Hello! And it is so good to see you for this next video, which is called your “Ideal Customer Avatar.” And here’s what you’re about to learn:

What the heck an Ideal Customer Avatar is and why you need it.

Next we’re gonna talk about the reason that understanding your customer’s deep fears and desires is essential for running a profitable, big-hearted business.

I’m going to show you how to begin to craft your Ideal Customer Avatar.

And, finally, we’re going to walk through a few examples to inspire you to create your own.

So let’s start off at the top.

**What exactly is an Ideal Customer Avatar?**

So an Ideal Customer Avatar is a single person, kind of like a character if you will, who represents your target market- the ideal customer for your business. Now, you keep this person in mind whenever you’re creating something for your business. So whether you’re designing a new product or service, if you’re writing copy for your website, if you’re creating free content or writing email campaigns or ad campaigns or even social media updates.

And you might be asking yourself, “Well, who is this avatar based on?” Well, it could be based on an actual customer that you already have, somebody you love, somebody who you say, “You know what? If all of my customers were like this person, I would actually have my dream business.”

Or maybe it’s a compilation, kind of like a master mix of several different fantastic customers. Or if you’re just starting out and you don’t have customers yet, just imagine somebody in your mind – think about real people that you know who represent someone you really intend to serve through your business.

Now, I will say that imagining someone is just a starting point and a way to really warm up your empathy muscles. The faster you talk with real customers, the better, and we’re gonna walk you through exactly how to do that in the Fun Sheet at the end of this video.

Now, one last thing, and this is really important, often your Ideal Customer Avatar winds up sounding a lot like yourself, and this is normal, especially if you’re a member of your target market. I mean, you might be building your business precisely because you want to serve people
who are like you. Now, we’re gonna walk you through how to create your Ideal Customer Avatar in just a few minutes, but first I want to talk about why this exercise and doing it with your full heart is so important.

First, without your Ideal Customer Avatar, there’s a good chance you’re not gonna sell much of anything because, look, in order to ethically and honestly inspire someone to buy from you, you have to understand them and they’ve got to feel that. I mean, this is communication 101. You must understand other people if you want to genuinely influence and engage and persuade them. And this is all about having compassion and demonstrating that you really get where someone is coming from, you see their point of view, and you really care enough to understand who they are, what their needs are – you want to make an emotional connection and you’re really there to take care of them.

You know another reason this is so important? Because without knowing exactly who your ideal customers are, you’re probably going to attract some less-than-ideal customers – people who I can call nightmare customers. They don’t value your prices, they don’t value what you do or who you are, and I have to tell you, when you have nightmare customers, business is not fun and it’s certainly not profitable.

Last and perhaps most importantly, if you’re not clear on exactly who you’re trying to reach, all of your marketing and your sales efforts and your content creation efforts – everything you’re working so hard at – it’s generally going to be too general and generic, which not only kills your confidence, but it can also kill your business.

Look, most new entrepreneurs make the big mistake and they fall into this trap of wanting to sell to everybody, but when you do that you are violating one of the most important laws of effective marketing. I want you to write this down:

**If you’re talking to everybody, you’re talking to nobody.** I’m gonna say it one more time. If you’re talking to everybody, you’re talking to nobody.

Meaning if you try to sell everyone on your product or your service, you’re not going to convert anyone. And trust me when I say, trying to reach everyone is just a losing proposition and it can sink your business fast. If you try and market to everyone, I guarantee this: your messaging will be completely bland, it’ll be forgettable, and lost in an ever-increasing sea of internet noise. Not to mention your efforts to attract traffic, to run effective advertising, or promote your business will be kind of scattershot and ineffective at best.

Now, before we go on I can already hear some resistance to this idea. You might be thinking, “But wait, Marie! I don’t want to niche down and be so specific that I start to exclude people. My product or my service, it really can help everyone!” Now, I hear you, but I am imploring you to trust me on this one. If you want your business to succeed, do not try and market to everybody.

Big, general groups, even like “stay-at-home-moms” or “small business owners,” that’s still way
too broad. Now, if you step back and you really think this through, you’re gonna see that there’s no product or service that really is right for everyone. There’s always these little subsets and little subcultures in every single market. And smart entrepreneurs who get specific? I’ve gotta tell you, that makes all the difference in the world. There’s a reason for that saying you might have heard before, “There’s riches in the niches.”

So, for example, let’s say that you’re a dating coach. Trying to be a dating coach for everyone would be a losing proposition. However, if you decided to be a dating coach for, say, socially awkward tech guys or single women over 60 then, my friend, you are onto something. You could speak directly to those ideal customers, you could gain traction, and then once you do that, and only then, perhaps you can think about broadening out to add in other groups. I want you to think about it. There’s a reason there’s a JDate and a Christian Mingle and an EHarmony. And there’s actually a cool newcomer on the dating scene, it’s called Farmers Only. And their tagline, get this, “City folk just don’t get it.”

Now, here’s the good news, once you create your Ideal Customer Avatar, writing copy for your website, your emails, your content marketing, all of that becomes so much easier and more effective. Plus you save so much time and energy focusing your efforts on reaching a specific group of people instead of getting overwhelmed trying to reach everybody. And if you do any kind of advertising or paid promotions, you’ll know exactly who to target and who not to, which will help you make better, faster decisions and can also lower your advertising costs.

Now, another good thing, you’re also going to increase your chances of attracting ideal customers versus nightmare customers. So you’re going to be serving people who are genuinely a good fit for your business, and that’s going to make running your business a lot more fun and a lot more profitable. Most importantly though, you’re gonna give yourself a chance to make a real difference to another human being. Your message is going to resonate because it’s based on something real, like real emotional understanding versus just general assumptions.

Before we dive into the exercise, I want to share this quote by the legendary ad creator Leo Burnett, because I think this speaks to the very essence of why this exercise is so important.

And he says, “If you can’t turn yourself into your customer, you probably shouldn’t be in the ad writing business at all.”

Now, I believe we can, and should, take this one step further and say, “If you can’t turn yourself into your customer, you probably shouldn’t be in business at all.”

Now, the essence of that quote is why so much of the target market work or the buyer persona work that you may have done before, or been exposed to before, usually falls short. Because you’re never taught how to really step into your customer’s shoes and see and feel life through her eyes. This level of deep understanding and empathy is what your customers crave, and no matter what
you sell: whether it’s a product, it’s a service, it’s a luxury good, never forget that you’re selling to
humans who long to feel seen and heard and understood.

You know, emotion is what makes people buy. Yes, they may justify their buying decisions with
logic and reason, but it’s how a person feels – their emotions – that’s what triggers them to
purchase. And this is why it’s just so important to do the work that you’re about to do so you can
connect with that raw emotion.

Now, let’s talk about crafting your Ideal Customer Avatar. So step number one in this process is
to stop thinking like you and start thinking like your ideal customers. And what this requires is
that you stop assuming you already know what your ideal customer wants and you’re completely
willing to see and hear and experience them with fresh eyes. So this is an exercise in imagination.
It’s an exercise in roleplay and empathy.

You’re gonna need to really open your heart and open your mind and begin to step in their shoes.
You’re gonna imagine living a day in their life, and don’t worry, we have some prompts coming
up that will walk you through this. But the important thing I want you to remember is this: if you
want your business to succeed, you must learn to think and feel like your ideal customer.

Now, what you’re about to create is just part of a whole equation, since you’re going to be relying
on existing customer experience, if you have any, and of course, your imagination. But once you
complete this exercise, you’re also gonna talk with your prospects and your customers. You’re
gonna ask them questions, you’re gonna listen, you’re really gonna get into their responses and
use all of those discoveries to further flesh out your Ideal Customer Avatar. Once again, the Fun
Sheet at the end of this video will walk you through exactly how to do that.

A few important notes before we continue. So creating this Ideal Customer Avatar exercise always
brings up a lot of smart questions like, “Well, what if I don’t have a clear idea of my product or
service yet?” Or “What if my customer base is really diverse and I want to keep it that way?” “What
if my product or service doesn’t really solve a pain point, it’s more of a luxury or a feel good item?”
“Why is understanding deep fears or frustrations even relevant?” You might be thinking, “What if
I sell to multiple segments in a given market? For example, I run a tutoring business for kids, but
it’s really the parents who are the ones hiring me.”

Now, these questions are all really important and I want you to know we’ve answered all of them
and more in the Fun Sheet that corresponds with this video. And speaking of the Fun Sheet,
there’s another resource in there that I want to draw your attention to.

We have a link to a classic article on Fast Company about the fashion retailer Anthropologie,
and this one is such an excellent real-world example of two things. First, how important it is
knowing who your ideal customers are, especially if you want to create an outstanding customer
experience. And second, and I think this is more important – especially for all B-Schoolers, you
know – you’ll see that Anthropologie is very clear on who their Ideal Customer Avatar is, and yet
Anthropologie reaches a diverse audience of women. You know, when I go into that store I see women shopping there all the time of all different ages. I see people in their teens, I see people in their late 60s, people of all different colors and sizes and shapes. And the point is, creating an Ideal Customer Avatar doesn’t limit who you reach or who you are. So if you want to have a wide range of clients and customers, different genders, ethnicities, and ages, and income levels and everything, just pick one person to do this exercise with.

You know, here in B-School we have lots of diverse folks. Right? We have women and men, we have people of all different ages, people with many different levels of business experience from virtually every part of the world. They all have different goals and dreams. But when I created B-School, I chose one specific person, one ideal person, to focus on that I really wanted to help with this program. And what that allowed me to do was really limit my thinking. It allowed the program not to have a “curriculum creep” and go all over the place. And, you know, I suspected that even though I chose one Ideal Customer Avatar, we would be able to attract a wide range of customers, and that’s been the truth.

So for now, just choose one individual to complete this exercise with. Just one of many ideal customers that you might have. And once you get into the hang of it, you may want to complete a new ICA for each major category of ideal customers that you serve. You know, this is really an exercise in compassion which, quite frankly, is lacking in most business training these days. The goal here is just to step into another person’s world and connect emotionally with those that you hope to serve.

So let’s walk through the first part of the exercise on how to create your Ideal Customer Avatar. So all of what I’m about to describe is in the Fun Sheet that is right below this video. I’m going to talk you through it now, I’m gonna show you some examples, and then you are going to work through it on your own.

So first, what you’re gonna do, you’re going to list all the common traits of your ideal customers. So both demographic, think age and gender and occupation, and then also think about the psychographic, like attitudes and values and lifestyle. Then what you’re gonna do, you’re gonna roll all those commonalities up into one person. And I want you to give them a name and give them a full identity, so an age and an occupation, and even a hair color.

Now, here’s something that you might want to do, and it’s kind of fun. You can go and grab a photo of a real person’s face – either somebody that you know or you can find one on social media or on Google – to really help you see this person as real. Remember, this is an internal exercise so it’s nothing that you’re going to share publicly.

Then what I want you to do is step into her shoes. I want you to see life through her eyes and really start to feel her emotions. You’re going to write a little short journal entry as her, not you, and I’m gonna give you three examples so you can get a feel for this.
Example one: Jenny is a business coach’s ICA.

I’m terrified. I was so excited about starting my own coaching business and bringing in extra money for my family so I could contribute more to Carter’s college fund, buy a new car, take John on a vacation, and finally get a new laptop. But now that I’m about to finish up my coach training, which took money away from the family and John was pissed at that, now I need to spend more money on a website and marketing training so I can get clients. I don’t know if all that’s gonna work. There are so many coaches out there and I’m wondering if I’m really that great of a coach anyway. Will people really hire me? And why should they when there are so many other coaches out there with more experience who are probably better than I am.

Plus I’m not making any money, so I feel like a fraud. I’m so confused. Should I even keep at this? I’m so ashamed. I told everyone in my life I was becoming a coach and doing my own thing. If I bail out now everyone will think I’m a flake. I’ll be totally mortified. But if I continue I’m afraid John is gonna kill me because he thinks my business is some woo-woo idea that’s costing us tons of money. He says I should get a part-time job and stop living in a dream world, especially in this economy. Maybe this whole thing is a load of crap.

I don’t want to talk to my coaching mastermind about how scared I am because I’m afraid I’ll look weak and like a loser. I don’t want them to try and coach me out of it. I’m scared and I don’t know where to turn or what to do. I feel totally paralyzed.

Example number two: Evan is a photographer’s ICA.

Crystal and I are just getting by. We always have enough to make ends meet, but little extra. Sometimes it’s enough for a meal out or something nice for the house. We just had our baby Lila last year and most of our focus is on trying to be good parents and partners to each other. We know that things aren’t going to always be this way, but right now there’s no time or money for vacations, no real luxuries.

We also put any big upgrades on hold. No bathroom renovation and no giant flat-screen TV. When we were first dating we always talked about the trips we would take. New York or Paris. Fancy restaurants, live music, shopping in boutique stores, and especially museums. Crystal loves art. She loves finding unique things. I wish there was a way to bring something special, something beautiful into our lives that doesn’t break the bank. I thought about painting a few walls a bright color, but I want something more.

Example number three: Martina is a fragrance maker’s ICA.

I’m so embarrassed by how much I sweat and, even worse, that sometimes I smell too. No matter what deodorant I wear or how careful I am, I’m terrified that when I get nervous, all I do is stink and it’s horrible. I’m a clean person, I eat right, but whatever. I’ve had this since I was little.

You’d think being as successful as I am, I wouldn’t have this problem. If people knew this about me, I’d be horrified. Let’s face it, some of them do and maybe they even talk about it behind my back.

I can’t believe my husband William still finds me attractive. I know he loves me for me, but I really wish I
could find a scent that would make him swoon. The truth is, I want so badly to feel feminine and confident when I meet people, they’ll hug me and think, “Oh my God, she smells so good. What is that you’re wearing?”

I want a little spritz of something that’ll make William dream of holding me tight. I want to find my signature scent, something that’s completely unique, that can only be associated to me, something that’s one of a kind. I want it to be whimsical and soft and inviting, something that can’t be bought at every Sephora or department store. I want it to make me feel powerful and feminine, but not overpowering.

The bottle needs to be beautiful too. I mean, my Milan apartment is pretty small and it’ll have to sit out on my dresser and everyone will see it when they come over. It also has to last. I don’t mind spending good money, but I want that beautiful scent to last all day.

Uber importante: so you might feel lazy, you might want to skip this ICA exercise, or you might just say, “You know what? I’m gonna do this one in my head.” Do not make that mistake, please. I beg of you. This one is so important, so just let it be fun, role play, really enjoy getting outside of your own head for a little bit.

Now, once you’ve spent some time living in your Ideal Customer Avatar’s shoes, you’re gonna keep going and you’re going to explore both her fears and frustrations and her dreams and aspirations, and here’s why that’s so important. Because when people have a problem, they feel frustrated. Right? Sometimes they feel desperate and alone – like nobody in the world could possibly understand what they’re going through. But when you know irrational fears, it lets you create messaging that clearly communicates to your customers that you understand them, you know exactly what they’re going through, and that your product or service could be the perfect solution.

Knowing their deepest desires also allows you to demonstrate that you have a bigger vision for them, that you believe in them, and you can help them get where they want to go. And when customers feel that you understand them almost better than they understand themselves, you’ve established a deep level of trust. And when it comes to business, trust equals increased sales and happy customers and referrals and, most importantly, a satisfying, soul-fulfilling business.

Here’s something that’s important to understand. No matter what you sell, all human beings have fears and dreams. Even if what you sell doesn’t solve a problem, or it’s based in luxury or beauty or joy or happiness, the human that you’re selling to has fears and dreams, and the more you understand the full holistic reality of your ideal customers, the more effective your communication is going to be. Even if you never, ever, ever mention anything about their fears or their problems.

Plus, I will say, doing this level of emotional creative work can spark so many new ideas in terms of product creation and packaging and marketing and giveaways and surprise value adds and
charitable donations and strategic alliances and tons of stuff. You know, most small business owners never take the time to empathize with their customers on this level and it’s why their businesses lack depth and true emotional connection.

The thing that I think is the most important though is that doing this work helps you bring more humanity and kindness to your business, and I feel like that’s why we’re doing all of this. That’s why we’re here right now.

So take action now. I want you to download your Ideal Customer Avatar Fun Sheet below and just give it a go. Don’t worry about doing it right, don’t worry about getting it perfect. I just want you to get something down. And remember, you’ve got all kinds of questions answered, anything that’s in that beautiful mind of yours, in the Fun Sheet. We’re going to walk you through also how to start interviewing real customers too.

And I do want to remind you, you’ve got the Answer Vault and you’ve got “Smart Marketing for Product Based Businesses” as additional resources, especially about this exercise. I know you can do this, so go for it, have fun, and I will see you in the next video.