

Client Pipeline Mastery

Find Your Prospects' Biggest Problems

Homework

For this week's homework, you're going to do 4 things:

1. Create your abbreviated elevator pitch.
2. Contact at least 10 prospects.
3. Review and practice your problem interview call script.
4. Call your prospects.

The most difficult piece will be actually making the calls, but you'll find that once you're on the phone, the calls are actually easy, since the prospect is going to do most of the talking.

1. Create your abbreviated elevator pitch/value proposition.

I've included this step in the homework, since having an elevator pitch/value proposition can come in handy during your problem interviews with prospects. In addition, having an elevator pitch/value proposition ready can lower your anxiety while making these problem interview calls to prospects.

Since you've already identified your target niche, you should have a pretty good idea of the types of services you'll be offering as a consultant. Next, you'll want to distill that into a concise statement of your value proposition.

What's a value proposition? It's a statement that explains:

- how you'll improve something for your customer,
- specific benefits, and
- why you're better than the competition.

A value proposition is NOT a slogan or catchphrase.

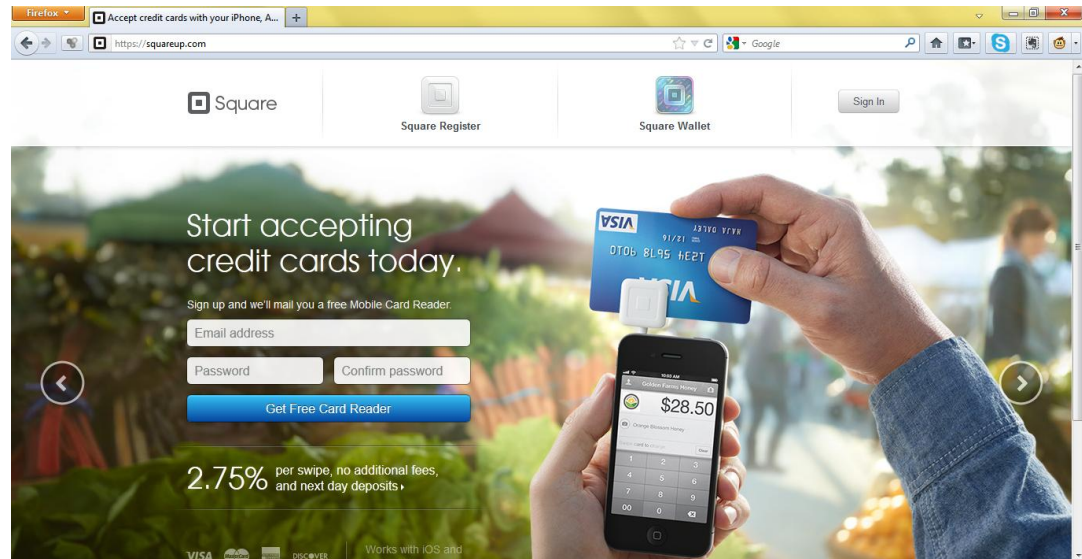
Avoid hype (e.g., "world's best!") and business jargon (e.g., "collaborative revenue-focused business solutions"--what the heck does that even mean?!).

Examples:

- Campaign Monitor makes it easy to attract new subscribers, send them beautiful email newsletters and see stunning reports on the results.
- Stripe makes it easy to start accepting credit cards on the web today.
- Evernote: Remember everything. Capture anything: save your ideas, things you like, things you hear, and things you see. Access anywhere: Evernote works with nearly every computer, phone and mobile device out there. Find things fast: search by keyword, tag or even printed and handwritten text inside images.
- Square: start accepting credit cards today. (I especially like how the photo conveys the ease of using the product and what it is):

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The examples above don't necessarily include information about differentiation, but in general, you DO want to include what makes you different and better than the competition.

As you draft your value proposition/elevator pitch, make sure that it's NOT focused on you or your skills, but on your target niche. What's in it for them?

2. Contact at least 10 prospects.

Now, you'll identify at least 10 prospects, preferably 20-30 who look like they might meet your key criteria from your ideal customer profile. There are a number of ways to do this, but you can start by looking at your own network or looking at online sources.

Whatever method you choose, make sure that the prospects fit your ideal customer profile.

If you're prospecting online, you can look at sites like LinkedIn, Twitter, Quora, Meetup, and Pinterest. Search for keywords in your target niche, and as you peruse the results, you'll start seeing potentially-common problems in your target niche. Look for questions that have gotten a lot of traffic, views, comments, responses, etc., and identify either the person who originally brought up the issue/question, someone else who has the same issue/problem/question, or someone who's contributed to the conversation or answered the question/issue.

Again, the goal is to identify people who potentially fit your ideal customer profile. Once you've identified several potential prospects, dig a little deeper on them using LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, etc. to learn a bit about them to see if they really do fit your ideal customer profile. If so, then you can reach out to them via e-mail. Below is a sample script you can use to contact them and ask for a phone meeting (replace fields in between %'s with applicable verbiage):

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SUBJECT: Your %Quora% question re: %their question topic%

Hey, %name%, I'm a %your title%, and I'm working with other %prospect types% to learn how to %major benefit%.

I'm writing to you because you asked this interesting question on Quora %(or whatever)% about %a related subject%, and I'd love your help to learn more about this issue.

I'd like to schedule a time to talk with you. You don't have to prep, and the call won't take more than 20 minutes.

Here are three times available; are any of these okay for you?

For the subject line and the topic in the body of your e-mail, it's important to be specific, since you'll generally get a better response rate from your e-mails. For example:

- "talk about your business" is less effective than
- "talk about your website" which is less effective than
- "talk about online marketing" which, finally, is still less effective than
- "talk about using your website for lead generation."

Note: If you need to schedule across different time zones, you can use a tool like scheduleonce.com to make it easy for prospects to schedule their time with you.

3. Review and practice your problem interview call script.

Practicing your problem interview calling script is essential. Practice will lower your anxiety about calling, and will improve the results of your efforts.

You'll want to practice with a spouse, friend, or anyone who can give you feedback about your delivery. You don't necessarily need feedback on the content of what you're asking, but your goal is to come across as natural and conversational.

Thanks for taking the time to talk with me today!

Like I mentioned in the e-mail, I want to learn more about %topic%, and wanted to see if you could help me understand a bit more about it.

Before we get into %topic%, I was wondering if you could tell me a bit about yourself and your role. [Depending on what characteristics you're interested in, ask them here--age group, geographic location, company size, etc.]

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Now, I'd like to learn more about %topic%.

- Tell me about how you're doing _____. (remember to stop and listen for 30-60 seconds)
- How do you go about doing _____?
- How does that fit into your normal workday or workweek?
- Who is involved with doing _____?
- If you could wave a magic wand and do anything related to _____, what would it be?
- How do you currently deal with these problems?

...

I really appreciate your time--this has been extremely helpful.

I'd like to talk further about some ideas I have, and was wondering if you could meet [next week, Tuesday at 10 a.m., etc.--make it specific].

The last thing I'd like to ask is if you could point me to 1 or 2 other people you know who also deal with %topic%.

Thanks again for your time!

4. Call your prospects.

Now we're down to the nitty gritty: actually calling prospects. Just remember: you are NOT selling during this call--unless the prospect eagerly asks for your help. Your goal is to learn as much as you can about their biggest problems; you'll also get a more detailed picture of your ideal customers.

To start, you'll call at least 5 of the prospects. Once you make the calls, you'll see that it's actually pretty easy, and it can even be fun to get to know people in your niche.

After each call, e-mail the person to thank them, go over follow-up, and ask them to refer you to someone else in your niche. You can use the following e-mail script:

SUBJECT: Thank you! [I've found that this simple subject line has a high open rate.]

Thanks for taking the time to talk with me today--our conversation was really valuable. I was especially surprised to learn %something that surprised you%.

Like we discussed, I'd like to discuss some other ideas about %topic% with

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you. Could we do a short call on [Tuesday at 4 p.m.]?

Last, you mentioned you could refer me to %referral name%. I'd love it if you could forward the e-mail below to them:

SUBJECT: Referred by %your prospect's name%

Hey %referral name%,

Please meet my friend %your name%, who runs %your company% (cc'd).

We talked about %topic%, and he'd like to get your help in understanding %topic% in more detail.

I recommend you two e-mail to schedule a time to discuss.

Thanks,
%your prospect's name%

Thanks again!

After you've made each call, congratulate yourself! Calling complete strangers is a HUGE hurdle, and you need to give yourself a pat on the back. The more you do it, the easier it becomes.

Now, after you've done 5 calls, make another 5 calls. Keep going until you see clear patterns emerge with the biggest problems and with common qualities between prospects so that you have a clear picture of your ideal customer.