



175. What Your Customers Aren't Telling You—But You Need to Hear with Sarah Tjoa

Janice Hostager: [00:00:00] What if your customers are already telling you exactly how to market to them, but you're missing it for one reason or another? One thing I've learned over the years is that listening isn't just hearing the words someone says. It's noticing what words they choose. It's paying attention to the questions that they ask, or how quickly they respond, or what gets them excited, or what makes them hesitate.

And sometimes it's paying attention to what they don't say. My guest today is Sarah Choa, managing director of Noble West, a creative strategy agency that helps food and agriculture brands clarify their vision, sharpen their stories, and connect deeply with the people that they serve. And she has a fascinating perspective on what it actually means to listen to your customers.

In this episode, we're talking about how to pick up the clues your customer's giving you about what really matters to them. It might be security, novelty, achievement, or something else entirely, and how to use those clues to make your marketing more relevant.

Now, before we jump into this episode, I do wanna say that we had a few technical issues, so the audio breaks up a little bit in this episode, so I do wanna apologize for that. But we had such a great conversation that I couldn't not air it. So anyway, here's my chat with Sarah. I know you'll enjoy it

Janice Hostager: Sarah, welcome to My Weekly Marketing

Sarah Tjoa: It's so great to be here, Janice. Thanks for having me

Janice Hostager: So everyone says that businesses really need to listen to their customers. What does that actually mean?

Sarah Tjoa: Well, I feel like especially in the age of AI and automation, the art of listening has gotten away from a lot of us, and listening is an art in so many ways, and I think If you've done any sort of coaching or manager training or any sort of growth training or you manage a team, you know what it is to [00:02:00] hear them, to listen to their gripes. How you interpret what you hear is the big part of listening, in my opinion,

and what you do with what you hear is the piece of it that matters. You know, I think certainly all of us are familiar, if you run a small business or a mid-size business, a marketing agency, or an

in-house team, you're listening to, and you're at a certain level, you're probably listening to problems all day long. Challenges. This is a thing we have to do. The deadline is this. The budget is this. And certainly we're kind of reacting in real time more often than not. but really how we engage in that form of active listening is what are you doing and what are you interpreting and what is the data telling you, when it comes to you know, cues that you're doing or cues that you're seeing? And I think that listening also encompasses more than what people are saying. Listening can also come in the form of, like, how you're really doing full sensory listening. You can learn a lot about a team or a customer or a client also based on, like, maybe some of the unwritten things. I think we all know are familiar with body language, but also listening to the things that they aren't saying, the things that they're not asking for or the things that they don't do.

Janice Hostager: Mm-hmm. Yeah, yeah. And marketing by listening, right? That's really what we're, where we're headed today, right? So we're talking about how to market some place or, how to market your business by really first listening to what they have to say. I think that a lot of small business owners think that marketing means saying the right things instead of doing, the listening part first.

So what happens when they get that backwards?

Sarah Tjoa: I think if you are assume-- if you are just marketing by what you... Marketing without listening often looks and feels like hollow claims. It often feels tone deaf. It can often feel... and it's, it doesn't, d- it won't resonate. Your customer won't hear you, or they'll feel misunderstood. And I, I, I try to [00:04:00] liken this to, different scenarios that we all have personally, too. Most of the time, if someone or a friend or a counterpart or a family member doesn't understand you, they don't ask you to clarify. Your customer isn't either. Your

customer isn't gonna say, "Hey, I don't think you got that right," or, "That doesn't quite resonate with me." They'll move on.

Janice Hostager: Yeah.

Sarah Tjoa: and I think when we think about the relationships that we like and trust the most, also the brands that we like and trust the most, they're the ones that feel personal to us. They're the ones that make us feel seen. and personalization in marketing comes in some of the more easy forms like, email marketing and the degree to which you're including a name or a personal insight. when it comes to the work that we do at Noble West and some of the strategy or brand strategy work that a lot of companies do, it comes from getting under the hood of what you can see on a company's website and understanding truly what makes them different. cause I think what a lot of companies, when you can tell that they maybe are doing know, a form of real listening, a lot of what the claims that they will go out with when they're marketing a certain company or a product will feel like something that could be slapped across any number of competitor clients.

And so I would say the real sign of knowing that you've listened to a key problem or you've listened to a consumer you know, an easy test of this is can you take a claim that you're putting on a website or a piece of an asset, and can that apply to anyone else in the category? And there's a

lot of that out there.

Janice Hostager: There really is. Yeah, we used to, uh, one agency I worked for a number of years ago, we used to say, th- at that time there were a lot of... It was in the industrial, divisions of, of larger companies that s- they was worked with larger industrial, clients. But they used to call it the eagle ad.

You can put an eagle on just about any one of those, ads, and it would, like, say the same thing, right? So, yeah, you're, you're absolutely right, and I, and I do see that a lot. If, if you really aren't getting, under the hood, as you say, and hearing what [00:06:00] stakeholders aren't really necessarily saying out loud, that becomes, like, the unspoken thing becomes so much more important, right?

Sarah Tjoa: Mm-hmm. The other thing I'd add, too, you know, there's visuals and things like I call them words that cost extra. and I think in the age of AI, words that cost extra are running rampant. So, if you are looking at any... There's, there's certain words that I think every- Like, everyone loves to use the word we're the m- we're the highest quality.

We are the

most premium product.

Those words mean zero to a consumer, or to a customer, because everything at this point is that. So, what i- quality to what end? Quality... And when I say the word costs extra, because now you have to spend extra time, money, and resources explaining to someone. And let's be real, marketing budgets are not just getting bigger every day.

They're getting smaller. Attention spans are getting shorter, which means you cannot afford, as a business owner, to not listen better upfront, because you're gonna lose your customers on the back end to someone else that can just articulate something better, 'cause they spent a bit more time upfront listening

Janice Hostager: Mm. Yeah, yeah. So now I know you listen to what a client actually prioritizes. So it could be money or power or novelty or security whatever it is. So how do you pull those things out if they're not naming them out loud? Like, what do you look for?

Sarah Tjoa: Yeah. I think it goes back to, and just to kind of circle back a bit to what you were mentioning with novelty and, you know, some of the security. Some of that for me, you know, my background is in largely in client management, although I would say that anyone who works in marketing is in client management.

Like, what- from whatever vantage point, whether it's creative or digital or whatnot, this is a people and a service business. So you can't afford to just not see the person for who they are on the other side of a Zoom screen or a table or coffee or whatnot. And I've spent a lot of time kind of being able to catalog different kinds of clients and different, you know...

I think we all have, like, our favorite clients, the ones that let us [00:08:00] do anything because they're really excited about anything. And, you know, I don't think that there's the, there's the, there's this myth that there's actually a lot of bad clients. There are far less bad clients than we realize. there's just way more people that we don't understand.

And so have spent some time kind of catalay- cataloging the hundreds of clients that I've had over the years, and they really do fall in kind of these, these categories of do they value novelty, which tends to be everyone's favorites 'cause you get to do cool things. Security, which tend to be the ones that people are like, "Ugh, they just don't let us do anything." and those clients value structure, and they wanna know when something's coming. and then you have a lot of, you know, there's a lot, there's some in-betweens in all of that. But being able to understand a person and meet them where they are in service of a broader mission, which for all of us is, you know, making money, getting to the next scope of work, getting to the next product growth, et cetera, comes from a lot of what is maybe the uns- untold stuff.

It is not what they're saying in an email or a conversation around, "Hey, I don't wanna go in that direction." It's spending a little bit of time to think about why might that be. And if you understand that a client values novelty and they don't wanna go in direction, then their answer to that is way more psychological and probably in the idea that they ac- you know, they don't feel like it is big enough of an idea. But if you have a client that values security, again, these two are the most diametrically opposed, and they don't wanna do something, that's because they don't feel safe doing it. And so the way that you answer and respond to those different kinds of people, again, it's a people business, looks so different.

And I think all of us as practitioners are trying to get to a campaign or a goal or a case study or growth, whatever that might have you, and the va- best means to do that is understanding the people that you're working with at their core.

Janice Hostager: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Are there some words or phrases that kind of act like clues to kind of get in, into [00:10:00] someone's, head to kind of figure out their deeper priorities? I mean, they might say, "Well, I don't have time," or, "I don't have peace of mind," or, Is, are there some key phrases or, or kind of, yeah, just sort of clues?

Sarah Tjoa: No, of course. I think that One thing I would do is I would spend a lot of ti- you know, we try to spend a lot of time upfront on what are their, what are personal goals, and certainly when you're in the beginning of a relationship, you know, you're gonna hear a couple different things like, "I wanna make sure..."

I want, I want to make sure that we protect what we have." Protect is a big, is a big, signal for security. That person wants to make

sure that the ship stays stable. you know, "I'm looking to, you know, really challenge or buck the norms." Those are, those are folks that are, you know, I think we hear that a lot, and m-marketers do tend to live in that novel world. and I think that if you are being met with, Again, when we think about what you're listening for, if you're being met with silence in a lot of ways, those tend to be, you know, folks that value clarity and security, and maybe feel like they haven't really, really gotten that quite yet. you're also gonna s- you know, there's also clients that value, like, achievement, and it's achievement at any end.

They just need to be m- they ha- they might come from having a CEO who's like, "I need to see progress." All of us have worked or been around a micromanager before. It is, like, work to any end or progress to any end. And you're gonna hear from those folks, "So what's going on? What have we done lately? What does growth look like?

What are our wins?" and those are all indications of the pressures that the person on the other end is facing, and give you an indication of how you can service them in the best way possible. so really if I were to kind of like slim it down, there's obviously, there's obviously words that would indicate to you what kind of a va- you know, what values this person has.

But I would also listen for, is this person coming back to me with more questions? Is this person coming back to me with silence? They're maybe not as responsive, or the way that they have engaged with me has changed. you know, I think, again, that goes [00:12:00] back to the observational listening that I think is really important when it comes to marketing or service-based in- in agre- agreements, or even how a customer's engaging with you. and then there's also just being able to see, you know, see if they're asking more questions of you for seeking clarity or, you know, additional context as well. Those are all indicators, and if you're just making sure that you're not, um, I think we c- we as, we as marketers, because we're always managing 17 different things at a time, we tend to get in a, you know, a flywheel of, okay, I'm just gonna react and make sure that I'm moving on to the next thing. Nine times out of 10, you're just gonna keep moving on to the next thing, and if you were to take a moment and compile the data of what you've seen, you'll see patterns of why people are enga- you know, acting the way that they are, and you'll be able to solve a problem that gets you, again, closer to the mutual goal that the both of you hopefully discussed at the beginning of any relationship.

Janice Hostager: Interesting. So a lot of my listeners are, they're either solopreneurs or they have a small team, and they don't have a big research budget or focu- focus groups. So what are some simple ways that they can get better insights about people? And they, they may not necessarily even meet them one-on-one often

Sarah Tjoa: Sure, sure. I mean, hopefully everyone, even in a small team, or, or whatnot, is doing some form of onboarding, whether that's onboarding to your team and/or onboarding to a new client, to either your systems or your platforms. That's w- at least every, every even solo,

every small, you know, every consultant that is just, like, a single solopreneur all the way up to business does an onboarding. I think that that

onboarding is important for a couple reasons. A, it sets everyone up for success. So what are you doing to make sure that you have everything that you need to move forward? It's a, it's a critical part of any engagement, right? I would pay attention to how someone engages in that onboarding. you know, there is... I often tell, you know, my team and teams over the [00:14:00] years that you learn just a- as much about someone through the onboarding and intake process as you do by how they do it. Do they take the onboarding seriously? Is it important to them? Do they f- are they timely with their responses? and those feel like very obvious things, but I think we often as people, again, humans, overlook some of those things in service of moving on to the next project, or m- next project or the

next achievement, and we'll disregard, maybe a poorly filled out questionnaire or an intake form that, you know, someone is submitting or a delay, and we'll chalk it up to, Oh, they were just busy."

And yes, busy with what? What is

distracting them that's important to them that they've disregarded some- a new engagement and a partnership that is supposed to help their business? Because no one, none of us here, solopreneur, big- or, or you know, or large entity, is not here to help, and in marketing, we're here in service.

It will tell you how they feel about marketing. It will tell you, you know, how they value it within the confines of their org. Did they take the project seriously? And it will tell you oftentimes a lot of what, how the rest of the engagement will go. Now look, maybe not everyone is talking regularly.

They don't have regular status meetings. Much of this is deliverable deliverable, which is totally understandable. But for any of us that are running a P&L of your own business, time is money. So someone's delayed, and you only have so much time in a window to be able to complete something. If you're not, you know, deploying a full automation, you very much are at the behest of your client's response time. So I would say that in any form of onboarding,

Janice Hostager: vois

Sarah Tjoa: just reading between the lines on how they, on how someone approaches that. You know, most of the time you get a client that, like, fills everything out robustly and they're doing it on, you know, they're doing it in a way that they've got other stakeholders involved, or they ask questions to make sure that they're giving you everything right.

That's the sign of a good partnership. But all of us have been on the [00:16:00] other end of having to chase someone down to get the information that we need to be successful, and then if you don't listen well enough to those signals, what you do is you create marketing that doesn't

have that under the hood because you didn't get it, but you wanted to make it work, and then you produce work that is full of words that cost extra or an eagle on it, quality product, and then we wonder why nothing worked. And

Janice Hostager: N-- Oh, go ahead. Yeah, you're, you're absolutely right. That's a really good point, and I think especially for onboarding, oftentimes we have, know, process in place, and it may or may not include, know, a call with them. You know, like you said, you might send them a form, fill out your information. We look at it and we're like, "Okay, makes sense."

And you kinda move on from there. But that really is the perfect opportunity to figure out not just what they're looking for from you, but what you can gain from them and in terms of customer success. And maybe hopping on a call, even if you have a lot of clients, getting on a call, just having a conversation with them, asking them some key questions.

and maybe you have some that you would share even, just like what, what you should ask them, like, to figure out exactly what it is that is really lurking underneath or what their expectations are.

Sarah Tjoa: Yeah, Janice, you're exactly right. There is something to, you know, all of- there's Time is money, and so oftentimes we don't have the call, but there's, uh, so much that gets taken care of in a call. more often than not, I try to, y- you know, an intake is gonna have, like, what were the goals for last year?

What is your goals for this product? What are you ... You know, KPIs, past things, like, standard stuff to just understand the lay of the land. you know, I think if you're trying to get to level with someone in the beginning, it's, you know, I try to get under the h- I try to connect with a potential, you know, with a client in a way that is, like, as human as you possibly can.

So, like, what are the watch ... Where are the landmines on this?

You know, we wanna know good, bad, and ugly of where that is, and you, you have to ask those things directly. If you ask, [00:18:00] like, challenges and opportunities, like, if we kind of veil some of that, we're gonna miss the, "Hey, I just need to ... I really, really wanna know". There's also good questions like, "What keeps you up at night? What are

your goals in, in all of this?" Because again, this is A lot of these are human-based transactions, and so whether it's a product or an initiative or a company that you're promoting, there's a body that's in front of you that is accountable to those things on the other end. So the more that we're, you know, that you understand the personal goals of the person on the, of the person that you're working with, you know, maybe you have someone who values novelty, who wants to make sure that they are winning awards, and that's one of their things that's on their goals, and it's on their growth list with their cl- with their, you know, their manager or boss.

That's great. maybe you just know the thing that keeps the client up at night is, "I have had a really bad agency relationship, and so I'm just actually worried that this isn't gonna work." You know?

and I think that being honest about I think that we tend to avoid some of, like, the critical discourse of, like, what could go wrong, because we don't wanna bring those things up early in a partnership. But it's the same way, like, you have to know those things in order for a partnership to work. And unlike relationships or, you know, marriages, where you're trying to ask those things maybe after a honeymoon period, marketers are expected to be effective on day one. So knowing where things are and what the fears and burdens of the person that you're working with, I would say, is a great place to start, 'cause it will orient you around the things that they will care about and the things that they are gonna, glom onto a little bit more than others.

Janice Hostager: That's all good stuff. so what do you, how do you handle an, an ideal customer avatar with, with this sort of thing? Do you focus in on a certain, let's say you as, as well as an agency, you probably, would prefer to work with somebody maybe that values novelty, for example. Or, I mean, do you build that in, or is that something that you realize that it's not part of the ICA, it's just something that, there are just individual [00:20:00] differences between clients?

Sarah Tjoa: I, I think we have to understand that there's, there's individual differences. I think that there's a time in my life that obviously you want a good mix, right? I think that it's helpful to have... And sometimes you don't get that, depending on the category. Um, you know, if you're working as, you know, we work in food and agriculture, we do not have a lot of, like, star-seeking, I wanna shoot to the moon, novelty valuing in marketing folks that we work with.

And I would venture to bet that anyone that works in B2B, that might be a lot of your listeners, they don't, they don't have, "Hi, I, I max Nike," or, "I max Coke or Pepsi, so I wanna break all these barriers." Like, most of us are probably working with folks that value security or value getting stuff done. and once you know that, there are ways to do the novel things with those folks.

You give them what they need, and then you give them either a safe space to do something new, or you give them, you know, "Here's all the things that we've been able to do. We have time to do something special on top of it. It's extra credit." There's ways to just be able to get to what most of us marketers want, which is engage in something interesting, try something new. but I would say that, you know, if you're sp- as long as you're spending time understanding the place from which that person is operating, and we do a diagnostic in, you know, when we kick things off internally, like where we'll share in, you know, with the team, "Hey, I'm gonna tell you that this person on the team is a security person.

They need to be won over and feel like they're safe before we can try the new stuff. But I think by the time we get here, they should be able to do that." And again, those clear- the clarity of, like, where the wins can be gotten is helpful for teams to orient around and help them be successful. certainly I would love to get to a place where, you know, there's like a little bit of a sorting hat before you go into some sort of fill out a contact form.

But, you know, I think what we all have learned is that you have to work with so many different kinds of people. and if you only are able to work with a certain kind of customer, then you probably won't be able to engage with all these [00:22:00] different kinds of customers. So having variety and being able to work with diverse populations is important.

Janice Hostager: Okay, so now pivoting a little bit. One of the things that I know that you are really enthusiastic about is millieurism in marketing. So believing that people wanna do good and that they wanna see change for the good and, that sort of thing. so often I think marketing assumes that we wanna poke at people's pain to get them to act.

If we start with the assumption that people actually want to do something good or make things better, how does our messaging change?

Sarah Tjoa: Yeah. I think when we think about our favorite, protagonists and antagonists in stories and how they act, you, you already have an idea. You know, we root for heroes because of their optimism, because of their belief that something is better, and that messaging looks ver- that messaging looks different because it is like, "I believe we can.

I hope for more." And people like to buy into those visions. People are willing to spend more money on those visions. People are willing, you know, on, on those worlds that you can build if you're coming from a place of optimism, especially today, where there is a lot happening in the world. People are looking for good stories.

They're looking for reasons to feel good. So if there's anything that anyone takes away from this, it is that if you can find the positive spin on anything in a product or find the way to center it around human work and why that is good, there's gonna be wins across the board for that. When you start from a place of assuming, you know, I try to believe...

Like, nihilism really comes down to, like, assuming good intent, that

even though we know that there are, like, maybe some bad players out there, but mostly just, like, people that are operating from a, from a certain place, if we're just assuming that everything is from a place of good intent, then you don't h- then you're not trying to cover your places or play CYA before you even get to the good stuff. Because marketing that plays CYA is like, [00:24:00] "Okay, I have to overcome some of these other things before I can even tell you why this is good." It comes from a place of, "Well, let me explain away the bad," and it often looks like very descriptive marketing. "Okay, so you're doing this, and we know we need to account..."

It, it is not at all emotionally resonant. It becomes very tactical 'cause it tries to logically solve for what the human brain is, experiencing. You know, you think about it when you're trying to calm down someone who is, you know, feeling bad. so I would, I would say that, know, to be able to believe that people are assuming an intent, this nihilistic belief, also makes marketing better because it is more hopeful.

It is the kinds of brands that create magnetic brands. Creates the kind of people that we all, the people and brands and products that we all wanna be around.

Janice Hostager: Yeah. Can you have an example of like maybe two ways to market like the same thing, one coming from maybe fear or deficiency, and then one coming from a more amelioristic point of view?

Sarah Tjoa: Yeah. Let me... I feel like, Okay. So let's take, for example, we work in food, so I'm gonna use a food product. Let's just say we're marketing, eggs. Let's go with mark- you know. We are w- we're currently working with one of our clients on a first to market, like, jammy egg. So if you've ever seen the hard-boiled eggs on the shelf, these are jammy yolks, which are very complicated. You know, people, people are like, "Okay, I have to boil it six minutes and put it in water." Anyways, we're launching the first one of its kind. It's a very cool product done by the most incredible people. If we were marketing this from a place of, like, scare, it's like you don't have, you don't have time to waste. We're immediately putting people like, "I don't have time to waste, like, 'cause I have all these other things." It's puts people on their heels. But there is... You're, you're creating urgency. You don't wanna miss out.

and the way that we are approaching that today is like, "We spent six years to save you six minutes." That

is the same message dressed up differently, and I think that for some

people would say there's a lot of value in, like, trying to, like, play to someone's, you know, [00:26:00] sense of, "Oh, I don't have time to waste." Sure, that is one way, but I think people would love to be able to play from a place of possibilities and like, "Oh my gosh, you did this for me? There's so much more I can do." That already gives the consumer so much more permission. and so I think that marketers would probably say, some of them would say, like, "I like the idea of creating urgency. I like the idea of pressure." But I think when you're marketing from an optimistic standpoint, there's just more room. There's more room

for more, there's more room to engineer, more lifestyle and other world building. And honestly, when you do that, there's more margin in that kind of work than forcing someone into a corner to worry about the time that they not have

Janice Hostager: Right, right. I love that phrase by the way. What did you say? It was like we, we work for six

Sarah Tjoa: we spent six years to save you six minutes.

Janice Hostager: Oh, that's brilliant. I love it. I love it. Every once in a while I'll think of catchphrases for businesses and think that's really good, you know?

Sarah Tjoa: Thank you. I bet, I bet you're one of those people that, you know, it's like, it's in the shower or a dinner party or when, and they, they just come to you in all these different places.

Janice Hostager: Yeah. Yeah. But so, all right, so let's say our listener is realizing that they haven't really listened to their customers in a long time. Is there something they can do, like right now, to really kind of bridge that gap and get to know where they're coming from and, and kind of really understand their customers on a deeper level?

Sarah Tjoa: Yeah. I mean, I know that not everyone can afford research, and look, we certainly don't work, we're not working in, know, the multi-billion dollar client range either. There is nothing that, first of all, like a human-to-human check on, you know, how are things in your world

doing? And again, I know that's a very people...

That's a very easy question that is not assuming, that is not adding more. It's like, "What's going on in your world?" that really helps contextualize a lot of things. So much of what, you know, especially if you're working with an owner operator. Now look, maybe you don't have that one-to-one client [00:28:00] relationship.

You're not really, like, in those deep client service trenches. We also have a lot of clients that manage big books of customer business. You know, they're technolog- they're tech companies, and so they've got hundreds of thousands of customers, and surveys are good. You know? Little five point, five question surveys that are very easy for someone to fill out, that honestly, like, get, can get automated because people like to share their opinions, and they love to be anonymous, unfortunately, when they share them sometimes.

It makes it easier. So, if you're looking at some of the masses, you know, the five point question, and, and I would always start, you know, start with those, with how, you know, how in general, like, would you feel like things are? And then build down into, like, what do you feel like is or isn't successful right now.

And then there's always, always have an open end, and make sure that you're like, leading someone in a direction where they can give you, you know, valuable feedback.

But the one-to-one call, what's, what's new in your world, and what's happening. Um, and you know, the other thing that I would say... Oh, and, and the survey, via email. There is no better, replacement for being able to just, like, offer value to a client. We, you know, at minimum, have a Google alert on the industries and whatnot. There's so much in the world of AI that you can automate on client intelligence

nowadays, and so if you don't have Google alerts and then scrubbing, and all of this kind of stuff that will then just send you an intel report on every, you know, all the businesses you represent, there is always something to say, "Hey, thinking of you." You know,

I, I, I joke a lot that we call that, that, like, you know, penguins call that pebbling. It's, like, when the one penguin brings them another pebble, and it's like, "This is my way of thinking of you." Everyone likes being thought of, every- so do that to your clients, too.

Janice Hostager: Yeah. Yeah. And that goes a long way. You know, you think about the holidays for sure, but, just reaching out and say, "Hey, you know, I, I saw this, I thought you might be interested," or, you know, "I know that you're looking to move to a new office. I, I happened [00:30:00] to see that this was for rent."

Or, you know, things just thought- very thoughtful little things that you could just pass on to them. And also, you know, I know you brought up AI, but I think, there are a lot of opportunities using AI to really put together maybe a, a poll or a survey where you can ask those slightly deeper questions or, questions that will open it up a little bit more so that it's not just the surface, you know, how did we do today, one to five, you know?

That you can kinda go a little deeper and just really get to know them on a different level or really get some feedback on a different level. And especially, I think, having had, you know, clients for years and years, sometimes you forget to do that. You think, "Oh, I know them," you know, "They're practically a friend."

But just reaching out and saying, "You know, I just wanna check base and, and how are we doing? What, what... Any feedback for me?" I think that can go a long way as well, so really good points.

Sarah Tjoa: you're so spot on. There is just something so important about not even addressing the business side of it. I'm just checking to see how you're doing. And Q4,

great time of year to check in. Budgets are being done. There's a whole bunch of craziness, and if you work in any form of a world that is, like, retail or CPG, the world's about to...

So I'm thinking of you. What, you know, is there anything that's... How are things going? Absent of the work, you would be shocked at the number of times, like, we have really good Q4 pushes because you just believe in the power of human in- you know, ingenuity and being able to check in and just being a good person. Being a good person will go a long way. We will get a lot of new business pushes just by checking in with existing clients and maybe other clients that... Or maybe you're project-based, and you go, you know, you're checking with, like, your, um, you know, your, your list of folks that maybe have dropped off your radar for a little bit, and you're just sending them...

Like, there's a lot of things that will come up when someone, when you make it easy for someone to reach out to you.

Janice Hostager: Right, right. How they make you feel or how you make them feel, I

Sarah Tjoa: They will always remember how you [00:32:00] make them feel. You forget kind of

about the KPI and the, the timeline and the this, but they will, you'll always remember how someone will make you feel

Janice Hostager: 100%. Sarah, where could somebody learn more about you?

Sarah Tjoa: Oh, thanks Jas. We Are Noble West is, you know, the, our our website, and again, we specialize in food and agriculture, but more than beyond that, because I'm sure most of your folks, that's a very niche category. we recently built like a diagnostic. My background's in brand strategy. I think archetypes, and again, when we talk about organizing people, built out a little kind of diagnostic tool around just kind of understanding, so you can avoid words that cost extra, so you can avoid the sea of sameness, and it starts to kinda get under the hood a little bit of who you could be as a brand, how you show up as a company.

So, that is, linked on our site as well in our latest newsletter

Janice Hostager: I actually just did that today, and it was some really good insight. So I, I won't say I was kind of like, "Oh, I should work on that." It was like, 'cause there's

Sarah Tjoa: Everyone has opportunities.

Janice Hostager: where you struggle and it's like, oh yeah, she's right. I do kinda struggle with that. Gosh. You know? Yeah. So it was great.

Sarah Tjoa: Good, good. I'm glad you found some value.

Janice Hostager: I'll put the link to that in the show notes for sure.

So thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us s- today, Sarah. This is really interesting stuff. I, you know, I- it's, it seems, on one level it seems, quite advanced, but really it isn't. It's really about knowing your

Sarah Tjoa: to some.

Janice Hostager: Yeah. Well, you know, I, I think it really is just g- about getting to know and you developing those relationships and that know, like, and trust factor i- in a better way, and we can all improve on that, I think, so.

Thank you again.

I love how Sarah shared some surprisingly simple ways small business owners can listen better through calls, surveys, onboarding, and just really everyday conversations.

You just need to get curious and pay attention [00:34:00] to the clues that they're already giving you. One thing I've learned is that better marketing doesn't always come from saying more. Sometimes it comes from listening better. So here's my challenge for you this week. Pick one place where you're already interacting with customers or prospects.

Maybe it's a discovery call or an email reply, or even a form that you have, or a D- DM. Instead of thinking about what you wanna say next, pay attention to what the exact words that they use and the questions they asked. I have a free tool that I've been using for this called Granola. I'm not an affiliate or anything.

I just use it all the time, and I love how it will transcribe conversations either in person, I use it on my phone for in-person meetings, or on a video call, and I'll put the link to that in the show notes. There is really marketing gold hiding in conversations. Thanks so much for listening. For more information about Sarah or anything we talked about, visit myweeklymarketing.com/175.

Thanks again. I'll see you next time. Bye for now