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Janice Hostager: 0:04

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. Hey there and welcome back to My Weekly Marketing. If you have ever found yourself watching someone else land the client that you were wanting to have, or maybe wondering why the competitor just got another sale while you're over here refreshing your inbox, then I feel your pain. This has happened to me. And today we're tackling that topic, but I want to warn you, it stings a little. But why do people buy from your competitor and not from you? First of all, it's so easy to take it personally. That can put you on a downward spiral. You know the one. You start thinking things like, maybe I'm not cut out for this, or maybe this is all a big mistake, and I should go back to my nine to five. Well, before you do that, listen to today's episode. The truth is, it's usually not about you at all. It's about perception, positioning, and consumer psychology. So in this episode, we're going to look at what really drives customer behavior and their buying decisions, and how to identify what your competitors are doing differently than you are, and most importantly, how to use those insights to tighten up your own marketing without turning into a copycat. This is not a comparison trap episode. This is about getting strategic. And I have a special gift for you that you'll want to listen to the end to know how to get. So let's dig in. Okay, here's the deal. People don't always buy what's best. They buy what feels right. Emotion comes first, logic comes second. We like to think we're making rational decisions, but most purchases are about avoiding pain or getting closer to something that we want. That means if your offer doesn't feel like it solves a problem, they're going to keep looking. Or if somebody else's branding or their messaging or their story feels easier or faster or more like them, they're going to go there, even if your solution is stronger. Honestly, that's just human nature. Now, I did say usually it's something other than you, and I would stand by that. However, one thing that I've noticed is this. Sometimes when we're doing a video or going on a podcast or hopping on a coaching or a sales call, we get a little nervous and we put on a mask. I get it. We are slightly out of our comfort zone. Our heart rate's up. We want to sound smart and polished and credible. So our brain does this thing that it always does under pressure. It reaches for something or someone that does this really well. And suddenly, instead of just being ourselves, we're thinking, if I can just sound like this other person, then I'll nail it. Or if I can channel this other expert's confidence or their tone or their certainty, then I'll be taken seriously. I have done this too many times. That's imposter syndrome showing up in your behavior, not just in your thoughts. It's not that you don't know your stuff, it's that you're borrowing somebody else's voice because it feels less

risky in the moment. And sure, that might work for a little while, but here's the catch. People can feel it when you're not being yourself. We all have this built-in radar for authenticity. And when somebody is slightly off, we can sense it, even if we can't explain why. Your audience feels it, your prospects feel it, and your clients will definitely feel it. And that's where things quietly break down. Because trust isn't built on perfection, it's built on presence and authenticity, on realness. It's built on sounding human, not a highlight reel of somebody else. So when you put on a mask, even a very polished one, it creates just enough distance to mess with that no-like and trust factor that your customers need before they buy from you. And they might be thinking, she's smart, but I don't really feel connected to her. And that connection is what turns listeners into leads and then leads into clients. So the ironic thing is that you're trying to protect your credibility, but it's usually stronger when you stop performing and start showing up as yourself. You know your stuff, you're a great person, so let people feel that. That's when people lean in and that's when they start to trust you. And that's when selling stops feeling so hard. So the question to ask first is how can I make my message connect more clearly? All right, after that, let's talk about competitors because this is where a lot of people get tripped up. When I say competitors, most business owners immediately think of that one person who does the same thing that they do. Same service, same audience, maybe even in the same city. And yes, those are competitors, but they're only really part of the picture. You actually have a couple different types of competitors. First, you've got direct competitors, those are the ones we just talked about, the obvious ones, the people that who offer the same type of product or service to the same audience that you serve, like we just talked about. If somebody could reasonably choose them instead of you, they're a direct competitor. For example, if you're a life coach, another life coach would be a direct competitor. But there's more to it, and this is where it gets interesting. You also have indirect competitors. These are the alternatives your audience might choose instead of hiring you. That could be a DIY solution that they've been doing for years, or a template they bought on Etsy, or it could be another course, or a how-to book, or even free content. And sometimes it's even their procrastination dressed up as I'm still thinking about it. So instead of guessing, ask yourself, who else is showing up where my audience hangs out? Who are they following, buying from, or mentioning in their stories? And what solutions are my ideal customers trying before they ever get to me? You don't need to obsess over that. That's not what you need to do. We don't want you to spiral. You're just taking a look. You're just observing. Because the goal here is not to panic or suddenly reinvent your entire business model or copy what your competitors are doing. That's a horrible idea for a lot of reasons. The goal here is just to get some perspective. When you understand who or what you're really competing against, your messaging gets clearer and your positioning gets stronger and you know what you're facing. Then you can take action and set yourself apart and show how

you're different and better. This is something we talk a lot about in my course, Modern Marketing Mastery. You really want to take a look at your competitors because your ideal customer is going to be looking at your competitors. And you don't want them comparing apples to apples. If you do that, then you start competing on price and the lowest price wins. Then it's a race to the bottom. You want to show how you're the best for them, and that's your huge advantage. Okay, so why do people buy from competitors and not you? This is a question that's hard to ask, but it's also where the gold is. Most of the time, it's not because you're bad at what you do, it's because something in your marketing is maybe fuzzy or missing or maybe just not really hitting the mark. So that could be a few things. Let's break it down. The first thing we often look at is price. This is the easiest thing to blame, and it's usually the least accurate. People don't buy the cheapest option. They buy the option that feels worth it. If somebody charges more and still wins the sale, it's because their offer feels safer or clearer, or maybe it's faster and definitely more transformational. Price is just a number. Value is emotion plus logic. You could charge double and still be the obvious choice if your message answers questions like, why is this the smartest move for me? What problem does this actually solve for me? What does this save me? Is it time, stress, mistakes, regret? And will this make sense for me in the long run? If your pricing feels like a hurdle, it's usually a clarity and transformational problem, not a cost problem. The second component is value. This is where a lot of people fall down. You know what you offer, but your audience doesn't yet. They're not buying features, they're buying what happens after the sale, the transformation. It might be for them, it might be a calmer life, or maybe feeling more energized, more time, more business, the feeling of really understanding what to do next. So if your message stays stuck in, oh, here's what's included, and I get six calls, or you get five modules, then they'll stall. And when they stall, it's probably not good. But when you show where they are now, like they may be frustrated or overwhelmed or guessing, and where they'll be afterwards may be clear and confident and in control. And this one people often forget. If you show them where they will be in a year, if they don't buy your product, show them the stakes, then they can see themselves in it. People pay for what they can picture. It's your job to paint the picture for them. Okay, the third reason people buy from others is product features. But this one's a little sneaky. Sometimes the decision comes down to something really small, like a guarantee or a bonus, or implementation help, or just being really clear about what their next steps are. Not because that feature is revolutionary, but because it removes friction and makes things easier for them. We live in the days of AI. It's not going away. People have all the knowledge they need right at their fingertips. So it's no longer teaching them knowledge. This it's about sharing your experience and your motivation and community. These are things that people are looking for now. Your competitor might not be better, they might just offer something that your customer wants that meets a subtle need that you don't.

A few years ago, I bought an expensive business coaching program. I had looked at many business coaching programs, but this one offered a small thing that others didn't have. It addressed the internal struggle that entrepreneurs face, overcoming insecurities and doubts that we all face when putting ourselves out there. As he says, entrepreneurship is an inside job. And that nailed it for me. Was it the cheapest? Not at all. Did my hands shake when I entered my credit card number online and prayed I wasn't going to regret it? Yep. But that small little feature clenched it for me. So pay attention to what your audience complains about. They might say, I don't have time, or I've tried this before, or I'm overwhelmed and I don't know if I can do this. Often the winning offer simply addresses those fears more directly. Okay, reason number four, brand perception. People don't just buy what you sell, they buy how it feels to buy from you. Is your competitor perceived as more confident, more established, or relatable? Or your customer might think it's more for someone like me? That perception might come from their messaging or their consistent content, or maybe just a calm authority. Or maybe just showing up like they belong there, like they own the place. Like I talked about in the beginning of the episode, authenticity is a big factor in this too. If your customer vibes with you, that can make a huge difference. But if they don't, that might be the reason they keep looking. Your offer can be objectively stronger, but if theirs looks clearer or safer or more aligned, then they'll win. Marketing is a clarity contest. Okay, now let's talk about the customer experience, because this is where a lot of decisions usually get made. People might find you because you're marketing, but they choose you based on how it feels to interact with you. Here's the sneaky part. Your competitor doesn't have to be better, just easier, warmer, or more present. Have you ever had an experience where you called a business and they took all day to return your call? Or you reached out to somebody and they felt kind of cold or distant? Little things like that matter more than we think. So ask yourself, how fast do you respond? How clear is their next step? Do you feel awkward or do you feel confident reaching out to them? If your response feels confusing or slow, or if you come across as being uncertain you want to work with them, people hesitate. And like I said earlier, when people hesitate, that's where sales go to die. So ask yourself, is it painfully obvious to work with you or buy from you? Or do people have to hunt for links or forms or the next steps? Ask yourself, do I follow up or do I assume they'll come back on their own? Spoiler, because they usually don't. And do people feel seen and supported before they ever become a client from me? This isn't about going over the top with maybe a like a white glove service or bending over backwards with every potential customer. It's about reducing friction and increasing their confidence at every touch point. A smooth pre-sale experience says, I've got you, this'll be easy, you're in good hands. That's what you want to convey. Now let's peek behind the curtain a bit at your competitors' marketing strategies. Not to copy, but to understand what's actually working for them. Your competitors didn't just get lucky.

They're likely doing a few strategic things consistently, even if it doesn't look flashy. So ask yourself, are they showing up in inboxes regularly? Even short, imperfect emails build familiarity and trust. Are they telling better stories? Are they sharing client wins and lessons learned or behind the scenes moments, things that make him feel more human and credible? Are they clearer about their processes or their results because clarity beats clever every time? Are they more visible than you are? Are they showing up to do guest podcast appearances or reaching out to others to do collaborations? Or are they specific about what their ideal customer is thinking and feeling and wanting? Then you want to ask yourself, where are they stronger? Where are they showing up consistently? Where am I invisible or vague or relying on hope marketing? You don't need to outmarket them everywhere. You just need to pick the stages that matter most right now and show up with intention. Like I said, clear beats clever, consistent beats perfect, and compelling always beats loud and in your face. That's how you win without burning yourself out. Okay, so let's turn these insights into some actions. I'm going to give you permission to learn from your competitors without copying them. In fact, that's just smart marketing. Here's what I want you to do. Choose one, two, or three competitors to analyze. Look at their offer, their messaging, their content, their reviews, how visible they are, and then ask yourself, what are they doing well? What's working for their audience? Is there a gap that I can fill with my own voice and my own approach? Then tweak your messaging, your visuals, or your customer experience accordingly. Remember, this isn't about chasing, it's about positioning yourself clearly so your dream clients recognize that you're the right fit. But what's easier than that, I have a free competitor analysis tool that'll help you do this. It'll help you track their SEO, their advertising, website, emails, reviews, their content, and their pricing. I'll put the link to that in the show notes for today. So here's the bottom line. If you're feeling frustrated that people keep buying from somebody else, you're not alone. But instead of spiraling, it's time to take a deep breath and get strategic. People buy from businesses that make them feel seen, understood, and confident, that communicate well and paint a picture for them. If your competitor is doing that more clearly right now, use it as fuel to refine how you show up. You don't have to shout louder, you just have to connect better. And if you want help with that, especially figuring out your messaging, I cover, like I said, all of this inside Modern Marketing Mastery. So be sure to check that out. I'll add the link to the wait list in the show notes too. That'll be launching again in about a month. So you can find the show notes at myweeklymarketing.com forward slash 139, or the link should be on the notes section of the Apple Podcast or Spotify notes too. So before I go, I have a huge favor to ask. If you want to DM me and let me know if this content was helpful, that would be great. I spend a lot of time and money making content that I want to be valuable and free for you, but I need to know if it's really working for you. So you

can just send me a DM at Janice Hostager Marketing on Instagram. I would be so happy. Thank you so much for joining me today. I'll see you next time. Bye for now.