

Momentum

Playbook 5

Who's in Your Tribe?

By Maria Ross

Here's What's Inside!

Why Miley Cyrus, <i>The Real Housewives</i> , and McDonald's Don't Care About Me	3
Know Your Ideal Audience	3
"Everyone" is Not a Market	4
Channel Your Inner Aaron Sorkin	5
Your Ideal Client, Customer, Reader or Fan Personas	5
It's Not About Sales, It's About Marketing	9
Your Assignment: Create Your Ideal Client Personas	9
One Last Thing...	11
Goodies and Inspirations	12

Playbook 5:

Who's in Your Tribe?

Why Miley Cyrus, *The Real Housewives*, and McDonald's Don't Care About Me

Young pop-singing sensation Miley Cyrus has a loyal Instagram following, sells out concert halls and makes headlines with her own unique fashion sense. Eager fans devour millions of records because they love her music and style.

The Real Housewives reality TV franchise has made handsome profits over the years. The bickering, back-stabbing drama of wealthy women in various cities draws millions of devoted viewers. Fans eat up tabloid news of the latest behind-the-scenes drama like a guilty pleasure.

McDonalds sells millions of burgers, fries, shakes and more every single day. They are one of the most recognized brands on the planet. Sure, their food has been shown to cause liver failure and rising cholesterol, but who can beat a \$2 real meal deal, complete with a ginormous sugary soda drink?

I personally don't like any of these brands. I can't stand Miley Cyrus (although she has a great voice), I refuse to dignify TRH with even one ratings point, as I feel it's a vile example of horrible human behavior that gives female friendships a bad name. And I'm not a fan of what McDonalds has done to people's health in the name of profit, although I used to live on McD's in college.

These brands don't give a damn if I like them or not. I'm not who they are talking to.

I am not their ideal customer.

Yet, they are still successful. Why? Because they appeal to the *right* people with the *right* message and only focus on their needs and wants.

Know Your Ideal Audience

Who are *you* talking to? Who should *you* be targeting? Who needs *what you've got* to offer?

Who is your ideal client, customer, buyer, supporter or fan?

This is the single most important aspect to a strong Brand Strategy and the key to engaging in effective marketing and promotion. It doesn't matter what you do: sell products, write books, promote a non-profit, offer consulting...even just attract an audience for your blog, books, art or web TV show.

If you don't know your audience intimately and make them real, you'll be shooting at a moving target.

I say "ideal", not "average," on purpose. If you simply target an *average* customer, your range will be so broad, you'll pretty much be targeting a vanilla, generic, faceless person who doesn't exist in real life.

If you claim to target "women between the ages of 25 and 60" how is that going to help you focus and attract the *right* women? A 25-year-old single graphic designer in L.A. has very different needs, tastes, pain points and buying drivers than a 45-year old stay-at-home mother of four in Des Moines, Iowa.

Having a specific person in mind will make your message and brand much more connective and relevant to a specific group.

I've gotten more calls from people in tears, lamenting how they spent thousands to sponsor a "women's" trade show where they got zero new customers—when none of those women were ever their ideal buyer in the first place!

Perhaps you *do* sell something that can appeal more broadly, but defining your ideal client (or customer, or reader, or donor....) personas will help you make smarter decisions such as pricing, packaging, advertising, even copy tone or visuals.

"Everyone" is Not a Market

When small business owners tell me, "I sell to everyone," my head starts aching.

"Everyone" is not a target market.

And ready for another truthbomb?

Not even everyone who needs what you offer is your target market.

We all buy shirts, right? But some of us buy them from Nordstrom because of the quality and customer service, regardless of price. Some of us buy them from Target because we like designer looks at a bargain price. Some of us buy them from StitchFix because we like the convenience of a personal online stylist.

Not everyone who reads memoirs may enjoy yours. Not everyone who needs a coach will like your approach and style. Your cool, disruptive tech product may not play well at a very conservative, risk-averse company.

People and businesses all have different buying drivers. They are attracted to different personalities, philosophies, benefits and price points.

Porsche does not target everyone who needs a car.

Whole Foods does not target everyone who needs groceries.

Tiffany and Co. does not target everyone looking for an engagement ring.

Just because someone needs a brand strategist, does not mean he is my ideal client.

And just because someone needs what you've got, doesn't mean it's a good fit, either.

Focus on your specific tribe.

Stop deluding yourself that you can convince everyone. You don't have the time, money or energy to fight that battle. It's about defining your people and speaking directly to their needs so that every move you make is super effective.

Channel Your Inner Aaron Sorkin

Aaron Sorkin is one of my favorite screenwriters ever. *The West Wing*, *The Newsroom*, *The American President*, *A Few Good Men*, *The Social Network*, *Sports Night* (extra points if you know this obscure sitcom!). His smart, snappy dialogue is like storytelling porn for me. If only all humans could be this eloquent when making a point.

I would shave one year off my lifespan to star in one of his highly-acclaimed dramas.

What I love most is that his characters are rich and complex. Here's what he has to say about developing them:

*"I think mostly about **intention and obstacle** - somebody wants something, something's standing in their way of getting it. It doesn't matter what they want - they want the money, they want the girl, they want to get to Philadelphia, it doesn't matter. But they've got to want it bad. And if they can need it, that's even better. And whatever's standing in the way has to be formidable."* – [Aaron Sorkin](#)

Do you know what your ideal customer's intentions and obstacles are? It's time to channel your inner screenwriter and find out.

Your Ideal Client, Customer, Reader or Fan Personas

You're going to build your **ideal client or customer personas**.

For a small business or solopreneur, I recommend no more than two or three, as it costs a lot of money and time to try to market effectively to more than that. Nike or Apple has that kind of budget and resources. You don't.

It doesn't matter if you are an author writing a book, a coach selling services, a boutique owner selling clothes or...yes...**even a B2B company selling to other businesses**. You ultimately sell to a human being, too, so you need ideal client personas.

First, Determine Your Target Segments

First, you want to come up with two to three target segments, or “buckets” of people who need what you’ve got.

Think about how your product or service will be used or consumed. What main categories of people are most likely to buy it?

PS: If you sell *through* others, than those businesses are also an “audience segment” to whom you need to speak so you’ll need a profile for them, too.

An example: Since I’m a B2B company, I have two company target segments:

1. Passionate Solopreneurs
2. Fast-Growth Startups/SMB’s (small to midsized businesses)

I have a broad description of each segment that includes some revenue parameters and cultural/personality traits. Then, I developed a specific persona within each segment, which we’ll get to in a minute.

If you sell direct to individuals or consumers, you may not need this extra “segment” step, but it can be helpful to bucket your audiences and create a general descriptor for each before you dive into a detailed character sketch.

Your segments could be anything, such as:

Working Moms
Small Design Agencies
Inspiration Junkies
Large Production Houses
Corporate Managers with Teams of Ten or More
Self-Published Authors
C-Level Executives
Memoir Lovers
First Time Home Buyers
Independent Contractors
Small Businesses Between \$10 and \$100 Million in Revenue
Financial Services Companies

Next, build a narrative for a real person in each of your two or three segments.

When you build your ideal client profile, it’s important to be specific. Create a narrative character sketch for a “real” person in each segment, just as a screenwriter might do. Who are they? What is their life like?

In addition to giving each persona an actual name (remember, you’re striving to connect to one real

person), I like to give them a descriptive and creative subtitle. Some examples just to get your juices flowing:

Bob, *The Risk-Averse CFO*
Gina, *The Spiritual Seeker*
Alison, *The Creative Marketing Executive*
Barry, *The Frazzled Executive Producer*
Hugh, *The Aspiring Yet Introverted Screenwriter*
Cheryl, *The Plate-Spinning Working Mom*
Lila, *The Inspiration Junkie*
Annette, *The Earnest HR Director*
Matt, *The Fit and Healthy Urbanite*
Taylor, *The Single Party Girl*
Scott, *The Data-Driven Business Analyst*

Now describe this person in detail, from a demographic level:

- How old is she?
- Where does she live, specifically?
- Is she married/single/kids/pets?
- What is her household income?
- Where does she work/what does she do?

Remember, this is IDEAL. Is the person most likely to buy and who do you want representing your brand?

Then dig into her psychographic information: What are her hobbies, interests, values? What groups does she belong to (or not?)? What does she watch on TV or read on the Internet? What books does she read, movies does she watch, or magazines does she read? What is her personality: Risk averse, bold, opinionated, a joiner, a loner, a rebel, a control freak? What does she fear or what keeps her up at night? What does she believe in, adore, or despise?

Make the sketch as complete as possible!

If you talk to a real human being and address her specific pains, desires, and needs, your marketing will be much more effective. Period.

And I'll say this again: This is an exercise you must also do even if you are a B2B company. These days, some give it a fancy name called *persona marketing*. At the end of the day, there is a human being you need to attract and serve. Who is he or she?

For the two segments in my business, my two personas are Jane and Steve, respectively. They are based on real clients. My solopreneurs tend to be female and my corporate execs tend to be male so that's what I made their genders.

Any time I create content or offerings, I think “What is Steve struggling with?” or “What does Jane want to know?” I also ensure I target the right persona with every marketing effort. If it’s not a good match, I don’t waste my time or money.

For example, my email list is mostly made up of solopreneurs, so I tend to write my emails for Jane, not Steve. But on LinkedIn and at certain conferences, I speak to more Steves than Janes, so I tailor things appropriately.

Here is an example from a past client: a self-care expert, author and speaker:

Cheryl, The Plate Spinner

Cheryl is a 40 year-old married woman with two kids, ages 4 and 7. She’s a career gal and had kids later in life. She is vice president at a bank and her husband is a senior financial planner at an investment firm. Cheryl lives in Evanston, Illinois and she and her husband both commute into Chicago for their jobs. Their household income is \$300,000. Cheryl is an intellectual and reads The New Yorker and tries to read Jonathan Franzen books. She does not get enough sleep and drinks coffee all day long. They don’t have a nanny or au pair as they are fairly traditional, but they do have daycare after school. Housework is the number one thing she and her husband fight about. Cheryl does the lion’s share of it, but her husband will only do his share when asked. They really need to hire a cleaning lady but that hasn’t happened. She watches The Daily Show and The Colbert Report and leaves MSNBC on for background noise. Cheryl will go to NYT.com, Salon.com, Slate.com – she’s a news junkie. But she’s also a self-help junkie – she loves to read about new diets and personal development. She likes Dr. Oz and Sanjay Gupta, those who offer more practical self-help advice rather than just woo woo.

Cheryl is also Type-A, and is always trying to be Superwoman. She’s constantly looking for ways to improve herself because she striving for perfection and doesn’t think she’s up to snuff – that’s her fear, that’s she’s not good enough in ALL areas of her life. She’s spinning a ton of plates and if one falls, she’s doomed.

DRIVERS: Needs more hours in the day, practical tips, structure, time management, organization, validation at home, time for relaxation and self-care, career success, rewards and acknowledgement. “Superwoman guilt.”

We now know Cheryl. Where she’s at in life. What she can afford. What she seeks.

Notice we added “Drivers.” By building the narrative first, we were able to surface specific buying drivers for this persona that my client could use when developing new content or courses, as well as emotions and aspirations she could address in her messaging.

You can make hundreds of tactical decisions by doing this exercise:

- Which colors should I use?
- What products or content should I launch?
- Which social media networks are my best options?
- Where should I advertise?
- What tone of voice should my copy have?

While this activity seems frivolous, it gives you countless “A Ha!” moments. My clients are now able to see why certain tactics didn’t work or how a new marketing channel might be best.

And as an author, I can tell you firsthand that if you don’t know for whom you’re writing as you write, things can be harder than they need to be!

What do you use as input for this? Your creativity, expertise, relevant articles, group conversations on key topics in social media (use topic hashtags to find relevant conversations!) and, mostly, your own common sense. Yes, you can do extensive (and expensive) research but for a quick and dirty approach, come up with your personas over a few glasses of wine.

Get creative! Think about a customer you loved and base the sketch of them.

In a future module, we’re going to talk specifically about how to get this type of data from your existing audience to further refine these personas.

It’s Not About Sales, It’s About *Marketing*

Many clients fear this exercise.

You don’t have to worry about being “right.” You also shouldn’t think, “What if I’m not speaking to this other random guy over here who might possibly buy from me someday? Am I missing out?”

This is not about whom you will let into your party if they show up at the door. If people that don’t match your personas want to buy your services, books or products, you’ll gladly accept their check. **It’s about who you will proactively reach out to and target.**

Early in my business, I worked with Microsoft. They do not fall into either of my personas. But they came to me and I worked with them. Do I intentionally spend time and money targeting the Microsofts of the world? No. Bigger agencies can probably serve their needs better. But can I help one of their execs if they reach out and ask? Yes.

Ideal client personas are tools to help you focus your precious time and budget on reaching the right people.

Aim for a target and create marketing and materials that speak to that target. If others get caught in your net, great. More fans for you!

Your Assignment: Create Your Ideal Client Personas

You're going to create your ideal client personas. Once again, you can call these anything relevant for you: Customers, Readers, Viewers, Attendees, Fans....

What are the two or three segments you target? Remember, these are your big "bucket categories" we talked about on [Page 6](#).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Use the space below to develop your character sketch or narrative for a specific ideal client within Segment #1. **Remember to be as specific as possible!** None of this vague *"between the ages of 25 and 50"* or *"lives in the suburbs."* Create a real person: *"John is 42 and lives in Commack, NY. He is married with twin 11 year-old daughters and works at..."*

Now your ideal client persona for Segment #2:

And if you have a third, your ideal client persona for Segment #3:

For each ideal client persona, find a stock photo online to represent the person. Paste the photo next to the persona above. Print these out and have them at your desk as you write blog or social media content, develop website copy, or come up with new offering ideas.

But wait, you're not quite done....

Now: post one or all of your ideal client personas from this week's assignment in a post on our nurturing Facebook group by Friday for a chance to win a fabulous prize from yours truly.

Remember, we are here to encourage you and provide any feedback. If you're like me, often it's fellow collaborators that help me polish my ideas to a glossy sheen.

Again, I'm going to reward you all year long, so don't lose your MOMENTUM: Post it now and keep that train moving!

One Last Thing...

There is no "right answer" for any of this, so don't let that stop you from taking action. You *know* who your audience is, you've just never thought about them in this way. If your ideal buyer or client is "you," then use yourself as a prototype! It's allowed.

You know whom you can best serve and with whom you want to work. Commit to pursuing those people. These personas are for your eyes only, so don't censor yourself. Dream big and embrace your creativity about the type of people you want to attract to your work. Who are they? What do they want? What are they like?

Most of all, have fun! This is the start of making promotion and marketing a blast for you. Trust me.

If you are still stuck, perhaps attack this by listing out the type of people you *don't* want to work with. If you know you'll bang your head against the wall working for someone indecisive or fearful of change, then your persona should reflect that.

Again, anyone can buy from or support you. But where will you focus your precious time and energy? Who would you handpick to represent your tribe?

Time to have fun and get creative,

Maria

Goodies and Inspirations

Can't find a good stock photo to represent your ideal client persona? Try [building your own custom avatar](#) for free!

Here's an [Ideal Customer worksheet](#) I created to guide you on some specific questions you may want to answer as you build your persona.

A great post about [how to create customer profiles to reach your target audience](#). This goes into a little more detail about what search terms they may use to find your offering and more.

And before it was played to death on *CSI*, an [appropriate little tune to play](#) as you do your exercise!