

*From the
Heart of Business Toolkit*

The Heart-Centered Answer To “What Do You Do?”

**Remarkably simple and straightforward help
that gets your perfect clients to say “That’s me!”
with no glazed eyes or long-winded explanations.**

by Mark Silver
Fourth-Generation Entrepreneur
and Sufi Spiritual Teacher

Don't Spend Ten Years Avoiding Who-Who-What

You fall in love with something that has changed your life. That's totally normal, and definitely worth celebrating. And guess what? You are uniquely suited to get it out to others. So you take the training, cross your fingers, and pump out a website.

Ta-da! You're in business!

And you write articles, and blog, and network all about what you do, and chant, and pray, and do whatever you do to bring in clients.

Uh, clients? Yoo-hoo? Where are you?

Why A Business Exists

Before we go to the land of Where the Clients Are, one thing must be set straight. A business exists and thrives because it helps a particular someone with a problem they are facing.

You can do lots of things that worth doing. Art, writing, healing, gardening, cooking, parenting. Lots and lots of amazing things that have no need to be attached to a commercial enterprise and still are fantastically worthwhile. Keep doin' 'em!

However, if you want your business to bring in revenue, as in people who are wanting to pay for your products and services, then it needs to help them with some problem. If you help people solve a problem, then you have a business. If you do something because you love it and it's joyful, then you have an avocation.

Of course, the ideal is to blend the two. But if all you have is the avocation, then you aren't living in client land.

Let me say that I know you want to help people. And if that's true, then let's just define your business a little differently than you may have already.

You don't have an accounting business. Or a coaching business. Or a design business. Or a food business. Or a.... So then what do you have?

You have a Who-Who-What

The trick is not to define your business by what you do, but by who you serve, and what they are struggling with. I call this the Who-Who-What, because it names two components of Who you are talking to, and it's explicit about the problem, the What. Demographics, psychographics, and the problem.

Hey, are you paying attention? This may seem a little boring or academic to you, "psychographic-gobble-gobble" but that is precisely why so many businesses struggle.

If you can nail down your Who-Who-What, everything else becomes 1000 times easier. If you don't nail it down, you just might struggle for years and years.

First, Three Examples

For instance, instead of a relationship or Nonviolent Communication facilitator, you help couples who feel hopeless about getting stuck in arguments and want to communicate with compassion. <http://www.wiseheartpdx.org/>

Instead of being an acupuncturist, you help/treat children and adults with chronic pain

who are looking for lasting pain relief without medications or surgery.

<http://www.acupuncture.vpweb.com/>

Instead of a sustainability consultant, you help business leaders who want to operate sustainably but don't know how to make it profitable. <http://ren-new.com/>

Now the Three Components

Component One: The Who demographic. A demographic is some observable characteristic or trait. In the examples above, demographics were: "couples," "children and adults," and "business leaders." All three of those characteristics can be verified by witnesses.

Component Two: The Who psychographic. A psychographic is an unobservable identity that is often related to a belief or value. From above, psychographics are "who value compassion in their relationship," "who want to avoid medications and surgery" and "leaders who want to operate sustainably."

The psychographic is a little trickier, because it's not always as blatant. But in each case it's there if you listen for it.

Component Three: The What. This is the problem the client faces, hopefully in their own words. Our three examples: "hopeless about getting stuck in arguments," "suffering from chronic pain," and "don't know how to make sustainability profitable."

Well, there you go. Who-Who-What. Easy-peasy, yah? Except... not so easy. Let me give you just a few helping points.

Keys to the Who-Who-What

> This is an incredibly tender process.

In our Opening the Moneyflow course, the first six weeks are spent working with the Who-Who-What within the Customer Focused Story. And people tend to find that it is a surprisingly tender process.

The issue here is that your business changes from reactive: "I'll help whoever shows up," to proactive and planting your flag: "I'm helping *these* people with *this* problem." It takes strength to do that, yes, and it's also very vulnerable to take a stand.

Make space for your tenderness as you begin planting your flag with a Who-Who-What.

> Yes, it's okay to narrow your focus.

The big question everyone asks is: "Aren't I going to lose clients if I limit who I want to attract?" Here's the short answer: No.

The slightly longer answer is when you get clear and specific, people respond. And if you have a viable Who-Who-What, a LOT of people will respond. And how many do you need, really, to have a viable business?

Plus, you can't save the world, y'know? it takes some real humility, but when when we realize that we're just little people in this big world, then it's okay to focus on the folks we want to help and trust that everyone else will get the help they need, perhaps elsewhere.

> Everything is in the reaction.

You know you've got a solid Who-Who-What when someone says, "Oh, that's me!" Or, they say, "Really? I know someone who needs to talk to you."

You do not want to hear, "That's nice." Or "How interesting." An effective Who-Who-What will immediately, without anyone having to do it consciously, bring up faces and names of people who fit.

This is because the Who-Who-What is a name. When you hear your name, you turn your head. Your name wakes you up.

It probably won't be simple, and you may not get clarity in one afternoon. Yet, if you're willing to focus in on the incredibly tender process of claiming your Who-Who-What, then everything else, from marketing to strategic decisions, will be so, so much easier.

And the clients will come out of the woodwork.

Now it's time for you to work on your own Who-Who-What.

And that's what the next few pages are for. Grab some tea, a pen, your heart and brain, and turn the page...

The First Who: Demographics

To Review: A demographic is some observable characteristic or trait. People get funny about demographics, because they think you can only use “women age 30 to 60” or some other boring statistical element.

You can be way more creative and clear than that. It just has to be a characteristic or trait that someone else can independently verify. “Buys 30 chocolate bars a week” is a demographic. So is “Active in a nonprofit organization.”

The Brain- and Heartstorm:

List all the observable characteristics or traits that 90-100 percent of your ideal clients have:

The Top Three

Which are the three most relevant or important:

1.

2.

3.

Use Your Heart to Pick One

Of those three, which feels the most relevant?

The Most Relevant Demographic

The Second Who: Psychographics

To Review: A psychographic is an unobservable identity trait that is often related to a belief or value. People get funny about psychographics, because they don't often think about them as parts of a person's identity.

A psychographic is any belief or value that people strongly identify with. "Loves chocolate" is a psychographic. So is "Believes in God."

The Brain- and Heartstorm:

List out all the internal beliefs or values that 90-100 percent of your ideal clients hold:

The Top Three

Which are the three most relevant or important:

1.

2.

3.

Use Your Heart to Pick One

Of those three, which feels the most relevant?

The Most Relevant Psychographic

The What: The Problem

To Review: The What is the problem the client is facing, as they would describe it in their own words.

I know you want to talk about what is possible for your clients rather than dwell on the negative. But believe me, if you can name the problem with empathy, they will feel seen for where they are rather than judged for not yet being where they want to be.

The Brain- and Heartstorm:

List out all the problems you solve for 90-100 percent of your ideal clients. See if you can describe the problems in words your clients have actually spoken, rather than your translation:

The Top Three

Which are the three most relevant or important:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Use Your Heart to Pick One

Of those three, which feels the most relevant?

The Most Relevant Problem

You Have a Draft of Your Who-Who-What

Fill in the blanks:

“I help

Your Most Relevant Psychographic

Your Most Relevant Demographic

who (struggle with / want / need / yearn for / are looking for)

Your Most Relevant Problem, in the Clients Own Words

”

Don't Worry If It's Two or Three Sentences

Even though the format here is in a single ideal sentence, you might be using phrases or short sentences to describe your psychographic, demographic and problem at first. So your Who-Who-What might be a little longer. That's okay, it will still work.

You don't need it to be clever or pithy. It just needs to be clear.

Didja Notice?

There wasn't anything in there about you, what you do, or how you do it. Yet, the message is oddly satisfying and effective.

And There You Go

If you have solved this to your satisfaction, then you have solved the absolutely biggest problem that every business has and most never deal with.

But How Do You Know If It Works?

It's time to test to see if you get the only response that really matters. Next page, please.

The Only Response That Ever Matters

If you've been working with the process of creating your Who-Who-What on the previous pages, there's a good chance you're either avoiding actually working on it, or you're caught in the endless cycle of tweaking to get the words exactly right. Painful.

Of course, there is one step beyond this; it's where you get up the courage to test it out on others. You call up a friend or two, or email them, and shyly share your marketing message.

Then you discover why you didn't want to share it. One person tells you, "I like it when you said, 'special.'" Another says they're offended by the use of the word "special." A third gives you a complete rewrite.

And a whole horde of people just tell you they like it. "Yeah, I really like that. Good job."

Nice, sincere people giving you their honest opinions. About as useful as a wet paper sack on apple pickin' day.

Your inclination to test your Who-Who-What is good, you just need to know where and who to test it on and what your asking and listening for. . .

The Purpose of an Initial Marketing Message

Your business is about helping someone with something, hopefully lots of someones. And asking for and receiving help is a tricky thing with us humans.

People, you know the you's and me's, generally aren't that keen on admitting they need help. So to avoid jam-ups, you want to create as direct a line between the help and people as possible. The most successful help responses happen when a particular problem is associated with a particular solution.

Here in the United States, 911 is the universal number for emergency services. If you have some kind of emergency, you call 911. You can get police, the fire department, or paramedics at your door in less than five minutes in an urban area. Very helpful service.

It's linked inextricably in people's minds here. "Emergency... dial 911."

Notice that the same kind of link functions, with less urgency, in other situations. Let's say I'm a friend of yours, and I tell you my back hurts. Immediately, without thinking about it, you'll probably say, "Hey, my chiropractor is great. Want her number?"

Or someone else mentions that their furnace just broke. "You've got to talk to Jason, he's fantastic with furnace repair." You need to replace the sink? A-Boy Plumbing here in Portland pops into my mind.

Think about challenges in your life and how often a particular person or business pops into your mind in response to them. It may be a therapist, or a restaurant, or a yoga teacher. Some situation presents itself and immediately that person or business pops up as the answer to that problem.

You want your marketing message to do that, but in reverse.

Names and Faces

When you speak your Who-Who-What marketing message, which is your answer to that painful question, What do you do?, my hope for you is that the other person has names and faces pop up immediately for them. "Oh yeah, my friend Barbara should talk to you." Either

that or they self-identify, “That’s totally me. Tell me more.”

If you get that kind of response, then you know you’ve made that all-important association between what you do and a problem that other people are facing.

Any other response either means that something in your presentation isn’t really conveying who and what you help with or you’ve asked for feedback and sent someone into their editor mode, wanting to help you.

You can have the slickest, punchiest, clever-est marketing tagline in the world, and if people say, “That’s cool!” or “That’s nice” or “Wow,” then you’ve missed. Because you don’t need wow, nice or cool. You need clients.

A marketing message, tagline, elevator speech, whatever-you-call-it, doesn’t need to be cool. It doesn’t need to pack a punch. I see zero punch or clever-factor in, “Oh, your back is hurting? Call my chiropractor, Jane. She’ll help you out in a jiffy.”

But I don’t think you’d be complaining if your clients were doing the equivalent of that for you, would you?

So, when someone asks you, “What do you do?” . . .

Give ‘em the Who-Who-What Instead of Telling Them

It’s a funny thing, but telling people what you do just rarely gets you names and faces. Tell people you’re a chiropractor, and people will usually say, “Oh, that’s cool.” But say, “I help people with chronic back injuries who really want to get back to their normal lives,” and you’ll get names and faces. I just made that example up out of thin air, and I thought of someone I knew as I was typing it, without even trying to.

It’s simple, but it just works.

Except When It Doesn’t

The other response you may get is a blank stare or dead silence. It happens, and it’s okay.

Every day for years you drive past a certain corner and never really take notice. Then, you buy a motorcycle. Yes, you’re really that crazy. You just did it. Then you notice... oh, on that corner there’s a motorcycle repair shop.

You’d never seen it before, because you never needed to. But now you do.

Because your message isn’t going for “punchy” or “cool,” you just want to elicit simple, conversational names and faces, folks who don’t need you and don’t know anyone who needs you will just drive on by.

That’s okay.

You just want to make sure that people you are trying to reach aren’t driving by because they can’t see you. If they are, time to tinker with the message.

An Example or Two

As students in our yearlong Moneyflow course take on this approach, they notice that people respond to them far differently. No glazed eyes. No stumbled words. No feeling awkward. Just plain and simple, conversational. And then baboom.

Here are responses a doctor in our course is getting:

His message: “I support people with cancer who are scared of what may happen and overwhelmed with trying to find a treatment plan that is both safe and effective.”

The responses he reported: “People seem to respond well to this, especially when I remember to keep it succinct and invitational. The two reactions seem to be interest in knowing more or, more commonly, a desire to tell me about a person they’ve known who had, or has, cancer along with her or his experience with treatment.”

Here are responses to a social worker in our course:

Her message: “I help service providers who have lost themselves in their work and who want to find their way back to themselves.”

The responses she reported: “I have had great response. People really connect with it, including folks who have lost themselves in their work who are not identified in my demographic. One friend started crying and said, ‘I could work with you.’ I will keep testing, but I am feeling pretty solid in what I have captured here.”

Do people cry when you tell them your marketing message?

Your Challenge

Run by some folks whatever it is you’re now saying to answer the question, What do you do? See what kind of a response you get.

Do you hear, “That’s nice,” or “I like it,” or “Why don’t you say it this way?”

Or do people say, “Oh, that’s me!” or “Gosh, I know lots of people you should talk to.” Do they break down and start crying, “Oh, I could work with you!”

If it’s the latter, you’re rockin’! If it’s the former, are you willing to trade in cool and punchy for simple and conversational?

Try it. You just might like all the names and faces that come your way.

There’s More

Check the last page.

There's More

If you liked this part of the Heart of Business free toolkit, there's more where that came from.

First, There's More to the Toolkit

This is just one part of it. You can download the other parts of the toolkit here:

Click for the **Toolkit**

Second, There's a Newsletter

We update this toolkit from time to time, and we let folks know about it on the newsletter. Also, this workbook grew out of two weekly articles that have gone out to our subscribers. If you like this quality of business support every week, you may want to subscribe.

This button will take you to the Toolkit page, just look for the newsletter subscribe form.

Click for the **Newsletter**

Third, There's a Whole Book

There are actually several books and programs if you check out the products section of our website. But I'm talking about the first book, the seminal book. The book that started everything and has all the foundational teachings in it: Unveiling the Heart of Your Business.

Click for the **Book**

Fourth, There's a Community

If you want feedback on what you did in this workbook or on any other aspect of your business process join us in the Tent at the Business Oasis online forum and much, much more.

Click for the **Community**