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Content Sells

7 ESSENTIAL STEPS TO CREATING YOUR IDEAL CLIENT AVATAR

Introduction

Getting clear on your ideal client is one of THE most important foundations of your content marketing.

Because trying to say everything to everyone, means you end up saying nothing to no-one.

We're all so over-marketed to that we tune out general or generic messages. That means as marketers, we need to understand exactly what messages will gain the attention, interest and engagement of our ideal clients.

So, how do we do that?

One of the best ways we know how to get that clarity is to create a Client Avatar. This is where you document everything you know about your ideal client.

Here are 7 Essential Steps to Creating Your Ideal Client Avatar:

1. Drop Your Assumptions At The Door

Whilst we do have a gut feel for who our ideal client is, it's a great idea to suspend those assumptions and begin with an mind open. Because, we can get a bit of tunnel vision about who our ideal client is and that can cause us to fail to see some of the signals and data that may be telling us a different story.

2. Ask

Now that you've dropped your assumptions at the door, you need to gather data to find out what type of client is an ideal match for your business. We recommend considering the ideal client for each of your products or product sets. For example, if you offer golfing instruction, your beginner's class will have a different ideal client than your advanced elite training.

Typically, your ideal client is someone you love working with and they love what you do. They are profitable, easy to work with, pay on time, lodge less complaints, take up less of your resources with long lead times and high customer service demands. Importantly, serving them is aligned with your mission and purpose. You find the criteria that is right for you. It varies from business to business. And you do that by asking questions.

Here are some areas for exploration:

Ask your existing data. If you have an existing business, you've already got a whole bunch of data that can give you great clues regarding who your ideal client is (sales history, complaints history, financial figures, your CRM) etc.

Interact with people. Ask your team - your sales people and customer service representatives are often great sources of information. Talk to your clients. Talk to your potential clients.

Do some research. Use industry research, demographics and other data to study your market and identify segments within that market who are closest to your ideal.

3. Choose One

Here is the important part where many people get tripped up. Based on your research, make a decision regarding who you are going to focus on as a potential ideal customer for your product. For example, if you run a recruitment agency, are you going to focus on senior executives in the banking industry who are responsible for hiring middle managers? Or perhaps it's small business owners in the hospitality industry looking for chefs? This part is important and is based on your research, understanding your core capabilities and aligning those with your mission and purpose. Try to be as specific as you can, because now it's time to find those people and interview them!

** Note, in your business you may have multiple products and multiple target audiences. In that instance you would do this exercise for EACH Client Avatar. We generally recommend you focus on not more than three ideal clients for each product. And it's a great idea to start this process with one and build from there.

4. Conduct Interviews

Once you are clear on who you want to target as your ideal client, now you want to conduct interviews. Choose existing clients and/or prospects who most closely resemble your ideal client avatar. Also consider interviewing ideal prospects who purchased your product from a competitor (for a broader insight into what may be causing a blockage to your prospects buying from you).

We recommend you set a goal of interviewing five people who match the type of ideal client you are interested in knowing more about. The interviews can be in person, on the

phone or via Skype etc. Ask as many open-ended questions as you can (Who, What, How and the really great one, Why). You want to know the usual demographic questions – age, educations, income, where they live etc. But it's crucial you also get information on their hidden fears, silent challenges, secret hopes. What's keeping them awake at night? What is the one problem that they REALLY want solved in relation to the product or service you offer. What are their frustrations? How do they like to reward themselves? What do they do for fun and on the weekend? What books and magazines do they read?

Look for empathy. Aim to go deeper, where possible. At first you may get a "stock standard"

response from your interviewee – and that's when you would ask "why" or request an example or ask them to tell you a story about a time when that happened.

QUICK TIP:

We recommend you record these conversations (with permission of the interviewee) and get them transcribed. Look for the nuanced phrases. Often this specific language can translate directly to your content and is a great way to avoid "marketing blah blah".

5. Compile & Consider

Once you have done your interviews, you need to carefully review the information you have gathered. The interviews will give you even further clarity about the specific traits of your ideal client –professional, personal, emotional, physical etc.

Look for themes and patterns across all the interviews. Did a certain frustration or phrase keep cropping up in all your conversations? Dig into the emotional drivers behind some of the answers you received and really spend some time here compiling the responses. Did you notice they all drove the same type of car, or that the majority were enrolled in yoga classes? Look for similarities and what we call "Golden" words – phrases or words that are specific, emotional, evocative and, when used in your content, will really connect and make an impact with your ideal client.

6. Create Your Document

Now you have done your research; you've got clear on your target audience; you've done indepth interviews and you've spent time reviewing the transcripts and finding patterns and underlying themes. Now you are ready to complete your Client Avatar document. This is where you distil all your information and insights about your ideal client into one specific identity.

Ideally, your Client Avatar document will include a specific name and photo of the person who is most representative of your ideal client. For example, if your ideal clients are

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fashion-conscious first-time mothers in their 30's, living in Sydney with a household income of $120,000, then you would look for an image in a stock photo library that most closely resembled that person – her age, her vibe, her clothes, all of these things help to paint a picture of her and make her more real. Then you want to give her a name. That could be a straight-forward name like Samantha, or it could be a nickname you can use to help clarify her traits e.g. Stylish Samantha.

In your document, list the demographic info – where she lives, what she earns, where she went to school etc, but also list the psychographic data – what she's worried about, her silent struggles, her frustrations, the things that delight her etc. This document should be a consolidation of the key insights you learned during your research and interview phases.

QUICK TIP:

Make your document VISUAL. Use bullet points. Don't make it too wordy. Go deep State the silent struggles and unspoken challenges and dreams – these are the things that will build a connection to your audience when you repeat them back in your marketing content.

7. Share, Share, Share!

Right – here's the part where many people fall at the finishing line. They've done all this wonderful work on their avatar, gained all these insights, created a beautiful documentation of their ideal client… and then they pop it in a drawer alongside their mission statement and forget about it!

Now you have your Ideal Client Avatar document – make it prominent in your business. Share it with your team. Share it with your marketing providers. Don't ever go to a visual design briefing without it again. Make it one of the key pieces of information you give to your web designer when making a new site; to your traffic team when starting a new campaign; stick a copy of it on the wall next to your desk, so you are always looking at that one person when writing your content. Speak to that person in your ads, in your blog posts and in every piece of content you create. Connect with them. Help them. Serve them. You will be amazed how it makes your content come to life and what a difference it will make to your results!

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