Create Your Ideal Customer Avatar Fun Sheet

Instructions:

Watch the corresponding training video, then grab your favorite journal or open a fresh online document to complete the exercises below. It’s called a Fun Sheet for a reason — so have fun!

PART 1

Handling Common ICA Questions, Objections & Concerns

Knowing and truly understanding your customers is a vital part of a profitable and purposeful business. It helps you create better products and services, write infinitely better copy and focus your time and energy when it comes to marketing.

Before you complete this Fun Sheet, let’s review some of the objections your mind may throw up as resistance to even doing it.

“But I don’t want to leave anyone out Marie! My product or service really can help everyone.”

Remember, there are over 7 billion people on the planet — more than you’ll ever be able to serve through your business in your lifetime. This exercise will NOT reduce diversity in your customer base or limit your potential for success. And if you’re honest, you know this. No product or service is right for everyone. Leveraging this truth is the key to creating raving fan customers.
“But I don’t just have one type of customer (one gender, age group, marital status, economic status) -- I have a diverse customer base and I like that!”

Yes, we like that too! Our company has a diverse customer base as well. For instance, we have customers in 119 countries across 160 industries here in B-School. Our MarieTV audience is comprised of different genders, ages, races, cultures, nationalities — you name it! We’ve got kids through senior citizens. But here’s the thing, whenever I’m starting to write anything or work on a new product or program, I pick one person — an ideal person that I’m trying to reach — and I use that as the basis for my communication. It allows me to get detailed, specific and personal. It allows me to focus my creativity and messaging in such a way that I move forward, fast. And, after almost two decades of working this way, I’ve noticed two important things:

1. When I get specific about one ICA as a starting point it helps me connect with the parts of myself that I want to share. I get more personal, I feel more comfortable and I communicate more genuinely. Like I would with a friend. That makes my writing more concrete and effective.

2. That level of honest, real communication allows me to connect with the folks I’m truly meant to serve and naturally I repel those I’m not. If sharing my love of hip-hop or a personal story or a movie reference offends someone or turns them off, that’s OK! That means ours is not the right brand for them and they’d be better served somewhere else. Win-win.

“This feels like I’m just making things up. Shouldn’t I talk to real customers?”

Yes! You should talk and listen to real customers — all the time. I used these exact ICA questions (what you’re about to see in a moment) to interview real potential customers and flesh out my own ICA when I was creating B-School.

You must speak with and interview real customers. But flexing your imagination muscles is also important too. It’s vital to strengthen your
empathy muscles and train yourself to step into someone else’s shoes and imagine life from their point of view. This skill is crucial for you to create effective sales and marketing material for your business.

"What if what I sell doesn’t solve a ‘burning pain point’ kind of problem?"

If you sell a luxury or pleasure item like jewelry or art or cupcakes, realize there’s always a pain point, a frustration or a deep desire behind everything we buy. We want to feel something we’re not feeling right now. Here’s another important point: you don’t have to address pain points directly. You don’t have to say, “are you frustrated and tired from not having a cupcake?” But remembering that you’re selling to a human being — somebody who’s filled with fears and desires and emotions — will help you connect in a deeper way and run a better business.

For a fantastic example of a luxury company who has a very clear idea of their Ideal Customer Avatar, see the following article on the clothing retailer Anthropologie. I spoke of it in the training.

Finally, before we get started, there’s one more pitfall to watch out for.

One of the biggest ways that people get tripped up in this exercise is when they have Multiple Avatar Syndrome.

What’s that? Multiple Avatar Syndrome is what happens when you simply have more than one Ideal Customer Avatar that you must market to! While I always suggest you start by marketing to one customer, sometimes talking to more than one is unavoidable.

This would be if you’re something like an SAT tutor and you have to market to both the students and the parents.
When that’s the case, there are two methods to consider. Choose whichever one feels like it could be the best approach for your business.

**METHOD #1: THE DOORWAY METHOD**

The “doorway method” is about using call outs to different clients. It’s like having clearly marked doorways on your website, and then once the Ideal Customer is through that doorway, you talk directly and specifically to them.

For example, let’s say you sell organic skincare and you put three different options or “doorways” on your homepage: one doorway is for sensitive skin, one is for dry skin and one is for combination skin.

It’s a fairly easy way to quickly and clearly help people find information that’s most relevant to them.

In some businesses, you have to speak to two different customers, but one makes the buying decision and the other does not. In this case, the customer that’s responsible for giving you money should be your main focus. Gear the tone of the overall site to her or him.

If this feels like something that can work for you, complete your Ideal Customer Fun Sheet for the two or more main customers you’re trying to reach and use that as the basis for your communication. Remember, every business is different and there’s no one-size-fits-all strategy, so you’ll have to use your judgement.
METHOD #2: THE WORLD VIEW METHOD

If you’ve got a diverse audience: meaning different ages, genders, backgrounds, income levels, but they’re all interested in the same topic area, you may want to play with the “World View” Method.

This is where you’re speaking to multiple avatars who are connected through a common theme, need, experience or sense of the world.

If you think about a company like Whole Foods for example, they have a very diverse group of customers — yet it’s easy to see that all the customers are united by a common world-view. They care about the environment and, generally speaking, all want healthy, organic, often locally-sourced food.

While it might seem like your customers are vastly different, you may still be able to unite them under the world view method. Ask yourself these questions.

- Do they have similar motivations?
- Do they share a certain world view or belief about your industry, product or service?
- Do they use the same language and tone?

And remember, especially for this exercise, to start by focusing on one Ideal Customer before tackling others even if you have more than one person you’d like to market to.

**“Note. You may resist this exercise or say “Oh, I already know this. I’ve already done something like this before.” Trust us — don’t skip it. You’ll cheat yourself and your business!”**
PART 2
Crafting Your Ideal Customer Avatar

Let’s dive in!

Think of your ideal customers. The people you love to serve. What do they have in common? List every common trait, both demographic - age, income, gender, marital status, industry, etc. and psychographic - worldview, values, beliefs, lifestyle, hobbies, interests, etc.

Now use those commonalities and create a single representation of your ideal customer with as many specific details as you can. Give her or him a name, a full identity and, if you’d like, grab an image of a face online or use a photo of an actual customer if you have one. Visually seeing a real human makes it easier to complete this exercise.

This wonderful human is your Ideal Customer Avatar.

The goal is to describe this person so well that you can easily step in her shoes. You want to know her intimately so that you can think like her, speak like her, experience her emotions and, for the purpose of this exercise, be her!

HER/HIS NAME:

AGE/GENDER:

HAIR COLOR/EYE COLOR:
MARITAL STATUS/CHILDREN (INCLUDE NAMES):

WHERE SHE LIVES:

ANNUAL INCOME:

OCCUPATION:

CORE LIFE BELIEFS:

FAVORITE BOOKS, MUSIC, TV SHOWS OR PODCASTS:

MAGAZINES SHE READS:

BLOGS SHE FOLLOWS:

WHAT CONFERENCES OR EVENTS DOES SHE GO TO?
WHAT DOES SHE DO IN HER FREE TIME?

WHAT ARE HER GUILTY PLEASURES?

WHO DOES SHE IDOLIZE?

WHAT WRITERS, SPEAKERS, AUTHORS, TEACHERS OR EXPERTS DOES SHE FOLLOW (IF ANY)?

WHAT BRANDS DOES SHE LOVE (ACROSS ANY INDUSTRY)?
NOW BE YOUR IDEAL CUSTOMER AVATAR.

Step into her shoes. Look at life through her eyes. What primary emotion, or set of emotions, does she feel at the exact moment she’s about to buy your product or service? What’s she saying to herself in her head? What specific words and phrases is she using? What story is she telling herself?

In a moment you’re going to write everything that comes to mind like a journal entry you’re writing as your customer. Especially the embarrassing and “non PC” stuff most people would never say out loud. Write your answers as though you were her, not YOU.

GO DEEP AND DARK

QUESTIONS WITH AN ASTERISK: These questions most easily relate to products and services that create a specific result. If you sell art, jewelry or other beauty-happiness-joy-or-luxury type products or services, complete these questions as best as you can. Remember, every human being has dreams, life goals and aspirations whether they relate to what you sell or not. Every human being wants to feel seen, heard and understood. Compassion-based marketing takes a holistic approach, bringing awareness to the whole human being you are serving, even when your product or service doesn’t directly appear to help them reach their full potential or achieve anything your mind may consider significant.

Now that you have spent some time in your customer avatar’s shoes, it’s time to go deep and dark. Answer the following questions as your Ideal Customer Avatar. You need to answer these questions with honesty and candor. Be brutal here.
What do you secretly fear may be true about your life, either as it relates to the service/product you’re about to buy or to your life in general, right now?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

What do you worry about? What keeps you up at night?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

What stresses you out on a regular basis?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

What do you not look at or face in your life because it triggers too much fear?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
What’s the worst case scenario related to your life situation -- the one fear that keeps you up at night?

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_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

How do you fear others (close friends, family, spouse, clients) would react if they found out about your situation?

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_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

What do you fear might fail in your life if your situation continues or if it gets worse?

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_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
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_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
Where will you lose power, influence and control in your life if things don’t change or if they get worse?*

If money were no object, what brand or kind of product/service would you buy to solve this problem?

What do you wish companies/brands/providers in this industry understood about you?
GO HIGH AS THE SKY

Keep going. Answer the following questions as your Ideal Customer Avatar. Remember, do not answer these questions as “you” - BE your customer! Get into fantasy land here and don’t hold back.

What do you secretly wish was true about your life situation -- either as it relates to the product/service you’re about to buy OR in your life in general?

What’s the OMG, I can’t believe that exists “dream solution” that you’d pay almost anything for?

If this dream solution -- product or service -- could appear and unfold perfectly, how would that story go?
How will others respond to you if you get this situation fixed in an ideal way?*

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

What will you be able to do, get or achieve if your fantasy situation comes true?*

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Where will you be more powerful and influential in your life if your fantasy situation comes true?*

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Great work!

You should now have pages of material to draw upon to authentically connect with your ideal customer from a place of true compassion and understanding.

This work will inspire your web copy, where you find and connect with your ideal customers, your sales and promotional materials, your ability to design and deliver products and services that matter and your ability to effectively sell.

*This exercise should be completed for every new product, service or offering you create.*

If your brain hurts, that’s a good sign. It means you’re growing. And if you found this challenging, that’s OK too! As with every exercise in B-School, do your best. Don’t let this Ideal Customer Avatar thing trip you up and do not spend days or weeks stressing over this. Give it an honest go and keep moving.

Just remember this: to be the most powerful, effective business owner you can be, you must stay emotionally connected to your customers. You must keep her fears and aspirations in mind as you create, market and sell your products and services.
PART 3

Interview Real Ideal Customers

Now that you’ve flexed your imagination and empathy muscles and fleshed out your ICA, it’s time to talk with some real customers. Your goal is to have conversations with at least 3 people you feel could embody an ideal customer. Or if you have favorite customers — pick up the phone and talk with them.

These can be casual conversations over a coffee or even over the phone or Skype. Your goal is to be an excellent, compassionate, focused listener. Let them do most of the talking.

Don’t worry about following a rigid customer research formula. Your objective is to get good at asking questions that help you truly understand your customers’ needs, wants, frustrations and desires.

Not only will that help you develop the best product or service possible, but you’ll also have the insight to more effectively market and sell. That’s because you’ll know the exact language to use to describe what your customers are going through and what they want.

The most important thing to focus on is being really present in your conversations. Get interested in the human you’re talking to. Remember, there’s no sales or business technique out there that can replace legitimate caring.

Get resourceful about finding three people and then use the following questions as your guide. Note: you don’t have to use all these questions. Cherry pick what’s relevant to your stage of business, how well you know the person you’re speaking with and how much time you have allotted for the conversation.
SAMPLE CUSTOMER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell me about your life right now. What are your favorite parts?
(You’re looking for the basics — where they live, their job, are they married, have pets, kids, and what’s great about their life.)

What does your typical day look like?

I’m working on a new idea for ________ [fill in with your product, project, service] and I’m curious...

Who do you currently use for ______? Or what do you currently use for ____? [fill in the blank with the product, service or category you’re asking about]

What’s working for you now? What do you like about _____ [insert competitive service, product, approach, current situation]?

Based on their response, you might follow up something like this.

“That makes sense. Tell me more about why that’s important to you…”
It’s important to validate and support whatever they’re using or doing now. Especially if they’re using a competitor. Another quick tip: never talk against your competitors. Simply dig deeper to find out what they value about their current solution or situation, and then ask what’s missing or what they’d like to see improved. That information will be priceless to you!

What’s not working? What are 3 things you feel that could be improved?

What are your main frustrations?

What would you like to change about how things are?

What’s the biggest pain for you around ______ [problem, frustration, issue]?

What does this ______ [problem, frustration, issue] cost you in terms of lost time, money or aggravation?

How important is this for you to handle right now?

What else would get better in your life if this was a non-issue?

Have you ever paid for a product or service like this before?

If so, what did you pay for products or services like this?

What did you like best about it?

What frustrates you about this kind of product or service?
Have you researched this product/service in the past?
If so, through what methods: Google, social media sites, through friends or something else?

What is the key motivator for you in looking to purchase this kind of product/service?

How do you judge if a product/service is good/bad or right/wrong for you?

What social media sites do you use most frequently?

What are your favorite websites, magazines, stores and brands?

What do you wish companies/brands/providers in this industry understood about you?

If money were no object, what brand or kind of product/service would you buy?

What’s a dream solution for you in this area?

Remember to honor the time you’ve allotted for this conversation and send a follow up thank you card or email.