

Who are you really competing with? (Hint: it's not who you think)

Last month I attended a marketing class for small business owners.

I was the *only* writer there. People were obviously excited to meet someone who could write all the materials that they were learning about. I handed out about a dozen business cards.

So why didn't I get *a dozen* phone calls bright and early the next morning?

Those new contacts didn't meet another writer on the way home. And I'm pretty sure they didn't hire another writer. There was a different issue at work that probably affects your business too,

Often, we think we are competing with other writers. But actually our true competition comes from the client. Instead of hiring a professional writer they decide to do it themselves, get a staff member to do it, or do nothing at all.

It can be frustrating to land customers who don't understand the value that you can bring to the table, but there is good news. Even though they reflexively turn to (let's face it) cheaper alternatives, they can be swayed.

Here are some tips to overcome the objections of business owners who aren't used to hiring writers.

What to do when a prospect is a do-it-yourselfer

In this situation it's easy to trample your prospect's ego. It's also easy for your own ego to get in the way.

Why?

Because you're saying that you can do it better than they can, and they are saying the same thing to you. Nobody wants to hear that, so it's crucial that you reframe the discussion.

It may be obvious to you that they need your help, but you will offend them if say you can fix their writing and improve their marketing... *they've probably put a lot of work into it!*

Give them a chance to find out what you can do for them, how you can make their lives easier and how hiring you will save them time so they can concentrate on the activities that they are passionate about.

I've been able to get my foot in the door by opening the relationship with a low-cost consultation where we brainstorm marketing ideas *together*.

They need to know that they are involved and in control. I tell them that they are the ones who will come up with the best ideas, but meeting with me will give them a chance to get

those ideas on their calendar so they can take action. And who knows? You might come up with an idea they haven't considered.

The truth is, many do it yourselfers won't hire you at that point. But since the consultation was not free, you haven't wasted your time.

But some will.

These customers can be hard to land because they don't want to be told that they can't do something well. They will be more receptive when you let them know that you can take care of projects that *they don't want to do or don't have time to do*.

What to do when your prospect wants to do nothing

It's almost painful to see a company leave money on the table by neglecting their marketing. You can see that they could do so much better if they blogged regularly, or wrote a newsletter, or improved their sales page... so why don't they do it?

Most people are busy and they let important things (like bringing customers through the door) fall through the cracks. When you point out things that *they should* be doing, it can wind up sounding like a huge hassle to get it all done.

When you're talking with someone who appears to be doing nothing, keep the discussion centered around their goals. What is their vision? In what areas are they bringing that vision to life, and where are they falling short?

Chances are they know what's missing. They need to make more sales, make their customers happier, or be easier to find on the internet.

Your job is to sell them the result, not the work that goes into the result.

For example, your prospect may not want to put out a newsletter. But they do want to get in touch with their customers on a regular basis. They may not want an online sales page, but they do want to make money in their sleep.

You also want and make sure that hiring you is a no-muss-no-fuss process.

Make it easy for them to say yes. If you usually have a drawn out process where they wait for you to provide a complicated estimate, experiment with a streamlined pricing model where they have only two choices—basic and deluxe. Or offer a simple retainer package where they can check one item off their list every month.

Whatever you decide to do, make it easy for them to understand and to take action.

What to do when your prospect wants to have a staffer do it

There are many reasons that it makes sense for your prospect to get things done in-house.

Plus, they don't know you... why take a chance on someone new? They've invested money and time to hire and train their staff—the staff should do the work, *right?*

Like all objections, this can be overcome.

As an outsider, you can provide a fresh perspective, and knowledge of how other companies do things and specialized skills that the staff may not have.

Staff members have day to day responsibilities that would have to be put on hold in order to complete writing projects. On the other hand, you can get it done while everybody on the staff continues to do their regular jobs.

It can be a challenge to sell your writing services to people who don't ordinarily hire writers, but it is worth it because these prospects need your help and they aren't being bombarded with pitches by other writers.