

myweeklymarketing.

Janice Hostager: 0:02

I'm Janice Hostager. After three decades in the marketing business and many years of being an entrepreneur, I've learned a thing or two about marketing. Join me as we talk about marketing, small business and life in between. Welcome to my weekly marketing.

Janice Hostager: 0:28

Do you ever feel like you're a little bit stuck in your business, like it's so much harder to get leads than you thought it would be, or maybe you thought like I did, that just getting everything done would be easier? I totally get that. When I first started my first business, I don't think I knew how hard marketing would be, and I had a background in marketing and advertising. Part of the challenge is that marketing has changed a lot over the years and it's still changing. Every new algorithm update that happens on Instagram or every new Google update can throw a total wrench in your results, but that's why I absolutely love to work with small businesses. I know the feeling of oh my gosh, I'm not getting enough clients. I also know that good marketing can change that, and this week I wanted to take Q & A questions from small business owners to kind of show you how to work around those challenges that all of us get into from time to time. In marketing, you need to be a voice in the world that's louder than all the other voices out there to get realized and it's going to feel like you're shouting a lot, but in this busy marketplace, we really need to be a loud, consistent voice, and that's some of the things that I want to address today. Also, I'd love to answer your marketing questions too, in future episodes. Like I said, they're my absolute favorite and I'll tell you how to send me your questions at the end of this podcast episode. So, starting out, my first question today is from Ashley. She writes I've had a photography business for about two years. I've been shooting mostly family portraits, weddings and engagements, and I've been mostly advertising on Facebook to get leads. But lately, it's not working as well. I've been discounting my rates, which has helped, but I'm still not getting as many leads as I used to. I'd appreciate any help you can give me. Thanks, Ashley, you are in a regular place with photography. I know my daughter's got a photography business on the side and I know she kind of struggles a little bit too. So you're not alone out there, and generally all businesses kind of walk into this situation where something that was working isn't really working as well anymore. So let me just start out at the beginning of that. First of all, You say that you've been in business for about two years and that's great. So you're a good photographer and you know that you can make a living out of this or at least I'm assuming you're making a living at it. The first thing I noticed about your question was that you shoot family portraits, weddings and engagements. So the first thing I would recommend that you do is kind of narrow a niche down. It's not that you can never shoot all of those again, but kind of you want to become the expert in one area. So I would pick an area that you are really passionate about. I know shooting weddings can be

exhausting, but it also can be quite lucrative. So maybe that's what your passion is, or maybe it's family portraits, or maybe it's engagement. So, whatever it is, I would just focus on one niche. And then the thing to do after that is to narrow that niche down and to figure out who your best customer is, and that can be quite different. And if you've been advertising on Facebook and discounting your rates, something is telling me that you don't have that done, because unless you're aiming for a discount customer, you don't want to be discounting your rates. It's going to be better off for you to add value than to lower the price. So one thing you could consider doing instead of discounting your rates is to say I'll give you a free eight by 10 print with this family session that I'm running for the month of October or something like that. So that's the first thing I would tell you is first two things. I would tell you to narrow your niche and then take a look at who your best customer is. So let's say you decided to focus on weddings and I would at that point, take a look at the best favorite customer that you've worked with and take a look at that individual and make that decision at that point that that is going to be who you're going to focus on. So let's say that a customer is paying a lot of money for your shoots. They're easy to work with, they might be local or they might not be local. It's up to you whether or not you want to travel and then from there I would go ahead and make that your customer avatar. Get to know that person as well as you possibly can and I have a free download for that if you, which I'll put in the show notes for today if you want to download that and just really define who your target customer is and get to know them really well. At that point, you know where they shop, how much money they make, what they're looking for in a photographer, what their wedding is going to be like or similar to you really get to know this individual, then it's going to be a whole lot easier. The next thing I would do is, after I know I mentioned discounts are probably not the greatest thing, but you really need to set a price that's in the area of what your target customer is willing to spend. From there, you want to take a look at what you do to make yourself stand apart from the other photographers out there, and it may not be pricey. Price may not be the thing to focus on, and I wouldn't recommend focusing on your price. I would charge as much as you feel comfortable charging and then I would take a look at the additional things that you can offer them. Maybe it's just really being great with the family on wedding day, maybe it's providing some other service that photographers don't offer on wedding days, and maybe it's the type of photography that you shoot. Maybe you have a different look to your photography. And then, after that, what I do with all my clients is I walk them through what I call the trail to the sale. So we've done a lot of that already so you've figured out who your target customer is and you've really gotten to know that person, and then we want to go to the awareness phase, and the awareness phase is where they would find out about you. It could be referrals, which I'll talk about in a second. It could be that they saw you on Instagram. I would take a look at your website. I'm assuming you have a website and I would look at how your search engine optimization is measuring up. If you go to Moz.com, you can do

a keyword search there for the keywords that are most popular in your niche that you're looking at, and so you want your SEO to be top just great in your area, right? So then I would take a look at the social media that you're doing. Make sure, on Instagram being very visual, and even on TikTok, you want to provide something that brides are going to want to follow. It could be the shots that they like. It could be just the way you pose people. It could be the backgrounds that you use. It could be a lot of different things that set you apart and give you that aha look on your Instagram page. And you can certainly do with this demographic. I would certainly be on TikTok as well, and also Pinterest. The nice thing about Pinterest is that it lives forever, so it becomes a search engine in and of itself, unlike TikTok or Instagram, where the feed disappears after you know a day or two. Pinterest just stays up there and then a lot of brides use Pinterest to plan their wedding days. So think of putting yourself in your bride's shoes and think about how that particular bride learns about photographer

When I got married, I would actually saw a book that was in a bridal shop that had photographers work in it and I thought they did a nice job and that's how I hired that photographer. So think about the path that they will walk once they find out they're engaged and they're getting married. Think about how they would find out about you and I actually did that when I because I used to design wedding invitations, so I know this market a little bit. But if you reach out to other people in the industry, they oftentimes will let you put a book. I had a book of invitations in a bridal shop when I did invitation design. You can certainly do something like that. Usually, there's a fee involved in that but a lot of people are sitting and waiting and they are just looking for all these things, including a photographer. So those are just some ideas in the awareness phase. Then you want to go to the consideration phase. So let's say they see a photograph that you have taken, either on Instagram or in a bridal shop or somewhere they'd seen something that you've done. Then you want to drive them to your website because that is what you own, and at that point, I'd highly recommend giving them a free download. And the free download could be something like it could be 20 things you want to include in your wedding photos, or how to look best on your wedding day. So it could use your imagination and think of things that would be of value to them, that would allow you to capture their first name and their email address, and then, after that, I would also recommend emailing them once a week, giving them some value, maybe showing them tips or showing them some other images that you have done in the past. So you want to set up an automation, with your email service provided for that. Next, we go to the consideration phase. The consideration phase is really where we're sitting in their shoes, right? So we want to know what they're going to do next, and a lot of what they do might be to look at other photographers. In fact, I'd almost guarantee that they're going to look at other photographers. So you really want to make sure that on your website and in your email communication that, first of all, you're talking to them like

they're a friend, like you know that person already right, because you really investigated your ideal target customer. So you really want to talk to them like you're talking to that person. And then you also want to understand what they like and what they don't like, and on your website, make it clear how you're different than everybody else. Make it clear why you're worth what you're charging. Just really set yourself apart from the competition that's out there. And the next phase of the trail to the sales, what I call the evaluation phase and that would in this case, you know and oftentimes this doesn't this isn't relevant. If you're selling something inexpensive, people aren't going to evaluate, say, a pack of gum. But when they're spending a lot of money on a wedding photographer, they may want to evaluate you by meeting with you first, and I would imagine that that's true. They just want to have a conversation with you. You can tell them about their day. I would spend some time in this step and just really have this kind of systematized so that they know that you're fully competent, that you are great to work with, and that you're going to get along with the family really well. You know that. It's their way to kind of test the waters and see if there's a good match. And then the next step, of course, is the sale. There's also the next step after selling super size. So at that point, I would ask what is it that I can do to maybe make more money so we don't lose money on the table? And that may be a separate family session that they'd be willing to provide at the wedding since they are going to be in town anyway. So you may want to do an add-on or kind of an upsell. It may be that you provide prints for them, which would be, again a good investment on your part because it's not going to cost you a lot, but it's something that they're going to want to have to keep. And then after that, there are two more steps on the trail to the sale, and I call them. Serve is the first one, and because they've already done business with you and it's after the wedding, how can you provide them with to make sure that they were a happy customer? Obviously, getting their photos to them in a timely manner after the event is going to be serving them well and you've developed a relationship with them. So, down the road, maybe they're having a baby, they're going to want to work with you again and the final step is the send phase and that's where, if they've had a good experience with you, incentivize them to maybe tell them about you and their experience to their friends, because that is like the full circle. Then they can start referring you to other people. There are a lot of things that we can do in photography to really build that relationship and to really get to know that target customer. So I hope that helps. Okay, the next question is from Chloe, and Chloe writes hello. I opened a hair salon a few weeks ago and was wondering what the best strategy was for marketing. I'm thinking, perhaps, about direct mail. I did give away online and that hasn't been very fruitful. I'd like to get to the point where I have five customers a day, but I'm struggling to get there. Any advice for me? Well, Chloe, I hear you for sure. Starting a business is hard and in the hair industry, there's a lot of competition out there. The first thing I'm thinking about with a hair salon is that putting yourself in the shoes of your customer would be. How do they find out about hair

salons? And oftentimes it's word of mouth, right? Do you ask a friend like who does your haircut? Or I've even asked perfect strangers like, oh, I love your hair, who cuts it for you? So that referral is really, really important. But obviously, if you're just starting out, you probably haven't had a lot of customers, so you're probably gonna have a lot of people out there who can refer you. Direct mail is expensive, so you might wanna look at the potential costs for this and I'm guessing it might be something that you'd recommend doing down the line. Instead, local partnerships would be a great place to start. I would work with people who do makeup, eyelashes, eyebrows, nails, et cetera and you might try some creative kind of scrappy marketing techniques a little bit. First of all, you could try discount haircuts for a day or free bang trims for a day, just to get people into the salon so they get to know like and trust you. I think the thing about hair salons is that people who cut hair become kind of a friend, right? So I go to the same person. Usually, every time I need a haircut and they get to know you a little bit. So a lot of it has to do with your personality. So I would take a look at social media and, for sure, show things like before and after shots, but also just like, do some direct camera kind of talking so that people can get to know, like and trust you a little bit and see that you're a cool person, right? Other ideas that are coming to mind are like free coffee deals like you can get a free coffee when you come in. Today I'm having Starbucks delivered, or something like that. I would also make sure that you do the Google My Business platform that we have available to us through Google. It allows you to put maps, promotions and reviews on it, and it's totally free and they get a lot of traffic every month. People like to use the Google My Business I don't know what you call it page or whatever it's out there, and I would also make sure that you have a website that's up and running. Make sure that your About page is really about you and your background. Telling about your story is good but this is important also to tell how your background can benefit your customer. So you want to be about you, but also about them a little bit too. Also, on your website, really pay attention to search engine optimization or SEO. Go to Moz.com or Ubersuggest.com both have free accounts, and you can do searches in your area and see what terms are getting the most clicks and the most traffic on Google, so that will help you. Just get your website out there so people can find you. The other thing that I'd also recommend is to do exactly what I did for Ashley in our photography business: walk the trail to the sale. Take a look at your target customer. If there's one type of customer, a certain age, a certain type of person that you love to work with that pays the most, that's pleasant to do business with. That's who you really want to focus on, rather than trying to do mass marketing to everybody, cause that really doesn't get heard by the people that you really are trying to reach. From there think about the awareness stage, like I was mentioning earlier, local partnerships. Advertising on Facebook or Instagram to your local area can be a whole lot more affordable because it is a local area. I would do the promotion days, like with the copy or free bank trims. Certainly utilize social media so that they can get to know, like and trust

you. Look for influencers or beauty bloggers in your area. All of these will bring awareness to who you are and what you do. The next stage of the trail to the sale is the consideration stage and again, just like with Ashley with the photography company, I would try and get people on your email list and even if it's not necessarily before they come in, it certainly be after they make an appointment. I would really maintain a relationship with them by sending them a weekly email just on hair care or maybe a discount coupon for some shampoo or some way to bring value to people who are on your email list. And it could certainly be like if you wanted to do a free bang trim day. When they make an appointment for a bang trim, then you've got their email list right there. Even if it's just a one-time thing, that gets people to join your list so that you can email them on a regular basis. I haven't seen email marketing John a lot with hair salons, so I think this would be an excellent way to get to develop a relationship with the people that come in, even if just a trim or a cut or a color, whatever it develops that relationship In the compare stage you want to again point out how you are different from your competitors out there if you specialize in a certain type of haircut or a blowout or coloring or whatever. You really want to, because you know your target customer. Look at what they are looking for and talk about how you're different than other people out there. The evaluation stage is a little tougher with a haircut because the way you actually evaluate a haircut is to get the haircut. So we're going to kind of skip that stage and go to the sell stage at that point, which, of course, is when they come in and make an appointment, and then the supersize is certainly just selling them shampoo or some product that they could use in their hair. I'm sure when you cut people's hair you can see all the time when they need a product that you can offer them to improve the quality of their hair or hold their cut longer or whatever. So that's the supersize. The serve would be a follow-up. You know it'd be great to get an email and I don't think this has ever really happened to me either. It's just maybe a text after they're cut and saying, hey, how are you liking it? Is there anything that you're unhappy with? Because you want to get that information, especially when you're on Google and a lot of times, people who are unhappy just go to Google and leave a review. That's not positive. So I would say, definitely try and follow up with those people and serve them well and also, before they leave the salon, make sure that they have an appointment into six weeks down the line, or ask them if they wanted to make an appointment for six weeks down the line when they can get their next trim. And last but not least and it's super important actually in what you're doing is a send stage, and the reason why this is so important is because haircuts are done with referrals, and so when somebody refers you, when somebody comes in, makes an appointment, you might want to ask them how did you hear about us? Then the person that referred you could send a free I don't know maybe a conditioner or something that a sample or something that would cause them to know that you're appreciative of their referral because the referral market is strong in that area. I think you really need to use that to your advantage as much as possible. The

thing not to send as a thank you would be like a 10% off coupon because that's just. It makes it look like you don't appreciate it as much as you just want them to come back. So I would send an actual maybe it's a gift card for a cup of coffee or something to show that, yes, I appreciate the referral. So that is all. I hope, Chloe, that that helps you. I hope, Ashley, that helps you as well. If you have questions that you'd like answered, please send me your questions via email. You can send it to questions at [myweeklymarketing.com](mailto:questions@myweeklymarketing.com) and you can find out more information about everything I talked about today at myweeklymarketing.com, forward slash 33. Thank you so much for tuning in today, as always, I really, really appreciate you listening. Take care. Bye for now.