

Funnel Vision: Giving Your Customers Their Big Dream

Before you can give your customers anything, you need to know who they are. If you completed the homework from the previous lesson, you've already got a better answer to this question. You've researched what they want... now, how do you approach them?

Relax -- it's not guesswork. There are actual steps to take: Omit even one of these steps and you risk not closing the sale ("sale" in this case being "the sign up in response to your call to action").

It's like going to a new store: You visit, you look around; maybe see one or two things you like and bolt out of there again when the store clerk looks like she's going to approach and "pester" you into buying -- even though you may have wanted to look some more. What's really happened here is that the store clerk scared you away by making too aggressive an approach, too soon; or by not giving you time to look your fill and "get comfortable".

Online sales follow a protocol too, in order not to scare the customers away and establish a rapport; and here's how it's done...

Step One: Identification -- Your research has done most of the work in identifying your ideal subscriber. Now you need to let that subscriber "get comfortable". This means letting them get to know you -- but the common misconception is that you need to get to know your subscriber. (True -- but that's only half the picture!)

The other fact no one ever acknowledges: You could spend a lifetime waiting for that subscriber to "get comfortable" with you... but if you don't truly understand what makes her tick, it will never happen.

On the other hand, if you zero in on her biggest need, pain, bugbear, problem or wish, it's possible to speed the process up in an instant. In fact, do this spectacularly enough and she may go from zero to one hundred per cent in trusting you, on the spot.

What are your potential subscriber's key emotions or thoughts you need to identify? Think back to the last time you, yourself, experienced this sort of instant identification with someone who had a product you rushed to buy or a newsletter you hurried to sign up for: Excitement, relief and hope were probably at the forefront.

And the big thought that hit you like a blinding revelation: "My goodness! She's *exactly like me!*"

You also need to keep an eye on the business end:

- **Target only potential clients and customers** -- ones who already spend money on your niche. (This is a factor that countless would-be entrepreneurs overlook. They end up with devoted fellow hobbyists... but no customers!)

- **Be a mirror.** It will help you pre-qualify. "Mirroring" is a phenomenon psychologists are well aware of, in human interaction. This means behaving like the people you spend the most time with. So if your niche members are informal online -- be informal. On the other hand, if they all seem to wear suits and never use contractions like "it's" in their own articles or forum comment, be sure to say "it is" in your sales letters, instead of "it's". If they talk about their dogs, don't be afraid to chat a little about your own pets. But whatever you do, never, ever fake similarity solely to gain their trust. Be aware -- but **be yourself!**
- **Pre-qualify subscribers.** Further to the notion of "being yourself", remember that pre-qualifying your subscriber is a good thing -- even if you weed out ninety-five percent of those who read your landing page or article. This means letting readers know **exactly who you are** and **specifically what you're offering** -- especially the things that make you unique and different. Remember, a 3-5% conversion rate (meaning 3-5% of the people who come across your website or read your link-containing article will act and sign up) is considered a really good result, in the wonderful world of sales!

And if your autoresponder or free webinar has a limit on how many "seats" or subscribers you can have before you need to start paying actual cash, you don't want to waste those precious few free seats on people who (a) won't turn up for the webinar (b) won't like it and won't sign up.

Step Two: Establishing rapport -- we've already ascertained that this can sometimes be done instantly if you "click" with your prospect's deepest fears, desires or needs accurately enough. But it usually takes a little longer, in the real world.

Make sure your blog, Facebook page and website are comfortable, useful places to visit. Make sure articles you write anticipate that subscriber's needs.

You're **building trust** and **letting them get to know** you, at this stage. You don't want "frighten them off" by rushing into a sales pitch.

That being said, don't hesitate to place a sign-up form, button or URL everywhere you appear -- along with clear instructions about **what you want your prospect to do next**.

The other side of the coin, in our offline store scenario? If you visit that store nine or ten times, and the store clerk ignores you completely (and doesn't give you at least a smile of recognition), you're likely to become annoyed or disinterested. "Maybe they don't have what I want after all..." And off you go, out the door. So it's a fine line, but investing time and paying attention in getting to know what your subscriber will want from you are both worth it.

Ways to let your prospect know you (a) recognize them and are (b) interested in their welfare?

- **Always, always, acknowledge their comments** -- even if you just hit the "Like" button on Facebook

- **Never, never tell them more than they ask.** Answer only the question... and wait for further cues
- **Recognize and reward** good ideas or personal stories they share. Try to include some detail that lets them know you identify with the situation in the story.
- **Give information freely.** Don't hold anything back -- but pay attention to our second point ("Never tell them more than they ask. *Answer only the question.*) Your focus should always be on giving them exactly the help they need.
- **Never pretend you know it all.** Always refer them to someone else who knows it better, if you don't have the answer you want. (They'll remember you with gratitude, if you're lucky; and you stand a strong chance that they'll refer your real target prospects to you... or come back themselves, next time they see your name.)
- **Be yourself.** No matter how scary that might feel!

Step Three: Your irresistible offer. If you've been doing your homework and genuinely thinking, night and day, about how you can make your prospect's life better (and help her reach her next goal, step or ultimate dream), you'll be in a much stronger and surer position to provide a sign up incentive that truly is irresistible. Your prospect should feel that *he can't live another minute* without what you are offering.

The mouth of your sales funnel is just the first step of your subscriber's journey. **You** know where she ultimately wants to end up -- even if she hasn't even thought about the end goal, at this point.

It will feel almost like magic as your offers seem to anticipate every need along her path -- but all you've done is plan your sales funnel, from beginning to end. And that will be true whether or not you're a one-trick pony, with only one strong campaign that carries all your business for life; or you have twelve sales funnels lined up on her path to the Big Dream.

And remember, "big dreams" can sometimes be very small (E.G. perfectly hemming a seam) but they are still hugely important to your subscriber.

Step Four: Dotting the "i"s and crossing the "t"s -- Here are some seven proven suggestions for hooking people into your sales funnel. Offer them:

- A free webinar or teleseminar
- A free report
- A free .MP3 file or video
- Free apps, software or plugins
- A free pattern or layout
- Free graphics
- Limited-time, free trial or access to your new service

But don't limit yourself to the above suggestions. Follow your instincts -- and your potential subscriber's "cues".

Be creative. Make up your own type of incentive. One marketer I know used her connections and arranged a virtual, online "Summit" consisting of twelve top industry experts. Access to the actual summit was free... but recordings were only available for 24 hours. After that, there was a separate fee for each one. And she turned her guests into joint venture partners by allowing each one to present a paid offer at the end of their particular segments, pitched to those interested enough to listen to the end.

Another one sweetened the pot by offering free half-hour coaching sessions to the first thirty interested people to subscribe to her new free report.

Now both these strategies have become part of mainstream marketing tactics.

The key is to always think about your potential subscriber: **What would she find irresistible enough to prompt her to part with her contact information?**

Finally, make sure you've included that **call to action** -- your sign-up form that tells the reader *what to do next* in a catchy but direct "prompt". ("Yes, Belinda! Send me your free video RIGHT NOW!")

If you're including it in a squeeze page, include a sign-up URL or button in at least two places -- the middle and the end. (Maybe even in your P.S.)

If you're including a link to your landing page in an article, don't just put a generic "[click here](#)" -- make the hyperlink as catchy or explicit as you can in your resource box. ("Visit Christa's site for more about [sewing pattern templates](#).")

<p>TIP: If you use your keyword as the hyperlink -- e.g. "sewing pattern templates" -- you'll garner even more targeted organic traffic.</p>
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Step Five: Making it real -- There are unchangeable tried-and-tested ways that salesmen have made the connection and closed sales throughout history. We've already looked at getting to know your client so he feels comfortable with you, but in order for him to identify even more with you -- to the point where he trusts that you know what's best for him maybe even better than he does -- consider using the following strategies.

- **Tell a story.** Use the old storytelling principle, "Show; don't tell!" Use a personal anecdote about yourself or someone you know to illustrate points, show that you understand what's going through your prospect's head, demonstrate you have a heart -- whatever you think your story needs to demonstrate.

You'll want to consider your audience, of course: This technique doesn't always work, if you use it with the wrong person. For example, a busy executive that

counts time in dollars may not want a rambling anecdote. And people who are practical and results-oriented may become impatient if they have to listen to flights of creative fancy. So fit your story-telling style to your listener.

Just remember -- the right story (keep it short and simple) can be the most powerful tool for creating that feeling of instant loyalty and connection.

- **Let them touch, feel and use your product, if you're selling one.** After all, no one ever sold a horse (well, not at the multi-thousand dollar range) without trying it out first and vetting it, to see if it's "sound". Instead of a free report, let your potential customer use your online software or service for a month "for only \$1"... or allow him to download five free pieces of PLR... or enjoy your All-Access Membership for one month, free (graduate her back to the "basic" level, at the end of the month -- that way, she's still hooked on your service and is being helped by you, but there's a good chance she'll upgrade when she begins to miss the exclusive benefits of the All-Access version.)

Again, any strategy should be used because it's the best option, not just for the sake of adding more incentive to the mix. If you have a truly priceless and unique offer -- one you know your target market would kill for (and no one else has yet invented) -- you might even be able to leap straight to a well-priced, paid offer without the "freebie".

- **Be consistent.** We've mentioned this before, but one of the key benefits creating a sales funnel endows you with is the ability to present offers or information *consistently*, without any long gaps (or offers piling up on top of one another, before your annoyed subscriber has read his way through the first one). Consistency builds trust; and trust is the cement that ensures a positive relationship between you and your customer or client. She will have faith that you can help her reach her next goal or big dream... and she'll be much more receptive to your next offer and well on her way to becoming that ultimate dream of your own -- a **lifetime, repeat buyer**.
- **Anticipate objections...** and build the counter-solution for each one into your content. An objection is rarely ever a negative -- it's often the prospect wanting to be convinced to buy.
- **Pay attention to timing.** It's one of the most important components in your sales funnel. When do you present the next offering? When your customer is ready -- and not before.

How do you know he is ready? You don't... but you do know (thanks to all your research and listening) what he will need next; and that allows you to prepare it and load it into your sales funnel. When the questions start to appear in your inbox or blog comments ("How can I build my own app, now that I've learned how to program...") you know it's time to present that new offer. (When you've

been at it a while, and really got to know your customers, you'll be able to plan this well in advance and set it up... before you ever get one question.

Whatever strategies you use, however, always keep it real. Don't use a strategy just to add pressure to subscribe or buy: Use it because it feels natural and you think your client will enjoy sharing.

We've talked about principles a lot -- so much, in fact, you may be feeling a little bewildered. "I know *what* to do now... but I still don't know **how**!"

If that sounds like you, then relax! We're about to pull it all together into **specific action steps**.

But first, there's another way to approach the sales funnel model, and that's microcosmically...

Thinking "AIDA"

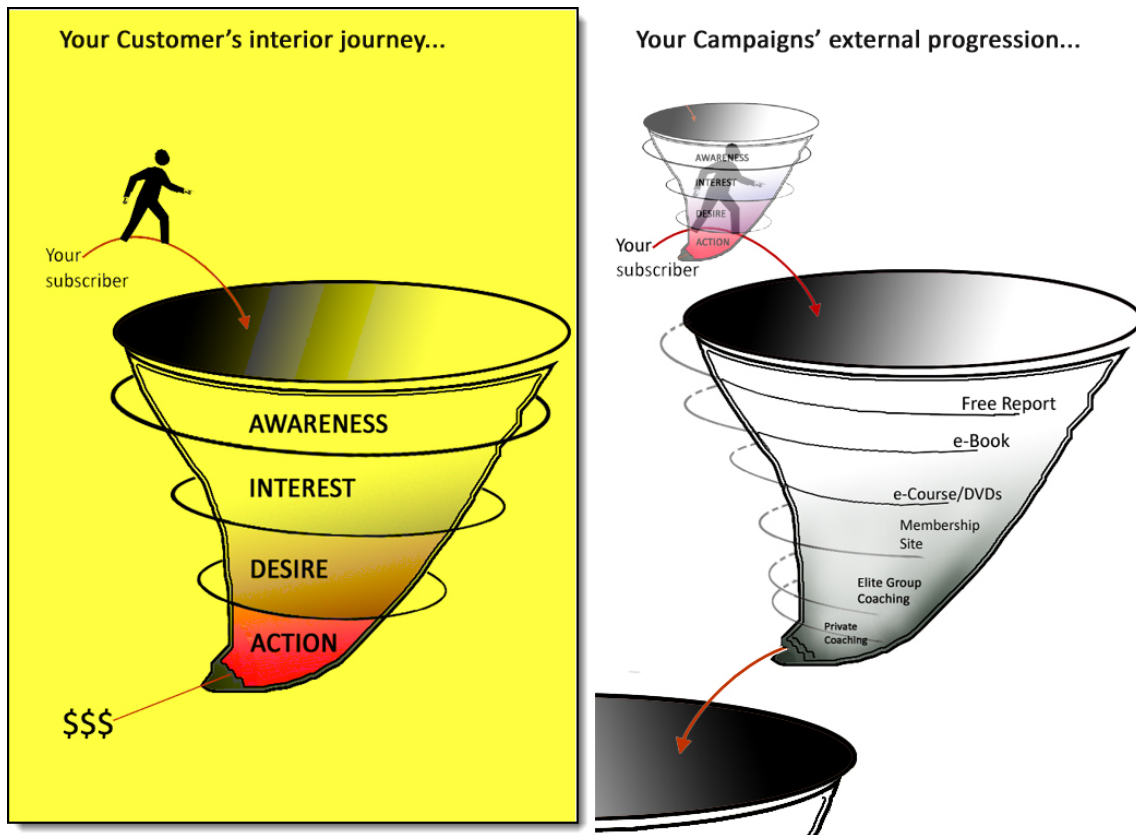
In nature, everything repeats. Just as a snail's shell spirals in on itself in perfect proportion, so that the tightest spiral is a perfectly-proportioned version of the largest spiral, so does the sales funnel model. (If you'd like to read more on how nature and mathematics repeat patterns within patterns, visit this link to learn about the [Fibonacci principle](#).)

Going back to the original inventor of the sales funnel model, we meet Elias St. Elmo Lewis in 1898. He coined the acronym, "AIDA" to describe the customer or client's state of mind during the sales process:

AWARENESS	"Who are you? Oh. You're talking to me..."
INTEREST	"What's in this for me?"
DESIRE	"I want it... but do I really need it?"
ACTION	"Okay. What do I have to do to get it?"

Once you're aware that almost every customer or client goes through these four basic stages, you can tune each step of your sales funnel to address these stages... for every offer. The principle is repeatable, every time.

Here's what we mean by saying the AIDA principle is a microcosmic sales funnel model in itself. (Our present-day model, at the right of the yellow illustration, below, is basically a "repeat" of the AIDA structure, taken to a global level:)



It's only when your customer has gone from first being aware you exist to being convinced she can't live without your product that *she takes action* -- and jumps into the mouth of your sales funnel, to begin her journey along side you.

Landing Pages 101

But what is this "mouth" we keep talking about?

It's whatever *induces the customer to part with her contact information* -- at the very least, her email address and first name -- or (if you're presenting a direct paid offer) her cash and payment details. Once your new subscriber has initiated this action, she's taken the first step to bonding with you -- and it's up to you to make sure she never regrets that decision.

One of the most important tools you'll use to elicit this information is the **landing page**, or squeeze page.

A landing page is a highly specific -- but deceptively simple -- little powerhouse. And more people make mistakes over landing pages than anywhere else in the sales funnel!

The most common mistake? Including distracting elements, such as navigation tabs (a big "NO-NO!" on a landing page) or unnecessary graphics. (Even too many adjectives, obscuring the point of your, well, *points*.)

Your landing page should contain...

1. A headline that really catches your target subscriber's attention
2. An **irresistible invitation**
3. No more than six key highlights showcasing your offer's strongest **benefits**
4. A **sign up box** (web form) or **button**

That's it. In fact, the less content your landing page contains, the better! You don't want anything to distract the reader from thinking about the nice, fat, juicy, fresh carrot being dangled under her nose.

A landing page can be a standalone web page... or it can be a dedicated page on your blog. It can be written in HTML... or be powered by WordPress.

Your landing page is the place people should end up, when they click on your link in articles, videos, Facebook Fan Page URLs or social media posts. You can write your own content and HTML for your landing page, have a ghostwriter, virtual assistant or web design company do it for you... or use a simple HTML template.

Let's take a look at some typical landing page templates currently offered on the web...



Boggling, isn't it? That's just from a simple Google image search. And one thing I'll tell you right now is.. most of these designs are way too "busy", with too much visual distraction and clutter.

This is the sort of template you should be looking for...

[PHOTO, LOGO OR WEBSITE NAME HERE]

[OPTIONAL: Website Name or Descriptive Headline Here]

"Your Eye-Popping Headline Goes Here"

Grab attention even further with this sub-head
Tell them what to do here e.g. "Sign up to receive free patterns weekly"

In less than a minute you can help yourself to...

- List the key benefits
- No more than 5 or 6 benefits, tops
- Tell him why signing up will make his life better
- And move him towards his dream
- As well as being fun, impressing the neighbors or giving him something exclusive

Remember that people want things more if they know there are **limited numbers**, or **limited time** to claim it; or they're getting something **elite and exclusive**.

Concentrate on only **one point** -- your amazing offer. No other distractions, no tangents.

Finish off with a question they have to answer "yes" or an optimistic statement that lets them see the future and how much better it will be if they download your product.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

P.S. Save your **best bullet point** for the P.S. Include a [sign up link](#) to send your reader to the same destination as your sign up box

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Tell or prompt clearly. E.G...
"YES, JOAN! SEND ME MY FREE PATTERN MAKER NOW"

Name:

Email:

Be sure to enter the email address you check most often -- we'll send you the link to your download straight away!

* We hate spam and will never share your email information!

Notice it contains all of the four essentials: Headline, benefits, a **PROMINENT** signup box (preferably **ABOVE** the fold -- that is, the reader doesn't have to scroll down to find it).

The example above is a very basic HTML format. That's not the only style -- you can get squeeze page templates that are wide and horizontal, long and vertical. They can look plain and simple, like our example above, or graphically sleek and sophisticated. Video squeeze pages are especially effective. (In the latter, instead of all the text, there's a video screen to the left of the sign up box, with a bare minimum of text.)

But no matter what format they take, remember that your landing page only has to do one, simple job -- Inspire the reader to say "YES!" and enter her contact information!

Sequencing and Follow Up

The landing page is your most important tool -- it's the flame to all those potential moths out there. But you won't get very far with building a reputation and a business if you don't live up to the promise of that first contact!

You do this through two key elements; one of which we've already mentioned: **Sequencing** (timing) and **follow up**.

Your initial research and ongoing contact with your niche members -- through your Facebook fan page (which you might want to create before ever presenting your first offer); through your blogs, forums and mastermind groups -- should help you get a feel for how long to wait before sending your next contact. Until you've developed that instinct, however, here are some general, well-tested guidelines:

First contact: Subscriber signs up through your Landing Page	Instantly generates a confirmation letter and/or thank you and download page
3 days later	Letter thanking subscriber for signing up and asking how she's doing with your download. Remind her how to contact you if she needs help. Give her your Facebook page link and encourage her to stay in touch or leave you feedback. Finish off by telling her when she can expect the first installment of your mini course, if you've offered one
Mini course -- begins anywhere from immediately to 1 week after signup, with anywhere from 1-day to 1 week intervals between each installment	Continues weekly through at least 5 weeks.
Mini course conclusion	Ends with paid offer
7 days after mini course conclusion	Thank subscribers again for downloading your offering. Ask them if they would fill out a very small survey for you, so you can improve your products. Invite them to write directly if they'd prefer

14 days after mini course ends	Let them know feedback results are in/ Report on the #1 or top three comments. Invite subscriber to sign up for the offering that's a "response" to feedback (an offering you will have prepared for your funnel in advance)... or do a little research and offer your affiliate link to a product from one of your almost-competitors that addresses the need they pointed out.
21 days	Send them a bright, short little email telling them something priceless they need to know about their niche interest -- a really valuable and juicy tip they can instantly put to use
28 days	Send them your monthly newsletter

Remember, the above timeline and even the steps themselves are not cast in stone. The most important points to always be aware of, however, are:

- 1. You need to keep yourself in your subscriber's field of vision.** (It's like meeting someone and really hitting it off... If you keep actively in touch and work at the relationship, you stand a chance of becoming good friends with that person: However, if you don't see them again for six months, they may not even remember who you are, the next time you bump into each other.
- 2. Your timeline should never be "forced".** Sure, you're tailoring it a little and it's not as random as it may seem to your subscriber, but it should never feel to the subscriber as if you're bombarding them with emails -- or zooming down on them, now and again, in kamikaze attacks that leave them thinking: "Who in the heck was *that*?" Your frequency of contact should **feel totally natural** to the subscriber, the way an email from your friend would feel.
- 3. Give them time to breathe... but not too much time.** Anticipate how long it would take you to try out a new product or read a special report; then keep that in mind, when planning your next contact. The bigger the learning curve, the longer they'll need... but don't be afraid to send reminders now and again with messages like: "How are you getting along with your new free sewing pattern maker? Have you had a chance to use it? I'd love to hear how it's working for you. Meanwhile, here's a great free pattern for a [Christmas Cat Tea Cozy](#) I found, the other day..."

You'll notice that good sequencing also *automatically becomes strong follow up*. This is because you know your subscriber; how she works; her pace and her preferences.

You've followed her comments on blogs and forums. You've listened to (and answered) her questions. If she has a problem, you're quick to jump in with a solution (even if it's not yours) and you've worked hard at the relationship. You've kept in touch (without pestering), you've kept your own ego out of it and you've made very sure that you are the "go-to" person she instantly turns to, whenever there's a need or wish.

So you see, there's no real "magic" or genius to giving your customer her Big Dream -- you're using tools like landing pages, sign up boxes, timing, regular contact, care and follow up to accompany her along her journey. But most of all, you're following your plan -- your sales funnel.

Thanks to your sales funnel, you'll be there every step of the way, helping her miss the potholes -- and showing her the quickest route to success.

And that's a real loyalty-building formula.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Put yourself in your potential customer's shoes. Make notes about his or her:
 - Goals
 - Needs
 - Dreams
 - "Voice" (linguistic habits)
 - Preferences
 - Likes
 - Dislikes
2. Go over articles you're writing or blog posts you have scheduled. Make sure you're really speaking to that person. (Don't be afraid to let your own personality shine through: After all, people never remember clones -- they remember trailblazers.)

Make sure that any articles, resource boxes, posts, landing pages, websites and your Facebook page all contain calls to action, telling the reader what to do next. (ALTERNATE: If you haven't started creating these yet, use this time to research how to write great resource boxes, and create one for every article directory you plan to submit to.)

3. Test all your links, if you haven't done so
4. Check out Facebook and see how your favorite niche experts interact with subscribers or fans. Try to identify what it is they're doing that makes you feel so friendly towards them.
5. Answer the question: "What would my potential customer find so irresistible, she'll give up her right to privacy and part with her name and email address for?"
6. Zero in on your first sign up incentive (offering). Refine that idea. Write a rough landing page draft for that offer, keeping in mind the four vital elements:
 - A headline that really catches your target subscriber's attention
 - An irresistible invitation
 - No more than six key highlights showcasing your offer's strongest benefits
 - A sign up box (web form) or button
7. Plan a consistent social presence, if you don't already have one. Schedule at least fifteen minutes every day (find out what time of day your target audience displays the strongest presence, and visit at that time).