



FROM HI TO BUY: CRAFTING A CUSTOMER PATH

With Tara Swiger

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

IN THIS CLASS, YOU WILL LEARN:

- ★ What your Customer Path is
- ★ How all your marketing activities can fit together to form a cohesive path for customers
- ★ The importance of regular communication
- ★ How to identify the most effective topics to write about (to deepen your relationships)

There will be audio lessons and worksheets for you to complete as you travel down your own Customer Path.

SETTING AN INTENTION

When you joined this class, you had something specific you hoped to learn. To make sure you learn that and get the most out of this class for where you are right now, let's get clear about what you really want!

This class will contain a lot of information about how your Customer Path might work. I've developed questions to help you apply it to your specific business, but it's easy to get distracted and to get overwhelmed by all you could do. To avoid that overwhelm, I'm asking you to set an intention about what you want from this class.

Setting an intention is a powerful tool for focusing your own attention. It makes sure that you know what you're here for, so that you can get exactly that. It'll help you ignore the bits that you don't need (or aren't ready to implement) and soak up the parts that will help you most. If I don't cover your specific question, your intention will help you recognize that - so you can ask me about it!

And it's super easy: Just remember back to why you purchased this class + write it down! You can use the worksheet on the following page to help!

I'm devoted to making this class useful to you, exactly where you are right now. So if I don't cover something or you still have questions - just e-mail me at tara@taraswiger.com and ask!

SETTING AN INTENTION

Setting an intention helps you get out of this class what you want to get out of it, and that your experience is personally tailored to your life and your business.

What do you hope to learn in this class?

What do you want to change about your customer path or how you feel about it?

What would you like this class to do for your business?

How do you feel about your Customer Path right now?

How would you like to feel about your Customer Path when you finish this class?

What do you already think your Customer Path "should" look like?

(ie, What do you think you should already be doing? What do you feel bad about not doing?)

THE CONCEPT OF A CUSTOMER PATH

Before we get started working on YOUR customer path and improving it, let's get on the same page about what a Customer Path really is.

I want you to start by really understanding what I mean by "Customer Path" and how to think about yours!

I covered this in an episode of my podcast, so listen in now! You can find it here:

<http://taraswiger.com/podcast4/>

You can also read it, via the transcript (*on the next pages*).

YOU'LL LEARN

- ★ What the Customer Path is
- ★ Why you need it
- ★ How to think about your customer's journey down your path

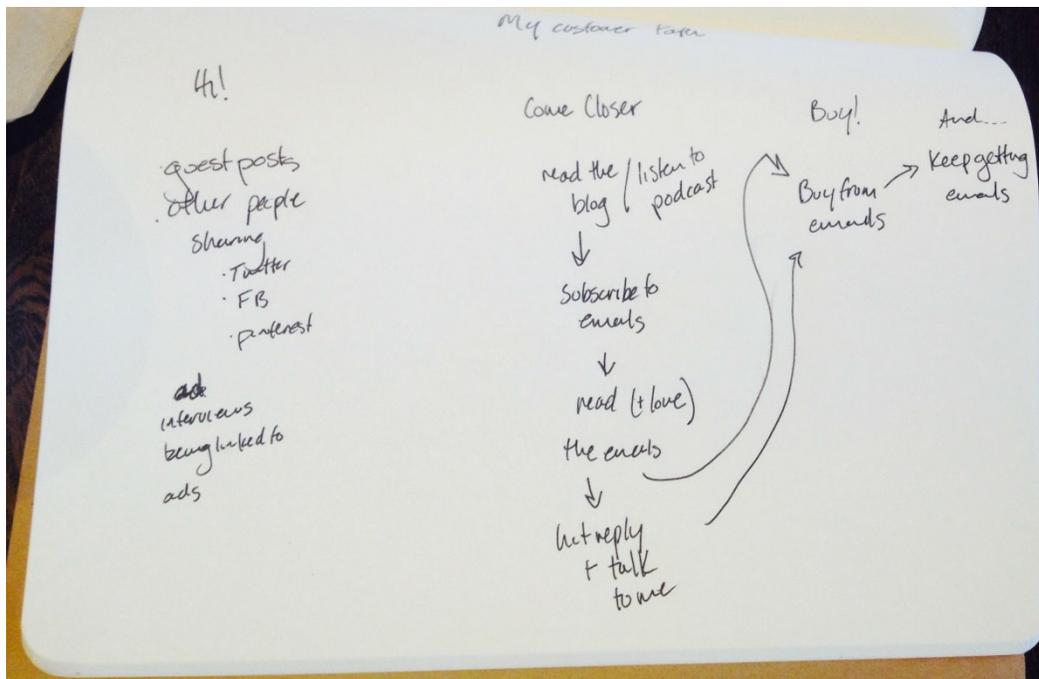
YOUR OWN PATH

The fact is, you have MANY possible Customer Paths. Some people will read your work (or subscribe to your emails, or whatever) for a long time before they buy. Others will discover you on Twitter, click through + buy!

So you're not looking for One Customer Path, or even the *best* one (because the "best" one is ANY path that leads to a sale!), but you are getting clear on what your potential customers are doing, the options you're giving them, and what you WANT them to do.

WHEN YOU'RE DONE LISTENING TO THE LESSON (OR WHILE YOU LISTEN!) START TO SKETCH OUT YOUR CUSTOMER PATH. YOU CAN USE THE ATTACHED WORKSHEET, OR JUST SKETCH IN YOUR JOURNAL.

Here's an example of mine:



Next week we're going to look at what this actually means, but if you have any epiphanies, write 'em down!

TO DO:

- ★ Listen to the lesson (or read the transcript)
- ★ Map your Customer Path!

TRANSCRIPT:

YOUR CUSTOMER PATH

HOW CUSTOMERS FIND YOU, FALL IN LOVE, AND CHOOSE TO BUY = YOUR CUSTOMER PATH.

A “Customer Path” is a framework to think about your marketing. Once you think through your message and your goals from your own point of view (like we do in [the book](#)), you need to shift and think about how this all fits together for your ideal customer. What do they come in contact with first? Where do they go next?

This is how you turn a casual reader (or random Google-r) into a customer, and then a raving fan.

.....

When students e-mail me to ask what they should do with a specific marketing tool, I generally ask them how that fits on their customer path! So today I thought we should talk about what that means.

Today we'll talk about:

- ★ What a customer path is.
- ★ The path you already have (yes! You have one!).
- ★ How to make decisions based on your customer path.

A customer path is the path a customer takes towards you and your work. It's as simple as that! It's easy to think about your marketing from your own point of view:

- ★ “I use Twitter.”
- ★ “I have a blog.”
- ★ “I use an e-mail newsletter.”

But your customer doesn't usually come into contact with you that way! They may find a link on Twitter, or a blog where someone has mentioned you, and they click through to your own blog and read a few posts. Then what?

- ★ They click to your shop.
- ★ They sign up for your newsletter.
- ★ They buy something.
- ★ They buy something else, or ask a question, or buy increasingly expensive products or options.

So this process is from their perspective, and it's how they interact with your business. This provides you with a framework of thinking about your marketing – instead of jumping around and wondering what you need to do, think instead of how something fits in with the path your customer will take as they find you and get more familiar with your business.

Having an idea of the places on your customer path that have a few gaps will help you determine what to use

Maybe you need to purchase ads on a web site that your customers visit frequently, or you need to participate more on Facebook because that's the social medium of choice for your ideal client.

It will also give you an idea of what to say

If you think of where your newsletter subscribers or Twitter followers are on their customer path with you, then you can think about how to tailor your message to them and reach them at that point in their path.

A customer path makes the process of finding you, learning about you, and buying from you more natural and easy for your customers.

It also makes it easier for you to know what to say to your customers at every step of that process.

A customer path helps you provide more value for your customers, because you are sharing exactly the type of information that they are ready to hear since you tailored your message to their customer path.

For example:

You can overwhelm people with too much detail when they first come into your world. So in your customer path, think about what they need to know or to do FIRST, and just give them that much information in the places where someone will first find you.

On the opposite side of this, it can be easy to give a regular customer too much information she already has; she doesn't need to hear your whole life/business story every time she makes a purchase – she already knows that story, and it's part of what made her a fan, so now she's here to buy more stuff. Don't overwhelm her with information she already knows.

IF YOU HAVE MADE EVEN ONE SALE, YOU ALREADY HAVE A CUSTOMER PATH.

You're not starting from scratch, but you're building upon what you have already started.

Let's think about the Customer Path in terms of these questions:

1. How and where do people discover you? Where do they first enter into a relationship with you, your writing, your products? How do they find out more information if they're interested?
2. What happens if they have the information and they love what they see, but they're not quite ready to buy just yet? Can they follow you on Twitter, or sign up for your newsletter, or subscribe to your blog? And is that the *one thing* you want them to do the most?
3. What happens after they buy from you - do they ever hear from you again? Is there a way for them to become more of a raving fan?

These questions will help you get started thinking about where everything fits. It's a puzzle, like this:

- ★ Where does _____ (Twitter, your blog, your Instagram account) fit into your customer path? Where is someone on that path when they encounter you in that place?
- ★ What can you write about in that place that will be the most useful to the person who is at that point in her path? What does she want to hear most - what will make her interested in what you have to say, and excited about what you're selling?

IT'S GREAT TO HAVE MANY WAYS FOR YOUR POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS TO FIND YOU AND INTERACT WITH YOU - BLOG, TWITTER, RAVELRY, ETC. - BUT IF A PERSON LANDS ON YOUR SITE AND YOU HAVEN'T MADE IT VERY CLEAR WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO NEXT, THE MOST LIKELY SCENARIO IS THAT THEY WON'T DO ANYTHING AT ALL.

If you give someone too many options, they're actually most likely not to do anything at all. Making a decision is tiring and they're not going to go out of their way to choose between too many options. So as the owner of your customer path, you need to make it clear what you want them to do next and how they can do that (and make it easy for them to do it!).

(For more information on this idea, read through [The Paradox of Choice](#).)

As you're working on the customer path, keep these ideas in mind:

1. Make the first step very easy. It should be easy to find you online if they hear about your name or your brand and they want to find you.

2. If people come to your site because they're searching for something specific (your product line, your store hours), make sure you have that information front and center on your site so it's easy to find when they get there!
3. Think of ways you can honor their commitment to you. If you get someone to sign up for your newsletter, they're making a commitment to let you into their inbox on a regular basis. Honor that by sending them what they ask for, and committing to regularly sending them things. You're not bugging them - they are asking to hear from you!
4. Remember who you're writing for: the content you produce on your blog should be different than your e-mail newsletter. Your blog readers may be first-time visitors to your site and your brand, but the people reading your e-mails are the ones who have signed up to hear from you and have been getting content from you on a regular basis.
5. The longer someone travels down your customer path, the closer they're getting to the real you. If you're uncomfortable sharing too much of your personal life online, remember that you can do this with a smaller, more dedicated group of people if you wait to open up those sides of your personality deeper into your customer path. Of course you should always be yourself at every step on the path, but you can get even more "weird" or even more "YOU" when they get farther down the path.
6. Make it easy! Guide them gently down your path by suggesting what you want them to do next every time they arrive at a new destination on the path. Tell your Twitter followers about your newest blog post. Tell your blog readers about your newsletter. Tell your newsletter subscribers about your newest product.
7. Keep it an equal exchange. At every step along the path, the customer is giving you something - her time, her attention, her e-mail address or her money. So you should be giving her something in exchange for that - your knowledge, your story, your tips and tricks or your products.

Let's pause and acknowledge something: all of this talking about connecting with people can be scary. You might feel like leading someone closer to you is "slimy" or "strategic," and it might make you uncomfortable. I think this is why people tend to post boring or impersonal content online - like tweeting that they just listed "X" in their shop - because it's much easier to be boring and impersonal than it is to put in the time thinking about a customer path and sharing something of themselves.

But remember, there's a huge up-side: it's much easier to talk to real fans about your work, and to invite someone to join you in something after they already know you and your work (and like you and your work!).

Look at your customer path as a series of chances for your fans to say: "Hi! I'm here! I love your work and I want to hear more about it!" That should make it feel easier to tell them about your work if you can think about the fact that that's why they're here in the first place. (Your work is loved and appreciated in their lives!)

YOUR CUSTOMER PATH (WORKSHEET)

Before class begins, it's important to start thinking about your Customer Path. Map it out! And then map out another possible path, and another one! (Make it as plain or artistic as you want!)

How people discover my work --> Come closer (what do they do next?) --> Buy

LESSON 1: EACH PART OF THE PATH

IN THIS LESSON WE'LL COVER:

- ★ What each part of the path is
- ★ How to assess your Customer Path with stats
- ★ The stats I track
- ★ Reassessing your path

We're going to start by learning a bit more about each part of the class, before we dive into all the details of it (and how to work on it) the rest of the week. We'll also talk about how to KNOW your Customer Path (statistics) and how to handle the HUGE amount of ideas you'll generate the rest of the week.

Before we dive into each part of the path, let's review what each part does:

Hi!

This is where totally new people are learning about you. You'll want to focus on this part of the path if you're brand new, you've never made a sale (or you've made very few) and you feel like the reason you don't have more sales is because NO ONE is seeing your work.

Come Closer

This is where people learn more about you and your product and gather enough information to decide to buy. This is where people move from "oh, I've heard of that" to "I read it regularly" to "I want to buy that!" This is where the bulk of your marketing activities live (blogging, social media, email list).

You'll work on this part of the path if people ARE seeing your work, but aren't buying. No matter how many (or few) sales you have, this part of the path can always become more and more effective. (The one exception would be if you have a crazy-high conversion rate* {say, higher than 50%}...but I've yet to meet a single business that has that - there's always room for improvement.)

*Conversion rate: the number of people who buy your work divided by the total amount that see your work. You don't have to have an exact number, because it changes all the

time. But the better this gets, the more money you'll make (without needing any "new" people).

Buy!

This is when the reader/stranger makes the decision to buy! Huzzah! This is where you'll focus if you want to build repeat customers and raving fans.

HOW TO LEARN THE FACTS OF YOUR PATH

While you can figure out your Customer Path by asking clients, paying attention, and common sense, tracking your site stats is the easiest way to find out what your Customer Path TRULY is. We're not going to focus on this too much in the class, but in case you're not already doing this, I want you to start! (It'll make everything easier!)

To start tracking your real Customer Path, you'll need to have Google Analytics installed on your site. The directions are [here](#). (It's as simple as signing up + then putting a code on your site. If you can't figure out where to put the code, google "analytics + {the platform you use: Wordpress, blogger, etc}.")

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: IF YOU DON'T ALREADY HAVE GOOGLE ANALYTICS INSTALLED ON YOUR SITE - DO IT THIS WEEK. PUT IT ON YOUR CALENDAR TO DO IT RIGHT NOW.

Once you have Google Analytics installed for at least a month, you can start tracking your path!

You'll want to pay attention to:

- ★ Referrers: Who is sending traffic to your site?
- ★ Search terms: What do people search for to land on your site?
- ★ Path: Where do people land? Where do they go next?

For Etsy, you'll use their stats. Click on "Your Shop" and pick Shop Stats from the drop-down menus. This will show you where visitors came from, what they searched before they came, and what sections of your shop they visited.

I STRONGLY WARN AGAINST CHECKING YOUR SITE STATS MORE THAN ONCE A MONTH!

It'll just drive you crazy and make you doubt everything. Instead, ignore your overall numbers (they're going to fluctuate in any healthy business!) and just look at what I mention above.

HERE'S WHAT I DO:

Each month, I put the data below into a spreadsheet (one month per row):

- ★ Site Visitors
- ★ Top Referrers (2-3)

- ★ Top Referrers of New Traffic
- ★ Top Search terms (2-3)
- ★ Total Sales
- ★ New Subscribers to Big List
- ★ New Subscribers to Starship Early Boarding List
- ★ I split it up into my top-selling products: How much, in dollars, and what percentage of my total sales that is.

With this info, over time, I can see if my traffic and/or new subscribers impact sales, and how people are coming to my site (Was that guest post worth it?). While you can learn a lot more than this from Google Analytics, it all depends on your goals, and what you need to know in order to make good decisions with your time and energy.

You'll also be learning about your Customer Path from your email newsletter software (if you have one!). For example, when you send a note in Mailchimp, go back after a few "campaigns" and look at the report and the "click map", to see what exact links people clicked. Over time, you'll learn:

- ★ What subject lines get the most opens
- ★ What links get the most clicks (where are they located in the message? How did you link to them?)

When possible, line this up with your sales. You can take the name on an order, and match it up with a name in Mailchimp, and then look at what emails she opened and what links she clicked. (I just started tracking this in a spreadsheet!)

Is it realistic that you'll do this every day? Of course not!

But if you do this once a month or so, with 3-5 sales (and 1-2 email reports), you'll know more than you know now!

YOUR ASSIGNMENT:

If you already have Google Analytics + email software (and you've been sending messages!), go and look at those stats now and edit your Customer Path Map if you learn something new!

If you didn't already have this in place, that's ok! You'll still learn how to improve your Customer Path in the rest of this class. But install it now, so that you'll have it! In another 2-3 months, take a look at it and you'll have new data to work with!

WORKING ON YOUR PATH

Starting with the next lesson, we're going to go through each part of the path and talk about how you can optimize each area. The class will be FULL of ideas and prompts for you to come up with your own ideas! It would take months of dedicated action to act on all the options.

Don't Panic

You do not need to do all of them right away - you only need to do the ones that optimize the part of your path that needs the most work. (And then come back and work on the next area, and the next, until you've optimized every area...and you can start again from the beginning!)

To get the most from this course, I strongly encourage you to do all of the worksheets and read all of the lessons, during one week, so that you can ask yourself questions and generate a bunch of possible actions.

BUT! Don't add every possible action to your To Do list just yet.

Instead, focus on coming up with all the possibilities, knowing you'll filter them later.

This will help you avoid overwhelm and will free you up to come up with all the crazy ideas you can.

Think of it like this: you're going to be a big possibility-and-crazy-idea generating machine during the first four days of class. Don't be afraid to go big! Because on the last day of class, we're going to filter through all your ideas to find what needs to be done RIGHT NOW, and what can wait until later.

Let's get started!

Before you dive deeper, what do you think needs work? Look back at your Map. Which area do you feel needs the most work? Make a note of it on your Map or Intention page.

LESSON 2: HI

GETTING TO HELLO

The very first question of sales is: How does anyone find this? How do potential buyers know you exist?

I've seen more makers get totally tangled up in this than in any other aspect of business. But there are only a few ways a new person is going to discover you.

People will initially find your work:

- ★ By searching (search: Doctor Who birthday cards)
- ★ By following a link someone else shared ("I love my Doctor Who birthday card! {link}")
- ★ By discovering it in the "real world" (in a shop, craft show, gallery)
- ★ By clicking on an advertisement

Let's break each of those down a bit.

Searching

This comes down to SEO ("search engine optimization") which can be a huge topic...but there's not much YOU, as a maker need to worry about. The easiest way of approaching this is to ask: What would people search if they wanted to find exactly this item?

Come up with a few words and phrases and then "optimize" your blog posts, pages, and shop descriptions by putting those words in your:

- ★ Product/blog post/page title
- ★ Tags
- ★ Description/content
- ★ Photos (this is a great post on optimizing your photos simply)

That's really it. Sure, you can dig deeper, but since Etsy, Google, et al are constantly changing their search equations, what works one day might not work the next.

See the worksheet on the following pages to get clear on your search terms.

A link from someone else

This can be ANY kind of link: a tweet, a blog post, an email...from a past customer, a fancy editor, or even someone re-tweeting your tweet! The point is - people will find you when

someone they already know links to your work - whether it's a direct link to a specific product, a blog post, a guest post, or your overall blog, shop, etc.

We're going to talk more about this in the next step!

Discovering it in the Real World.

If your products are in shops or you do craft shows - this is obvious - someone walks by and BAM! They see your work!

There are a few ways you can optimize this, to make sure they don't just see your work...and forget all about you:

- ★ Have great labels that include all the information they need in order to purchase.
- ★ Make your website clear and easy, so if they love this product they can find another!
- ★ Educate the sales staff/owner. Make sure that your communication with the shop owner isn't just about getting them to buy, but helps them sell your work to their own customers. Whether this is a newsletter to your wholesale clients or a sheet you send with each order, make it easy for them to talk about your work.
- ★ Be awesome at craft shows. This is a big topic (I have a whole class about it!), but you know what to do: Have an eye-catching booth, be friendly and open, make it easy to buy with easy-to-find prices and the info they need.

The other, less-obvious way to be discovered in the Real World is the oldest: People (or you!) talking about your work with their friends.

Again, the focus is on making this EASY for people to talk about.

You could:

- ★ Include an "extra" in packages, asking the buyer to "share with your friend"
- ★ Incentivize sharing, by giving credit to anyone who sends someone to your shop (ex, "Tell your friend to mention your name, and you'll get \$5 store credit!")
- ★ Make it easy to share: Include easy-to-remember description of what you do in your packages, or extra post cards, stickers, magnets (something useful!).
- ★ Educate your own friends + family on how to talk about your work...and empower them with things to give away (business cards are awkward...how about mini-samples of your products, postcards, stickers, etc?)!

See the following worksheet to make it easier in the "real world".

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON:

Complete the worksheet: Optimize for Search

Complete the worksheet: Make it easy on the Real World

OPTIMIZED FOR SEARCH

Use the words and phrases you come up with here to title your blog posts, products and to use in tags, categories, descriptions and photo captions.

List all permutations of your name and your business name:

Every name people might call your product:

Every description they might use for it:
(*ex, Dr. Who yarn, Doctor Who yarn*)

Location
(*especially if you do local stuff*):

Problem it solves:
(*ex. spring scarves, bridesmaid jewelry, yarn for wedding shawl*)

What else would people search for?

Questions customers ask you:
(You can create blog posts with this exact title)

What is one action you could take from all the possibilities?
(Remember: You can go back and edit things or just apply this going forward.)

MAKING IT EASY IN THE REAL WORLD

LIST ALL YOUR IDEAS HERE!

Is your work already find-able in the Real World? (Shops, galleries, craft shows?)

If no, would you like it to be? Where?

What is the first action you can take in order to make that happen?

If yes, what can you do to make it easier for the person who finds you there, to find you online or buy from you again?

Is there someone (ex, shop owner) you want to educate? How?

Who could spread the word about your work? Be specific and list their names!
(Don't forget customers + friends + business friends!)

How could you make this easier for them?

OTHER PEOPLE'S PLATFORMS

Now that you've looked at high-tech (SEO) and low-tech (word of mouth), let's talk about how you can get in front of other people's online audiences.

Listen to today's lesson here: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/taraswiger.com/CustomerPath/Customer-Path-Lesson-2.mp3>

Or, read the transcript on the next page!

After you listen, complete the worksheets on the following pages!

Resources shared in this lesson:

[ClickToTweet](#)

[DiggDigg](#) {wordpress widget}

[Sample email for a First Email](#)

PS. I say "Lesson 1" throughout the recording...but I'm wrong! It's clearly Lesson 2! :)

LESSON 2 TRANSCRIPT: OTHER PEOPLE'S PLATFORMS

IN THIS LESSON WE'RE GOING TO COVER:

- ★ Why social media isn't what you think
- ★ How to empower your readers
- ★ Other People's Platforms and how to get there

Let's get something out the way right from the start: Everything we've talked about so far has nothing to do with YOUR social media followers or platform. At this point in the Customer Path, the potential customer doesn't know you at all...so they're going to find you somewhere else!

Using YOUR social media to send traffic to your shop only works if you ALREADY have an audience on social media. And if you do, then people aren't "discovering" you from your own stream: if they follow you - they already know who you are (ie, your social media falls somewhere else on the Customer Path)!

WE'LL TALK MORE ABOUT THIS IN THE NEXT LESSON, BUT FOR NOW I WANTED TO GET YOU USED TO THE IDEA THAT YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM ISN'T A "DISCOVERY" TOOL, IT'S A "RELATIONSHIP BUILDING" TOOL.

However, where social media DOES fit in on this part of the Customer Path is when OTHER people use it - in other words, when you empower your fans to share your work with THEIR audience. When I teach yarn shop owners and alpaca farmers and traditional artists (people who are just starting to get online) about social media, I tell them this: the most powerful way you can use social media is to make it easy for OTHER people to use it to spread the word around it. Don't waste any time building your own following, until after you've done everything you can to get other people to share it on their platforms.

Remember: the combined platforms of all your customers and readers are probably MUCH bigger than any platform you could build for yourself! So first spend your energy there.

Start with:

- ★ Put sharing buttons on everything: Each item in your shop, every blog post, each email. {Use a plug-in like [DiggDigg](#) to do this on WordPress.}
- ★ Ask people to share! "If you like it, please tweet it!"

- ★ Include “[click to tweets](#)” of your best quotes (better for blog posts than products).
- ★ Ask CUSTOMERS to share, right after they’ve purchased, in a follow-up email or confirmation - including a [Click to Tweet](#).
- ★ Pinterest! Obviously, have a Pinterest button on each product. But also - make each blog post more pinnable by having an image with the title of your post (or a quote from your post) on it, so readers can pin it!
- ★ Can you come up with other ideas?

USE THE INCLUDED WORKSHEET TO THINK THROUGH HOW YOU CAN MAKE YOUR WORK MORE SHAREABLE.

Once you’ve empowered your people to share your work in every way you can, it’s time to think about OPP (OPP = Other People’s Platforms). Specifically, how can you bring your work in front of an already-established audience?

But before we dive in, let me point out that I’m talking about this very last, because before you spend time pursuing this, you need to have your own platform ready to connect and convert.

You want to:

- ★ Have done what you can with SEO.
- ★ Be clear about your message + who you’re talking to. (Which we work on, in detail, [in my book](#).)
- ★ Have your thing for sale, with great descriptions and photos.
- ★ Make everything share-able, so that every new person that comes to your site can easily tell their friends.

In other words, before you spend time bringing MORE people to your site, make sure that your site’s in great shape, so that the new people who come have something to do!

Ok, now, let’s dig in!

When you’re thinking about people or entities that introduce people to you, the most important thing is that YOUR person is really in their audience, and that this is where she’d expect to hear about you. So you need to be clear about who your client really is. If you know one of your customers, use her, exactly as she is, as an example. If you don’t, put together what you know about your customer until you have a good idea of who she is (there’s worksheets for doing this in my book).

Now, think of this customer - where is she going to look to find what you sell? Where does she get her information?

If she's a knitter, she probably reads knitting magazines (or is a member of Ravelry). If you sell sock-weight yarn, then she's a sock knitter, so what does she read or where does she find sock patterns?

If you sell bags to busy moms who want more color in their life (hi Aubrey!) - where does she find fashion advice (does she even care about fashion advice)? What kinds of magazines does she read? Blogs?

These are the kind of questions you'll need answers to for every part of your Customer Path, so don't avoid it!

Now, go deeper: What specific sites is she a fan of? You probably know them, because you're probably a fan of them too. But if not, ask a customer!

Ok, before we go on to what you're going to DO with these sites, let's stop to look at your options.

You could show up in another platform as:

- ★ An editorial - this is where a magazine or blog editor highlights "4 great scarves" or some such. Or even a tweet: This is a cute bag!
- ★ A review - when your product is highlighted.
- ★ An interview with you, the maker.
- ★ You could write content yourself (a magazine article, a blog post).

The kind of content that you pursue depends on your product and your goal. If you want people to know your product, editorial or review is best. And interview or article by you is better at introducing people to your vision and personality (which is important if you're selling something custom or that involves closely working together).

Now, the next step is to look closely at the platforms you identified when thinking about your buyer. Before you put much work into it, you want to figure out if it has an audience FULL of your buyers - in other words, is the platform aimed at them? You can read the About Page and a few recent posts. Does this answer the issues in your customer's life? Does it speak in her voice? Appeal to her visually? If it's a magazine, read its website - who does it say it's for? Most

platforms will say exactly who they're for because they're doing what you're doing - trying to make sure their Ideal Reader knows she's at home!
If not, skip it. If so, onward!

Now that you know that it really does speak to MANY of your Ideal Buyers, it's time to get your work on it!

If it's a platform (site, blog, magazine, etc.) that does a lot of editorial stuff, it very likely has a submission policy. Always start here! Read it thoroughly and submit your work EXACTLY as instructed.

If it doesn't have submission guidelines, you're going to do a bit more work.

For starters, check it out - does it feature other people's work (in the form of editorials, interviews, guest posts?) If not, it's not for you. Your best hope is to get to know the person behind the platform via social media (more on that in a minute), but understand that she's probably not going to change her whole site to feature you.

(The Yarn Harlot is a great example - she has a big blog, but doesn't feature things for companies...however, she does talk about the yarn she buys and the patterns she uses, so your best hope is to sell your yarn at a shop she visits or an event she teaches at.)

Once you're crystal clear on what the site features and that you'd be a great fit, it's time to make friends! And I mean this literally - you are going to meet and get to know the person behind the platform.

Why? Because you'll improve your chances of your pitch going well if it lands with someone who already knows and respects what you do. And it'll improve your pitch to get to know this person very well, over time. Now, don't let this feel icky or weird. This is a very organic process - you're a human getting to know another human. Remember - you're not going to "use" the other person - you want to put your work on this platform because you think it would be USEFUL for the audience - in other words, both you and the owner of the platform want the same thing! Yay!

Diane, of [Craftypod](#), and I taught a class all about this way back in 2010, so I'm going to share some of our tips here, along with a sample email Diane made.

Begin with USEFULNESS in mind, in everything you want to do, and then:

1. Start by getting to know the person -

Follow them on Twitter, read what they write, subscribe to their emails and then, react to it! Make your first contact about what THEY are doing - retweet their posts (if it's useful to your audience!) or reply to them telling them how much you like it. Remember that praise is nice, but don't be too fan-ish, and remember that you're equals.

Don't just retweet - many big platforms get lots of retweets and probably don't notice each and every one. Instead, leave real, helpful (or at least interesting) reactions - replies to their social media and/or comments on their blog.

2. Stay in touch

Let it progress. Keep RTing, commenting, and when they post a question: answer it! Participate in their community, whatever that means for them.

Always be looking: How can YOU help them? How can you help them help their people? Look for little ways to send them helpful info, things they'd enjoy, etc.

If they send a newsletter and ask for replies - hit reply and chat with them about what they wrote about. Don't be shy about sharing your own experience, especially as it relates to your thing. (DO NOT pitch them here.)

3. Don't freak them out!

Don't go overboard with praise and stalking!

Remember: you are equally awesome. Don't let them forget that by acting like a goofy fangirl.

4. The moment the door opens ...

Wait until the relationship is more equal than Rockstar-FanGirl.

They might compliment something you do, retweet you, or mention that they're looking for content.

Or you might just feel it. Trust your intuition. You'll get a signal from someone you've been building a relationship with that tells you they're open to the next step.

Now - the size of your "ask" will determine the size of the relationship you need to build.

For example, if they regularly ask for and accept guest posts, a few Twitter conversations will be enough.

Conversely, if you'd like to send them your product, to their house, and they don't have any information on that on their site, you'll want to wait until you've emailed with them a few times before you ask for their address!

This takes time!

So how do you manage it all?

- ★ Keep your list small! Edit it down to 5-10 relationships that you're working on right now.
- ★ Make a private Twitter list of "developing relationships" so that you can easily keep up with the handful of people you really want to connect with.
- ★ Have all these newsletters go in a special email folder.
- ★ Keep looking for people with clear submission guidelines!
- ★ Put it on your calendar or your weekly To Do list - keep submitting to sites with clear guidelines and check in on developing relationships (reply to their tweets, comment on their blog, read their emails, etc) every few days.

Through all this, remember - you have something to offer the world! You are as worthy and interesting as everyone else on your list. And no one person is going to completely change your business! Guest posts and even features in national magazines don't necessarily result in sales, they only introduce you to more people...it's what the people do next (on your customer path!) that really matters.

CONSCIOUS CONNECTION

Where does your customer look to become informed about what you sell?

What else does she read or listen to that's related to your industry?

List 20:

Go through each platform and look for submission guidelines.
List 5 that you'll submit to (*and the details you need*):

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Which platforms don't have submission guidelines that you'd like to connect with?
(*List the details you need!*)

How are you going to connect with them? (*List 1-3 ideas*)

Once you've connected, what will you pitch them, exactly? (*It's good to have it in mind now, so when the moment comes, you're ready!*)

Add it to your calendar, to-do list, or map! Make connecting with people a regular part of your work week!

MAKE IT MORE SHAREABLE

Do you have “share it” buttons on everything in your shop? (This is the default in Etsy.)

Do you have “share it” buttons on your website, for every post?

Are your blog posts Pinterest-ready? (*Clear image with words on the image + descriptive “title” in the photo settings.*)

Do you ask for the share?

If not, where could you do this more?

How could your customers (who already love your work!) share your work?

When and how could you ask them?

List 5 more ideas of what you could to make it easier/more fun/enticing for a fan to share your work?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

(Get crazy!)

HOW DO BUYERS FIND YOU?

Now that we've reviewed the various ways people can find you, it's time to apply this to your own customer path!

How do people find YOU? Which of the four ways we've discussed is working for you now? How would you like to improve it?

(This lesson's worksheets will have helped you generate ideas! If you've got more - write them down!)

If you don't feel sure stating how people are actually coming to you...we can solve that!

If you don't know, your assignment is to ask your 5 most recent sales.

Send them each an individual email. Need help? Use the attached script!

(Don't be shy! And don't dally! Right now - put it in your calendar to send it this week! And then let us know in the discussion.)

HOW BUYERS FIND YOU

If you have no idea how buyers find you/your products, your assignment is to ask them!

Send them each an individual email (no mass emailing!). If you're not sure what to say, use the following script. (Edit it to sound like you, but be SURE to include all the personal details, so that they know this isn't a robo-message!)

Hello {first name}!

Thanks again for purchasing {thing they bought}! I hope you're loving it!
I'm always working on making {business name} increasingly awesome + useful to buyers, so I was hoping you could help. Would you mind telling me how you found my work? (Etsy search, someone linked to it, you follow me on social media or my blog ... or something else?)

This will help so much -
Thanks again!

{your name}

LESSON 3: COME CLOSER

In this lesson we're going to cover the in-between step of Coming Closer.

WHEN THEY'RE NOT READY TO BUY

Now that you've got people knowing who you are...what's next?

This is the overarching question of today's lesson:

What do your people do once they land on your site?*

**We are talking about your OWN SITE, here, not an Etsy shop or Ravelry group, for many reasons (control, focus, branding). For more on optimizing your presence there, and the importance of crafting your Home Base (along with details on what you should have on your home base,) check out the [book](#).*

BEFORE YOU GO FURTHER, TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR CURRENT CUSTOMER PATH THAT YOU MAPPED OUT - WHAT DO PEOPLE DO WHEN THEY LAND ON YOUR SITE?

Some people are going to jump right to BUY...and that's awesome! Your first goal of your site is to move everyone who is ready to buy, right to where they can lay down their money! This means your products and your "shop" should be immediately click-able, from your home page and every page on your blog (because remember, not everyone is coming in your front door, some people are going to come to a specific blog post!).

THE SECOND GOAL OF YOUR SITE IS TO GRAB ALL THE PEOPLE WHO AREN'T QUITE READY TO BUY AND GIVE THEM SOMETHING ELSE TO DO.

This "something else" might be:

- ★ Read your blog.
- ★ Sign up for your email newsletter.
- ★ Follow you on social media.

Each of these things has their value (and we'll talk about each of them in detail), but you'll want to PRIORITIZE what you want the person to do, based on:

1. Which action is most profitable for you? (What drives sales?)
2. What action is most helpful for them? (What answers the questions that prevent them from buying?)
3. What builds the strongest relationship over time? (What leads them to keep coming back to you?)

I HAVE MY OWN EXPERIENCES, AND THAT OF MY CLIENTS, THAT INFORMS WHAT I THINK WORKS BEST, BUT YOU WILL HAVE TO TEST THIS FOR YOUR OWN BUSINESS.

How?

I haven't found a way to get a pure data-driven experiment - analytics can show you where people go (to your shop?) and where they came from (your newsletter?), but it's hard, if your shopping cart is off-site, to see what led to a completed sale.

My favorite way of testing this is to match customers (like I discussed in Lesson 1) with their specific actions and...to ask them! You can get a feel by looking at your last 5 customers and looking for them in your other data - Are they newsletter subscribers? Have they commented on the blog? Do they reply to you on Twitter or Facebook?

You can also let your intuition guide you, combined with regular conversations with people before and after they buy and make a note of what they say. (Have patience, it will take time to gather enough data points, especially if you're just starting!)

In other words, if you're just starting out (in the first year of making sales), yes, you'll be guessing! In that case, start with what works for others, give it a good long time to work, then keep tweaking and paying attention.

As you read through the next step in today's lesson, use the worksheet on the next page.

PRIORITIES FOR COMING CLOSER

What do people do right now in my Path, if they're not ready to buy?

What do I know about the last 5 sales? How else are they engaged with me? (Commenting, following on Twitter, Facebook, Etsy, etc.?)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What would I like them to do?
(It can have several steps)

YOUR BLOG

What is the role your blog is serving on your Customer Path?

What do you want to communicate to people at this point? What would help them decide to move closer (or buy)?

What do you want them to do next?

What will you add or change about your blog to make that more obvious or easy?

CONNECTING VIA BLOG

First let's get this out of the way:

Do you HAVE to have a blog?

Nope! If you don't have a blog right now, skip ahead to the email lesson (next one!), and work on that first.

If you do have a blog and you're not sure how to make it effective at converting to sales or what to say - you can absolutely apply everything I saw about emails and if you want more ideas, I've written a whole class about it.

There's a lot of opinions out there about what you "should" do with a blog, and there's a lot we could talk about, but the point of the class is to make sure you're using each tool to move people along your path. So that's what we'll focus on here - seeing your blog as one piece of your total path.

Where does a blog fit?

Your blog is the thing most people are going to see as soon as they discover you. For most of us, it's the very first impression after someone "finds" your work. If your readers share a post (see last lesson!), their audience is going to land on a specific blog post, not your home page.

Your blog is talking to:

- ★ Complete strangers who want to learn more about you
- ★ Long-time readers who love you
- ★ People who are considering working with you (collaborators, press, etc)
- ★ Everyone in between

Your blog is really many points on many Customer Paths, and it'll probably be something that an individual will return to a few times before she buys. As you think about how it fits into your path (and how you can make it a more effective part of your Path), keep in mind what blogs are good at, and what they're not.

A blog is great at:

- ★ Giving the reader a peek into your world.
- ★ Passively pulling them closer - it can feel informal, like chatting with you.
- ★ Informing them about your product, process, and philosophy.
- ★ Introducing them to other customers (so they can imagine themselves as one!).

- ★ Inspiring sharing - blog posts are one of the most-shared pieces of media (behind photographs...so if your blog post has photos...!).
- ★ Building a portfolio of information, establishing you as a source of inspiration/education/entertainment.

It's not great at:

- ★ Inciting action.
- ★ Giving you information about the reader (A VERY small percentage of readers actually comment).
- ★ Empowering you to take action in the relationship.

Blogs aren't great at inciting action, because the reader of the blog is in a different mindset than a motivated buyer. This doesn't mean you shouldn't bother linking to your products in your blog posts - because your posts can be a great reminder to the reader that you do, in fact, sell things! But remember - it can't be your only form of marketing, because the regular reader is coming to your blog to READ, not necessarily to BUY.

Also a blog also doesn't let you take action towards your reader - you have to wait for her to comment or email you before you even know she's out there!

If we're thinking about the Customer Path as a series of steps closer to you, increasing in commitment, reading your blog is a first, very passive step. But it's not any kind of commitment. A new person can stumble upon your blog, read a few posts...and forget all about it. This means that your Blog = Step 2 on your Customer Path (Step 1: Discovery). Your job is to make sure it leads them to a bigger commitment, which Step 3 (whether that's Buy my thing! or Become a regular!).

The Next Step = subscribe to your updates!

We'll cover this in the next step, but before we go on we have to address RSS subscriptions, to differentiate subscribing via RSS from subscribing to emails.

If you have no idea what RSS feeds are - you can skip this! This is for those who think "Subscribe to my work = RSS subscription, via a feed reader."

RSS is not enough

Specifically, subscribing to your RSS via a feed reader isn't enough. While this is a great option to give a reader who wants to stay in touch, it's not the most effective at building a relationship.

Why?

- ★ Statistically, feed readers just aren't being used as much as they once were (and they were never used by very many people, which is why you may be thinking - What is RSS?!)
- ★ It's passive on your end - you can't DO anything except post your blog post and hope your reader sees it
- ★ It requires action for your reader - she has to remember to go to her feed reader and then click on your feed (and if she doesn't do this often or she subscribes to hundreds of sites, your feed may get buried).

And the biggest thing: You don't have any access to those readers - you don't know who they are or what actions they take. You can't send them a thank you email. And you can't prompt further conversation, because they can't hit reply and be emailing directly with you.

Yes, a reader can "subscribe to RSS" via email...but if you're going to email your RSS feed, you can do that with newsletter software and you'll have control over what they see and the information.

In other words, you can do all the same things with newsletter software (send blog posts via email) PLUS you own the email addresses, so you can send emails JUST to subscribers and not put it publicly on your blog. PLUS you can contact them individually or send them a series of emails as soon as they subscribe.

EMAIL LIST: THEIR FIRST COMMITMENT

At this point in your Customer Path, you wanna give your readers something to do between finding you and buying from you...something that allows you to remind them that you exist (and that they like you!) and connect with them in order to learn more about them, serve them better, and generally know what's happening.

This is where your email list comes in!

Here's a quick rundown on what I mean by "email list", in case you don't know! (If you want technical how-tos, I recommend checking out the provider you're using. Mailchimp has a great tutorial that will walk you through each step.)

- ★ Interested readers sign themselves up to get updates (or even blog posts) from you.
- ★ Use a newsletter software (I love [Mailchimp](#)) + they'll manage everything (when you create a "list" the "forms" (how people will sign up) are automatically generated. Readers can subscribe and unsubscribe themselves).
- ★ You can send emails to your whole list, or just a segment (ex, a discount to only those that clicked a link in your last message, or an invitation to only people in San Francisco.)
- ★ You can make your emails pretty or plain, you can embed pictures and link to things.

Here's the biggest thing to remember about your email list:

These are people who gave you their email address because they want to hear from you again!

This informs everything - what you send, how often you send, how you help them move to the next part of the path!

Because these readers have taken a step towards you, you want to honor that commitment by giving them exactly what they want.

That means:

- ★ sending regular messages
- ★ writing directly to them (since you know they are people interested in your work, you can talk a bit more deeply, or offer them exclusive access, or just in general give them MORE than you would blog readers)

But let's back up: How do you get people on your list?

1. **Invite all customers!**

In your follow-up or thank-you emails, invite the buyer to sign up for your email list. Be sure to tell them what you'll be sending and how often. (Check out the attachments for a template!)

2. **Create a gift for subscribers.**

This is something that they'll get in the very first "Welcome message" they get. (More on this in a minute)

3. **Put the sign-up form FRONT and CENTER on your website.**

Remember: this is the #2 priority of your website - to catch all those people who love you and want to hear more (#1 is making sales!) - so this is above social media, links to other sites, etc.

4. **Take it everywhere!**

Have a sign-up sheet in your classes, in your craft show booth, in your purse!

5. **Link to it.**

You probably tweet your latest blog posts and have a link at the bottom of your email to your blog, right? Well, if your email list is the REAL step you want the reader to take (because it makes them more likely to buy), then share it in all the same places. Tweet a teaser of what's going to be in your next email. Put a link at the bottom of your emails. Link to the signup form in your blog posts.

6. **Give them a reason to join NOW.**

Make something that only happens once, and that they need to be on your list to have access to.*

**I started my craftybiz list by having a live Q+A on the phone. You could have a giveaway, lead a group project (knitalong), lead an email course (free to subscribers!), or have a flash sale. To make this effective at building your list, you need to spend time telling people about this, like you would a new product - write a post about it, tweet it, email your customers, ask your friends to tell their people. Make it a BIG DEAL.*

Remember: of all the people who you interact with (or "market to"), other than buyers, these are the only people who have expressed this much interest in what you do. So gathering as many of these people as you can makes everything in your marketing easier!

That said, this takes time! Everyone starts at zero. Do not let the slowness or your (relatively) small list keep you from being motivated to delight and serve the people who do want to hear from you.

I'm going to say it again: Every single person on this list WANTS to hear from you. Even if there are only 2, there are 2 people who want to hear from you! That is AMAZING. You have a responsibility to them, so take it seriously.

TEMPLATE FOR INVITING CUSTOMERS TO YOUR NEWSLETTER LIST

I recommend sending a thank-you email (or Etsy message, but I prefer email, because not everyone checks Etsy as often as you do!) to everyone, on top of whatever is generated automatically. You can even send this message to past customers, who have bought in the last month or so. Make it even more personal and ask if they received the item, if they're enjoying it/using it/etc.

Here's a template you can use - you should customize it to your own personal style, but it's a good place to get you started:

Hi {name}!

Thanks so much for buying {thing}. If you have any questions about it, you can ask me at {email} or post about it in {Ravelry group, Facebook, Twitter, etc. - if you have one.}

For updates and {whatever you're going to send them - coupons? sneak peeks?}, sign up here: {full link}

Thanks again,
{your name}

No, this isn't scalable after a certain point. But for now, when you're trying to build your list and build relationships with every single customer, it's well worth the investment of time. To make it more manageable, batch it - send all the messages one time during the week (or when you get more orders - each day).

CREATING CONTENT THAT CONNECTS

The biggest complaint I hear from clients when I ask about their email list is this: "I don't know what to write about!"

I get it, really!

IN THIS AUDIO LESSON WE'LL COVER:

- ★ How to create content for the two pieces of your newsletter
- ★ An opt-in that works
- ★ Ongoing content
- ★ 3 Things that matter

Use the attached worksheet to start coming up with ideas. Force yourself to think bigger and crazier, and fill in the WHOLE list of 20!

You'll find today's lesson here: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/taraswiger.com/CustomerPath/Customer-Path-lesson-3.mp3>

Or, read on for the transcript!

LESSON 3 TRANSCRIPT

The biggest complaint I hear from clients when I ask about their email list is this: "I don't know what to write about!"

I get it, really!

But we're going to make it easy as possible. The secret is to take the time to think it through, before you start to do it - how it fits into your Customer Path, why you're doing it, and what you want to communicate. Then make a commitment to DO it.

We're going to talk about two kinds of content:

- ★ The "opt-in" bonus that people get when they sign up.
- ★ Ongoing content that will build relationships.

There are three things to keep in mind when creating for your list:

1. Who is signing up to your list? (Ya gotta know your Right Person!)
2. Why she is right for you and why are you right for her? (What is the benefit of buying your work? What does it bring into her life?) This is based on your brand + your promise: What do you give buyers? What are the qualities of your brand?*
3. Why is she signing up? (Does she want to be the first to grab your newest product? Does she want to see behind-the-scenes?) This is directly related to #2.

**Some possibilities: fun! color! beauty! feeling not-alone! encouragement! a giggle! a sense of belonging! clarity! comfort!*

1. THE OPT-IN

Good news: This can be ANYTHING!

If you keep in mind the three things from above, you'll want to send your Right Person the one thing that will:

- Be a symbol of the bigger thing your business is doing in her life.
- Help her take the next step (buying!).

Here are some examples:

- ★ A coupon for your shop
- ★ An email series where she gets to know you better

- ★ An e-book compiling your 10 best posts (as determined by your readers, based on traffic, comments, or something else)
- ★ A list of your favorite suppliers, tutorials, or resources (useful only if you're connecting with someone who wants to do the same thing - like knitters, sewers, writers)
- ★ An invitation to something special (a customers-only trunk show, a tele-class, a one-on-one session with you, the opportunity to buy something you don't usually offer (like custom work))
- ★ A free sample of what you sell (one of your patterns, a chapter from your book, etc.)

You might be reading through this list thinking: I don't want to give away/discount my work!

And that's the right attitude when it comes to total strangers. You should NOT be giving away or discounting work to the whole world (it devalues it!) ... but these are not strangers. These are people who want to get to know you better - they're just on the cusp of buying. So what would help them feel comfortable buying from you? What could you do to demonstrate the value of what you do?

Having an opt-in gift/giveaway increases conversions and I've found it to be useful because it helps you explain why they should sign up. "You like me and my work and want to learn more...sign up here and you'll get that (learning more) and this nice, useful thing!"

Don't worry about people who will sign up "just" to get the free thing, because the free thing is going to DEMONSTRATE YOUR VALUE. So even if they unsubscribe, they'll still have this great free thing as a reminder of how awesome you are and that will do its job (or else they're not right for you!).

Check out the worksheet to help you come up with your best ideas!

2. CREATE ONGOING CONTENT

Once you have your list set up and you know what you're giving the subscriber, you've got to start creating content to SEND them, regularly.

How often should you send emails?

The most important thing is that you send them EXACTLY as often as you promise, and that you make it expected. Once a month is the minimum you can send without the subscriber forgetting why they're getting your message. You can do anything in between weekly and monthly, just make sure you send it on the same day (every Thursday, or every other Tuesday, or on the first Monday or the 10th of the month).

What to send?

This, again, is up to:

- ★ Who you're talking to
- ★ Why she loves you (the benefit of your work)
- ★ What she needs to know to buy from you

These emails are often called "newsletters", but that's a misnomer; a newsletter that rounds up what you're doing is pretty boring. Remember: make it about THEM, not about you. I keep saying "content" instead of "writing," because it doesn't have to be writing. You could make audio notes, videos, or photos - whatever fits in with your value proposition + your brand.

So you could:

- ★ Feature projects your customers have made with your products.
- ★ Give a backstage pass to what you're working on or to what inspired your newest product.
- ★ First access to this week's (or month's) newest products (before they go in your shop).
- ★ Invite them into the process - let them name your next product, or influence your design decisions.
- ★ Tell them a story from your week or month (even though this is about something that happened to you, make it useful or entertaining to THEM).
- ★ Invite them to take part in something with the community (a knit-along, a discussion of Game of Thrones).

Remember (again!) these are people who have already decided they like you and want to hear from you!

If you're feeling stuck, think about your brand/products in general -- what do they bring into a buyer's life? A sense of being fashionable and high end? Goofiness and fun? Color and happiness?

What could you email them to make them feel the same way?

Should you send your blog posts?

You can make this an option, but because this person is more invested in you than a simple blog reader, I would also send something *else*, that's special just for subscribers.

Make your emails an effective selling tool

The next step for the customer to take after subscribing (and receiving) your emails is to BUY. So here's how you make it effective at that (this is also applicable to blog posts).

- ★ Have a call to action in every email. This means that you are asking the reader to do something. Ask them to do only ONE thing. (ex, If you tell them about your newest product, don't also ask them to visit your blog, follow you on Twitter, etc.)
- ★ LINK TO YOUR PRODUCTS, in a way that makes sense (when you talk about your newest product LINK TO IT).
- ★ Invite them to hit reply and talk to you (you can learn SO MUCH from talking to your potential customers about what they're looking for, how they describe it, and what they still need to know before they buy).
- ★ Make the occasional email about selling one product in particular. Tell them what it does for them, share happy testimonials, and tell them they can buy it now. This will make you better at selling + will be a clear and obvious reminder to your subscriber of WHY she subscribed and what you do.

Note: Don't be afraid of unsubscribes - there are people who don't want to buy your work...so why would you want to keep creating great content for them?

Fill out the worksheet to come up with your ideas. Remember to stay loose + don't get bogged down in HOW you'll do this. If you feel stuck, set a timer for 5 minutes and write constantly, without stopping, about everything you could possibly communicate about your work and your life as an artist.

CREATING GREAT ONGOING CONTENT

What would a die-hard fan of yours want to hear about regularly?
(If you can't imagine that, picture a fan of a bigger, similar company.)

1.

11.

2.

12.

3.

13.

4.

14.

5.

15.

6.

16.

7.

17.

8.

18.

9.

19.

10.

20.

What does she need to know in order to make a buying decision?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

How could you communicate this?

What do people love about your work?

How could you communicate this in emails?

CREATING YOUR OPT-IN

Who is signing up for your emails? (Describe her! *Remember - this is the person who has found your work and wants to hear more information from you. So what has she liked so far on your site?*)

Why are YOU (and your work) a perfect fit for her? What problem are you solving or benefit are you providing?

What is she waiting for? What does she need to know before she buys?
(*This is what your emails should consistently give her.*)

What could you say to her to communicate your value, trustworthiness, and the benefits of your work?

Now, how could you communicate this in an opt-in gift? How could you SHOW instead of TELL?

(List ALL possibilities! Go crazy!)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Take it further! If money and time and space were no object, what could you do to thank her for subscribing and answer all her concerns/demonstrate the value of what you do?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

LESSON 4: BUY

Today we're going to dive in to making the sale, and what they do after they buy.

WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS

At this point in your path, your potential customer has found you (yay!) and invested in you at least a little (read your blog, subscribed to your newsletter + read a few e-mails)...and the question at this point is: How do you turn this traffic into sales?

It's all about relationships.

Are you starting to see the overarching theme? Your path is about building relationships. Specifically, relationships with your Right People (the most-likely buyers). First, you connect with them where they already are (on other people's platforms), then you create content based on the questions they ask and the solutions they are looking for. If you've had the privilege of talking to your buyers, you'll have found this to be true: They buy (and especially become repeat buyers) because they LIKE you.

The previous parts of your path were about building this relationship and helping the potential customer get to know you and your work, in order to like you and what you do. (Note that this does not mean they need to know your personal life, at all. They can feel like they "know" you by knowing what you're working on, what you take pictures of, and what inspires you.)

For some makers, this makes asking for the sale even harder: What if they don't like me? What if they think I'm icky and money-grubbing?!

First, let's take a deep breath and return to your intention.

Your goal in building these relationships, writing newsletters, crafting this path is to inform the people about the work you make, and allow them to connect to it in a more meaningful way. They know this. The obvious outcome is that they will then have the opportunity to BUY your work. They know this. You are not pulling a bait and switch by asking for the sale. If you have any doubts, think back to when you got the emails selling this class. Were you upset to learn that I was offering a class and you could buy it? (Probably not...since you bought it!)

GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH THIS IS THE VERY FIRST STEP TO MAKING SALES.

You may think you're comfortable because you have a shop set up and you link to it from your website, but let's dig deep.

- ★ Do you regularly share what's new in your shop, with the same friendliness and generosity that you share free content?
- ★ Do you share links to your content and products as often as you share links to other people's?
- ★ Do you make a clear offer in your content?

I've found that creators have two modes when it comes to making an offer:

1. They just throw it out there, without crafting it carefully (typos in the description, bland "just listed this" tweets, a throwaway line in the newsletter).
2. They hide it and don't make it clear (links hidden in a busy sidebar, posts that mention new products but don't link to them).

Though they look so different (in one you look like you're just trying to sell something, in the other you look like you don't sell ANYthing!), they are equal. Equally bad at making a sale, equally bad at satisfying your best buyer, and equally based in fear - fear of putting in the time, trying your hardest, and being rejected.

I get it. *I really do.*

It takes time and effort (what if it's wasted?!) and it takes guts (what if it doesn't work?). On top of all that, it takes consistency - whether it works right away or not.

So even after you carefully craft an email making the offer - even if it doesn't work - you have to try again.

The good news: it will get easier the more you work on it, the more you learn about it, and the more you look at it as an experiment, instead of a measure of your self worth. The better you get at making a clear ask, the better results you'll get (and the less it will feel like a total waste of time).

So that's what's next: Equipping you with confidence, so you can make a great ask.

HOW TO MAKE A CLEAR OFFER

It might sound obvious, but the thing that's keeping you from turning readers and subscribers into buyers might be simply this: You haven't made a clear offer.

Making an offer = inviting the reader to purchase the thing you have available for sale, while explaining the benefits of your thing and then asking them to take one action.

When to make an offer:

- ★ When you have something new for sale.
- ★ After the reader has taken a step towards you (signed up for the newsletter)*
- ★ When you have a solution to your customer's problem. (Need a Mother's Day gift? Getting married? Don't know what to do for your friend with cancer?)

*You can do this automatically with an autoresponder. I'm giving you free access to an entire class on autoresponders at the end of this class, so be sure to read all the way through!

Where can you make an offer:

- ★ In a blog post
- ★ In an email
- ★ In person!

The principles of a clear offer:

1. It's obvious. You're not hiding what you offer. The reader knows what you're talking about.
2. You are talking directly to the right buyer (in her language, with the things she cares about).
3. You state what you have to offer and its benefits.
4. You explain who it's for (and who it's not for).
5. You end with a clear call to action. (What do they do next?)

Call to action.

You might be wondering: Do I REALLY need a clear call to action? Is it necessary for me to tell the reader exactly what to do?

The answer is, statistically, YES. The more direction you give the reader, the more likely she is to act. It might feel silly to say "Click here to order your earrings"....but if you're writing an email or blog post, the reader needs that direction. She might be skimming or she might not realize that a

link is a link (especially if it's not underlined). So yes, the clearer your call to actions, the more likely your sales.

Examples of Calls to Action: [Click here to buy this](#). [Hit reply to ask your question](#). [Subscribe to meet the other Captains](#).

Every piece of content you write won't be an offer to buy something - but you do need to make offers often and consistently in order to form the right kind of relationship with your reader/buyer. The right relationship = one where she comes to you because of what you sell, not for free information or entertainment, but because she wants to pay for what you sell. The more often you make an offer (even just an offer to subscribe), the more your reader will expect it and react to it.

Will some people be turned off by your offer or unsubscribe because they don't want what you are selling?

ABSOLUTELY.

But keep your eye on the important bit: They don't want what you sell. So that subscriber/reader/follower was never going to buy. When they leave, it's a GOOD thing - it means that you are going to only be talking to people who DO want to buy.

(I can't stress this enough: Do not bother with unsubscribes! They do not matter!)

Remember: This takes practice. You'll get better as you go, but you have to keep with it. Don't give up after the first try!

Fill out the worksheet on the next page so you can practice making your offer!

PRACTICE MAKING AN OFFER

What kinds of offers do you make right now?

Where are you being clearest?

Where do you feel the best?

Where are you being slapdash or hiding?

How could you make your offers clearer right now?

When could you make an offer to your reader?

In what way will you deliver it?
(Think of the middle part of your customer path!)

What will you offer? (Be obvious)

Who is it for? (Be explicit. What does this buyer already need to know/believe? What is she ready for?)

What is the benefit for the buyer?

Write a clear call to action:

HOW TO FEEL GOOD

Once you know how to make a clear offer, you have to feel good and confident enough to DO it. In this audio lesson, I'll share four tips for feeling good about your offer (and why this matters more than anything else.)

You can find today's lesson here: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/taraswiger.com/CustomerPath/Customer-Path-Lesson-4-.mp3>

Or, just read the transcript on the following pages!

LESSON 4 TRANSCRIPT: HOW TO FEEL GOOD

If you're not feeling good about asking for the sale and making offers - it'll come across in your tone and message. It'll be easy to slip back into the two bad offers.

So here are some tips for staying positive, feeling good, and keeping it all in perspective.

1. It's all an experiment.

No one knows the best way to communicate with your customers. You are the expert on your business and you're learning with every single experiment. EVERY thing is a data point, not a success or failure.

The key aspect of a scientist: They're not attached to ONE outcome - ANY outcome is a data point and teaches them something new.

(We'll cover creating an experiment in tomorrow's lesson!)

2. They want what you're offering.

You are talking right to the person who would most appreciate the benefits of your product - right? So please believe me when I say - they want what you're offering! Whether it's art for their walls or jewelry tutorials or knitting patterns - you are talking to someone who has connected with you because they want to hear more about what you offer - so don't keep it from them!

3. Patience.

This takes time.

Even with the best Customer Path, it takes time for people to find you, get to know you, and buy from you. Every business takes a different amount of time to figure out who their customers even are, start connecting, and build something sustainable - so PLEASE do not compare yourself to anyone else.

It takes consistent focus to build a business. So even when you're getting no results, you have to keep working.

There's a funny balance here: you need to KEEP working, consistently, while still tweaking and shifting things until you find something that works. You need to find a way to look at your metrics (visitors to your site, newsletter subscribers, sales) without giving them any power over your own self-worth or how you feel about your business.

4. Perspective.

When you're feeling overwhelmed or frustrated that you haven't done more yet, take a minute to look back at what you have done.

How many subscribers did you have last year? The year before? How many sales?

What have you learned over the last year?

See, you have made progress!

Above all, keep in mind your bigger picture: You're doing this because you want something sustainable.

YOU ARE IN THIS FOR THE LONG HAUL

When you really sink into accepting that this is going to take as long as it takes and that you are going to do your best, every day, and make smart, strategic decisions - it gets easier. You can see more clearly and make more sustainable decisions.

Remember: You are building a business, not a lemonade stand. The goal is sustainability, not immediacy.

This might be a little more intangible than you'd expect from a marketing course, but here's what I've learned to be true: If you feel bad, weird or awkward asking for the sale, it's going to come across. Not only will your reader be able to tell (you're not as stealthy as you think!) but your work will suffer - you'll spend less time on it and your motivation will dry up.

That's why we can't talk about connecting and selling your work without talking about how to handle the emotions that pop up around this.

So know this: you're not alone in feeling bummed, scared, or frustrated - and this is a normal part of the process.

HOW TO KEEP 'EM COMING BACK

Yay! You've made a sale!

....Now what?

Well, you want them to keep coming back.

To build loyal (and repeat!) customers:

- ★ Delight them with their purchase
- ★ Keep talking to them
- ★ Make them a part of something bigger

If you've been wondering how some sellers manage to sell out their shop every time they list products - this is it! They've built a fan base (slowly, over time) and they let those fans know what they're doing, when they're doing it, and that they need to take part in order to not miss out.

1. Delight

Customers become regulars when they are delighted by their purchases and they remember that they were delighted. The first step is to delight them when they first buy from you. Delight encompasses all of the tangible and intangible aspects of the experience - if the product is exactly what they expected, if it (and the packaging) makes them feel the qualities of your brand, if it arrives on time. You wanna find a way to delight them in a way that reflects what your product brings to their life.

2. Keep talking

Once the customer has a delightful experience, get their permission to keep connecting them, so that you can remind them of what they like about your product. If they're already signed up for your emails - fabulous! If not, invite them! Make this an automatic part of your process: invite every new customer to join your email list. (You could even create a customer-only list, if you wanted.)

3. Invite them in

If it makes sense for your business or industry, invite your customers to be part of something bigger than just you + them, invite them to join the community of their fellow fans/readers/

buyers. If you sell knitting-related products, you're in luck: Ravelry makes this easy (well, easier.) If you don't, this still might work for you. What do your readers/buyers have in common? Are they fans of something? Doers of something?

(Ex, all my readers/buyers are Explorers of their own business.)

How can you communicate their inclusion into the group?

A few ideas:

- You could hold a "project-along" that everyone works on together (making, photography, writing, etc) - just be sure to share the participant's projects with the group, through an online space (FB, Flickr, use of hashtag), or posting it on your blog or emails.
- You could offer a private Facebook group for your buyers to share their experiences, ask questions, and give advice (especially useful if you're a teacher or you write on a thorny subject).
- You could start a Tumblr or Pinterest board, where you share your customer's photos of using your product. (I'd also feature this every once in a while on your blog or email list, to bring attention to it.)
- You could hold a "challenge" with your email list, where you all work on X in so many days.

Remember: you might not have a product that people interact with the same way they do a book or yarn (say, if you sell fine art), but your brand brings SOMETHING into people's lives, or it celebrates something, right? So make your community around THAT. (ex, fandom, gardening, domesticity, travel, adventure) The more specific you can be, the better! And yes, there might already be communities around this thing out there, but the difference is, this is going to be a very specific group of people who not only like this Thing, but also like YOUR take on this Thing.

You might still be thinking: I'm not sure this is for me. And I get that. Inviting people to be part of something bigger, around YOUR work...well, it's challenging. It's stepping into a new kind of leadership role, one you might not feel ready for. But as a seller-of-something-people-love, you already are leading. You are already sharing your vision of the world with your buyers. So do your fans a favor and let them gather together and make friends!

FILL OUT THE WORKSHEET ON THE NEXT PAGE AND PLAN OUT HOW YOU'RE GOING TO KEEP YOUR RIGHT PEOPLE COMING BACK!

KEEP 'EM COMING BACK

Delight:

How could you delight your customer?

How could you bring more of {-----} into her world?
(*brand quality*)

Keep in touch:

How will you get the customer on your email list? (Check out the template from Lesson 3!)

How else could you keep in touch?

Something Bigger:

What kind of community could you and your biggest fans form?

What could you bond over?

What could you do together?

How could you highlight your biggest fans?

Where could you help them connect online?

LESSON 5: YOUR ACTION PLAN

It's time to turn these ideas into action! Let's create your Action Plan and an Experiment to test it!

WHERE DOES SOCIAL MEDIA FIT IN?

Now that we're at the end of class, you might be noticing that we haven't talked about social media, since that bit about making your work share-able.

Why? Because it fits everywhere. And nowhere.

Here's what I mean:

- ★ People might be following you in order to get to know you better (after they visit your site or see one of your messages). (Come closer!)
- ★ You can post messages about what you're working on, your newest post, etc : To connect deeper/let them get to know you better (Come closer!)
- ★ You can send messages with a direct link to a new product - and that might lead to the sale (Buy!)
- ★ And of course, your fans can share, retweet or like your posts and that will introduce you to their followers (Hi!)

SOCIAL MEDIA FITS EVERYWHERE...BUT IT CAN'T STAND ON ITS OWN - IT'LL WORK BEST WHEN IT LEADS PEOPLE BACK TO YOUR BIGGER PATH.

Why Social Media can't stand alone:

- ★ You can't control what people see (FB rearranges what you see + changes their system all of the time).
- ★ It's moving so fast, all of your followers won't see everything you post (on Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest).
- ★ You are crowded out by all of the other voices around you. (Your message is diluted.)

Now - this doesn't mean you shouldn't use it, only that you can't count on it to connect with your customers in a meaningful way, the same way forever.

How you CAN use it:

- ★ Spread the content you're already creating.
- ★ Lead people to the next part of your path.
- ★ Be useful: share links, photos, ideas that your buyers would love.
- ★ Have conversations with buyers and potential buyers (just be sure not to be distracted by your peers): Ask questions, answer their questions, and have fun!
- ★ Connect with editors and bloggers that you'd like to build a relationship with.

Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest are GREAT for sharing a WIDE variety of stuff that your buyers would like to see and read - articles, photos, ideas, patterns. By sharing, you become a source of inspiration and ideas. This can be a great way to build relationships with your followers and readers, but note that unless you can bring those people to your own site and onto your Path, this doesn't impact your business.

Instagram is great for showing parts of your life that your buyers might be interested in. But don't overthink it too much (Is this business? Or personal?), because when you're a maker, the business IS personal. Your sister will like seeing the dolls you're making as much as a potential customer! And a customer might be interested in your adorable dog. Decide what makes you comfortable and keep experimenting!

To sum up - social media is a nice add-on to what you're already doing, but because it can take so long to build an audience, and you have no control over what that audience sees, it's not a tool you want to spend too much time on. Instead, use it to highlight what you're already doing and have conversations with your customers (when you find them). When you have the other parts of your path firmly in place, you can move on to building an audience on whichever platform you like best, and experiment with how to make it effective at reaching your goals.

EXTRA RESOURCES:

- ★ A [guest post I wrote about using Instagram for business](#).
- ★ Attached you'll find the advice shared by a Starship Captain, in the forum (She gave us permission to share it with you!)

CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

Now that you've generated a zillion good ideas* for your Customer Path, it's time to narrow those down into a workable plan of what you're actually going to DO.

**You have completed all the worksheets, right? If not, go back and do them all! Don't worry about getting it *right*, just force yourself to come up with ideas!*

This takes 3 steps:

1. **Filter.** First, you'll go through all your ideas and possible improvements to your Path and filter it through your current business goals.
2. **Arrange.** You'll notice that some of the things on your list are One Time To Dos: you'll do them once (like, write your opt-in) and then you're done. Other items (like: Send a weekly email) are ongoing. You need to separate these two and give them both their place.
3. **Schedule.** This is where your big pile of possibilities becomes do-able - you'll decide when you're going to do it and build it into your regular business doings.

LET'S GET STARTED!

(This is all in your worksheets! Be sure you work through it and don't just read about it!)

Filter:

First, before you start looking at all the possibilities, go back to your Intention. What did you want to get out of this class? What bigger business goal are you working towards? Now, take a look at all your other worksheets. Circle the items that are most likely going to get you there. Circle the things you're most excited about. (Don't worry about when you're going to do the things, or how long it'll take to do everything you've circled.)

Arrange:

Look at the things you've circled. Now it's time to turn them into actions for you to take. You might need to reword some of the things, to make them into actions. (For example, if you have an idea of an opt-in you're excited about, you might need to rewrite it as: Write opt-in about {idea}.) Action = something you can do.

On the attached worksheet, split up the actions into things you can do ONCE and things that need to become part of your routine (actions you'll take on a regular basis).

Next, prioritize them: What do you want to work on first? Prioritize the One Time Actions (number them, so you know what you want to do first, second, etc). Then, look at the Routine Actions. Which one do you want to fit into your routine first?

YOU CAN PRIORITIZE HOWEVER YOU LIKE.

Pick the things :

- ★ you're most enthusiastic about.
- ★ that will have the most impact.
- ★ that make sense. (eg., You've got to identify possible platforms before you can pitch guest posts and write them.)

Schedule:

Start by thinking through how much time you actually have to work on new projects. Where will "doing Customer Path To Dos" fit in your daily or weekly schedule? (If you're spending more than 5 minutes a day on social media, cut that right out and add in this!)

If your daily schedule is more **freeform***, mark off one section of time each day or week to work specifically on this. (Ex, I don't schedule every moment of my day, but when I'm working on a new project, I dedicate the first hour of my work day to it, or Friday afternoons).

**This is one of the weekly [Starship lessons](#).*

It does NOT matter how much time you have in a week to work on your business, only that you DO have some time dedicated to it. Whether it's 2 hours a week or 40, having boundaries around this time is key to getting anything done in a consistent way. Don't get distracted by the time other people have, or the time you wish you had. Work with what you have.

Now that you have a time when you are going to work on your list of actions, go back to the One Time actions, and put a Due Date next to them. Start with your top priority and ask yourself: How long will this take? If I work on it in my very next "Customer Path Time Slot," when will it be done? Write that date next to it! And then move on to the next action.

Next take a look at your Routine Actions. It's unrealistic to try to add 10 new routines to your week or month. Instead, just pick one to add right now. Then, in 2 weeks, come back and pick up a new one to implement.

On your worksheet, you have space to write about HOW you're going to fit the new routine in your schedule. Studies have shown that getting insanely specific about when, where, and how you'll do a new routine (habit) will make it more likely to get done (and easier! You won't have to figure out all the moving parts before you get started).

Don't over-schedule.

I suggest putting due dates on 2-5 actions, depending on how long they'll each take. You'll need to be flexible and handle new things that come up in your business, and you don't want to get discouraged by things that "fall behind," so don't schedule too far out. Come back to the list once you get your top 2-5 actions done.

By that point you will have:

- ★ Built confidence that you are awesome at accomplishing things!
- ★ Learned so much about what works and what doesn't.
- ★ Figured out that some things take longer than you thought.
- ★ Shifted something in your business: Either you'll have more time (getting better at managing your day?) or have less time (have more orders?) or have decided to focus on a new opportunity.

This is AWESOME!

I know it's easy to get frustrated that you're not doing exactly what you planned to do (or thought you should do), but business is always changing, and staying flexible is how you learn and grow and improve. So don't beat yourself up over this list. Instead, stay open to what's working and what your own business is teaching you!

MAKE YOUR ACTION PLAN!

FILTER

What was your intention?

What bigger business goal are you working towards?

GO THROUGH YOUR WORKSHEETS AND CIRCLE THE IDEAS THAT LINE UP WITH YOUR INTENTION AND THAT YOU ARE MOST EXCITED ABOUT.

...

ARRANGE

Only fill in the sections that you want to work on, based on your filtering.

Hi!

What do you want to do for Search Optimization?

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

What are your best ideas for Conscious Connection?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What are your best ideas for making your work more shareable?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What are your best ideas for the Real World?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Come Closer

What were your best 3 opt-in ideas?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Which one will you make first?

What are your best ideas for content to send?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

How often will you send emails?

When will you send your first one? (Or your next one)?

Buy

Where do you need to make your offer clearer?

What is the next offer you're going to make? Where?

MORE ARRANGING!

Split your above ideas into two piles: One Time Actions and Routine Actions

ONE TIME ACTIONS

NOW, PRIORITIZE! NUMBER THE TOP 10 THINGS YOU WANT TO DO.

Next: Put a Due Date next to your top 2-3 One Time Actions.

ROUTINE ACTIONS

NOW, PRIORITIZE! NUMBER THE TOP 3 THINGS YOU WANT TO ADD TO YOUR ROUTINE

Pick one routine you're going to add to your week THIS week. Find it a dedicated space in your week and figure out if it requires anything else, or what else has to change in order for you to have time and energy for it. Write out exactly how you're going to start doing it (when, where, why, how):

EXPERIMENT

Now that you've created a Plan of Action, you're ready to act! Yay!

But once you start acting, you're going to know what's working, and what's not, so that's where an Experiment comes in. Not only will it help you assess what you've done, it'll also help you focus on actions that get the specific results you want.

You can listen to today's lesson here: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/taraswiger.com/CustomerPath/Customer-Path-Lesson-5.mp3>

Or, read the transcript on the following pages!

LESSON 5 TRANSCRIPT: CREATE AN EXPERIMENT

Now that you know what you're going to be working on, it'll be easy to get sucked in to just working away with your head down. But remember - we're creating a Customer Path that works for our ACTUAL customers. So it's not enough to just put everything in place, you gotta pay attention to what's working and what's not.

There are a zillion things you can experiment on, but just start with one of the things you're adding to your Customer Path (whether that's integrating search terms into your content, writing guest posts, submitting your work to editors, sending a regular email, etc.) and craft an Experiment around that.

This is an ongoing process. So don't worry if you've got lots of ideas. Just pick one thing to experiment on, and at the end of the experiment, you can try another one!

Setting up an experiment is easy, but you want to be intentional about it, so you don't forget about it and so that you really learn from it!

1. Set a hypothesis

What do you want this experiment to do for you? What do you think will happen?

Look back at your intention from the first week - make sure that what you're experimenting on will bring you closer to that intention.

2. Set the parameters

How long is this experiment? What will it entail? (You are so much more likely to stick with something if it has a clear end date. You'll also get better results if you plan a time to stop and reassess.)

3. Put the support system in place to hold it

What will you need in terms of time, space and energy to do the experiment? How can you set up your day, week and life to make that possible?

Look at what you've found is already working, and use those systems or tools to support you in your experiment.

Review the results

What worked? What didn't? At the end of the experiment, make notes about the results, how you felt, and what you learned.

(Put this in your calendar, or use the [Starship](#) or [Lift Off](#) monthly reminders to trigger your review!)

NOW, IT'S YOUR TURN! SET UP AN EXPERIMENT FOR ONE OF THE THINGS ON YOUR ACTION PLAN!

CREATE YOUR OWN EXPERIMENT

What is your hypothesis?

(What will you try and how do you expect it to help?)

What are the parameters?

(When will it start? How long will it last? What will you do, specifically?)

What support do you need to complete the experiment?

(Put it on your calendar, find the tools you'll use, etc)

How will you evaluate it?

EVALUATE!

When your experiment is over, come back to this worksheet and evaluate it!

Did I prove my hypothesis true?

What did I learn about this?

What did I learn about myself?

What surprised me?

What do I want to adopt into my daily (or weekly) workflow?

What didn't work?

What do I want to experiment with next?

BONUS! CUSTOMER PATH Q+A CALL: SUMMARY

When I held this class live, I also hosted a live Q+A session with the class members so they could ask me their questions directly. Now you can be privy to that session, because I recorded it for you!

Download the recording HERE: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/taraswiger.com/CustomerPath/Customer-Path-Q%2BA.mp3>

Or read the summary on the following pages instead!

CUSTOMER PATH Q+A CALL: SUMMARY

The overall question of this course has been about how to get people to sign up for your newsletter list.

This is something you'll work on FOREVER. This is ongoing. There is not a point where you get to and think: ok, I don't need to worry about that anymore.

There are a few steps:

- ★ Create the list
- ★ Create an opt-in
- ★ Create a plan for ongoing content
- ★ Continue to share your list, wherever your people are (your most popular posts, in guest posts, etc.).

We'll talk more about this in Lesson 3, so for now, let's get started with the questions!

Q (from Lisa): How do I make enough people want to sign up for a newsletter? Creating a good newsletter will take up quite a bit of my time and I don't want to bother if it's just going to be a small handful of people.

A: But it's a handful of people who WANT to hear from you. These are people who are more likely to buy than people who just stop by your blog or follow you on social media. How much would it be worth if they all bought from you again? If sending one email = one sale? Where else are you spending time on people you aren't sure want to hear from you? Can you move some of that time into creating a newsletter for people who have already told you that they want to hear from you? The number on the list doesn't matter at all, because these are the people who will require less work from you in order to get them to buy.

Over time, you're building a relationship.

Q (from Lisa): Any advice for sending a free sample of your product to an uber cyber presence? For me it would mean sending a doll to a popular NYC mom with a young daughter, but for a knitter, a knitting blogger like Never Not Knitting.

A: Connect with them first - do not send a sample first! The first thing to do is to come up with a list of people you want to target for this type of connection (because most of them won't turn into getting press for your product, so play the numbers game in your favor and have a list of 10-50 people or sites). Next, check their sites to see if they have submission guidelines; if they have them, follow those guidelines perfectly. Third, follow them on social media and comment with usefulness

(more on this in Lesson 2). Over time, send a super short pitch e-mail to tell them about you, your work, and that you'd love to send them a free _____ (insert product that you sell). Ask for permission to send something, and then get their address if they approve it. Follow up to make sure they got the product after you send, but know that just receiving the item doesn't guarantee that they will promote it for you on their site. Every site owner will have different rules for this, so familiarize yourself with their policies before you send your e-mail.

Q (from Vanessa): I know that 95% of my newsletter subscribers are other creatives who are signing up to support me. That's flattering, but I don't feel that I'm really reaching my Right People that way, because these people are my friends but not my customers. Should I remove them from my newsletter, or how should I proceed?

A: Keep them on your list (unless it just really bugs you to have them there), but *write* the newsletter with your Right Person in mind. Plus, you never know when one of your personal contacts is going to share your content with a friend of theirs who might become your next customer.

Q (from Keli): Is a newsletter better than having a blog? I just put a lot of time and effort into creating a blog, and I feel like I'm really behind because I don't even have a newsletter or know where to put one. Am I wasting my time consistently writing on my blog?

A: First of all, you are not behind! Your business is your own, and your pace is totally normal for your business and where you are right now. It just takes time. For you, right now, it sounds like keeping a regular habit of writing on your blog is a good place to be - it's helping you find things that you're passionate about and want to write about, and it's helping you connect with your customers. As for a newsletter, I would just wait until you're able to write regularly on your blog AND write for a newsletter. Maybe for now, if you want to start a newsletter you can start one JUST for past customers. If somebody buys something from you, you can e-mail them to invite them to sign up for your newsletter. Then you could send messages just once or twice a month to get you started.

Q (from Amy): I'd love to talk a little about how giveaways and other free promotions affect the people you're attracting. How can we do them that attracts at least a decent percentage of potential customers to you versus free-stuff-seekers?

A: Give it away strategically. When you give away something to your newsletter subscribers, you're honoring that commitment they made by letting you into their inbox. When you do a random blog give-away, you might get comments on your blog (or likes on your Facebook page),

but there isn't much you can do with that when the give-away is over. So if you want to do a give-away, think first about what you want people to do as their entry to the give-away - it should be something that is useful to you in the future.

Beyond that, the thing you give away needs to be closely tied to the thing you want to be known for. People will share your give-away on social media, so make sure that you give away something that is going to remind people of who you are and what you sell.

Q (from Anne): Is it better to offer a discount or an upgrade than to offer a give-away?

A: Yes! Read Lesson 3 for more on this, but yes. Give them a discount or a free upgrade because then more people will buy, rather than just giving one person something for free. Make sure you explain it to them so they understand why your offer is something special for them.

Q (from Sheri):

Here is a question I have been struggling with.... "Identity." I am an individual and have email and social media and contact info (cell phone number) as myself, but I also am a business and have email and social media and contact info (a whole lot more!) as a business: Jubilee Junk. For my own sense of boundaries and sanity, I need to have some separation between the personal "Me" and the business "Me." I also want to be able to respond to customers easily and somewhat "unseen" so they experience and calm and professional person instead of a crazy lady. Since I do not have a retail business or location, I am working everywhere and often at home or in my car. I want to be able to respond remotely and smoothly.

I also struggle with the "split-person" effect...

When I post on Instagram, WHO am I? I see the benefit in being myself and connecting on a personal level, and I like that. At the same time, I don't want to irritate my "non-customer" social media people and friends and family by always being about business, the "sale" or "promoting" my business.

How can I divide AND integrate the two halves?

A: Set working hours. Do NOT answer after set hours (as if you had an office or an assistant!) Be clear about how people should contact you. Set expectations about when you'll respond. LEAD them where you want them to go.

Also - don't deal with personal stuff during working hours. YOU are the only person who can create the boundaries that you need. Think of it like working in a traditional office: during the working day, your family wouldn't be able to reach you for non-emergencies. Then when you left work for the day, customers wouldn't be able to call you at home.

So you can structure your time that way as well - set times for yourself when you're going to check work (or personal) e-mail, work or personal social media, etc. - and then STICK to those times.

As for split personality - this is something for you to figure out.

- ★ For FB. Create a "Page" (not a human account) for your business. If they find you've created a personal account for your business, they'll close it. You don't have to post it all to your personal FB account. I've found my friends LIKE to see what I'm working on. Make a plan, and then stick to it, don't let yourself doubt.
- ★ Instagram: There are several Starship captains who have great success using it for business. Don't worry about what other people think - use it the way YOU want to use it.

In NO way will posting about your business be "sales-y" - you're just sharing what you're working on or what you just did - it IS a part of your life.

Q (from Micah): My question is somewhat the same, although I think they were talking about giving a physical item away, and I'm wondering more along the lines of free content such as free patterns and tutorials. Additionally, while thinking of other people's platforms, a lot that came to my mind when thinking about crochet are sites that pretty much only point to free patterns. Those can be really huge platforms, but I worry that traffic is only looking for freebies...which I guess brings me back to my question because I have already received traffic from some of those sites and I'm looking for tips to turn that traffic into sales.

A: I agree re: platforms built on free. If a platform is dedicated only to free stuff, then it's probably not the right platform for you. BUT, there are absolutely crochet sites that don't just do free patterns - sites that review books, or share their own projects, or podcasts, or yarn stores, etc. When you're thinking about the sites you want to build relationships with, focus on sites whose audiences aren't just searching for free things.

Another thing to do is to optimize your popular traffic pages in any way you can - link to your pattern shop where they can pay for patterns just like the free one they're coming to download, etc. Make sure that every free thing you offer has your name and your web site all over it so that

once somebody uses that free thing, they can easily find out how to get more from you (that they will be interested in paying for).

Yet another option is to tell people that to get a free pattern they have to sign up for your e-mail ... and then have that lead them to an autoresponder that tells them about other patterns you have for sale that they might enjoy.

Q (from Keli): I would love to have someplace to go to do my work, other than my house. If I go to a coffee shop, I might get a lot of interruptions from strangers. If I go to my local yarn store, I feel anxious about that because I don't use any of that store's products in my work (making yarn and designing knitting patterns), so I feel awkward about using their space to do my work. Any ideas on that?

A: For the yarn store, you can absolutely bring your own yarn to the open knit night - you become a walking talking advertisement at that point, which is totally acceptable. Then you can just hand them your card and offer to discuss it later (to avoid selling under the owner's nose), and then if you're open to wholesale you can use that as an opportunity to ask the owner if she would like to carry your yarn in her shop.

In a coffee shop, you probably won't run into other knitters who will ask you about your yarn. It would be good to get out of the house and have a separation from work and home, so absolutely go to the park or a coffee shop or another public place. I doubt most of the other people there will bother you because they're also there to work, so it's worth trying it sometime.

Q (from Anne): I don't know how to explain what I make so that I can be searched for easily. Or that people know what to search for. My lampwork glass aquariums are very unique and I get a very good response from them but I don't know how to make it easy for them to be found. If you google "lampwork glass aquarium(s)" my stuff is close to the top but that is not a phrase people are familiar with. So how do I describe my work in such a way that it will get found and people will understand what it is?

A: Here are some questions for you - Why are people buying it? What are they looking for?

Anne:

Usually they are buying it to decorate a beach themed room or a vacation home on the beach. Or they are men who love the fish theme.

I had a client commission for a floral piece with hummingbirds. When I posted a pic of them on FB, I had no idea that hummingbirds were so popular. People ordered them for Mother's Day presents or for the special hummingbird lover in their family. I have had several men who say they like the glass flowers because they don't die so they're flowers that aren't a waste of money.

A: Tag your item(s) with the things people are going to search for. Maybe, beach themed decor, decoration beach house, decoration fishing cabin, fish decoration, unique decorating ideas? Use those words in your descriptions of your products and in your blog posts (ways to decorate a beach home, alternatives to flowers that won't die, etc.). Use a keyword search tool like <http://www.wordpot.com/>. This will allow you to see how many people are searching for your specific term in a day and will give suggested keywords that are similar.

Q (from Kelly): I'm wondering if you recommend keeping separate mailing lists for the different stages of where people are on your customer path.

Should you use an RSS feed so that everyone on your list is getting blog posts or should you only send specifically targeted newsletters to where people are on the path?

A: In theory, I could see you having one list that introduces new visitors to your site to you and what you sell, and another list for past customers who have already bought your products. You can also have sub-lists within one main list to target people with what they want to hear more about. But in general, someone who is about to buy your product is not that different from someone who has already bought your product, so you can probably keep them on the same list. But if your product is more like a class, then a person who hasn't bought a class might be very different from a person who hasn't bought one yet (because the person who has taken the class has a much deeper relationship with you after they've taken it), so in that case it might be a good idea to have two lists.

...

Throughout the call students have mentioned the [Starship](#), so I wanted to let you know: As a Starship member you get free access to all future and past classes, during your membership (so that's why there are several Starship Captains in this class!).

Your discount link (good for one month) is here: <http://taraswiger.com/help/starship-super-secret/>

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!

MORE BONUSES!

Thanks again for going on this exploration with me!

To thank you, I'm giving you \$100 off my two most popular adventures:

- ★ If you loved the discussion, the worksheets, and the gentle accountability of checking in every lesson, you'll love the Starship.
As a Customer Path student, you'll get \$100 off The Starship (even with the payment plan). Your discount link is on this page. The Starship opens just once a quarter, but you can beam up now, before June 11th.*
- ★ If you don't have the time to take part in a community (or you just don't feel ready for it), the Solo Mission has the Star Charting, quarterly map-making and monthly reviews, all delivered via email. To get \$100 off, just click Buy here, then put in the coupon code: CPSoloMish.

*AFTER JUNE 11TH YOU'RE STILL WELCOME TO JOIN, BUT THE DISCOUNT WILL NO LONGER BE AVAILABLE.

How to create an Automagical Email Series

A series of emails sent automatically to subscribers is my most-favorite way to connect! To help you create yours, I created a whole class about it, and I'm giving it to you, brave Customer Path Maker, for free! Note that the class is delivered via email, in an automatic series, so you can see how it works firsthand! [Learn more about the class here](#) or [join it \(for free!\) here](#).

I'd love to know how this class helped you (and how I can make it even better!)

Fill me in on [this \(short!\) feedback form](#), before June 7th, and when you click "submit", you'll get a Thank You coupon code for anything in my shop!

You can also tell me about it on Twitter or Instagram: @TaraSwiger, or by using the hashtag #TaraSwiger.