Defining Your Audience Checklist

Audience Research

Remember as you're doing your audience research that you want to pay specific attention to values, feelings, and core beliefs; problems and challenges; pains and frustrations; fears and desires; hopes and dreams, etc. – you know, the deep stuff – as they relate to the product or service you provide.

What you're looking for here is the exact language your ideal clients or customers use to describe their challenges and frustrations, which you'll then mirror back to them in your content.

Audience Research Resources

☐ **In Real Life:** Hands down, the number one best way to find out what your ideal clients struggle with is to ask them. If you don't have clients in your preferred target audience, ask friends, family members, and other contacts who fit your preferred target audience profile. You can do this in person, over Skype, or via email.

☐ **Comments on your own blog:** If you're not getting tons of comments yet, start asking pointed questions at the end of blog posts to generate feedback.

☐ **OPB/Other People's Blogs:** Find blogs that serve your ideal customers and note the comments there. You can also see which blog posts on these sites get the most comments and social shares, which tells you that these are topics that resonate with this audience. You can also check out the blog commenters' sites as well, and note what they write about.

☐ **Forums:** Forums can be a great resource for finding out your ideal customers' pains and frustrations, because that's what people to go forums for: to find answers to their specific challenges. You can find forums in your niche by googling "**your area of expertise + forums,"** or using a tool like **Omigli** (http://omgili.com/), which is a search engine for forums and boards.

☐ **Email:** If you have an email list, ask in the first email that goes out after someone signs up to your list what you can help them with/what their biggest frustrations are around your area of expertise. When someone signs up to my list, I ask them to tell me about one problem or challenge they have when it comes to writing web copy and marketing online.

☐ **Competitive Audience Analysis:** Go to websites and blogs that serve your preferred audience & ideal clients and note what topics are covered on the blog, what paid services and products are offered, and so on. Bonus points if you find sites that have an FAQ page – just reading through the frequently asked questions copy will give you a good bead on what this audience needs help with.

☐ **Keyword Research:** Use a keyword research tool to find out what people are searching for online related to the product or service you offer. Ok, so the free Google Keyword Tool has been replaced by something called Google Adwords Keyword Planner, and word on the street is, it's not so hot, but here's a list of other keyword tools you may want to try:

http://www.iacquire.com/blog/the-best-free-premium-keyword-research-tools/

☐ **Social Media Searching:** Run Twitter searches on your area of expertise and stalk Facebook pages that serve your intended audience. Note what issues repeatedly come up for your preferred audience and the language they themselves use to describe them. You can also ask questions on your own social media accounts, such as, "What's one thing you're struggling with right now with [insert your topic here]?"

☐ **Surveys:** Create a survey using **PopSurvey** or **SurveyMonkey** or one of the other free survey services, then post to the link to your survey on your blog, via your social media accounts, and send it to your email list. If you don't have an email list, go back to some of the real, warm-blooded, living, breathing human beings you spoke to in research tactic number one on this list, and ask if you can email them a brief survey.

Bonus Resources

Amazon: Amazon is a great resource for finding out what people in your audience are already reading and responding to. Do a search on books that cover your industry or niche, and read through a few of the book reviews. People will often talk about what's missing in those books or what wasn't covered thoroughly enough, which is a gold mine for finding out what people in your niche want and need. I've found lots of nuggets o' gold with this method.

Magazine Headlines: While you're there at Amazon, search for magazines in your niche and read through headlines of 5-10 magazines. Publishers do exhaustive research and spend thousands of dollars to figure out which stories will generate the strongest response among their readers, so why not piggyback on that research? If something made it onto the cover of a magazine in your niche, you know it's a hot topic people want help with.

Audience Insight Questionnaire

Use these questions to put yourself in your ideal clients' shoes and really see her situation through her eyes.

- ➤ Who is she/he? What are her favorite books/movies/tv shows/magazines/blogs/bands?

- ➤ What are her hobbies and interests?

- ➤ What does she value? What does she like to do in her free time? What does she spend her money on? Where does she like to travel?

- ➤ What's a "day in the life" for her look like?

- ➤ What's the one thing she never leaves home without?

- ➤ Who are her mentors? Who and what are her greatest influences?

- ➤ What does she feel is missing in her life?

- ➤ What makes her feel valued and respected?

- ➤ What frustrates her? What does she complain about?

- ➤ What are her biggest fears? Deepest desires?

- ➤ What are her most pressing concerns? Pain points? Struggles? Challenges?

- ➤ What's the story she's telling herself in her head about her problems?

- ➤ What's at stake for her?

- ➤ What keeps her up at night?

- ➤ Where is she now?

- ➤ Where does she want to be?

- ➤ What kind of information/products/services does she need to get her desired outcome?

As an example of the kind of gold you're looking for here, I've pasted in some of the exact comments I found on blogs, forums, and on social media that shined a light on my ideal clients' pain points and challenges. **These are the kind of deep insights you want to add to your customer research doc every time you come across them**.

Notice how these people are sharing their biggest pain points around branding themselves online – which goes way deeper than just "branding":

- "I totally struggle with ways to get my clients to connect with me."
- "I want my clients to feel like they know me, but I'm struggling in writing something that shows my personality AND also focuses on what I have to offer photographically speaking."
- "My product and my business are boring and cookie-cutter. As a photographer, I feel like I'm stuck in a world of the same. It's literally killing me inside to know that I cannot seem to find my special something that makes me stand out from other photographers."
- "I've been looking into some great copywriters who won't edit out my voice."
- "It helped me see what I was afraid of when marketing: being intrusive and pushy."
- "I opened my business and just expected clients to come and I had NO FREAKING CLUE how to get them in the door."
- "I'm afraid what others will think of me if I market and coming off as a 'cheesy car salesman'."

If you check out my website, you'll notice **I incorporated every one of these frustrations & pain points into the copy on my Home page, About page, and Work with Me page**.

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To show you the level of insight you want to gain when define your audience, here's a *partial* sketch of my ideal client avatar/perfect customer/buyer persona:

She (and he, but for the sake of this example, I'm using "she" to make things easier) is a creative entrepreneur. She is a solopreneur, freelancer, or small business owner who sells a creative product or service. She's done things a little differently in her life; she hasn't always followed the path of "normal." Her goals and dreams aren't the garden-variety "find a good job with a regular paycheck and benefits, marry a good man, buy a home, save your money," but instead are lofty, exciting, daring, and just a little bit crazy. Not everyone gets it. Freedom – creative and otherwise – are of paramount importance to her. She's a creative rebel.

She either makes a full-time living from her creative work – i.e., it's not a side hustle or a "hobby" – or she's quickly ramping up to that reality. So she's mostly able to support herself with her creative services, but she wants to her income to be higher, and more stable. She wants to get client inquiries rolling in consistently so she can get off the feast-or-famine roller coaster for good.

But she doesn't want to compromise her creative integrity when it comes to the business of being creative – from the clients she takes on and the way she likes to work, to the schedule she keeps and the art she creates. She knows she has unique gifts and big talents to share, but she needs to find a way to differentiate herself from the other 567,878 lifeless portfolio sites out there that reek of beauty, but don't make an emotional connection with the right kind of clients, right now.

She's oh-so-ready to leave pain-in-the-arse clients and customers by the wayside, and work only with dream clients, collectors and customers, the kind who understand and appreciate her creative talents and abilities, and are willing to pay a premium price for them. She's hopeful, positive, reliable, resilient and fun. She's teachable, uber-curious, generous, ambitious, and has a fun-loving wild streak. Beers and bands on Saturday night? Hell yeah!

Creativity is like oxygen to her – she's gotta have it in her life to survive. And while she's committed to daily creative practice, she also loves good times and good friends and blowing it out on the weekends. She knows that fun and downtime is just as important to her creative practice as the work is. She's extremely curious, well-read, and a lover of creativity in all its forms. She doesn't get people who say they wish they were "more creative," because she can't turn it off. Ever.

In terms of her business, things are going pretty well, but she's a little frightened at times, because she feels like this might all go away, and she'd have to go get a j-o-b, which would be the kiss of death for her. And there's no way she wants to let the naysayers who thought she couldn't make a go of her creative business win.

*But sometimes she secretly fears that since she's a committed creative, she's not really meant to be a successful business owner with a fat bank account as well. And she fears that if she were to develop a successful business around her creative offerings, she might have to "sell out" and compromise her creative integrity to do so, which is **not** part of the game plan. She knows it's time to up her game and get serious about marketing herself, but she's not sure where to begin, and she doesn't want to be "markety," "salesy," "pushy," or inauthentic.*

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Like I say, this is a **partial** sketch. I have multiple pages of notes on my ideal client that go into much greater detail than what I've shared here, getting uber-deep into her frustrations, fears, annoyances, and deepest desires, hopes and dreams.

Yes, it's a lot of work, and it'll take some time, but I promise you, if you do this work now, you'll be amazed at how much marketing clarity you'll achieve, that once implemented, will bring in more desirable clients and change your business for the better forever.

Now it's time to **take action** and use this **Audience Research Checklist and Insight Questionnaire** to define your own audience.

Good luck!