

## **Developing a Niche Market**

Often when I suggest to Counselors and healing professionals that they might want to market to a specific niche audience when starting a private practice, they are resistant. Although there are many reasons for their resistance, the most common reason is fear. They are afraid that they will never get enough clients if they narrow in and focus on marketing to one group of people.

While this is a natural reaction if you don't understand the benefits of niche marketing, rather than limiting the number of clients that will be drawn to you, marketing to a specific niche can actually bring you more clients. This article discusses the logic behind developing a niche and how to go about selecting one.

### **What is a Niche Market?**

A niche market is a group of people with something in common. It could be similar interests, hobbies, age group, gender, social background, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, educational background, values, etc. Those within a niche market have similar desires and needs and therefore a product or service is marketed specifically to serve them.

### **Why is a Niche Market Important for Counselors and Healing Professionals?**

Large businesses usually do blanket marketing where they target everyone. They have big budgets that allow them to do this, and are often already known to the mass population and therefore achieve at least some success with this method. However, for healing professionals and others in smaller businesses who can't possibly market to, or meet the needs of the masses, niche marketing is much more effective as it provides a manageable sized market to focus your marketing on.

Niche marketing allows you to market to your ideal clients and helps you to find these ideal clients. For example, if you were a Homeopathic doctor targeting young children, you would market your services in places where parents are likely to find out about you. You might advertise or write articles in parent magazines, or join organizations geared towards parents.

In addition, when you have a niche market, potential clients will more easily be able to decide whether your services will meet their needs and desires or not. If you are coach who targets women in mid-life who are seeking a career change, any woman who fits these criteria will easily be able to determine if she is likely a suitable client.

Furthermore, people prefer specialists as opposed to generalists when seeking a service professional. If you were looking for a Counselor for help with problems you were having with your intimate partner, wouldn't you rather see one who specializes in couples counseling as opposed to one who seems to serve everyone? You would likely believe that a Counselor who specializes in work with couples is going to be able to provide you with a better service than a generalist would.

Another benefit of having a focused niche market is that it is much easier to get known in your field when you are seen as an expert. Because you are well known for your expertise, when someone needs that expertise, they will think of you.

Marketing a practice on the web is also much easier when you have a niche market. Many healers don't understand why their site never shows up in search engines, and while there are many aspects involved in getting your site found in search engines, having a narrow niche can really help.

In today's crowded marketplace, it is becoming more and more essential to have a niche if you want to be successful in marketing a counseling, healing or holistic health practice. You must find a way to make yourself stand out from the crowd and a niche helps you do that.

### **How To Choose a Niche Market for Your Practice**

1. **Brainstorm.** Think about what people are looking for as you talk with them. Read and watch the news to see what is current on people's minds. Pay attention to what is going on around you and to current trends in society. You never know when a niche opportunity is going to present itself.

2. **Choose a niche that you're passionate about.** It's a lot easier to motivate yourself to market to a population of people that you enjoy working with. Passion and enthusiasm are also contagious. If you are excited about your work within your niche, potential clients will sense this and be more interested in working with you.

3. **Have knowledge and experience about the niche** or at least be learning about the topic and be planning to become an expert in it.

4. **Your niche market to be large enough so you have enough people to market to-- but not so large that it includes too many people and ends up lacking focus.**

5. **Research the viability of your niche.** You need to know if people are actually interested in, and want or need services in your niche area. There is no use offering a service that interests you, but that others don't want to buy. Another part of establishing the viability of your niche is researching the competition you will have. If you choose a niche market that has high competition it will be likely be more challenging to be successful at it.

6. **You must be able to identify and know where to reach your niche population** so that you can market to the people within it. As a healing professional or Counselor, your marketing budget is likely limited, therefore it's very important that you can reach your niche market easily and cost-effectively so you can make the most of your financial resources.

### **Having More Than One Niche Area**

Many wonder if it is possible to market to more than one niche population. The answer is yes, but you will have to be clear in making the distinctions between your target areas, as you don't want them to become blurred together so that your niche becomes watered down. In addition, it often takes more time and effort to market to more than one niche area and longer to get known for each. However, there are some healing professionals who are successful with more than one niche market just like there are those who are successful marketing themselves as generalists.

Selecting a niche can be a challenging aspect of starting and marketing a practice because you have to overcome your fears about focusing on a particular market and then make a commitment to serve that particular population. You have to be willing to let some areas go and realize that you can't serve everyone as well as you can serve a specific population.

There is also much to learn about marketing within any niche area. As with everything in marketing a practice, knowledge, persistence and patience do pay off for those who make the commitment to succeed.

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Juliet Austin, MA, is a Marketing Coach, Consultant and Copywriter who assists counselors, therapists, coaches, alternative health professionals and other healing professionals in marketing their private practices. She helps her clients overcome resistances to marketing, implement no or low-cost marketing strategies, create compelling promotional materials, and write attention-grabbing website copy designed to get results.

Juliet is the author of the FREE, 22-page, report, "67 Ways to Attract Clients" which you can get at: <http://www.julietAustin.com>

You can also visit her marketing blogs at: <http://www.marketingapivatepractice.com> and <http://www.websitedesignandpromotion.com>