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Defining Your Niche

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Defining your niche is an essential exercise for everyone, novice or experienced, who intends to market a product or service. Creating a “mission statement” is personally enlightening and—when done thoughtfully—financially rewarding. Take time to savor this process. When properly attended, your mission statement will help you develop a personal and business focus, as well as identify potential clients for your unique products or services.

1. CREATE A MISSION STATEMENT. Make a *mind map* to help yourself think open-endedly and develop priorities.

- A. Identify your short- and long-term personal and professional goals.
- B. What is your role and/or that of your organization? With your clients? Your colleagues? Your profession? Society?
- C. *Focus.* Write simply and clearly. Keep refining your mission statement until it is four or five sentences long. Remember, before you can “Tell It Like You Are,” you must have a highly developed understanding of who you are and what there is to tell.

2. RE-EXPLORE YOUR TALENTS AND INTERESTS. Again, a *mind map* is very helpful.

- A. Think in terms of what you do best, most easily and with the greatest satisfaction. What do you do most frequently? Perhaps you are specializing without thinking of yourself as a specialist.
- B. What is *unique* about your interests? Your personal experiences? Are you particularly adept in some aspect of your personal life—i.e., raising your children? Are your interests and experiences finding expression in your business life?
- C. Talk to your colleagues, friends, family, etc. Often they can see talents, interests and specialties that you take for granted or perhaps underappreciate.
- D. Finding your niche often means discovering what is already there. Don’t think in terms of creating a “persona” or “image.” Rather, *discover who you already are* and enjoy it! Don’t feel discouraged or embarrassed by asking what you want to do at this stage in your life. Most of us have had little or no real opportunity to explore our professional uniqueness in a meaningful, deliberate fashion.

3. WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE? WHO IS YOUR CLIENTELE?

- A. Your *audience* is not necessarily your *clientele*. Your audience consists of those who you want to be aware of your services. Your clientele (who are a part of your audience) consists of those who will avail themselves of and *pay* for your services.
- B. Think *expansively* about your audience. It consists of colleagues, associates, friends, family, other businesses (even those who seem to be in direct competition), organizations, social groups, churches, etc. Today, with media such as computer bulletin boards, your audience can expand beyond imagination!
- C. Think *specifically* about your clientele. Research. Become aware of who needs your services and where those people are likely to be found. Identify and understand their attitudes as potential consumers of your services. Empathize and speak to their needs.

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