

myweeklymarketing.

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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, and welcome to another episode of My Weekly Marketing. If you're building a business, or even if you've been at this for a while, you probably had a moment like this. You sit down at your computer, coffee in hand, ready to finally work on your marketing. And within about 10 minutes, you're completely overwhelmed. Because now you're thinking things like, should I work on my website or should I be posting on Instagram? What about email? I've heard that SEO is important. Do I need a funnel? And suddenly it feels like there are about 112 things you should be doing and you don't know which one actually matters. So you either do nothing or you bounce between things, or you spend hours on something that doesn't move the needle. Friend, I have been there more times than I could count. And I've made a career out of marketing. So you should know it's not because you don't have a marketing experience. There are a few reasons why this overwhelm is so dangerous. First, obviously we can only focus on one thing well at a time. As my sister likes to say, multitasking makes you stupid. And that's always frustrating when you don't know what that one thing is. So we go back and forth and we lose so much time when we switch from one task to another. But sometimes we get frustrated and just rage quit. But the worst thing is that we get paralyzed and we start thinking that marketing is just not our thing. There's a ton of information online about marketing and thousands of courses and videos and other things that you can download. And on top of that, when we turn to AI, we think they have the answers. But even with AI, you have to know how to direct it in a way that's right for you, or it just becomes more AI slop. In reality, most marketing advice is built for businesses that already are up and running, not for someone starting their businesses, because marketing can get extremely microfocused. Once you start looking at ROI, CPC, CRM, SEO, it's easy to feel like you're drowning in marketing acronyms and it's easy to shut down. So today I want to strip all this way down to the bare essentials of what you need to get your marketing up and running. Because once you have the foundation, other things can be built on top of it. If I were starting over today, no audience, no email list, no clients, here are the first three marketing priorities that I'd focus on. Okay, priority number one, nail who you're talking to and the problem they have before you refine your offer. This is where I see some people get it backwards. They rush to this question: what should I sell and what should it cost? If you don't deeply understand who you're talking to and what they're actively struggling with, you'll create content that gets polite smiles

and zero clients. I can't tell you how many times I've heard gurus on Instagram tell you to follow your dream to build a business. Let me be clear. If there is no market for what you're selling, you've just built an expensive hobby. Numbers make a business successful. If it's your dream, that's awesome. But dreams alone are not enough. The market drives the sale, not the other way around. If there's no market, then there's no sales. So the first thing I do if I were starting from scratch is focus on who that market is. You want to look at one specific ideal customer, not a broad term like women entrepreneurs. One painful, urgent problem that they have, and one desired outcome that they're already thinking about or wish that they had. And this is where I see people skip ahead because this part feels slow and more difficult to nail down. Sometimes it feels like you're trying to nail jello to a wall. It's definitely not as fun as designing a logo or posting content, but it's the part that kind of makes everything else work. If you can't finish this sentence clearly, you're not ready to go to market. Here's a sentence. I help this specific person who is struggling with this specific problem to get this specific outcome. Let me give you a couple examples. Let's say somebody is a marriage and family therapist. Okay, but if you're talking to someone at maybe a networking event, they might not know exactly what that is. So compare that to this. I help long married couples who feel more like roommates than partners reconnect and build intimacy. Or I help women in their 40s and 50s who feel stuck in emotionally draining marriages figure out what they actually want and what to do next. Wow, right? You're in a completely different place with those last two. One is broad and forgettable, and the other two are magnetic and memorable. Here's another one. I help people with their accounting. Versus, I help freelancers who are making money but have no idea where it's going clean up their finances so they can actually pay themselves consistently. Or I help Etsy shop owners who feel buried in receipts and spreadsheets simplify their bookkeeping so tax season isn't a panic attack. Here's why this matters so much. When you get this right, your content feels easier to create on your end, and people feel like you're speaking directly to them. And then they start thinking, oh, she gets me. When you get it wrong, you're attracting the wrong people, or you're always speaking in general terms, which is kind of forgettable, or you're attracting no one at all. If your messaging feels vague, if your content isn't getting traction, it might not be your content. Fix your clarity. Really think about what your ideal customer wants and paint a picture for them about what their life will look like after they start working with you. Don't be afraid to get specific and don't be afraid to make that ideal customer really narrow. If you're stuck on this, you can use AI to generate pain points for your audience or identify search phrases for your that your ICA is using, or find out the top frustrations of your audience. What are they worried about at 2 a.m. or what are they typing into Google? I actually have a free download, a little worksheet to guide you through these steps. So that will make it a whole lot easier. I'll talk a little more about it at the end of this episode. Once you start

looking at what your ICA is struggling with, you will start to see problems. So I think it's totally a good idea to use AI for some of this, but don't outsource your brain to AI, which is easy to do sometimes, right? So test it out with your real customers or your potential customers. Nothing replaces a real conversation. And many people are willing to hop on a 15-minute call with you. This is one thing I did when I started my business, and it was a game changer for me because I got feedback that I never expected, and it really helped me shape my offers. Okay, priority two in building your marketing foundation is to build a simple path to a conversion. Don't worry about funnels. Everybody wants a funnel. But if you're new to marketing, a funnel is a complex system that turns visitors into buyers, and they definitely have their place in marketing. But not at this stage. At this stage, you don't need a funnel. What you need is a way for someone to raise their hand and just talk to you. That's it. At the beginning of your business, the best thing you could do is turn strangers into conversations. That could be a simple landing page with a book a call button. It could be a lead magnet with an email follow-up to book a call. It could be a conversation you're having at a workshop. It could be a networking event. It could even be in DMs or groups on Facebook or on LinkedIn. It can be tempting to build a complicated system before you've proven anyone wants what you're selling. This is a mistake I absolutely did when I started out, probably because I knew marketing and I was well-versed in funnels. But although I was comfortable building complex funnels, it was way too soon. And I actually got a little bit off course. And when you start too soon, suddenly you're building landing pages for everything that nobody visits. You're setting up multiple email automations that are not speaking the right message to your audience. And you're creating a lot of content that's off base. And none of it is necessary at this stage because you aren't clear enough on what your customer really wants in an offer. So if you have conversations, they lead to understanding your audience better, defining your offer, and really getting your first clients. That's what you want right now. Not to scale or automate. You don't really need passive income or multiple income streams at this point. You just want conversations. My first design agency client came from a conversation I had with a woman at my church. She ended up being one of my best customers for many years. Another client I had came from talking with someone in a Facebook group, and her business helped me shape my coaching offer and ultimately my Trail to the Sale framework. I've seen people get their first clients from a simple calendar link, from a workshop where only four people showed up, or like I said earlier, from a DM conversation. It's not fancy, it's just a clear next step. It just needs to stay simple. One offer, one call to action, one path, because clarity creates the easiest action. Okay, priority number three, pick one awareness channel and commit to it. Awareness or visibility is where people sabotage themselves the fastest, because it's easy to get pulled in every different direction. It's easy to try Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, blogging, YouTube, podcasting all at once, and then say,

really, nothing's working. This is where the internet gets a little crazy and you have to put on blinders because you feel like you need to be everywhere because you see other people everywhere. But the people that are doing successfully are not really everywhere. They pick one channel. And especially when you're starting out, you want to pick the place where your people already are. If you're a service provider, especially B2B, you want to be in LinkedIn. If you can show up consistently and win the algorithm, Instagram's a great place for you. If your audience listens to podcasts, then being a guest on a podcast could be your secret weapon, honestly. Or don't forget about local networking, because that's sometimes the easiest place to create a no like and trust factor with people that you want to work with. So you want to commit to just picking one, showing up consistently, talking about the same problem. Don't get broad on this, just be really focused and leading people down your simple path to a conversation. Awareness is the first step to what I call the Trail to the Sale. And the one thing I teach in my course, Modern Marketing Mastery, is that you don't need to be everywhere. You need to be somewhere where you can be in front of your ideal customer on a consistent basis. And there are a lot of places where your ideal customer can become aware of you. And there are multiple ways to get in front of people. So instead of just thinking about like social media platforms, think awareness strategies. Think about your ideal customer's typical day. What do they do? What do they watch? What do they read? What do they listen to? Here's what I see happen sometimes. People try to do a little social media, a little blogging, a little networking, a little video, a little podcasting, and nothing gains traction because nothing gets enough focus. I mean, I get why we do this. We think one of those things will be a big hit, and we think it's a numbers game. So the more places we can be, the more likely we'll be successful. But what happens is that we spread our content and ourselves so thin that we burn out, or that nothing grabs and holds the attention of your ideal customer. Believe me, again, because I've been there, I'm a pretty goal-oriented person. And when I started this business a few years ago, I made a goal to post on Instagram and Facebook daily, podcast weekly, put out a weekly newsletter, plus network on a regular basis. All of this was on top of my clients and the course I was developing. It was absolutely too much. And you might feel really motivated and excited now about your business and trying to be in all the places and doing all the things, but burnout can happen quietly and it's tough to recover from. I know from my own experience, I was on the ledge. It's not fun, and you will lose all the joy that you want to get from running your business. So since that time, I've really focused on simplification, on creating processes, which is a whole another podcast episode. But I want you to think about that when you're planning your marketing, especially in the awareness stage, because it's so easy to overcommit at that point and try to do too much. So here's what I want you to do: pick one awareness strategy. It will either be borrowed. So think about being a podcast guest or guest speaking at an event,

writing a blog post for another website, networking events. All of these have the same audience as your ICA, your ideal customer avatar, but they won't be with a direct competitor. Social media is also borrowed audience. You might feel like you own the social media audience, but it can go away overnight and you can't control the algorithm. So that's borrowed audience. Another's audience is owned audience. This is your own email list, your own blog posts, your podcast listeners. This will come later if you're just starting out. And then, of course, there's paid audience, which is paid ads, paid podcasts, guest spots, and so on. Again, this is something you could do now if you have the funding, but it's not necessary until you have your offer refined a little more. And I honestly wouldn't recommend it at this stage. So pick one visibility channel, commit to it, not forever, but long enough to actually see what happens. Okay, so if your marketing feels overwhelming right now, it's probably because you're trying to do too much too soon. So come back to me to hear this. You need clarity on your audience and your messaging, conversations to establish an understanding of your audience and get feedback on your offer and consistency for awareness. That's your foundation. And if you can get those three things working together, marketing starts to feel a whole lot less like throwing spaghetti at the wall and more like a solid foundation that makes sense. So if you realize that your marketing message might be a little like maybe vague right now, I put together a super simple five-minute magnetic message builder worksheet that you can grab in the show notes. It'll help you tighten this up fast. You can get it by going to janicehostager.com forward slash message, or I'll put the link in the show notes. And you can find the show notes by going to myweeklymarketing.com forward slash one fifty-two. Thanks so much for joining me today. I'll see you next time. Be well and take care. Bye for now.