

# Marketing vs. Sales, And Why Knowing The Difference Is Critical To Your Success

*By Mike Klassen*

In a perfect world, you would never have to search out [new clients](#). Every client you'd ever need would come to you.

As a freelancer for seven years, I'm happy to report that it is possible to get to a level where repeat clients and great word-of-mouth keep you pretty busy.

But when you're [just starting out](#), going through a slump, or looking to break into a new niche, the responsibility to [land new clients](#) is squarely on your shoulders more so than normal. And the most successful freelancers will tell you that even when business is great, they're still reaching out to new clients.

I'm going to fess up to a mistake I made for many years. If I were being kind to myself, I might simply say that I didn't know any better.

But the truth is, there was probably a bit of fear and/or laziness holding me back.

The problem was I didn't commit to the sales process seriously enough when it came to [reaching out to new clients](#). I was marketing, but that's only part of the equation.

Marketing is something most of us can do without too much stress. But continual, serious attention to sales is what separates the successful freelancers from the ones who are always wondering why they're not getting anywhere.

Let me define both marketing and sales, understanding that these are just my personal definitions.

*Marketing* is the attraction phase. This is where you're not only spreading the word that you're available, but showing how you can help prospects solve their problems. When you're sharing a message that resonates with your target audience, you've opened the door that can eventually lead to sales.

Here are just some of the marketing avenues available to you:

- Direct mail (postcards, sales letters, etc.)
- Social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)
- Video (Webinars or simple "Here's what I can do for you" videos)

- Podcasts
- Blogging
- Comments on other blogs related to your specialities
- Guest articles
- Your website and freebies that you offer
- Cold calling
- Public speaking

And there's much more, but you get the idea. Bottom line, marketing is getting your name and ideas out there in such a way that people you can help pay attention and want to know more.

On my website, I have about a dozen free marketing resources that prospects can download. And for the longest time, I was pretty proud of myself for all that work.

But you know what? It doesn't help my business if those resources aren't leading to actual sales. Even a strong call-to-action in your marketing material might not always be enough if you're not taking the next step.

If you really want to maximize and accelerate your success, you've got to make sure that your *marketing* activities are paired with *sales* activities.

*Sales*, to me, is nothing more than talking to people about their business problems and showing how you're the best person to solve them.

Did you notice the key phrase in that last sentence? It's "talking to people." When you're talking to people, you're learning about the important issues and problems they face in their business. You're also creating a bond and a trust factor. In fact, I'd go so far as to say you're making a friend.

It can take time for that friendship to develop. But no matter how clever or smart you come across in your marketing material, it's often that one-on-one interaction that is going to eventually lead to a project.

As [freelance copywriters](#) and designers, we're not vending machines where a final product is delivered with a push of a button and no personal interaction. You need to be *talking* to prospects.

The trouble is, too many freelancers wait and hope for prospects to see their marketing material and rush to the phone yelling, "Where have you been all my life?" Yes, a few might. But if that's the foundation you're banking on for a financially rewarding freelancer career, prepare for a slow climb to the top.

Instead, to speed up that process, take the initiative and talk to prospects who are coming into your world through your

marketing process. Or, reach out to them directly if they're unlikely to find you.

Let me give you two simple examples of putting this into action.

1. You mail out postcards or letters to prospects that you believe will be a good fit for your services. You point them to a report on your site that requires they provide their name and e-mail address. That's marketing at its most basic. It's easy and doesn't require you to do much ... just send the postcard or letter and hope people respond to your offer.

But in this case, sales is personally contacting the people who download your report. Or, following up by phone if they don't respond to talk about their needs and see if there's a good fit.

I've talked to plenty of freelancers willing to do the marketing part, but far fewer who will do the sales. It takes some courage and confidence in what you're offering to take that step.

It took me a long time to get there. I was trying to avoid rejection and discomfort. If a prospect trashes my postcard, I don't feel it. But taking the initiative to reach out and talk to someone I don't know is a risk. It's something many of us never had to do back in the corporate world, so it's natural that we would hesitate, or not have a good plan of action.

Unfortunately, giving into this fear or hesitation will keep us spinning our wheels in the marketing phase, never reaching our business's full potential.

2. This is something that dawned on me recently. I'm connected to just over 100 people on LinkedIn. But I really don't know half of them. This is pretty common for everyone and applies to Twitter and Facebook, too. At the time you connected, there was probably a good reason for it. But now, months or years later, you couldn't remember that reason if your life depended on it.

I'm going to go through my list of LinkedIn contacts that I don't know too well and asking to setup a time to talk *by phone*. I'm not trying to sell them anything. I just want to learn more about what they do and whether there's a future partnership possible. Maybe they'll become a client. Maybe they'll be someone I partner with to serve other clients. Maybe at this time there's not a clear connection between us. But at least I'll be better informed about them as they will be with me. And at least I've taken the initiative too see what opportunities might exist ... I'm not just sitting around waiting for opportunities to come to me.

After all, what's the point of being connected with people if you can't help one another or even have a clue about what each other does? Far too many people don't take the time to really learn about the people they're connected to on these social media sites.

Finally, let me share an eye-opening exercise that I've been doing consistently for a while now. It completely takes away any false feelings of making progress when I'm really not.

Each week, I list the activities I do for my business, whether it's working on a project, creating marketing material for my business, or scheduling a time to talk with new people I've met in one of the social media channels.

In front of each activity I put either **MARKETING**, **SALES**, **PROJECT**, **CONNECTING** or **OTHER**. Would it surprise you know that during those periods where my income was down, there weren't a lot of activities marked as **SALES**.

I had plenty marked as **MARKETING**, but now we know there's a difference.

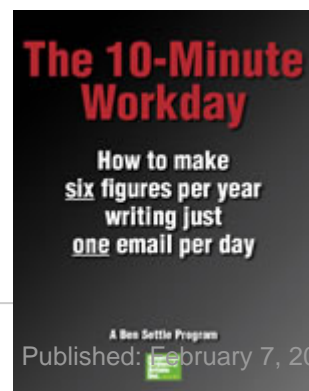
Try that idea yourself and I think you'll find it creates a very clear picture of what you're accomplishing each week. Lack of **SALES** activities this week is going to translate into lack of projects down the road.

Marketing without sales often gives you the false illusion that you're making progress. Marketing activities are an important start, but your monthly income will tell you how well you're doing with vital sales activities.

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## 4 Responses to "Marketing vs. Sales, And Why Knowing The Difference Is Critical To Your Success"

Mike, great article. I've just started getting busy with paid projects, and this is a great reminder about the importance of not forgetting about the selling aspect.

And you're right, marketing is easier than following up with potential clients. Blog posts are less intimidating than hearing no from a prospect. But the results from sales (living the writer's life) is worth it.

*ctalbott* – February 7, 2011 at 5:19 pm

**Thanks for the comment. Glad you liked it. And really happy to hear you're busy.**

**I made calls today and got the president of one company who growled, "What do you want?!?" He's probably not a good fit. ;-)**

**I think that's what most of us picture when it comes to reaching out, and scares us from doing it.**

**But I reached two other people who were nice, and happy for me send them something.**

**When you reach people like that, it really lifts you up, and gets you closer to your goals.**

*Mike Klassen* – February 8, 2011 at 4:52 pm

Mike- I found your article very helpful. Its the one article I've read recently that resonated personally with me. I'm not a copywriter or even aspiring to be one at this time; I've taken AWAI's Internet Research Specialist course and am still working on getting my new business up & ready for prospective clients. But you touched on a very real and substantial difference between Marketing & Sales that I know I have a problem with in the Sales category. Thanks for addressing that.

*Ellen* – March 25, 2011 at 10:23 pm

**Ellen,**

**Thanks for taking the time to comment. I'm really happy this was helpful for you.**

**Good luck working through the program!**

*Mike Klassen* – March 26, 2011 at 12:18 pm

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