

CRAFT YOUR MARKETING

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LESSON 1 TRANSCRIPT

To listen to the lesson, visit <https://s3.amazonaws.com/taraswiger.com/CraftYourMarketing/CYM+Lesson+1.mp3>

Welcome to Craft Your Marketing! This class is a walk-through, read-along of my book - Market Yourself.

The overarching question we're going to answer in this class is: *How do I stand out?*

The best way to let everyone know that what you're doing is different is to *DO YOU*.

No one else has your vision, filter, ability, experience that you have, so your particular combination of all of these things + how you think about what you do is your sparkle - that thing that's going to catch someone's eye and make them buy or write or feature.

But hearing that you should Be You is the most frustrating thing ever, because it can be hard to spot what's special about ourselves, what's really different from what everyone else is doing. And it's VERY easy, thanks to the Internet, to compare ourselves to everyone else, and to spot the similarities (oh, they also work with the same people); and then you spot all the ways they're better - they do it better, they have greater success, they are better-known.

However, as long as you're in that headspace, as long as you're thinking about what someone else is doing, you're actually ignoring what YOU are doing - you might stress yourself out making your work more like theirs, or trying business models that don't work, or beating yourself up because what works for them is not working for you.

At the very least you're going to be so distracted by their sparkle that you can't clearly communicate your own.

I get this all the time with my clients: They will go on and on about what OTHER people are doing, without any hint of what THEY are doing.

So here's how we're going to avoid comparison + stand out:

- ★ Define your own version of success - what do you really want? What are you working towards? This will help you define all your actions AND keep you grounded when you see someone else being "successful" - maybe they have a kind of success you don't actually want.
- ★ Then, we're going to hone in on what about you and your work is special and different. THIS is the thing that's going to appeal to people (the press, publishers, customers) + make you stand out from the crowd.

- ★ Once you've got an idea of what makes you special, we're going to find the words that you use and the words your customers would really use - and craft a statement that you can use as your bio, pitches, etc.

Let's first define what you want:

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Ok, you came into this class with some things that you were hoping it would help you get - something that you thought would result from spotting your sparkle. Take a moment to write down everything you want, everything that you consider a measure of the kind of success YOU want - it might be press, specific wholesale client, a specific craft show, anything!

WORKSHEET:

Visit <http://taraswiger.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Craft-Your-Marketing-Lesson-1-Extras.pdf> and either print out the worksheet or use your own notebook to answer the questions on the first page.

By getting clear on you what you really want, we can zoom in on what you need to do to get there.

Bigger picture - what are the connections you see on here? Is it that you're seeking more attention? More customers? More opportunities to do stuff in person?

WORKSHEET:

Look for connections and write them down, using the second page of that worksheet.

Do you have a good idea of the kinds of things you're wanting to have more of in your business? Can you see how some of them fit together?

Now, I want you to keep this in mind as we move through this course.

You're not creating a marketing plan that will just get you ANYTHING, you're going to create a plan to help you specifically reach this goal. At the end of the class, you're going to have a plan to help you get this goal, and as you work through the different chapters, I want you to keep this goal in the front of your mind, because it will impact all the other decisions you make.

You see, I see far too many people try to make a marketing plan without knowing what their goals ARE. They don't know: Do I want more online customers? More craft shows? More wholesale accounts? All these goals necessitate a different plan, so it's vital for you to get clear on this first.

I want to make a distinction here about marketing plans and goals. If you're in the Starship or Lift Off then you've set a quarterly goal and creates a map to help you achieve that in 3 months. People often get confused about how their marketing plan fits into this.

So let's talk about the distinction:

Marketing is going to ALWAYS be happening in your business, every day, no matter the specific goal you're working towards. The same way that making and shipping your product always happens, it's helping you reach a bigger vision of your business (like more sales or press or whatever you want). Once you have a marketing plan that works, you'll be implementing it in the background while you also work towards something specific, in your map.

Your specific quarterly goal could be a marketing goal (like getting more email subscribers) or it could be product based (making 50 items a week).

You can scale up and down the time you spend on marketing, depending on your goals, but you'll always be doing it. Your marketing plan will be full of regular, repetitive tasks, while your Quarterly Map is going to be full of One Time Actions.

Now, with that in mind, let's talk about what marketing IS:

What Marketing is

- ★ A path (customer path)
- ★ A relationship

Your marketing message

What you're going to do this week is work on the YOU part of the marketing message - what's special about you. Remember, as you think about this, that you're talking specifically about the product or business that you defined in your marketing goal.

HOMEWORK:

Read Chapters 1 + 2 and do all the worksheets from those chapters.

I know it might feel weird to go into detail defining your thing, but if you're having a hard time talking about, this is the absolute first step - get really really explicit about what it is.

If you want a fresh copy of the worksheets that you can print out + write on, you'll find them here: <http://taraswiger.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Market-Yourself-worksheets-only.pdf>

WHAT YOU REALLY WANT

What would “success” look like in your business?

What do you want in your business that you don't have? **Write down everything!**

SPOT THE CONNECTIONS

LESSON 2 TRANSCRIPT

To listen to the lesson, visit <https://s3.amazonaws.com/taraswiger.com/CraftYourMarketing/CYM+Lesson+2.mp3>

Welcome to week 2! Today's lesson is all about how to figure out WHO your Right People are and how you can best serve them.

THIS WEEK YOU WILL:

- ★ Learn about your positioning
- ★ Identify your Right People (whether you've had sales, or not)
- ★ Translate your ideas into your customer's language

Last week we started by digging into how awesome you and your work is and I've noticed that when I start to talk about focusing on how awesome your thing is, it's easy for people to confuse this with the Build It and They Will Come Fallacy.

People will NOT come just because your thing is awesome. They won't even come just because you're doing a great job explaining it and you're speaking directly to them. People will come because we go out and get them, which we'll get into more in future lessons. But remember this: you have to do BOTH in order to find people and then convert them - you need to go out and get them and then you need to clearly explain your thing once they're on your site or in your booth. We start with this part of it because it needs to be done FIRST. Before you go out and find people and invite them to your work, your work needs to be ready for them.

POSITIONING

Now, in the last chapter we talked a bit about your message and what makes your work special. You probably found that there is a lot of different aspects of your sparkle that you could focus on. Maybe that you use recycled material, or that you love bright colors.

In order to help you narrow down what you're going to FOCUS on, I want you to think about two things:

- ★ What your goal is (What we talked about last week!)
- ★ Positioning.

Positioning is a fancy marketing word that refers to where your product sits in the market, in comparison to others. It's the total package of who your product serves, its price, and its value. In other words, if it was on a physical shelf, where would that shelf be? What would it be next to? Would it be more expensive or less than the things next to it? Why?

I find it helps to think about someone ELSE's business to understand positioning. For ex, Apple vs PC vs Android. Apple computers are more expensive and they are positioning them as tools for creatives (come standard with audio, video and photo editing). Apple vs Android - their position is more expensive, more focused on design, and focused on a seamless experience (not just anyone can sell an app, it has to be approved, and it has to work across devices). While Android's position is that it's more open, more inclusive, more options.

Or your favorite cereal - is it positioned as healthy? For kids or adults? Fun or serious?

Your work could have any number of positions, depending on what you decide to focus on. For example, my Positioning is "friendly, goofy, understandable business help for makers," but I could have just as easily decided to make it "Professionalism for Yarn Makers" or "MBA for crafters". Those positions are maybe more stuffy, more put-together. I've decided to make my work more about simplifying business foundations so that creative people, who don't want to get an MBA, can make their business work - AND helping you not feel so alone. I spend time talking about feelings and fear and the soft stuff that goes into doing something. But I could instead do work that's about deep branding stuff, or more focused on accounting or never mention emotions and feelings.

The good news is: You can change your positioning as you change and your business changes. But for now, if you're having a hard time narrowing in on what aspect of your sparkle you want to highlight, or who you want to serve, it might help to think about how you want your work to be positioned.

For example: Are you making, like Amy, geeky art for fans? Or are you making abstract art for collectors?

If you're a knitwear designer: Are you making easy, learn-this-technique patterns? Or are you making complex colorwork designs for the hardcore colorwork lovers?

The clearer you get about your positioning, the easier your decisions will be AND the more recognizable your work will be.

With that in mind, let's talk about who your work is going to serve and who your marketing is going to talk to: Your Right People!

WHY RIGHT PEOPLE:

Right now we're just identifying, but you need this in order to make all the other decisions in the class. In order to:

- ★ Choose your tool
- ★ Write your descriptions
- ★ Design new products

- ★ Decide what shops or craft shows to take your work to

Everything stems from who these people are, what they use, what they value and where they shop.

The good news, as you'll read in Chapter three, you definitely DO have Right People. You might not have found them yet, but as long as you're making something that's truly YOU, you're going to have people who like it and who it will speak to. It's part of the awesomeness of being human - we are each unique, and yet we find art or writing or products that just SPEAK to us, as if the maker really GETS who we are.

THIS is, yet again, why you need to keep creating stuff that is true to you and your vision: No one gets excited about mediocrity. So make your work stand out and focus on what makes it stand out, and you're going to have a much easier time finding your people.

IDENTIFYING YOUR PEOPLE.

If you already have made some sales - awesome! You have a list of people to start with. (And if you don't - don't worry! we'll talk about how to define your people before you have any in a minute.)

How to identify your Right People using your Current people:

Now, every time I have this conversation with a client, they tell me: Well, I've made SOME sales, but those people are really unique situations! I'm not sure there's anyone else like them! So I ask them to describe their BEST customer to me...and sure enough, we are ALWAYS able to find some qualities that more people are going to share.

The trick is to DIG IN to the motivations and qualities of this person and their decision. I like to ask:

- ★ What does your best customer say about your work?
- ★ How does she use it?
- ★ What is THAT like? (If it's art on her walls - what's her house like? If it's jewelry - what does she wear it with? If it's knitwear design - what else does she knit?)
- ★ What matters to her about her purchases?

As an example, I was having a one-on-one session with a [Starshipper](#) and she's an artist that sells 3d pieces, kind of sculptures that hang. I asked her to describe her best client and she said - oh, she's kind of weird. She said she likes bright colors. She buys a lot of art from a lot of people. Her house is just kinda - there's art and photos and stuff all over. She and her husband don't make a lot, they live in a small house....I think my Right People will have more money or something.

And I said: ok! I can see a couple of qualities right away that all your People will share. For starters, she loves color and she loves art. Her home is full of things that deeply matter to her. She values investing in her space and making it meaningful. So when you write descriptions, focus on these things, speak to these

values. When you think about what she reads or where she shops, ask yourself: Who else serves people who have want their surroundings to be meaningful?

So! I want to encourage you to dig in, to your BEST customer - either the one who's bought a few times or the one you love working with most. Pay attention to what they tell you, how they use it, what they care about -- even if it's not what you think. (ESPECIALLY if it's not what you think!)

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVEN'T MADE ANY SALES:

First, understand that at this stage you're IMAGINING your Right People, so don't get too hung up on this. It's much more important that you make a plan and start sharing your work with who you THINK your RP is, then adjust as you go - keep paying attention to what your buyers tell you and adjust your Marketing Plan to speak more to them.

I see a lot of people get stuck here OR just skip it altogether and decide "I don't have people, so I'll just do what I want!"

The problem with this is that you often end up just talking to people EXACTLY like you - other makers who make what you make and unless you sell supplies those are NOT your buyers. So! To avoid this, I want you to think of your Right People like this.

First: Think of where your product would be sold. What kind of shop? What else do they carry?

Then: Who shops there? Perhaps it's someone like your aunt or your best friend or even a version of you who doesn't make what you make.

Now: WHY is this person in the shop today? Are they buying a gift for a pregnant friend? Are they spending their tax refund? Did they just find the perfect pattern and they need yarn (or the perfect yarn and they need a pattern)? Are they challenging themselves? Treating themselves? And finally: When they get your product, how do you want them to feel? What do you hope your work brings into their lives? (I'm going to ask you this again later, but while you're thinking of your person, answer it now!). WHO needs or wants this feeling, from this kind of product?

For example: If your knitting patterns are complex color work designs, you want me to feel accomplished and challenged. Now: Who wants to feel this way? An advanced knitter looking for a challenge or who is ready to really impress their friends.

THAT is as specific as you need to get, and it's actually much more specific than what you've probably been thinking: you don't need to know how much money she makes, but you do need to know how you want her to feel and what kind of person WANTS to feel that way (and what else she wants to feel) - that very specific information will completely shape what you write and what you say about your work.

LESSON 3 TRANSCRIPT

To listen to the lesson, visit <https://s3.amazonaws.com/taraswiger.com/CraftYourMarketing/CYM+Lesson+3.mp3>

Welcome! Today we're going to dive into what you read last week, about your Home Base, and we're going to get ready for what you'll read this week, about Choosing your Tools.

THIS WEEK YOU WILL LEARN:

- ★ What you MUST do before you start marketing
- ★ Why Content Works
- ★ The Third Question to Ask
- ★ How to choose the tool your customers are using

WHAT YOU MUST DO BEFORE YOU START MARKETING

We've talked about what makes your thing special and we've talked about who your people are. But the next step is not to go into the world and tell people.

Why not?

Think about it like throwing a party - you don't send out e-vites until YOU have decided the details: Where will it be? What will be provided? What should the invitees bring or wear? And before anyone comes over, you gotta get your place in order. You don't want to invite people over to a housewarming before you've moved into your house.

Your website is your home and your marketing is your invitation. FIRST you get your home ready, then you invite people over.

Etsy and Facebook are not effective Home Bases.

- ★ You don't own them.
- ★ You don't have any control over them.
- ★ A small change could completely destroy your Customer Path.

Your Home Base needs to be entirely within your control, so that you can use it to guide people into what they want to do. This is your Customer Path - the steps a person takes to go from total stranger to regular customer. The path include:

- Hearing about you/Finding you
- Getting to know you (on your Home Base!)
- Deciding to buy.

On your Home Base, you're going to control this Customer Path, so that people know what to do at each step to move down the path.

For example, in my customer path, you probably:

- ★ Discovered the podcast or blog (through a referral link or by searching)
- ★ Read a bit
- ★ Signed up for my newsletter
- ★ Got my messages for a while
- ★ Decided to buy this class when I offered it.

This is the customer Path of a lot of businesses with blogs, podcasts, or YouTube channels. For a knitwear designer the path might be:

- ★ Someone sees your pattern on Ravelry,
- ★ They click through, add it to their queue
- ★ See it a few more times in their friends' feeds or on the forums
- ★ They buy the pattern and join your group
- ★ Get to know you and buy again

Now, looking at the customer path like this, I think you can see why NEW content on your site, something other than just new products, is so useful - it gives people something to share, improves your SEO and gives people ever new opportunities to find you or refer you. I don't think that every business needs a blog, but you do need a steady stream of NEW for people to share - whether this is a blog, a podcast, videos, events, classes, new pictures, new products or new designs. People can only share your work if they have something TO share. I talked in the book about how to make something share-able, by being sure that you have given the reader everything they need in order to share (like share buttons, and a request to share), but the other thing they need is NEW.

I didn't include this in the book, because I didn't realize how important it was at the time of writing the book, but as I've worked with more and more craft businesses of all different types and sizes, I've come to recognize that the way the internet works today, is how society has always worked: Word of Mouth. Your work is only going to be found if someone (or you) tells someone else ... and you've got to give them something to share: specifically, new content.

Now, if you're a yarn shop or farmer, your new content might be new events or new classes. If you're a knitwear designer, it might be a new KAL of one of your patterns + good answers to people's questions. If you're a yarn maker it might be attending a fiber festival. But the more often you have something new to share with your people (within reason), the more often they are going to share it with their friends.

YOUR JOB IS TO DECIDE WHAT KIND OF NEW CONTENT YOU CAN

BOTH CREATE ON A REGULAR BASIS AND THAT YOUR PEOPLE WILL MOST WANT.

Remember: This does NOT need to be a blog that you write.

Only if that makes sense for what you sell. My mom, who sells art, is really frustrated because she doesn't feel comfortable writing, and she regularly compares her blog to mine and I told her: I blog because that's what I sell: My words and my lessons. I podcast because I sell education and conversations. But if you sell ART, you don't need a lot of words. Instead, your new content can be an Instagram feed full of your artwork in progress (now, you need to put this on your HOME BASE, so when people share it they're sending people back to you).

There's a spinner aboard the Starship who makes beautiful fiber videos - that makes sense because she sells books about spinning and videos help customers see the process they're going to learn.

Yarn stores don't sell words, they need customers to COME IN to the shop, so their regular content would be knitting groups and classes and NEW YARN.

No matter what you sell - think about: How could I share a taste of this for free, to give people a feel for what it's like to purchase my work?

DO THIS:

So other than new content, check out Chapter 4 for the other content your home base needs. Make a note of any of the pages or information your site doesn't have now. List it out so you know what you need to work on.

Now, the final piece in making an awesome home base will also help you choose your tool: *How do you want your customers to feel?*

You've discovered your sparkle and who your customers are, but it's time to think about how the two things are going to interact. The best way to make sure your website is effective and you use your chosen tools correctly is to focus on this one question:

How do you want your customer to feel?

Another way to ask this question:

What does your work bring into their life? What feeling are you giving them?

Once you've answered this question, you want to make sure that EVERY bit of communication you have, including your website and any messages you send on any tools GIVES YOUR CUSTOMER THIS FEELING.

This might feel vague now, but the clearer and clearer you can get on this, the more and more effective all your marketing will become. I've seen this happen in my own business and in that of all my clients. The more you bring this feeling into your website, your descriptions, your interactions, the more customers are going to understand why they'd spend their money with you and they'll share you with more of their friends. (This, focusing on this feeling, also helps your work stand out from everything else.)

Some examples:

In my work, I want you, my students, to feel not-alone in the hard work of building a business. I also want you to feel confident and like it's a fun adventure, instead of a boring slog ... all while acknowledging that YES, this is hard work.

So because of that, I use "explorer" metaphors, I talk about having adventures. I teach methods of experimenting. I also share struggles and stories from other makers, and I regularly write about the emotional stuff, so you know you're not alone. Keeping this feeling in mind impacts everything - how I describe what I do, what I share on social media, what I actually teach about, and how I handle every question.

If you're a knitwear designer who focuses on complex or advanced designs, you might want your customer to feel competent and accomplished. You'd communicate this in your marketing by providing tutorials for learning new skills, sharing links to videos or tutorials for advanced techniques, writing or sharing about deeper skills and understandings, and in not talking down to her. You want her to feel competent, so everything you do is both about making her feel more competent and treating her like she IS competent.

If you're a jewelry or accessories maker, you may want your customer to feel beautiful or sexy or comfortable - do you see how each of those feelings would give a different set of marketing messages? You'd share different stuff on social media, you'd reply to questions differently, you'd create different products and describe and photograph them differently.

At the same time, this question, "how do you want your buyer to feel?" it intimately tied to the first two questions we've answered: "What is special about your work? Who is the person who will love this?" You see, if what's special is that your work is eco-friendly + sustainably made, and the person you serve is an exhausted mom ... then how you want to make her feel is probably gentle, or cared for, or relaxed. You want these three questions to all serve each other, and to make sense with each other.

Now! This question is going to fit right into the next two chapters: **What tools will you use to communicate with your buyer?**

This is the question that trips a lot of people up, because they have a lot of "shoulds" around what they should be doing: I "should" be on Twitter. I "should" be on Pinterest. I "should" sell to shops.

Honey, I want you to let go all of that. In fact, take a minute -

DO THIS:

write down all your shoulds. What do you think you really HAVE to do? I'm always surprised by what makers think they have to do, because it often makes absolutely NO sense for their business, and they have no good reasons for it. So get all those "shoulds" out of your head, before you read about tools.

The reason I keep referring to these things as tools is because I want you to understand: Each thing you use to communicate with your people is simply a tool. It's no better or worse than anything else, and each tool is suited to one specific kind of task. There's no business that uses EVERY tool, and the only "should" is this: You should pick the tool that fulfills two rules:

1. YOU can use it consistently (you, right now, exactly as you are)
2. It makes sense for your Three Questions (What makes your work sparkle, Who loves it, and How it makes your people feel)

This automatically removes some of your tools from your tool belt. If you aren't interested in travel or talking to people face to face, craft shows are a selling tool that won't work for you. If you never snap photos, forget Instagram. If you've got a visual product and you don't like words, skip Twitter and use Instagram. If you don't "get" Pinterest, skip it. (Just install the button on your site, so other people can pin your stuff).

Now, that's the YOU part - can you use it consistently?

The next part of picking a tool relates to each question:

What makes your work sparkle?

If you get in gorgeous new supplies or products every week - take pictures of them. If your product involves a process - video it and put it on YouTube!

If your work is colorful - take pictures!

If your work is based on words - use Twitter and write long Facebook page posts. If your work is social (like a workshop leader, or a yarn shop) - get social.

If your work needs to be touched - get it in shops or at craft shows!

Next: Who loves it?

It can be tricky to know if your people use your tool or not, the only thing you can do is find some people LIKE your people and ask them. But keep this in mind: People of ALL ages are on the Big Two channels (Twitter and Facebook): 71% of online adults use Facebook. And until you survey your people, you don't

know how old they are. You might be surprised! You can narrow it down by doing a bit of googling: Who uses the tool you're considering.

If your people are under 30 - get on SnapChat.

If your people are young moms - get on Pinterest.

If your people are into visual beauty - get on Instagram.

If your people are local - head to the farmer's market or hold events around town.

If your people are international - remember to post at all times, esp in the middle of the night.

Check out the Pew Center Research on Social Media Usage: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/social-media-update-2014/>

And finally: How do you want your people to feel?

Now, you can use almost any tool to help your people the way your work will make them feel, if you use it in the right way.

For example:

If you want them to feel...

- ★ inspired, post quotes or writing or craft prompts
- ★ not-alone, share stories (links to online stories, or ones you've collected)
- ★ loved, share encouraging words
- ★ gentle, share mindfulness techniques or articles
- ★ relaxed, share relaxation tips or articles about getting better sleep
- ★ funny, share funny cat photos (or whatever would be in line with your sense of humor)
- ★ empowered, share stories of people overcoming or things that remind them of their own power.
- ★ part of the community, ASK for their stories

So with that, you're ready to read Chapters 5+ 6, and start choosing your own tools. If you already use some tools (as many of you do!), put them through the test - can you stick with it consistently and does it serve your Three Questions?

Next week there's a bonus lesson on the tool I love BEST: an email list!

HOMEWORK:

1. Answer the question: How do you want your customer to feel? Write it down!
2. Put the answers to the first two questions (What makes your work sparkle? Who is it for?) down, so all three answers are together. Can you now see your marketing message? If not, keep working with it, thinking about it, and editing it over the next two weeks).
3. Before you do your reading, write down a list of all the things you think you "should" be doing. Now, let it GO.
4. Read through Chapters 5 + 6 and do all of the worksheets.

LESSON 4 TRANSCRIPT

To listen to this lesson, visit: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/taraswiger.com/CraftYourMarketing/CYM+Lesson+4.mp3>

Welcome to How to Rock your Email Newsletters for fun & profit!

Working with hundreds of small businesses over the last 4 years has taught me that email newsletters are THE most effective tool in reaching your Right People. More effective than a blog, Twitter, Facebook ... anything! You don't need a big list to make it work, either - when my yarn company, Blonde Chicken Boutique, was replacing my day job salary, my email list was around 200 people and a good 80% of my sales came directly from subscribers clicking through. In the past few years, I've worked with many students to set up their list, and even when their lists are tiny, they find that more of their sales come from subscribers and that as their list grows, their sales grow.

WHAT WE'RE GOING TO COVER IN THIS LESSON:

What I mean by "email newsletter"

Why an email newsletter is the most effective tool

How to rock yours and how to make it super-effective at speaking to your Right People

-how to get people on your list (+ why you should stick to it when you have 2 subscribers)

-when to send it,

-what to say,

The most important part of every e-mail you send

WHAT IS AN EMAIL LIST?

It's simply a list of the email addresses of people who are interested in what you're doing. Instead of YOU keeping track of these emails, you use a newsletter software, like Mailchimp or Aweber, to manage it for you. This software will create sign up forms you can embed on your site and a standalone webpage sign up form. It will include a footer on each email that you send that complies with spam laws. The newsletter software will give you lots of tools for making your list easy to manage, including an unsub link on every email (so anyone can unsub themselves at any time) and buttons to forward your emails or tweet it or like it on Facebook. It will also create a link to seeing your newsletter on a webpage and an archive of past messages, so you can link to old ones, or share it with others. Because all of this is created automatically, all you have to worry about is creating the list, sharing the form with all of your people, then sending the emails regularly.

WHY IT'S SO EFFECTIVE:

Unlike anything else you do, an email goes directly TO your subscriber.

Unlike a blog, they don't need to remember to check your website.

Unlike a tweet or Instagram, they don't have to be online the moment you send it.

Unlike Facebook, you can be sure that it will be delivered to every person who has signed up to get it.

Unlike a craft show, it's not just people who turned up that day. Unlike YouTube or a podcast, they don't have to check a specific app.

Just as importantly, there's something magic that happens when a reader gives you their email address. They are taking a step towards you, making a tiny commitment to you and your work. An email address is more valuable than a social media follow, so when a reader gives it up, it means more. In other words, the email subscriber is a more devoted fan than anyone else, except a customer, so she is much more likely to become a customer. So it's more effective to spend your energy to talk to people who are more likely to buy than trying to convince strangers or less-invested readers.

Now that you're convinced you want to start a list, let's talk about how to get people on it. The very first step is NOT to create the list; it's to figure out what you're going to send.

Then you're going to make the list and tell people what you'll send. Then you send them what you promised (and delight them!).

And finally, you stay consistent.

1. FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU'LL SEND.

What should you send?

This goes back to The Big 3: WHAT makes your work special? WHO are your people? HOW do you want them to feel?

Keep those three things in mind as you think through the stages of your customer's buying process:

Before they buy

What is keeping people from buying? What do they need to learn or understand before they buy? What questions do they have?

How can you get them ready to be an owner and user of your product?

After they buy:

What will help them use your product better?

What will make your product more useful in their life?

There are a zillion ways you can structure your messages, but the important thing you'll notice here is that the answer to none of these questions is: send a newsletter. That's just a bunch of news about your business or your blog. Instead, answer their questions, ask them questions and make a real connection with your readers.

Let's have some examples!

When I had the handspun yarn company, my monthly messages would always be about a theme (like Mother's Day or Spring or Winter hats) and I would include a picture of my newest yarn, and give them a resource for using my handmade yarn. AND I would often include a naming contest - so that everyone who suggested a name would be entered to win 50% off a skein of yarn. This wasn't just "What's new with me," but more of a "here's what's going on in the world, here's how it ties in with yarn." (For example, at Christmas and Mother's Day, I sent them templates to forward to their loved ones, that said "Hi! I want yarn! Here's where to buy it.")

Another yarn dyer I work with is sending email messages about the different aspects of hand dyed yarn, answering the questions she gets most often, or explaining a specific benefit of her yarn that people might not understand (like how her dyeing method keeps the colors from pooling, or why she re-skeins each skein, or how to choose a yarn for a pattern). She is speaking to people who love yarn enough to buy a more expensive skein, and she wants them to feel knowledgeable, so that's how she talks to them in her monthly messages.

An artist I work with sends sneak peeks of the art she's working on, and then a special early access to her monthly online art gallery, so that her subscribers can buy her original art before it's available to anyone else. Then she reminds them before the gallery closes so that they don't forget to grab it.

A designer I work with sends messages about her designs, each message linking to either a past project or a new one that she's launching, and it talks about how to choose yarn for that project. Then she highlights the projects that have already been made with it.

Another designer who creates complex, advances patterns sends information about how to become a better knitter, because her goal is to educate her readers so that they have the skill necessary to make her patterns.

If you sell furniture and you want to communicate the value, to a buyer who cares about the solidness, you could discuss why you work with certain kinds of woods, or tools, or techniques (just be sure not to focus on the technical details, but translate it into how it BENEFITS the buyer).

Remember - you can also very easily send them your blog posts. It's called an "RSS campaign" - your newsletter service will grab the "feed" from your blog and send new posts to subscribers. So if you're already creating this content for your blog, you can send it to your newsletter. But unlike having them

subscribe to the RSS feed themselves (which you have no control over!), you can also send messages just to them.

If, on the other hand, you have a hard time staying consistent on your blog, I'd first focus on getting consistent on your monthly emails and THEN add in a blog post every other week. The main focus is CONSISTENCY and QUALITY, not QUANTITY.

How often should you send?

This, of course, depends on you and your business. If you have lots of new products all the time or if your emails can help the people day in and day out, send more often. If you have fewer new things or if people need to buy your items less often, send less often.

Statistically, you're going to get better results if you send more often, with a minimum of once a month. If you send less often than once a month, people will forget that they signed up and won't know why they're getting it. If you sell a product in an Etsy shop, you probably don't need to send it more than every 2 weeks. But if you sell useful or applicable information, I'd go once per week.

2. START YOUR LIST

After you have decided what you're going to send, sign up for a service (I recommend Mailchimp, nearly all of my clients use it), and go in and "create a list". Head over to the "forms" and personalize it! Put your header in the header and then write a bit in the description - tell the subscriber exactly what they're going to get (how often and what kind of content), be sure to focus on the BENEFITS of your emails. You're not just going to send "updates", you're going to get "early access". You're not going to get "lessons", you're going to "learn how to ... {specific things they'll learn}."

3. GET PEOPLE ON IT

I know that this is one of the most-stressed-over parts of having an email list, but I want to encourage you: IT IS OK. However many people sign up for your list, your job is to SERVE THEM. Provide them with value, ask them questions, connect with them!

It's far more important to have people on the list who want to hear from you and buy your product, than just to have a LOT of people. Again, what matters is quality, not quantity. Quality subscribers open your emails, click, and are truly wanting to buy your product. And any subscriber has already put their trust in you, by giving you access to their email box, so treat them wonderfully, whether it's one person or a hundred.

With that in mind, you get people on your list by...letting people know you have a list! Use all of the tools you are currently use and LINK to your list.

1. Put the sign up form in your sidebar (at the very top!)
2. Link to it in blog posts

3. Put the link in your email signature
4. Share it on social media sites (Facebook Pages will now let you add a "button" to your page, including a "sign-up" button, so that people can subscribe to your emails!)
5. Bring a sign up form with you **WHEREVER** you might meet buyers - any show, shop, event. If you're talking to someone at the coffee shop about your work and they're interested, take their email address and then send them an email with a link to your list!
6. Invite every customer to sign up, in your Thank You message.

This is an ongoing process, with a lot of deeper, more advanced things to try (I'm going to create an advanced class on this, for the Starship!). The important thing is that you don't just put it up and walk away from it. Edit your form, try new things, explore options, send different kinds of emails, test every idea you come across! I've had an email list since 2008 and I am still tweaking my forms, offers and tools I use.

4. SEND IT CONSISTENTLY.

Once you know what you're going to write, when you're going to send it and you've got your sign up form, the only thing left is to actually write it regularly. And remember - it doesn't have to be words! You can send pictures, video, audio - whatever you can create consistently.

To get consistent, make a system out of it. Once every few months, plan out your next months of content, so you don't have to come up with something each time you make it. Pick a day of the week or the month when you're going to create the content. Then put it on your calendar and no matter what else is going on, sit down and work on it. Then edit it the next day and load it in your newsletter software (this always takes longer than you expect, so just be patient and remember that it will get faster as you become more familiar with it.). Then schedule it!

GET YOUR MINDSET RIGHT:

You are NOT annoying people

They asked for it! They are interested and if you have a product that will actually benefit the buyer (and of course you do!), then you are doing them a DISSERVICE by not telling them about it.

Do it even if no one's listening

Effective marketing is much more about your attitude and your skill than it is about specific strategies and tools. You are going to take a while to write a good newsletter, to find your voice, to be compelling and interesting to your people. So start **NOW** and write consistently, even if you've got no one listening. If you wait until you have some people on your list, then you'll have an audience for your early stumbles **AND** you'll make the earliest subscribers wait too long until they hear from you. You are going to go through ups and downs in motivation and feeling good about your work, so the more consistently you attempt to connect with your buyers, the more you'll train yourself to do it no matter what ... and that is going to build trust with your readers, and build a consistent, successful business.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE KEY TO MAKING EACH EMAIL EFFECTIVE:

Include ONE Call to Action.

A call to action is asking the reader to act! This will usually be a direct link to purchase something, or to a post you want them to read, or to answer a question.

Your Call to Action (CTA) needs to be in alignment with your goals. For example, if you want to increase sales, don't keep sending your list links to blog posts, send them an email that includes a direct link to your product and a direct CTA (ex, Buy this here!). If you want more traffic to your site, share links to your site. If you want to get to know your buyers, ask them questions. But everyone should have one call to action, so your readers get used to interacting with you. And it should only have ONE CTA, so they know exactly what you want them to do. If you include more than one option, you're going to split it up (no one person is going to click everything. They'll usually pick the first or last link you offer).

One final note: Your emails are the single best way to connect with your customers - not just to sell them something but to actually connect, person-to-person. You can gather information, learn their language for talking about your work and get better and better at communicating with them. To do this, from time to time make your call to action a question for the reader to answer. Don't just ask things you want to know; first share your own story about something, then ask them to share theirs. If you sell home goods, this might be a story about your favorite thing your house, then ask them "What's your favorite piece in your home?" If you sell yarn or patterns, share a knitting misadventure and ask them about theirs. Whatever piece of information you'd like them to share with you, they are more likely to do it if you've first shared with them. No matter what the question or their reply, you can always learn something - about how they think, how they describe what they care about, or even just what kind of people are reading your work. Experiment with asking all kinds of questions! The only way you can get this wrong is if you ask a boring marketing question, without first sharing a personal story.

TO SUM UP:

1. Decide what you're going to send.
2. Tell people.
3. Do what you told them you'd do.
4. Do it consistently, include a CTA and ask them questions!

Now get out there and start emailing your fans!

ROCK YOUR E-MAIL LIST

WHAT WILL YOU WRITE ABOUT?

Answer this to decide:

What makes your work special?

Who is your work for?

How do you want them to feel?

Before they buy:

What is keeping people from buying?

What do they need to learn or understand before they buy?

What questions do they have?

How can you get them ready to be an owner and user of your product?

After they buy:

What will help them use your product better?

What will make your product more useful in their life?

What can you send your people to answer these questions? (Write at least 10 ideas)

How can your email make the reader feel the way you want your product to make them feel?

Is there a specific angle you can come from? A type of content you can share?

YOUR NEWSLETTER PLAN

How often will you send your newsletter?

What kind of content will you put in your emails?

What are the next 5 things you'll write about in your newsletter?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What will your Call to Action be in each message?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Where will you share your newsletter?

(Check off once you've put it in all these places)

- ☐ Sidebar of your website
- ☐ Share link on every one of your social media platforms
- ☐ Link to it in blog post (explain benefits of signing up)
- ☐ Put at the bottom of your 5 most popular blog posts
- ☐ Include an invitation to sign up, in your Thank You message to customers
- ☐ "Sign up" button on Facebook Page (if you have one)

LESSON 5 TRANSCRIPT

To listen to the lesson, visit <https://s3.amazonaws.com/taraswiger.com/CraftYourMarketing/CYM+Lesson+5.mp3>

WHAT'S A MARKETING PLAN?

It's just a plan for what you'll share and when and on what tools.

The phrase is confusing because you'll actually have more than ONE marketing plan. You'll have an overview, that says what you tools you use and how often you want to post there (a schedule for your marketing) ... and then you'll have a short term content plan - what exactly you're going to post when. In my business, my marketing schedule is that I'll blog on Tuesdays and podcast on Wednesday, and my content plan specifies the subject matter of my blog posts and podcasts.

In this class, we're going to cover the BIG picture Marketing Schedule, and then I'll share examples of a Content Plan. When you're done with the class you'll have your big picture Marketing Schedule, and a plan for creating your next content plan. [Craft an Effective Blog](#) guides you to create specific pieces of content, if you need help identifying good blog posts ideas.

Your marketing can plan be as simple as a [post-it note](#) or as complex as [a spreadsheet](#).

What to include in your plan?

The tools you're already using in your business.

Do NOT use this as an opportunity to add a bunch of new tools. If you aren't using any tool, revisit what you learned in the Tool chapters. Which ones make sense for your business? Pick one, and start there.

In general, if you have an online shop, this is the order of priority:

1. Online shop set up, with great photos and descriptions, with at least 20 items (don't move on to another tool until you've done this).
2. If you're a yarn maker or knit/crochet designer, Ravelry comes next - set up your patterns or your yarns in the system + create a filled-in profile.
3. Email list (you can move on to the next tool once you've set up your forms and linked to them in your
4. Thank you message and have scheduled 2 messages).
5. Website
 - best, longest-lasting option: self-hosted WordPress site;
 - quickest, free-est option: Blogger
 - Put your sign up form in the sidebar, and set up the site with everything we discussed in Chapter 4, before you move on.

6. Facebook page, Instagram or Twitter: Depending on what you'll be most likely to use, and how photogenic your product is. Just pick ONE. Wait until you have at least 500 followers before you move on to another.

Now, most of you in this class already have bits and pieces of this (or all of it!), so you don't need to change what you're using, and you certainly shouldn't add anything new yet. Instead, make what you do use more effective through what you've learned in this class: share content for your people, write descriptions that highlight the benefits, become consistent with it.

MAKE YOUR MARKETING PLAN

Now, your marketing plan is simply what you're going to share, where and when. You're going to base this "What to share" on what you sell and what you want to sell. A lot of people start by figuring out how many times they're going to use each tool, like I'll **tweet 3x a day**, but then you have the issue of trying to find stuff to share, and that might not be in alignment with what you really WANT to spend time on.

Since the goal is to sell more of your stuff, it makes sense to build your marketing plan around that. So this is where we'll start, with one new product in your shop (or event you're attending or class you're holding). Then we'll add in sharing new pieces of content you create, and then we'll fill it in with sharing other things (from other sources) your people will love.

Make a plan for what you do with each new product:

List the tools you use and that you want to keep using, with consistency. First, decide how often you're going to have a new product. Every day? Once a week? Three times a week? Whatever you can stay consistent with. (It's usually better to do to a new item three times a week than to post three new items in one day.)

How can you share your new product on each of these tools?

How often does it make sense? (For example, very few people see each tweet (because they're not online when you post it), so it makes sense to tweet a product 2-5 times over the course of a week.)

WRITE ALL THIS DOWN ON THE WORKSHEET

Make a plan for what to do with each new piece of content.

Your marketing plan will also include the content you're going to create on your Home Base, whether it's a blog, podcast, videos, pictures. You'll want to share this new content on all your other tools. First decide how often you're going to post to your Home Base. If you've struggled to be consistent with this in the past, I'd start with once every two weeks. Eventually you can build up to once a week and then maybe 2-3 times per week, but once every two weeks is better than never.

Just like we did with the product, list the tools you use, and create a plan for where you'll share it. I use [CoSchedule](#) to allow me to schedule these social shares as soon as I write the piece, so I don't have to keep coming back to it.

Make a Newsletter plan

You should have done this in the previous week, but be sure to write down how often you're going to send this and figure out what that means for your distribution of new products. Will you be sharing 5 new products in each monthly email? Or just share one product in every other email?

Make a plan for the other time

Social Media tools work best when they are, yes, social. When you don't just broadcast what you want to say, but when you share other things your followers are going to like AND when you have conversations.

- ★ Twitter - plan at least 2-3 tweets in between your own stuff. This can be links to other things your people will like or replies to people's tweets you want to talk to. Also plan to check once a day and reply to anyone who has replied to you!
- ★ Facebook - plan at least 1 post/day, in between your own stuff. This is usually links to other things people will like, or just a bit of writing about something, or a photo (you can set Instagram up to send your images to your Facebook page). Again, be sure to reply to anyone who replies to you (if it makes sense).
- ★ Instagram - share pictures from your life! Your promotional pictures should be spread out amongst personal pictures. Check out Grace's [How to Hack Instagram](#) for lots of thoughts on hashtags and getting followers.

Once you've got all this down, you can turn them into checklists that you revisit each time you launch something new, or you can create a calendar that fills each piece in for the coming month or quarter. I use a combination of the two. I have a content calendar that includes the topics I'm going to write about for the podcast and email newsletter. And for each new post or class launch, I go down the checklist to be sure it's shared in all the places (again, I use CoSchedule, which makes the checklist easier). And then once a week I fill in the other stuff using Buffer to schedule it ahead of time. You can read all about how I schedule everything in the blog post (I'll include it in the list of resources).

BY THIS POINT YOU SHOULD SEE THAT IT ALL FITS TOGETHER, RIGHT?

The point of the marketing plan is that your marketing flows from your business and your goals - one action (like listing a new item in the shop) sparks the marketing to spread the word to your followers. You don't wake up each day and wonder: What should I tweet about? Instead, you do your work, which includes making products, listing them, and creating new content. Each of those actions inspires the

marketing. And as you work, you take pictures and think about how to describe it on Instagram or your blog or newsletter. So it's all stemming from your real work.

THAT'S YOUR BIG PICTURE MARKETING SCHEDULE.

You now know what to do with each new product, piece of content, and what to put in the tools around that. You can use this marketing plan forever, just changing it up as your tools or your goals change.

But to get deeper, to know in even more detail what you're going to do, it helps to make a content plan.

HOW TO MAKE A CONTENT PLAN

1. **Decide what you're going to make and focus on.**
2. **Line it up with your calendar.**
3. **Put it on your calendar or a spreadsheet.**

1. Decide what you're going to make and focus on.

Your content and everything you share, flows from what you're making and selling. So you don't just come up with random stuff to write about - you write about what you're working on and what you most want to sell.

So the first step in a content plan is to plan what you're going to make and what you want to sell and when. Now, if you have a regularly updated shop with new products every week, you can just build your content around one new item each week. Not that you'll be blogging "this is the new item of the week," but you'll allow that item to spark an idea for content, like what inspired it, what else you can use with it, etc. Go back to what you already decided you want to share with your people, and then tie your content ideas with specific products and get very specific.

For example, if you decided before that you want to share 3 ways to wear your scarves, write that piece during a week when you have new scarves in the shop, and then include photos and links to the scarves in that blog post.

Now, you can just do this week by week, by looking at what you're about to list and your shop and write about it, but I've found that most makers find it relieves a lot of stress to plan this out at least a month or two in advance.

Another option is to not just be inspired by what's going in your shop, but to choose a focus. Either focus on a product TYPE or on a quality of your brand or on a feeling you want them to have. For example, you may add cards and prints and coloring books to your shop, but choose for one month to focus your content on just the cards. You can write about sending cards, the joy of getting mail, famous letter-writers

of literary history, etc. You can write about your process, the customers who have used your cards, etc. The next month you can choose to focus on prints and share similar content about them.

Those are suggestions for regularly-updated shops. But if you're a designer, teacher, or actual physical location - your content calendar can be shaped in different ways.

If you have specific time-bound events, like classes or farmer's markets or something, use the calendar of those things to shape your marketing. For example, if you've got a mitten class coming up, plan to spend the week or two before the class sharing mitten-related content.

If you're a designer or teacher and you release a new product only every month (or less), then your marketing will be shaped by those new releases. Plan when you're going to release what and then write content around it. Spend a week or two (depending on your release calendar) talking about the benefits and qualities of your upcoming design (hinting about it all the time), then release it (don't forget to create pieces of content that celebrate its release!) and then answer questions or objections people might have in the week or so after it's released.

No matter how you chose to shape your content, the focus is the same: What you're making and what people can buy.

2. Line it up with your planned frequency

Once you've got an idea of when you can do what, look at your calendar and how often you plan to post things. For example, I release a podcast on Wednesday and an email lesson on Thursdays. So if I want to talk about a new class that's launching in 2 weeks, I only have a few chances to do that. If the Starship is only for one week, I only have one email and one podcast in which to spread that message. (So those two pieces need to make a VERY clear call to action.)

3. Put it on your calendar or a spreadsheet.

I've included a template of my super simple content spreadsheet in this week's resources. Once you've thought through what you can do, the next step is to decide exactly what you'll say or do. For example, you may think: I'll talk about necklaces this month, and I'm writing 2 blog posts that month. The final step of a real content calendar is to commit: What is each blog post going to be? Write a headline or description of it. (The difference between: write about necklaces + 5 ways to wear a statement necklace). This final piece of coming up with specific pieces of content WILL take a while, but it will save you so much time later!

THE FINAL STEP OF THIS MARKETING PLAN IS ACTUALLY IMPLEMENTING IT!

You've spent all this time planning, so take the final step and COMMIT to it. Make a scheduled time each week when you work on content creation. It doesn't matter when that is, just make sure it's regular and it's a top priority.

Once you do, here's how all these different pieces of your Marketing Plan might fit together:

Imaginary Person has a blog, email list and uses Twitter.

She sits down on Monday to work on content.

Every week she writes a blog post and schedules it for Wednesday.

She goes down her checklist and schedules tweets for the blog post (using different tweets each time).

After the blog post is done, she spends 30 minutes scheduling a tweet or two for each weekday that she thinks her people will like.

Once a day she hops on Twitter and replies to her replies and comments on 1-2 tweets of people who might be her people.

Once a month she creates an email, sending people tips on using her product. She ends with a CTA to buy her newest product.

Whenever she adds a new product to her shop, she goes the checklist and schedules tweets.

REACHING OUT, GETTING IT IN FRONT OF OTHER AUDIENCES

Now, this is a marketing plan that will get you consistently sharing your work with your people. If you just become consistent with this, you WILL grow your audience. People will find your work via search, they will recommend their friends, they will share your social media posts.

But all of this is about your OWN platform. The reason why we've focused on this because, again, your HOME needs to be in order before you can reach out and invite more people in.

But once you've gotten consistent with this (for 3-6 months), it's time to think about getting your work on OTHER people's platforms. There are lots of ways this can work, so I'm going to give you a list of ideas.

- ★ Sell at an event - you will meet so many people not already in your audience. If it all fits what you do, I recommend it highly, at least a few times a year.
- ★ Write a guest post for a site your people read (this is if you love to write and it makes sense for your product).
- ★ Submit your work for editorial review in magazines and blogs your people read (follow submission guidelines).
- ★ Join a FB group or sub-Reddit or Ravelry group that your people would join (NOT other makers) + become an active, helpful voice.
- ★ Take part in a Twitter chat that your person would attend.
- ★ Interview someone that your person reads or follows online, on your website (that person will share the link back to your website).

- ★ Collaborate with someone who speaks to your same people (start with those with tiny audiences and as you build up your collaboration and marketing skills, branch out to people who you think are “too big”).
- ★ Agree to be interviewed by anyone who asks (no matter how small the audience, unless you think your audience will be turned off by the setting).
- ★ Attend local events where your people will be (this is probably **not** a “networking” event, but something like a PTA meeting or a book club or a brewery tour or something). If you’re not sure how to connect, listen to this [episode about networking](#).

TAKE ACTION

Pick ONE thing from the above list (or come up with your own!), and then do it at least once every month.

How to tell if it’s effective?

Set a way to measure it and a goal for it. What do you want from this tool? Make a note of that measurement today.

Come back in one month and see if it met your goal.

If so, awesome! Keep using it!

If not, change something.

Example:

Goal: I want to use Twitter to drive traffic to my site (traffic that eventually buys).

Measurement: Using Google Analytics, how many people does it drive to my site. If this number goes up, do my sales go up?

Plan: Tweet a link to my site twice a day (12 hours apart) with 2 more tweets in between there and reply to all replies. (Use Buffer to schedule these!)

A month later, what happened? How much traffic came from Twitter? Was that more or less than last month? Did my sales go up or down the same amount? (The question you’re answering with this: are they correlated?)

If awesome, keep going!

If not, change something. Perhaps tweet less. Or write your links in a different way. Or include a picture in one of your tweets.

Now, because this takes a lot of focus and time, I don't recommend you take on more than one of these tool experiments each month, because let's get real - your time is best spent on other things than obsessing over each tool and your traffic. If you "waste" a lot of time on Twitter, just creating a plan for what you'll do, and sticking with it, will make your time use more effective.

What I recommend instead of obsessing over everything at once is to set one experiment per month, each month a different tool, and then **KEEP THESE GOALS IN MIND**.

Now, these experiments won't be that useful in the beginning, because it takes a while to build up an audience in any tool. So if you've just joined something, take the time to set an intention for it: How do you want it to help your business? And then spend 3 months using the tool (with a plan!) and **THEN** review if it helped you how you intended it. Do this before you move on to a second tool. In fact, most experts advise you to not move onto a second tool until you have over 500 followers on one tool (because you can then bring that audience to the next tool).

YOUR PIECE BY PIECE MARKETING PLAN

How will you share a new product? *(List your tools, then fill in frequency)*

How will you share new content? *(List your tools, then fill in frequency)*

How will you fill in around this? *(List each tool and include frequency)*

What will you do for each new thing? *(This is your checklist)*

EXAMPLE -WHEN I CREATE A NEW CLASS:

Blog:

Write blog post about one benefit of class (week it is open)

Newsletter:

Weekly email: Share story of how I've used this benefit, include invitation to class

Instagram:

Share class image

Share related image, write about why I created it

Twitter:

Tweet 1x/day while it's open (quote bits of the sales page)

Facebook page:

2 posts during the week it's open

INSTAGRAM HACKING

by [Grace Shalom Hopkins](#)

Instagram is my social media angel; this is the glue that holds together all my social media presence. I tried Facebook page-ing and Twitter and it was gnashing of teeth, even with scheduling, plus very little feedback and tribe-building ever resulted from my gnashing.

This is my formula for how I grew 80% on Instagram in a month and that translated into Etsy views, blog readers, and Facebook page followers. I did this without becoming a full time social media slave, less than 10 minutes most days and 30 minutes every week or so.

THE MAIN PROCESS

The formula works in a loop, so imagine this as a big circle.

- ★ Post 2-4 times a day. Tag with your #brandname and 4-6 related tags.
- ★ Scroll through your feed once a day, **like*** photos liberally (don't be fake but don't use this time to be aloof either) and comment when you feel led to.
*like = double-click the photo to "heart" it or click on the heart below the image This is your normal daily pattern, and it's very low key. The tricks are what make the formula sticky.

In a Nutshell:

1. Follow people who have a lot of influence in your niche. Get ideas from them on how to use hashtags in your posts and other people to follow.
2. Comment whenever you can provide relevant, useful information or feedback – this will help establish you as an expert.
3. Spread the love – “Like” a lot of pictures each time you scroll through so that your name shows up in more peoples’ feeds.
4. Use Instagram to weave yourself into the community of your niche – using relevant posts, hashtags that other people frequently use and search, behind-the-scenes peeks at your work, and occasional links to the products you sell.
5. Play the Instagram game so that you can use this app efficiently and get the most out of it.

HOW TO PLAY THE INSTAGRAM GAME

- ★ Post photos that are in line with the trending topics - see what your competition is getting activity with and see what other buyers are posting about. When you do your daily scroll-through, this is really ninja recon, so pay attention to the details!
- ★ Use the hashtags everybody else in your niche is using. For spinners, that's #spinnersofinstagram and #instaspin, those are the huge catch-all ones. For knitters they are similar #instaknit and #knitstagram. You are wasting your effort in tagging if you don't use the big popular ones.

- ★ When you're first getting used to tagging, click on the hashtags you put on your own photos and see which ones are full of irreverent stuff and make a note to not use them anymore. (For instance: for yarn spinners, #spinning or #spin is full of bicycle people :P.) You can quit doing this once you get a big enough pool of tags you like and just use those over again. For spinning and knitting the hashtag pool is pretty limited, making my life easier!
- ★ Participate in the group 'games' - not sure what to call them. Like show me what you're working on (#WIDN = What I'm Doing Now) will jump around IG every few weeks. If everybody is doing it, do it too!
- ★ Figure out unity building questions. People always say, *ask questions to get a response*, and that doesn't work when you haven't got people or you've only got slackers on your feed. You need to find the thing that gets the outgoing commenters and they will lead the way for the others. Some people feel shy being the first to comment I guess. My unity building question is the name game. I post photos of each of my new colourways and ask people to suggest names for it. I seriously get followers right and left and likes and comments when I do this.
- ★ Remind your people in your newsletter, thank you for buying messages, follow ups, everywhere you can to hashtag your brand and tag you if they post photos. Encourage them in every way you can to find and follow you on IG. For me this is the best relationship building venue and that's what you want!
- ★ Follow the brands you like and other indie makers and really active IG people in your niche, but DON'T follow anybody else as a rule. This sounds silly but the logic here is you want to be able to pick up your phone and scroll through a fairly small feed of photos every day and get the most bang for your time. You're going to be seeing the trend setters and the leaders within your niche, you want to keep an eye on them. For me there is like 20ish people who are SUPER active in the spinning/knitting world, I'm very friendly with them and we are sort of a tribe now.
- ★ This doesn't mean you can't follow your friends or family or people outside your niche, I do all those things. I just mean don't follow4follow or whatever they call it. It clogs up your recon and makes you look less professional. Plus it's always nice to have your followers outnumber your following. :P

What to Post About

- ★ Ask questions, respond to other people's photos and questions with your own (this week I had a spur of the moment mini-lesson about spinning Suri art yarn and got to see the other woman's project step by step in her own feed, fun!).
- ★ Post photos of your process, your projects, your cooking, your outfit, your makeup, your doctor's office bracelet, handwritten quotes, close ups, trying on, everything that strikes your fancy. You aren't hard selling, you're building a relationship. Think of IG as your personal biggest fan/student/mother/little sister, whatever works for you. I personally think of it like I'm writing to an intern who is as interested in

me as my mommy is :P

- ★ Refer to diets and health struggles carefully. Do this tastefully and infrequently but doing so connects you with others who have this struggle and bonds you further with your people. "Hey I've been cramping it's time for knitting! #endowarrior #knitstagram" connects you instantly to other endo knitters, you can suffer and create together! Remember your tribe wants you to be a person, being real is a powerful force. The same thing goes for something like a photo of a vegan meal or a selfie with the new gluten-free flour you found.
- ★ Same goes for hash-tagging culture or religion or subculture related geekery. Do that! If you are a Jewish knitter and knit your own covers, hashtag Jewish specific tichel-type things.
- ★ Weave YOU into your community because you are building better and stronger bonds that way and you're reaching out to people who maybe didn't know they were your Right Person.
- ★ Post finished listings to your IG and say "link in the profile" and have the link you most want people to see in your profile. That makes it easy for them to find and people tend to visually skip links that aren't clickable. This reminds people you are actually selling those sexy things.
- ★ Avoid hard selling on IG, this isn't the platform for that (Facebook is the place you do more links and hard selling). IG is all about the behind-the-scenes. You can, as I said above, post links every now and again but try and keep that to once or twice weekly TOPS.

Integrating with Other Media

Share SOME of your IG photos to Facebook and Twitter; they have buttons where you can share them as you post. I don't ever check Twitter but I figure it's good to just have it active and branded in case I would like to do more with it later.

I also keep my Facebook SEO and relevancy stats up by posting directly from Facebook without hashtags. If everything is from IG, Facebook doesn't show you as well in people's feeds. Avoid that. It's also good to do other things on Facebook, namely directly blog post links and direct listing links. Those build backlinks which Google likes.

Weekly Research

Do a weekly recon mission: this can take 15-40 minutes, depending on how much time you want to devote to it. Try not to go over or under those times because I have found that if I spend too end up plastered all over everywhere a la spam or I don't get anything constructive done.

- ★ Click on the tags you identified as the good ones (like the #instaknit example I used above) and scroll through, liking the ones that are a good fit for you. Hand dyed yarn people should avoid the solid

colour acrylic people and scout out the people who love hand dyed yarn. Spend a few minutes in each tag; don't waste all your mojo in one. Spread the love.

- ★ When you find one you really like or one that got tons of activity, click through to the poster. Like more of their stuff, 3-5 is good. Enough to show up on their feed in a block. What you're doing is saying Hi, basically.
- ★ Comment if you see a frustration in the comments you know how to fix, comment when you love something, etc. But liking is nearly as powerful, I've found in this stage.
- ★ On your feed of people you'd already identified as either competition or active buyers, click on any tags that you might not be using, see if it's worth it. Do the scroll and like thing on it if it is full of good stuff and make a mental note to use that one when you can.
- ★ Also on your feed, click on the people who are commenting on those competitors' pages and like as needed.

IG is small right now, so it's really cozy and the niches are very much a community. If your niche is "heyyyy #selfies #sexygirlz #single" you might have more ground to cover but for most of us it's still really small.

This was originally posted by Grace on the [Starship](#) and is shared with her permission. Check out [her gorgeous yarn!](#)