

How to get clients (without paying for advertising)

Molly came to me with a problem. She liked these ideas about sharing her story all that, but she didn't know how to go from awareness to income: 'Even if they hear about me, and visit my website, most of them aren't ready to buy that day so I lose them.'

A look at her website showed the problem: it was like an advertising brochure. The home page described the business (in typical industry-speak), and the rest of the pages were individual products and services people could buy. If you didn't want something there and then, there was little point hanging around.

The mistake Molly made was to treat marketing like advertising.

Old versus new marketing (or: why putting up ads is not the only way to grow your business)

The old model of getting customers looked a lot like this: put word out and wait for them to come. The more you paid for big ads the more customers came and the more money you made: the person with the biggest advertising budget won.

In the old model, the barrier to entry was high – you had to pay for ad space and that was expensive. It was also a hit-and-miss business – you relied on: a) the right people reading your ads; b) realizing it was for them; c) being motivated enough to go from seeing your words to taking action based on a short moment. If they forgot about your ad or lost your contact details, that's it. Opportunity gone.

Luckily, that is not how it works any more. Seth Godin explains the current situation:

[For most people] advertising means the glamorous kind, the kind that people think of when they think of the Super Bowl or Time magazine or of profitable ads that are worth selling.

These are the ads that built Yahoo, the ads that built NBC and the ads that so many entrepreneurs and media moguls are counting on.

These ads don't sell because they work. They sell because they are sold.⁹

Smart entrepreneurs already know it's not the only way. For example, Sara Blakely launched *Spanx* undergarments without any outside investment, no debt and without spending a penny on advertising. She just became the youngest self-made billionaire woman on the Forbes list.

'People trust advice' she explained.¹⁰

Smart free rangers don't blindly invest their money in ads that shout in an already noisy space. They also don't rely on handing out cards at networking meetings and hoping someone calls back.¹¹ That approach is like proposing to someone on your first date and wondering why they say no. You know what works better? Dating. Building an actual relationship.

Grow a base of people who love what you have to say

Instead of going out there to get clients, or constantly 'pitching' yourself to 'contacts', what if you were known as the Go To person in your industry? What if you never had to pick up the phone to contact them because they came to you every time?

That's the power of content marketing. Content marketing means creating and sharing quality content, for free, with hundreds or thousands of your niche all at the same time. You give away quality, prove your worth and build that relationship so that when you are ready to make an offer you don't have to go out searching: you constantly have new people coming to you, listening, keen and ready for more.

There are many ways to do this today: you've probably seen people doing it on Facebook and even some on Instagram and Linked In. But to keep things simple, let's start with the one medium that no algorithm change can mess up for you: building relationships with more than one person at a time via email.

Seven steps to a hot email relationship

1. Create content

Create great content that you could charge for. For example free guides, or simply great audio or video... or straight up written messages.

2. Give it away for free

Whether you create a mini How To guide and give it away (or make videos/written messages with titles that even you can't help clicking on to hear more), at first one person will take it, then 10 people, then 100 people, and beyond. Each piece of free content showcases your value to dozens or hundreds of people, again and again, even when you are asleep.

Think of these two first steps like that great conversation that keeps your date thinking: 'Wow you are fascinating, I have to find out more!' That response would not come about had you spent your whole time talking about how awesome you are and flashing your degree certificate. Same applies here. Think from your audience's perspective and create something that chimes with them.

3. Ask for their email address in exchange for this sort of thing

People are busy. They will forget who you are if you do not keep in touch. *Building up an email list a smart way to overcome that for a consistent income.* So you don't find yourself regularly saying, 'Where are the people?' build a list. For example, offer for people who take part in your test projects to sign up to your email list (don't overcomplicate this on the tech front: if you're in person they can just say 'yes' and write their email down for you and you can add them). Or place a box prominently on your website and offer your Really Good Free Content in exchange for their email address and the permission to stay in touch.

How? A proper email list (aka 'autoresponder') service will provide everything you need to set this up (including sign-up form for your website). They will also ensure that your free content can get delivered automatically to each person's inbox the second they provide their email address, meaning you don't have to sit there watching your emails. The two free ones I suggest are either Mailchimp or Convert Kit (Convert Kit is my fave - I both use and highly recommend it!

<https://frh.me/convertkit>

(Note: it is important you use a proper email marketing service such as the above as they are set up to let people sign up and unsubscribe in one click, which is a legal requirement. For this reason, don't go around cc-ing everyone you have ever met on a big email! Not only is it not nice, it's also not legal in most places to do this as they can't unsubscribe easily. Instead, get people to sign up to an official list (like the above) that is set up for this purpose, so you can be sure you have their permission to contact them).

4. Continue giving away quality

Keep up your end of the bargain – don't be that date who suddenly turns boring. Stay in touch by sending regular quality content to your new list. You are looking to build the relationship and show you're a great bet, and that means being generous and interesting in the process! A monthly company update is probably not interesting to anyone other than yourself, but a well-written short piece on an issue that's likely to be on your list's mind is far more interesting. If in doubt about what to send, ask *would I get excited about receiving this email?*

5. Call me, baby!

Don't be shy about staying in touch: you wouldn't think it was polite if someone you went on a great date with waited another three months to contact you... just because they didn't want to bother you! If someone signs up to your list they *are* interested, so email them once a week, or once a fortnight: if you're new in your space this is important as if your name isn't established, and you wait any longer between messages, then when your email shows up they won't know who you are and might assume it's unsolicited spam. Remember: if they are really not interested, they can easily unsubscribe.

6. Listen to them

A great date listens as much as they talk. Ask your readers to hit reply and tell you about the one thing they most want help with. Ask them what they think of a certain topic. Ask questions, listen to their answers, and then create products and services to respond to what they most want right now. You can't get that sort of interaction from an ad!

7. Make an offer

Ooh, now we're getting serious about this relationship. Some people make an offer in a box at the bottom of their emails (eg a reminder of an ongoing service or for a special offer that's on this month). Others link to their service/product in the body of the email. Others create full-on product launch campaigns on specific topics, and send several emails just about that. How you make the offer for them to buy something depends on your business and your relationship with your readers, as well as the income you want.

These seven steps are about getting permission to interact with people – not just legal permission but emotional permission to the point that if you miss a newsletter or don't post in a while they say *hey where did you go?*

For an example of the results of this approach, I chose my first accountant because of her content marketing. She had a blog and an email list sharing helpful tidbits for beginners with no clue about accounting.

I read her free content for a few months, and discovered she knew her stuff, could speak my language and was likeable. The second I actually needed an accountant I hired her – not the accountants who had been pushing business cards in my hand at every opportunity, or the one who kept on sending emails suggesting we finally get together for that *free consultation* – I only wanted *her*.

Honestly, I have no idea if her prices were higher or lower than competitors. As a result of reading her words regularly, she was the only one I wanted. That's the power of not being stingy with your freebies.

The other benefit to this approach is location and time freedom. At the start of this book I mentioned a little conversation on a boat in some tropical waters. The one with the boat captain, the corp-orate employee and me. How did I afford to go off grid, write and hang on a boat while also earning? How do people like Benny the polyglot manage to travel the world as they do? Again, by the power of a constantly growing base of people, built-up using the steps above. In this case, instead of a service (such as accounting) your offer can be a virtual product. Either way, when you don't have to go around town hustling for business many more opportunities open up:

The power to give a free trial to dozens, then hundreds, then thousands of people at once as you grow.

The power to choose your ideal clients, gather them around you and get to know them.

The power to have an idea, hit *Send* on an offer and get takes within minutes.

The power to never have to ask *where are the people who are going to buy my stuff...* and instead create a consistent income.

Some Q and A for this second edition bonus:

You many have seen some people doing this and wonder if the market is 'too crowded'. Well the reality is that few do it well. You are not competing with the others, you are competing with the ability for people to connect with you and feel you are for them. To want to hear from you because it strikes a chord.

If you can place yourself in *that* category then you've got the essence of this down already.

So why would something so simple NOT work?

In my experience there are definitely situations where things hit a wall, and here are a few:

- Someone doesn't know what they are really about / is uncomfortable with their main flow and tries to make themselves or their brand someone they are not because *that* person looks like they have it together (eg: the 'copy cat' trap)
- Not speaking your people's language (see the sections in the book on connecting rather than hiding behind business speak!)
- Not being comfortable with 'selling' – either with the idea of making money... or with talking about anything to do with what you do.

Some useful ways to respond to this are:

- a) to keep refining what you are doing and who you want to be in all this (the tools in the book and Free Range Humans support tools are there to get you started on this!)
- b) check in on how you're speaking to them – pass it by someone who loves what you do, and who gets it, does this stuff sound like you? Is this what they'd want to pass on to their friends to give a real taste of you or your brand or is it a bit 'same-same'?
- c) on the selling front, read the "selling" chapter in this book as a starting point. So often our own views of what 'promoting' is gets in the way of great communication with real humans – if that's what you care about, and if you believe in what you are offering, then you're off to a solid start of doing this in a way that people get and appreciate!

Above all the reality is that this takes practice: so start now.

Above all, remember that communicating kindly, clearly and with real connection is something that you do naturally as a human. All you're doing here is putting it in a different form, on a different topic. And that's something that's more than possible to pull off.

Does it have to be via email? Email isn't my thing...

I give the example of email here as a) it's the one that you control (Facebook and the other social change their algorithms all the time and that can mean that one day 100 people who love you see your offer and the next only 5! I personally don't want to expose my income to that risk so it's smart to always keep some email list even if it's on the side). Also b) it's a simple place to start and you have to start somewhere.

Even if it is your flow then the format of it can vary. We talk about email here but people find it's more effective for them to use this approach but on a social media platform of their choice. Some do it mostly via videos (live on those platforms for example). Some do it via writing.

But to avoid option overwhelm, start with this and remember that while there are other options whole thriving free range careers have been built on this, and the steps you take here will serve you in good stead.

I'm not an Attractor, can I use this?

All profiles can use this as a 'secondary' tool, but it's a powerful one for the Attractor as a primary tool.

Connectors use this to deepen relationships (eg: with people who have been referred in from those they connected with!), and Trusted People *can* choose to use it to stay in touch long term so their name doesn't disappear – but these profiles are typically frustrated when spending the *bulk* of their 'attracting clients' time on this form of attraction without their primary style getting a look in - so watch where you're putting your energy and use this wisely.

Wait do I need to build a big following before getting paid?

In a word: no. Most people *don't* wait to build a big list before getting their first income! Yes, that includes people who today make a living with a big following.

So don't wait: build this consistently on the side – even picking up names from people you work with or who buy that thing from you or enquire – while also taking the smart Faststart steps to getting out there and getting your first real clients and customers. Doing both of these is much smarter than waiting to be 'big' in order to be paid – and also smarter than not taking this 'consistent income' step and therefore always scrabbling for clients and customers in the future.

Start now, grow it continuously and you are setting yourself up for a consistent income – on your terms.