Getting Your First (or Next) Client

Using the progressive agreements

Now that you have your progressive agreements, and you know what marketing media you'd like to use to communicate with your ideal clients to move them through the agreements, we are going to put it into action.

In the modules after this we will be setting up a system that you can replicate and automate, but for right now the goal is to start building relationships. After all, that's what it's all about. It's about making your first (or your next sale), and then replicating that. That's what builds your business. So let's work on getting your first (or next) client!

Getting Started!

Step 1 – Make a list of people you know who could be your ideal client.

Since selling is all about relationship building, you'll be closest to a sale with people who already know you. When I started out with Neuro-Semantics trainings back in 2007, I filled my first training with friends, old colleagues, and (though most experts would not advice it) a few of my family members. I rented a small training room and held free introductory seminars. At that time, I didn't have any idea of my ideal client or of the problem I was really solving. I pretty much was just inviting anyone who I could think of and that meant that I had a lot of people who wouldn't buy from me. You are in a far better position. You have a vision of your ideal client, and so you can focus on them alone.

With your vision of your ideal client in mind, brainstorm whom in your circle of friends, acquaintances, colleagues from a previous career, or people you took your training with, fit the criteria you are after. You can also inquire with people you know if they know someone who fits the criteria and ask for an introduction.

Step 2 – Decide how you'll contact your list

Once you have your list. What relationship do you have with them? Are they close? Or perhaps they're people you know but you're not that close with them (like a colleague from a previous job and you haven't spoken to him/her in a few years). Depending on how you'll contact your list, you need to prepare the medium you'll be using to contact them. Do you phone them? Send an email? And when you send an email, what are you inviting them to? All of this depends on where they are in the progressive agreements, as well as how close you are to them. Remember, it's all about relationship building! Without relationship, there's no selling.

Step 3 – Set Your Goals

Your intention determines where your attention goes. Just like a coaching session when you don't set the outcome, a sales conversation without any intentions set beforehand will be simply another conversation. Preparing for communicating with a potential client before you communicate with them by setting your intentions, helps you be present and focused.

Very early on in my career as a coach, a sales manager taught me the ABC of selling: Always Be Closing. To me that sounded pushy and lacked integrity, but I have a different perspective on that now. Always Be Closing doesn't mean that you are closing them on the end product that you ultimately want to sell. It means that you are helping them move on to the next progressive agreement. That's a focus to keep in the back of your mind.

In any conversation, there are 3 levels at which you can set a goal: state, relationship, task. I put them in that order for a reason. First, the quality of your relationship building will depend on the state that you are in. And second, the ability to achieve your task goal is dependent on the quality of your relationship building skills.

Let's start with your state. What would be the best state to be in when you contact your client, whether that is through email, on the phone, or in person. You state determines your behavior, the words you choose, your creativity, the kinds of questions you ask.

Second, what is your relationship goal? What is important to you in relating to your potential client? What do you want to convey to your potential client? Integrity? Compassion and genuine care? Expertise? Do you want to build trust?

Lastly, you're having a conversation with someone to accomplish something; You have a task that you'd like to fulfill. This may be as simple as determining whether someone actually is your ideal client, but it could also be to get a "yes" to attend a webinar or an introductory session. The goal(s) you set will depend on where your client is in the progressive agreements. You might need to find that out first, in which case you'd have 2 tasking goals. When it comes to a tasking goal, think in terms of "call-to-action". You are helping your client make a decision one step at a time. If you want them to get to the next stage, you need to offer your client something. You are calling them to action. That might be a webinar, getting on your email list so they can receive your weekly blog, or an introductory session.

You can find a template for you to use for each conversation where you can set your goals and prepare for your conversation (I'm using the word conversation for emails, phone, as well as face-to-face contact) right here.

Step 4 – Create your "script"

While a script might sound a bit rigid, it certainly helps with being prepared before you connect with your ideal client. You've set your goals, and you've chosen your medium. What are you going to say? What questions would you like to ask? What states do you want to induce in your client and how will you do that?

One of my principles is that I won't sell if there's no need. I also have a preference to ask questions over merely sending information their way. Asking questions allow me to assess where my potential client is in the process, and whether I want to make a call-to-action or not.

I don't personally write out a script. I do prepare and go over the following questions. Once you've done this several times, and you have refined it, you can replicate it and use it as a template.

What pre-frames will you set?

An ounce of pre-framing is worth a pound of reframing. The reason for that is that whoever sets the frame, controls the game (subsequent experience). Any concerns that you can address in advance (time, money, trust, etc) will save you time and effort later on in the marketing and sales process. At the same time, pre-frames can help establish trust in expertise and set expectations for later in the process.

A great example of this is the way Michelle Duval does this in her sales conversations. When she does an interview with someone who applied for a coaching program with her, she will start with a few pre-frames. First, she will tell the potential client that this conversation helps to determine whether she wants to work with them and for the potential client to do the same. Second, she tells them that most of her clients will refer to 2 or more people and then asks who they were referred by (so she can thank them). This pre-frame implies that Michelle is successful in what she does, hence the referrals. Since it's true, she can use this information with integrity. It builds trust and expertise right from the beginning.

Some other examples of pre-frames:

- I don't make an offer unless I think I can help you and we are a match.
- My intention is that you gain great value out of this meeting and, like all my successful clients when I first meet them, that you gain a lot of insight in yourself/your organization and your next step. (What are you presupposing here? ☺)

The pre-frames you set will depend, again, on where your client is in the process. You probably don't want to preframe anything about prices or making an offer when your client hasn't even acknowledged they have a problem or need yet. You might want to pre-frame something about the value of your blog, or what they will get out of the webinar you're going to give.

The pre-frames you set need to be true to you. There's no need to say anything that isn't true or that will get you the sale quicker or easier. Base it on your principles and on what you really believe in. Recently, one of my clients said that my comment about "when you want to get the best, you need to be willing to pay top dollar for it. This was in relation to some competitors who offer something slightly different, and whom I know won't be able to provide the quality that I offer. After that, I leave the decision making in the hands of my client. My (pre-)frame is powerful not just because of the messag, but also because I am aligned with what I say. There's no hesitation or incongruence. I mean what I say. That's the difference that makes the difference!

What call-to-action to make?

What call-to-action do you want to make? Are you going to schedule a webinar? Do you want to add people to your email list? Do you want them to subscribe to a blog or do you want to sit down and have a conversation with them?

How will you verbalize that call-to-action? How are you going to make that offer?

What questions to ask?

A huge part of sales and marketing is helping someone make an informed decision. In essence, selling are motivation and decision making conversations. What does your potential client want? What do they want to move away from? What are the pros and cons of the change? What if they don't change? (We'll get more into that in the next module)

What questions do you need to ask of your client that will give you more information AND that will help inform your client about what they want.

You can download a template for creating your script and preparing your communication with your potential client(s) right here.

Some possible questions to get your brain going:

- If there's one thing you'd like to change that would make a big difference in your (business, relationship, health, etc) life, what would that be?
- What are you most frustrated with?
- Explore their experience around the problem you've chosen to solve, and ask clarifying questions:
- "What do you mean by...?" (Stuck, frustrated, and/or overwhelmed?)
- "Tell me more about that..."

- “How do you know this is a problem?”
- “What’s the impact of this having on your business/life?
- “Why is that Important to you to fix? And why is that important to fix? And why is that Important to fix?”
- “What else is going on.....?”
- “What have you tried to do to fix this? What else have you tried?”
- How long have you been dealing with this?

Step 5 – Contact your list

Your assignment is to contact at least 8 people in the next 2 weeks. (That’s less than 1 per workday, so there are no excuses! ☺) You might have a different goal for each of the people that you contact, as they may be in a different place in the process or you might want to contact them differently.

Remember to take incremental steps and focus on building the relationship!

Step 6 – Reflect and refine

Once you have reached out to your list, you’ll want to reflect as to how it went. In some cases, you might even want to ask the person you spoke to about their experience. I have created a self reflection exercise and checklist so that you can refine your conversation next time. It’s at the bottom of the Client Communication Sheet you have already downloaded. In the upcoming module we will solidify your marketing and sales funnel by creating the templates and automating part of the process.

Subscribe TO change

Your New To-Do List

As you are starting to go out and make things happen, I'd like you to maximize your results. The more consistently you work on your marketing, the better the results. And this doesn't have to take that much of your time, either. Ultimately, you can only have a business if you make sales. And so, my aim is for you to make marketing and sales part of your every day schedule. To make it as easy as possible, there's only 3 tasks for you to focus on every day.

1. The 1 thing that brings you the money today
2. The 1 thing that brings you the money tomorrow
3. Another task that you either love to do, want to do or need to do

It doesn't have to be time consuming, you don't have to have the perfect website (although that doesn't mean you don't eventually need one). To make your first (or next) sale, it's not about having all the fancy technical details in place. Rather, you need to get started with building relationships and letting people know you're out there, what problem you are solving and for whom.

Onwards!

Love, Femke