learn about your customers... by studying them, hanging out where they hang out, and best of all - listening to their needs!

Ways you can learn about your audience online:

- **Search online forums** (such as Quora): Find frequently asked questions related to your industry.
- **Social media or Facebook groups with ideal audiences:** To learn in groups, you can observe and engage in conversation. Ask questions. If you are looking to secure clients from groups, remember that online groups are not different from building a relationship in person in that you'll want to build authentic connections. Communicate. Engage. Eventually, you might invite people to a 1-1 conversation. Just because it's online doesn't make it different from in-person interactions. Don't just show up and make a sales offer to the group. You wouldn't do that the first time walking into an in-person networking event, would you?
- **Podcasts/Magazines:** What is your audience reading/listening to? What podcasts, industry magazines, websites, or blogs do they frequent? By listening to podcasts, scanning the groups, and reading publications that your core audience reads, you'll better understand the current topics they are paying attention to and what they care about. If your target market is young families/new parents, then read parenting blogs to understand the challenges facing new parents, etc.
- **In-person events:** What conferences, masterminds, or events does your audience hang out at? Go there. Research, learn, build connections.

Tips:

- Google search for what you're seeking: "trades magazines," or "best blogs for new moms," or "blogs for brides," etc.
- Ask your network on social media, such as LinkedIn or Facebook, or post in groups. You can say what you are seeking and ask your network for connections such as: *"I'm looking for women ages 30-40 who are contemplating a career change but don't know what step to take first. I'm looking to talk with them for 10 minutes/I'm looking for them to answer 3 simple questions. Confidential. Not a sales call, this is strictly research. As a gift, they'll receive XYZ."*
- Search for relevant hashtags on social. On Twitter, Instagram, or LinkedIn you can search hashtags (the # symbol with wording after it, such as #parenting, #wedding, #smallbusiness, etc.) to find out both what's trending in your field, and also, what type of things are trending among your target audience.

Use this space to write about how you've researched and what you have learned about your customers.

INTERVIEWS

The absolute BEST WAY TO learn about your prospective customers is to TALK WITH THEM.

Your assignment over the next 2 weeks is to conduct at least 5 customer research interviews (with a blend of both past customers if you have them and with people who fit your ideal prospective customer).

This first section is dedicated to interviewing new people, to expand your circle and to learn from new people who aren't yet customers.

Your mission is to have discussions with people who could fit your ideal client to learn more about what they think, how they feel, and where their pain points and gaps are. Find referrals who fit your target market so that you get feedback from the most ideal audience. For these exercises, do not approach it as if you are selling them! Reach out and ask if you they have 15 minutes to help you with research. You might offer them a gift for their time. By way of simply having the conversation and building the relationship, they could turn into a client (this has happened for more than 1 of my clients!) however, don't go into it as a bait and switch. Go into it genuinely wanting to LISTEN, ASK QUESTIONS and LEARN.

Stay as curious and open as possible. While you might have some theories about what your market wants, go into it without expectations or without trying to prove your theory. By staying open you might learn some surprising things that may inform your growth strategy, positioning, and messaging and how you choose to curate and sell your offers!

Just because you're good at something or want to sell it in a certain way doesn't mean people are going to pay for it. Therefore, it's critical to maintain a curious mindset and be open to learning from your customers/prospective clients. It's imperative to be learning from them to ensure that your offer in the market is something that they actually need, want, and are willing to pay for.

STEP 1: REACH OUT TO INVITE PEOPLE INTO THE PROCESS

You can send personal invites, post on social profiles, send an email or call and ask people in your network for referral connections. Here is sample wording you can use when seeking out people to interview: *"I'm looking for five people to have a quick 15-minute chat with me who are (insert demographics, such as), " Busy working moms between the ages of 30 and 40 who desire to make a career switch, feel exhausted, and aren't sure how to even navigate the change. This is not a sales pitch, I am simply looking to do market research and will offer them a small gift as a thank you for their time.*

Use this space to brainstorm the names of some people you could interview.

STEP 2: CREATE A SCRIPT AND QUESTION LIST

You don't have to stick to the script 100%, but outlining the essential things you want to learn about your ideal customer will guide the interview through the important topics. Adjust language to fit your audience and word it in a way that feels authentic to you. You don't have to offer a gift for their time but you might choose to do that if it feels good to you.

STEP 3: SET THE EXPECTATION OF THE INTERVIEW

When you start the interview, begin by explaining exactly what you're aiming for. Let them know your intentions to gather info to help inform a product/service you are innovating. Help them feel comfortable. They need to know that it's a safe space to provide honest feedback and that they won't be grilled about what they say and that you won't be trying to sell to them, otherwise they may hold back due to not wanting to hurt your feelings. Alternatively, some people will think they are being helpful by validating your ideas but they'd actually never pay for the product or service, so the more objective and curious you stay, the more likely to illicit useful data. Help the person bring down their walls by letting them know how valuable their honest feedback is.

The questions you ask depend on your niche and the work that you do. Here are some examples of open ended questions to get your thoughts going:

- Tell me about yourself; tell me about your career path...
- What are the top three pain points in your life/work...
- If you could go back five years what would you tell yourself?
- What do you think I sell/ do? (to see how you are perceived by the market)
- What's a reason you would NOT hire me? (to see what truths or misperceptions could exist)
- What are the top 3-5 words you use to describe yourself
- If you could go back in time and change one thing about your career trajectory, what would it be?
- Is there one thing you wish you learned sooner as it applies to your life/career path?
- If you remove any of the "what ifs," or reasons why it's not possible, what's your dream vision of what your life would look like one year from now?
- What do you see as the biggest problem in your industry?
- What is the biggest problem that you're facing in your career?
- What steps have you taken in the past to solve this problem?
- If you worked with someone to help you solve that problem, what was beneficial about that?
- How would you feel about working on this problem in a small intimate group with peers? (ask questions about how they learn best: 1-1, group, etc?)
- If you've tried to solve this before, why didn't it work?
- What got in your way from solving this before?
- What would it require for you to solve this problem now?
- If you were to invest in a service/product/coach to help you address this problem, what would you want to see/know about that product/service to know it's the right fit for you?

STEP 4: ONLY IF THEY ASK ABOUT WORKING WITH YOU OR IF YOU RECEIVE THEIR PERMISSION TO MAKE AN OFFER, IT MIGHT BE ALIGNED TO DO SO

If they show interest in continuing to work together such as if they explicitly ask how to work with you, it's recommended that you set a new meeting to conduct a sales consult meeting with them or add their name to the interest list for whatever offer you are creating. If you've identified their goals and have enough info to make an offer, you could offer a special opportunity to work with you as a part of a beta program or something similar (if you are offering one) however remember that the goal of this conversation is to learn and by way of showing an interest in helping others, it could lead to a sale now or in the future, but that's not your primary goal in this call.

STEP 5: ASSESS

Objectively review the feedback. Are there commonalities among the feedback? What have you learned? Are there areas of value that you've been delivering and not realizing the full value of that? It's also important to remember the sources you spoke with -- meaning, if you received the same consistent feedback from them but it doesn't resonate with the direction you want to go, does it mean that perhaps your ideal audience is actually someone different than you thought it was?

INTERVIEWING CURRENT CUSTOMERS

While prospective clients have valuable insights, your current clients can help you understand why people choose you NOW. This informs how you might improve your messaging toward a better quality customer.

When you start the interview, set the stage about what you are aiming for -- that you are looking for their open and honest answers as it will help you grow and shape your offer. Do not get defensive. Provide a safe space to hear feedback and re-state that feedback back to ensure that you are receiving it, and hearing it correctly. "I heard you say xyz, and that makes you feel abc, is that correct?" This builds trust and shows that you are listening. The key is being vulnerable so that your clients are comfortable giving you honest feedback to help you grow. People do not want to hurt other people's feelings, they want to help. Unknowingly, sometimes they will only stick to the positive info. **However, you cannot grow and improve if you don't have all the information.** I recommend conducting interviews over the phone so that you open up a conversation. And preface it by letting them know how much you value their honest feedback and how it helps you.

Brainstorm some other questions you'd like to explore with customers:

Past/Current Customer Interview Questions

- What did you find most valuable about working with me/my company/this product?
- Can you describe what I do? (Listen to what your customers say and integrate this language into your marketing. If you don't like/agree with what you are learning it could mean you need to pivot/change what you are doing to bring it into alignment with what you wish to be doing).
- What was most beneficial to you in our work together?
- What's 1 thing you'd change or like to see different about the service?
- If there is 1 way we could improve our service to be more valuable to you, what would that be?
- Are there services you weren't offered that you would like?
- By getting these services, what does that make available to you?
- What is the monetary range you would invest for those services?

Brainstorm some other questions you'd like to explore with customers:

After conducting customer problem research you will have gained great insights into your customers pain points, and by doing so, you will be empowered to craft your messaging as you reflect back your customer's world to them.

Your customer's pain points are the driving forces behind their need for your service or product. It's those pain points and desires that drive them to seek a solution, so your task in marketing is to demonstrate that you understand their problem or pain point and that you have a product/offer that can help them get where they want to go. Your service is the bridge to get them from PAIN to PLEASURE.

Use this space to write down insights you learned about your customers and their problems.

What keywords or phrases came up multiple times?

What are the top problems/pain points that your service/product addresses?

How is your business/product/ service the best solution for your ideal clients?