



Grab Your Watercolors: Painting a Picture of Your Perfect Customer

Women like a man in uniform.

It's the house of my dreams.

"I don't care, as long as it's healthy."

Turns on a dime.

Whether it's spouses, houses, kids or cars, we know how to describe what we want. So why, then, is it so hard to get a small business owner to identify the client they want... the *perfect* client?

In the past few weeks, I've met with a number of business owners and professionals about their marketing needs. One of the most important areas we discuss is what their perfect client looks like. Gender, age, economic status, location, profession, health, etc. – whatever identifies that ideal person or company.

Secondly, I will want to know where that perfect person gets his or her information, because that's where we're going to put our marketing efforts.

I find that I run into two challenges:

- ♦ Most people, unfortunately, can't describe the type of customer who would make their business wildly successful. They've likely never even thought about it.
- ♦ Many small business owners are scared to pinpoint one demographic

group for fear of alienating others. These folks are recognizable because they invariably say something like, "I'll work with anyone" or "we have so many different clients".

For people in the first group, I emphasize the importance of developing a profile of their target market, and what that can mean to the growth of their business. To the second group, I just want to say, "well duh!".

Look in any magazine or on any cable TV channel and you'll see zillions of examples of identified clients. Can you find a Jaguar ad in *Horse & Farm*? Baby cribs in *50 Plus*? Heavy metal CDs on the religious channel? Nope.

Now, for those of you who are afraid of losing clients, ponder this... If a farmer wanted to buy a Jaguar, would the dealership sell him one? If a church-going kinda guy wanted the latest Metallica album, would the music store allow him to buy it? Of course.

These clients will come because you're convenient, or well-priced, or they like the image that you've created, even though it doesn't necessarily describe them. But in most cases, those aren't the folks who are

going to make you rich.

If you know what your best clients look like – and you may likely have multiple "best" client models – then you can talk their language. You can make conscious choices to put your advertising dollars and marketing efforts where they will have the most impact.

For a second, let's go back to those baby cribs that are missing from the magazine for seniors. If a company developed a lightweight, easy-to-fold-and-store baby crib that was perfect for visiting grandchildren, where do you think they might advertise? Aha! For that specific product, they might have a different perfect client. But then, the ad that appeared in *50 Plus* would also be different than one in *Parenting*, wouldn't it? Because – and I can't stress this enough – you need to know to whom you are speaking.

The best clients bring repeat business, pay on time, refer others to you and are a joy to work with. Got one of those? Then collect as much demographic information about that person or company as possible. Now find others who "look" the same. Don't be afraid of who you might lose. Instead, be excited about what you'll gain.