

Chapter 14 Preview

Reaching Your Ideal Customer

Now that you know who your ideal customers are and what they want, and you've expressed the way your business satisfies those desires in a single, powerful phrase, let's explore how to reach those ideal customers by creating the ideal marketing for your business.

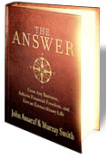
Marketing is all about improving the odds of communication: crafting just the right message and finding the right channel and form of communication to convey that message to the right people. There are several ways to go about this. You can get expert opinions on what you should do. You could start with an intuitive sense of how you've acquired your customers. Or you might reason it out. However you arrive at your initial strategies and tactics, your next step is the phase that marketing is famous for: test, research, tweak, and test some more.

Look for Your Customers Where They Are

You may have heard the joke about the guy outside the bar who is scuffling around on the ground under a corner streetlight. A policeman comes along and asks him what he's doing. "I lost my keys," the man replies. The policeman helps him look, but after ten minutes they find nothing. Exasperated, the policeman asks the man, "Are you sure you dropped them here?"

"No, I dropped them way over there, by my car," the man replies, pointing at a parked car twenty yards away, "but the light's better over here."

No matter how hard he looks, that guy is never going to find his keys—and the same thing applies to your business. No matter how much money or effort you put into a marketing campaign, you're not going to attract your ideal customers unless you go looking for them where they actually *are*, and not just where the light happens to be. We worked with a client who was a chiropractor seeking to expand his business. He talked with other chiropractors in his area to see what they were doing to attract more clients, and learned that they were sending out flyers in the mail. One colleague he talked with had rented a mailing list, printed up flyers, and sent out mailings to five thousand names.



“How did it work?” our friend asked.

“Not that great,” said the colleague, “I got two leads.”

The total cost of his campaign was \$600. Those were two expensive leads—and neither one of them ended up actually becoming a client!

Before doing anything, our client asked himself, “Where is my ideal client?” Most of his best clients came to him suffering from back pain. In many cases, this pain would keep them up late at night. The pain was not so agonizing that it would send them to the hospital, but it was bad enough that they couldn’t sleep; nor could they do much else that required focus, like reading. So they would end up watching television on the couch until late at night.








Our client researched the cost of advertising on the local cable TV network, found it to be quite reasonable, and ran a series of inexpensive late-night cable TV ads. He got 125 leads in just four days. Total cost of the campaign: \$500. That’s four bucks per lead—and *dozens* of them became paying clients.

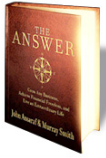
That’s the difference a little planning can make.

Choose the Right Distribution Channel

Our chiropractor client understood that the first step in thinking about how to reach your ideal customer is to decide *where* are you most likely to find him. Another way to put this is to ask, What is the right *distribution channel* for your business?

A distribution channel is the model or vehicle through which your customers will make their transactions with your business. The particular distribution you choose for your business will also determine where your ideal customer is most likely to hear your message. Below is a list of the seven basic distribution channels (a brief description of these seven channels appears in appendix 3).

-  Direct sales
-  Sales agents
-  Phone sales
-  Mail order
-  Online
-  Retail
-  Events



Your business may take advantage of one or more of these channels. Each will require a specific and distinct communication strategy.

For example, when Murray went to work for Telecommunications Terminal Systems in the early eighties, they wanted to create a coast-to-coast telecom company that would be the first national organization of its kind; previously, such companies had operated only within individual provinces. Murray knew that they could never achieve this objective through the channel of direct sales (or at least, not on their timetable), so they went with the distribution channel of *sales agents* and set up a national network of dealers. Using these dealerships as local service providers, Murray's team was able to create a national presence that helped the company generate \$60 million in revenue within a fairly short time.

Think back to what you learned from creating your ideal customer profile and put yourself in your ideal customers' shoes, just as the chiropractor did. Where are they, and what are they doing when they are most likely to be experiencing that need or want that would bring them to your business? What do their days look like, or their nights? What magazines do they read? What are their media habits? If yours is a B2B business, then what trade publications and other business media are your customers using to inform themselves and stay current?

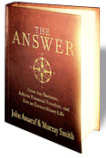
With your ideal customer's everyday life in mind, walk through that list of seven distribution channels, and see which one is most likely to match up with your customer. In other words, through which channel are you most likely able to reach your prospects with your marketing message?

Case Study: OneCoach

When we were going through the original planning for OneCoach, we knew from the start that we wanted to have a global impact and touch the lives of millions of businesspeople. We also knew that we wanted to preserve a sense of immediacy, and to maintain that quality experience with our clients no matter how large we grew. The moment we conceived of the OneCoach program, we began thinking about the ideal distribution channel to accomplish those goals.

It wasn't a quick or simple choice, because there were many candidates. We could have used the direct sales channel, for example, by creating branch offices run by our central headquarters in San Diego. Or, again going with direct sales, we could have built a massive facility here in Southern California, like a university, and designed educational programs that would bring clients from all over the world to this one location. We could have decided to license to other organizations; and there were several other options we looked at, any one of which would have been feasible.

We spent months looking at all the various channels and models, and finally concluded that there was only one model that perfectly fit the results and the experience that we wanted to create: franchising, a type of *sales agent* channel.



To create the kind of passionately committed client experience we were after, we needed representation at the local level:

We needed to have people on the ground in each locale, people who understood the unique qualities, character, economic conditions, and other aspects of that region in a way that we could never hope to do from one central location. We could have hired several thousand people around the world, but then we would have a structure with employees working at great distances from the home office, and we didn't think they'd have the same stake in the process as someone who had paid a significant franchise fee to develop opportunity in his or her own area.

We decided to use a two-tiered franchise model, creating a group of roughly one hundred master franchisees (whom we call *regional owners*), who would then develop and support a network of fifteen hundred local franchisees (*business partners*) within their region. Franchise operations are moving away from such two-tiered models, because they take profit away from the franchisees and put it into the hands of the corporation. But it made perfect sense to us: Relinquishing a piece of profit would support our long-term vision by giving us far greater control of the brand, the integrity of the training model, and the quality of the client experience at the local level.

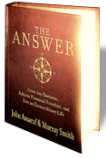
The franchise model also allowed us to focus on our core competencies. Our most highly developed skills and abilities are in the areas of training, sales, marketing, management, and infrastructure. Achieving the same goals with a direct sales model would have required creating a company with some one thousand employees and one hundred managers, which would have introduced a colossal distraction from what we do best. Clearly, franchising was the best distribution channel for us: No other model quite fit.

We designed and launched our business mastery program, started growing our executive team, and got some experience under our belts. A year into the project, after more than three thousand businesses served in thirty-three countries, we made the final decision to proceed with franchising, and we spent a year getting the regulatory processes in place, so that by the time our company was two years old and we had fully tested our program, we would be ready to start selling franchise rights, first nationally and then internationally. Right on schedule, we sold our first ten regions, and we've been growing steadily ever since.

Choosing the Right Channel for Daycare

Let's return to our example of the daycare service and see how we could use what we now know to choose the ideal distribution channel for reaching our ideal customers.

Based on our work in chapter 11, we know that the ideal customer for your daycare service is a woman, from twenty-one to forty-five years of age, married, with one to three children, employed, a homeowner, with a total annual household income of \$70,000 or more. Based on our work in chapter 12, we also know what our customer wants: safe, affordable daycare that will provide an educational component within a nurturing, loving environment.



Now, where will we reach her? Let's look through the seven major distribution channels.

Our ideal customer's age range suggests that she is probably Internet-savvy, making the *online* channel a good possibility. Because she is a homeowner with young kids, chances are good that she spends the majority of her nonworking hours in the home, which makes reaching her on the *phone* through a telemarketing service a good possibility. Also, given the nature of the service, most parents would probably want to come visit the daycare center in person before making their decision about using our services, which puts us in the *direct sales* channel.

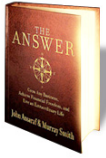
What about the rest of the list? We can eliminate retail and mail order right off the bat, because daycare service is not something we can move through either of those channels. The last two channels, sales agents and events, don't seem conducive to our business, either. This leaves us with three candidates: *direct sales*, *phone sales*, and *online sales*.

By the way, this is a typical number of distribution channels to be considering at this stage. Although there are seven possible distribution channels to choose from, you'll almost always find that only a few apply to any given business. And by prioritizing these and examining them more closely, we can often narrow our options down to one.

Which of these channels is most likely to reach your ideal customer? The best way to answer this is to put yourself in your customer's shoes and imagine walking through her typical day. Like virtually all parents of young kids, she's probably swamped early in the morning as she hurries to dress herself and her kids, make breakfast for the family, drop the kids off at daycare, and get to her job on time. She's probably just as busy in the evening, too, not to mention completely exhausted by then. If we're going to reach her by using a call center, the only times we can reach her at home are in those early-morning and evening hours. Given her hectic schedule and state of mind during those hours, how receptive is she likely to be to a telemarketing call? Scratch phone sales.

What about the online channel? This sounds logical—but take another look at that day we just walked through. How much time is she spending surfing the Web? Because she has so little free time, chances are good that she just gets online for the essentials, like paying bills, making some quick purchases, and possibly catching up with friends and family via email.

What's more, she is probably not even looking for a new daycare provider, because she already *has* daycare. Your daycare may offer substantial advantages over her present provider, but she doesn't know that yet. We need to reach her with a message that will inform her about the superior benefits your daycare offers, but trying to generate leads online by creating a website is probably not going to do the job.



In less than five minutes, we've narrowed the field of distribution channels down to one: direct sales. You are now one of the few daycare owner/operators in your area, perhaps the *only* one, who already knows which distribution channel has the greatest chance of success for promoting and selling your service. You know where you will have your greatest chances of increasing customer response rates, which will allow you to spend your marketing dollars with confidence and certainty as you go about increasing your revenue and your profits.

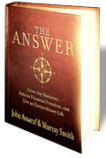
And imagine what your competition is doing. They are spending a small fortune designing, creating, and implementing an expensive website—a website that their ideal customer isn't looking for and will never find. They are hiring the services of an expensive call center that will only annoy their prospects.

But not you. You know which distribution channel has the greatest chance for success, based on the careful work you've done creating clarity and focus around your business. You're hiring some local moms whose kids have already left the nest to work for you part-time as salespeople, getting out the word about this unique, well-run, learning-oriented daycare center that allows parents to see their kids via webcam anytime they please.

Choosing the Right Marketing Strategy

Now that you know where to reach your ideal customer, it's time to consider what marketing strategies you might use to get your message across. Here is a list of sixteen different strategies to consider. (This list appears, along with a brief description of each, in appendix 3.)

- 📖 Advertising (television, radio, print)
- 📖 Affiliate and joint venture
- 📖 Affinity marketing
- 📖 Barter
- 📖 Catalog marketing
- 📖 Direct marketing
- 📖 Event marketing
- 📖 Frequent-buyer programs
- 📖 Internet
- 📖 Outdoor media
- 📖 Point of purchase (POP) and point of sale (POS)
- 📖 Place-based media
- 📖 Promotions and cross-promotions
- 📖 Public relations (PR)
- 📖 Referrals
- 📖 Signage



That's a lot of choices! Fortunately, you won't need all of them. In fact, just as with the seven distribution channels, you'll typically find that just one or two of these methods will prove to be the most effective for your situation, in terms of both cost and response. And with the information you have assembled, that decision will now be far easier to make.

For this daycare operation, the marketing method that makes the most sense to us is direct marketing. This looks promising. We could purchase a highly defined list from a list broker and refine it further using our specific demographic profile information. We could target homeowners who live within a five-mile radius of our daycare center, and narrow that down further to families who have one or more kids and an income range of \$70,000 and above. The specificity of this list will yield a small but highly targeted direct-mail list that would be inexpensive to buy, so we might be able to afford a whole series of mailings.

Now that you have your lead-generating strategy in place, you need to develop a tactical plan for the process.

Choosing the Right Marketing Tactics

Now that we've decided direct mail is our best option for communicating to our ideal customer, we need to decide on our tactical plan of action for implementing that strategy. Choosing our distribution channel tells us *where* we'll reach our best prospects; choosing the strategy tells us *what* we'll do to reach them; and choosing our specific tactics tells us *how*.

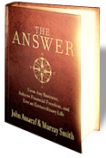
- 📖 Distribution channel = where
- 📖 Marketing strategy = what
- 📖 Marketing tactic = how

In appendix 3 you'll find a fairly lengthy list of possible marketing tactics. This is not a complete list, because new tactics evolve and emerge constantly, but it is certainly extensive enough to give you a wide range of ideas to choose from.

When considering direct mail, we have several options. We could send a sales letter, a brochure, or a postcard. A sales letter might work—if it gets opened; these days, that's a long shot. Most people easily recognize business-related sales letters and will more than likely toss our letter out, unopened.

What about a brochure? A brochure might work if we designed it as a self-mailer—that is, a piece that is mailed by itself rather than being placed into an envelope. Here again, though, we have a problem: A brochure is also easily recognized as promotion and discarded before anyone reads the information.

Also, these different kinds of mailings will differ significantly in cost. Before we make any decision on how much to spend, we need to consider a factor that is all too often ignored.



Your Customer's Lifetime Value

You're well aware of the fact that before you launch into any marketing campaign, you need to weigh its costs against the estimated benefits. But in order to accurately assess those benefits, you need one critical piece of information: your customer's *lifetime value*.

Lifetime value refers to the amount of revenue and profit you can expect to receive from your ideal customer over the term of your relationship. Knowing your ideal customer's lifetime value gives you a tremendous advantage. This information drives all your lead-generation and marketing decisions, allowing you to focus your marketing dollars with far greater precision, accuracy, and productivity. It allows you to know ahead of time exactly how much money you can afford to spend on efforts to acquire each customer, and results in a far more predictable cash flow.

Not knowing this number leaves many businesses floundering in their marketing efforts, making hasty and ill-informed marketing decisions, some of which can even prove fatal to their businesses. Launching a marketing campaign without knowing this number is like flying a plane without a flight plan.

Case Study: A Catalog Company's Customer Acquisition Cost

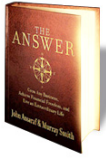
Jack Rued, a OneCoach executive, did some work a number of years ago for a catalog company that sold a line of home decorations. This company was basing its customer acquisition costs strictly on the dollar value of the average initial purchase. "They had never really considered the lifetime value of their customer," recalls Jack, "so it had never occurred to them that investing more money in customer acquisition than they got back in initial sales might be a profitable strategy."

At Jack's suggestion, they shifted their acquisition strategy and began investing at a "loss" of \$15 for each new customer. "By the end of the first year," says Jack, "we had acquired so many repeat customers that gross revenues had increased by \$8 million—simply by looking at the customer's lifetime value and changing our customer acquisition strategy."

Over the course of three years since making the change, the catalog company went on to grow fourfold.

How to Calculate Your Customer's Lifetime Value

Calculating the lifetime value of your customer is simple. First, estimate your customer's *lifetime revenue*, that is, the amount of money he will spend with you throughout his "lifetime" with your business. In the United States, the average consumer moves about once every five years, so we typically use a figure of five years for the lifespan of a loyal customer, assuming that the customer will move out of our business's sphere of influence in five years.



Given the particular nature of your business, you may have a typical customer lifetime of ten years, or three months; just give it your best guess.

Let's say you sell a product retailing at \$100, and your customer purchases it once every 3 months (4 times per year). Using the default lifetime of 5 years, this gives us a lifetime revenue of \$2,000 ($\100×4 purchases per year $\times 5$ years). Once you have your lifetime revenue, simply subtract all the expenses involved in generating that revenue, including your total cost of goods sold and the sales and marketing costs involved in acquiring that customer.

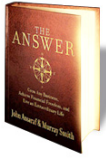
Let's say that \$100 product you sell costs you \$10 to produce and deliver. Because your customer purchases a total of 20 times (4 times per year for 5 years), your total cost of goods sold is \$200. Let's also say you spend \$90 in sales and marketing expenses to acquire that customer, plus another \$500 over the course of the 5 years in communicating with that customer. That's a total cost of \$790 ($\200 plus $\$90$ plus $\$500$). The *lifetime profit* for this customer would be \$1,210 ($\$2,000$ lifetime revenue minus $\$790$ in total costs).

Why is this number so important? Because if you make marketing decisions without knowing the lifetime value of your customer, you're shooting in the dark. And shooting in the dark is never going to create the success you want.

Take the example above: To sell that \$100 product, you know it costs you \$10 to produce it and another \$90 to acquire that customer. When you make that first sale, you will just break even. Is it worth it to spend that much money—or even more—on marketing to that client? Looking at these numbers alone, it doesn't look like it. After all, you're not making any profit, right? You just broke even. You might well be tempted to stop marketing—and if you did, you'd be missing out on a huge opportunity for your business!

Knowing your customer's lifetime value tells you a whole different story. Even though you only broke even on that first sale, knowing your customer's lifetime value tells you that if you continue marketing and selling that product to that customer, you are ultimately going to make a profit of well over a thousand dollars (\$1,210, in fact) from that one customer. Lifetime value is the reason cellular phone service companies can afford to give their customers cell phones at ridiculously cheap prices, or even for free: They know they'll more than make it up in revenues from the services the customers use.

What's more, for every dollar of revenue your business produces, you are dramatically increasing your business's *market value*. In some industries the multiple of annual revenues that is used to determine the value of a business can be as high as five, or ten, or even thirty. This means that if you increase your business's annual revenue by \$100,000, that could increase the price tag on your business, if you decide to sell it, by as much as \$3 million.



Cutting Through the Clutter

Once you've decided on a marketing strategy, it's time to sharpen the focus of your message to ensure that you reach your prospect with enough impact to cause him or her to pick up the phone, walk into the store, or go to the website and get involved with your business.

Here is the problem any marketer faces: Your prospects are swimming, drowning, suffocating in marketing messages. We all are. In today's media-saturated world, we are exposed to a relentless barrage of advertising messages, from the moment we wake up to the time we go to bed. From television and radio, our morning newspaper and favorite magazines, our email inboxes and the websites we visit, billboards, subway signage, and park benches, messages claw at our eyes and ears for attention around the clock. Now we even find ads on fruit in the supermarket, corporate signage on secluded nature trails, and marketing pamphlets promoting products in dental and medical offices. And that flood of marketing messages is only going to continue to grow.

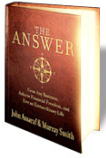
Because your prospects are inundated with marketing messages, they'll filter most of these messages right out of their conscious thoughts—unless one happens to hit them squarely on their hot button. And because you put the time and effort into investigating exactly who your prospects are, what their most pressing want is, and how your business fulfills it, that's exactly what your marketing message is going to do: make a bull's-eye hit on your ideal customer's hot button with a highly targeted and strategically placed message, compelling the prospect to become involved with your business.

To this end, hiring a professional copywriter is an investment that can be worth its weight in gold, providing you find a good one. (As with any professional, not all copywriters are alike; it's always best to get strong recommendations from the writer's past clients.) But whether you hire a professional or write your marketing materials yourself, you'll want to have a solid grasp of what makes an effective marketing message.

The Cut-Through-the-Clutter Marketing Formula

Effective marketing copy must:

- 📖 grab and engage the reader's attention;
- 📖 give the prospect enough compelling information so that he or she can make a cogent decision;
- 📖 offer a crystal clear, low-risk, easy-to-take next step so that your prospect can take action.



Note that this “next step” action may not necessarily be to plunk down their credit card right then and there to buy your product. It may be to pick up the phone to make an appointment to learn more, to order a free trial, or to visit a retail location. Whatever it is, you want to stimulate a concrete action step that gets your prospect actively involved with your business.
That’s the cut-through-the-clutter formula:

grab • engage • inform • offer

Although we’ll use the example of a written piece to illustrate this, exactly the same formula can and should be used with any and every marketing communication you create for your business. You can apply it to print ads, radio spots, TV commercials, brochures, flyers, live presentations, websites, e-letters, bag stuffers, coupons . . . *anything*.

Let’s take a look at each one of these four steps in detail.

1. Grab

Before it can do anything else, your message first has to gain your prospect’s attention, which you’ll typically do with an attention-grabbing *headline*.

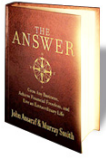
The headline is by far the most important single part of any ad. If your prospects don’t read the headline, then they won’t read the rest of the ad, no matter how well it’s written. If your headline doesn’t do its job, the rest of the project is nothing but a waste of time, effort, and money.

In a print piece, the headline is printed in the largest type; it’s where the eye goes first. In a radio ad, the headline is the first thing the listener hears. No matter what the medium, every marketing piece starts with a headline—and that headline must grab the prospect’s attention, effectively and immediately.

The right attention-grabbing headline also serves a crucial function that many marketers and business owners don’t think about: It immediately *qualifies* your ideal customer and *disqualifies* those prospects who are not ideal. A well-written headline will grab *only* the attention of those prospects who genuinely need or want your product or service—and those are the only ones you want to grab, right?

You have already identified those needs and wants by creating your ideal customer profile in chapter 11, and you further refined and focused those wants through the “hot button” exercises of chapter 12. All this work you’ve done gives you the raw material you need to draw on for your headlines.

For example, let’s say your daycare facility specializes in caring for children ages two to five. Let’s say you’ve discovered that all the other daycare services in your area have a child-to-teacher ratio of about 10:1—that is, there is one teacher for every ten children. You’ve also learned that one of your ideal customer’s hot buttons is making sure their child is getting enough personal, undivided attention and supervision. So you hit on this innovation: You could hire additional staff so that your child-to-teacher ratio would drop to 5:1.



Now we can use that hot button and your innovation to give us the raw material for your attention-grabbing headline:

*Ever Feel Like Your Daycare Treats Your Child
Like a Number Instead of a Little Person?*

Again, your headline will use the largest type in your entire piece, so that the reader's eye knows exactly which words to read first.

2. Engage

You've grabbed your prospect's attention; that's the good news. The bad news is that you only have it for the next two seconds—and then it'll be gone again. Remember, your customer lives in a world of media overload. Simply grabbing her attention is not going to get your message across, because only a moment after you've grabbed it, you've lost it again . . . *unless* you're carefully following the cut-through-the-clutter marketing formula.

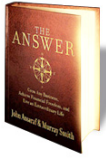
Once you've grabbed your prospect's attention, you must ensure that the very next thing she reads *holds and engages* that attention—and that is the *subheadline's* job. The headline is like tapping on a glass with your spoon at a dinner party to get everyone's attention so you can give a toast. The subheadline is the first line you speak when you actually start *giving* the toast. Imagine your potential ideal customer is saying this to you as she distractedly glances at her watch:

Okay, you've got my attention for the next ten seconds—what is it you want to tell me? And please, make it quick—I've got other places to be.

Your subheadline needs to *engage* your prospect's attention by persuasively promising to provide her with *vital decision-making information* that will resolve a major concern or frustration of hers. In other words, your subheadline builds on the impact of the headline and fleshes it out with enough specifics to make it sufficiently intriguing that the reader will want to read further:

*Here's How to Ensure Your Child Gets Personal,
Loving, Caring, One-on-One Attention at Daycare.*

Your subheadline will be set in the second-largest type in your piece, and it will be placed directly below (or after) your headline. Again you're leaving no room for ambiguity whatsoever: Your reader's eye knows exactly where to go.



3. Inform

Now that you've cleared some space for your message, you want to give your reader some significant, innovative information about how your business delivers on the promise of the headline and subheadline. This is the task of the lengthiest piece of text in your marketing piece: *the body copy*.

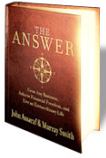
If your marketing piece were a trial lawyer, the headline and subheadline would be your opening statement. It's up to the body copy to detail your case by presenting all the relevant evidence to the jury. Your body copy must convince your prospects that you have the best daycare available. And simply *telling* them that you're the best isn't enough—you have to *prove* it.

In your body copy, make sure you emphasize the *benefits they want*, and not simply the *features you have*. The biggest and most common mistake businesspeople make is to focus on their business's features, and not on its benefits.

It's important to remember that every prospect is looking for the best deal—and this does *not* mean the lowest price: It means the most *value*. Prospects will pay a higher price if they understand the value of your product or service. Therefore, it's imperative that your body copy informs your prospects about your greatest value *with crystal clarity*. Again, this is why all that work you did in the last few chapters is so valuable. Without your ideal customer profile, and your list of hot buttons, and your innovations in place, you won't know the right information to provide in your marketing messages.

For your daycare piece, you'd want to make sure to highlight the fact that your child-to-teacher ratio is *half* that of all other daycare providers in the area. You would want to do this so that you don't come across as maliciously attacking your competition; you're simply informing parents that you have come up with an innovation for your daycare service that has their needs in mind. You might even point out that they're free to inquire at other daycare providers to verify the information you've given them. And, depending on how much room you have in your marketing piece, you might also highlight any other critical innovations you've made in your business.

It's important to make careful choices here. While the body copy is by far the longest portion of the piece, this is still a marketing piece, not an informational pamphlet, brochure, or catalog. Resist the temptation to throw in every bit of juicy information you can conjure up. Yes, you have successfully grabbed and held your prospect's attention—but the rest of the media-saturated world is still plucking at her sleeve, clamoring to be heard. You have a minute or two to inform her—not all day.



4. Offer

You must always end your marketing message with a *compelling offer*. Whether it is a postcard, a direct sales letter, a print ad, a television or radio commercial, a live presentation, or a web page—no matter the form or format, *every* piece needs to close with a compelling offer.

Why? Because if you don't, ninety-nine prospects out of a hundred will simply walk away. Your prospect will not take any action unless you ask her to do so *right now*—and give her a very good reason why.

Your offer has one purpose, and one purpose only: to lead your prospect to take action. This is why the offer step is often referred to as the *call to action*. Your compelling offer needs to be a low-risk or no-risk way to lead your prospect to take the next step in the sales process—to *take action*.

If you sell a low- or moderately priced product or service, the next action step might be to buy. If you sell a more expensive item, the next action step might be to request additional information. One excellent way to encourage your customer to do this is to offer a free informational report.

In our daycare example, the offer might look like this:

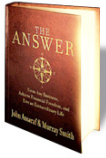
Get Our Free Report That Compares the Child-Teacher Ratio at All 17 Area Daycares.

When the prospect calls or goes online to request the report, you capture their contact information. If they don't buy from you immediately, you can then continue communicating to them using a series of additional compelling messages (all of which will follow the same cut-the-clutter formula), also known as a *drip campaign*.

Here's how this looks in all four steps:

The Cut-Through-the-Clutter Formula

Grab: *headline;*
Engage: *subheadline;*
Inform: *body copy;*
Offer: *call to action.*



Throughout these last few chapters, we've been using the example of a hypothetical daycare center. Now it's time for us to come clean: There was nothing hypothetical about it. A few years ago we worked with a client who ran a daycare center, and we went through this process with them, developing all the steps we've shown you here. By now you're probably wondering how the daycare campaign went. It went *very* well. In fact, this daycare center went on to absolutely dominate the market in its area.

And whether your business is a local daycare center, a billion-dollar conglomerate, or anything in between, you can do the same

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