



14 UNENLIGHTENED MARKETING MISTAKES AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

It's easy to get overwhelmed by all the details of running a business. We all make plenty of mistakes along the way, and they become terrific learning experiences. "Oops! Let's never do that again," I've said more than once. Like unknowingly scheduling a seminar on a national holiday. Or forgetting to put your phone number on a flyer.

I'm happy with what I've learned along the way, but if I could prevent you from having to make all the mistakes I've made or observed, I would! That's what this report is about: sharing the missteps and the best ways to avoid them.

One of the definitions of the term "unenlightened" is ignorant, and that's a good way to describe most of the mistakes in this report. Ignorant doesn't mean stupid, it means not knowing. It's ignorant to act without clear intention, especially when those actions cost money.

Unenlightened marketing mistakes are made when otherwise mindful businesspeople take an action, believing it's the only way to do things. There are so many options they don't know about or haven't considered.

Enlightened marketing is about conscious communication, and delivering real value to those we serve. It's a commitment to acting from an educated and aware perspective, to working for the highest good of all concerned. Enlightened marketing calls upon us to be our best and biggest selves as we represent our businesses.

I've grouped these mistakes into three categories, according to the three main areas of marketing: Value Identification, Value Communication and Value Delivery.

Marketing is...

- 1. Value Identification*
- 2. Value Communication*
- 3. Value Delivery*

And, for the purposes of this report, I'll refer more often to the *service* your company offers. Even if you sell a tangible product, your customer receives a total experience from you that is service.

Value Identification

The main objective of the Value Identification aspect of marketing is to find the overlap between the value your business delivers and the desires of your intended audience.

For socially responsible and values-driven businesses, value identification is about recognizing the unique gift you are bringing to the world. Who can benefit most from this gift, and how is it important to them?

The trick in this step is realizing that value is *relative*. What one person considers valuable, another might not give five cents for.

The premium pricing that most organic products command is an excellent example of relative value. Why would someone pay as much as three times the cost for a commodity product like food? Well, it turns out that many people value the lack of pesticides and the heightened nutritional content enough to pay more. But the fact is, not everyone does.

Our task is to find the balance between our *value* and their *values*. That brings us to our list.

Mistake #1: Not identifying your value.

To skip this step is to malnourish your business; it will never thrive. Everyone with a business has identified something to sell, of course. That's why they opened a business. Many are quite sure they can help others with their gift. The omission here is not *intentionally* specifying, and differentiating, what you have to offer and why someone would want to give you money for it.

What do you offer that sets you apart from all the alternatives?

You have to know what makes you unique, special and the better option (for your intended audience) relative to all the other options out there. And the catch is, you have to be able to articulate it!

For example, I have a client who is a talented interior decorator. She is self-taught, a member of no associations (that might differentiate her with some credentials), and one of over a hundred in the phone book. Basically, a commodity.

However, during our work together I learned that she is most in joy when working with tight budgets, in small spaces and with young moms. These are

excellent differentiators, and suddenly her value emerges: creating kid-friendly, stylish rooms for families on a budget.

What do you do that *no one else* can do? What do you offer that sets you apart from all the alternatives? Why do your loyal customers return to you again and again? These answers all point to your distinctive value.

Mistake #2: Not establishing a brand for your business.

A brand is the unique identity for your business, and it's all the thoughts, feelings and expectations that are associated with that identity as well.

People think about brands in terms of the overall impression they have of them, including logos, colors and images; personal experiences of the product or service; and even news reports about the company. This total perception, living in the heart and mind of your customer, is your brand.

Brands need to be positioned, which means defining who they're for and why they're the best choice for them. In the example above, we have an intended audience (families on a budget) and a differentiator (kid-friendly, stylish rooms); this is the beginning of brand building. In addition, you should articulate a brand promise that lays out what to expect from an experience of your brand.

Volvo promises its cars are the safest.
Ben & Jerry's brand promises innovative ice cream flavors and social responsibility.
FedEx promises your stuff will be delivered overnight. I promise you can increase sales without selling out. What's your brand promise?

Well-positioned brands have a clear audience, a differentiator and make a compelling promise.

Unenlightened marketers skip this step entirely and doom themselves to commodity status. Do you want to be just another entry in the Chamber of Commerce directory? Of course not! You want to be the Starbucks of your profession.

Starbucks proved the power of branding by transforming a measly pennies-per-cup beverage into an experience its audience would pay scads of money for. They expanded the coffee playing field from simply aroma and flavor to include atmosphere, skilled service (not from wait staff, but "baristas"), fair trade and more benefits than my poor little truck stop coffee counter had ever heard of. How can you transform your own commodity into a brand? (Hint: differentiated value)

The irony here is that almost every business has a brand identity of some kind, just not necessarily the one they want. I've heard people refer to "the expensive place," or "that weird guy who does something tax-related." They've called brands "cars for old people," or "the ones made in sweat shops." Our task is to brand *ourselves*, consciously, with an identity, and work to make it at least as prominent in the minds of our audience as the other impressions they receive.

If you don't do it, someone else will do it for you, and you might not like the results.

Mistake #3: Not knowing who your intended audience is.

In this case, I mean knowing *who* they are as well as knowing what their *values* are. To whom are you selling? What are their interests? What is precious to them, enough to prioritize above other purchases?

One of the most unenlightened phrases I hear is that "everybody' is my target audience." A well-known cosmetics company seems to have instructed its saleswomen to look for "anyone with skin," since they have products for women, men and children. This does not a target audience make!

I have heard a chiropractor say his service is needed by "anyone with a spine," and again, I groaned. Does he truly want to work with "*anyone* with a spine?" What about con artists, murderers and smelly people who don't pay their bills? I feel confident I could find someone with a spine he would *not* want to help.

Does your intended audience include the words "everybody" or "anyone"?

Aside from naming a group of people you serve in demographic terms, it's critical to get to know their needs, wants and attitudes. I've studied buying habits of my intended audiences in the past by conducting focus groups, reading their favorite magazines, and even following them around on shopping trips. You can't know your customer too well.

Therefore, instead of seeking anyone with a spine (a short search), a chiropractor would do better to attract, for example, "active men who've overdone it over the weekend." Besides gender, implied in the description are age (probably over 30, since that's about the time we start to injure ourselves by overdoing it), a set of values (staying active, and, if such a descriptor catches their attention, concern for their health and well-being). No, this doesn't have to be the only market you work with, but with this specificity, you'll have an easier time finding them and tailoring services to their needs.

Mistake #4: Not checking in regularly with your intended audience.

I am frequently asked, “Is my price too high?” “Is this ad persuasive?” “Is it clear what I’m trying to say in this letter?” These are great questions, but I’m not the one to be answering them. I know who does have the answer, though: the people you want to respond to your marketing. So, ask them!

As you work to identify value in your business, check in with representatives of your intended audience and ask, “What do *you* find valuable about my offering? Does this meet your needs? If you didn’t get this from my company, where else would you look? How much would you expect this item to cost?”

Look at past successes with those who have appreciated you most. These are clients who “get” you and appreciate you. They will tell you what more they need from you, and whether what you’re doing is what they expect from your brand.

As much as possible, test value *before* you go public. If you develop a letter, a business card, a new product or service, a promotion – anything you will put in front of your intended audience and expect a response to – show it to a few clients first, and incorporate their feedback.

There’s a well-known company whose core market is ages 12-29. There was a lot of frustration in the marketing department, since managers kept shooting down each other’s ideas, and senior management didn’t like the ads. One day someone handed out t-shirts with the words, “I am not the target audience.” This told the marketers, as well as senior management, that they would be mistaken to evaluate work based on their own tastes, since they were not 12-29 year olds. Even those that might have been under thirty have no objectivity.

*One day someone handed out t-shirts:
“I am not the target audience.”*

The next time someone gives you feedback about what works or doesn’t, ask yourself, “Does this person represent my core market? Should she be buying from me? Is what she’s suggesting right for my brand?”

Only your intended audience has the answer as to whether you have correctly identified what is valuable to them. And there’s only one way to find out what that answer is.

The Value Identification process is critical to getting your business positioned advantageously in the hearts and minds of those you want to sell to. Although it’s

best to do this piece before you start your business, it's always worth taking time out to check in with your intended audience to see if they continue to find value in what you offer.

Take time to recognize and articulate, in conversation and in print, exactly why someone would want to buy from you. Then, you'll be ready for the next marketing process:

Value Communication

The most difficult thing to accept about this aspect of marketing is that *everything communicates*. Everything you say or don't say, do or don't do, sends a message. It's a bit nerve-wracking.

Sometimes your messages are received intact and understood exactly as you intended. But occasionally, people draw conclusions you never could have imagined from information you didn't know existed. It can be incredibly frustrating, but at least knowing about these unenlightened mistakes may help you avoid them.

Mistake #5: Doing the tangible first.

So often, in the excitement to get a business opened or new product released, companies will crank out logos, brochures and web sites. Then they will ask (or be asked), "Who's the target market? What's the benefit of this service for them? What's the best way for us to engage and communicate with them?" Asking these questions *after* the production of materials is an expensive, unenlightened mistake.

You must know who your product or service is for, and how they will react to it, before any imagery or verbiage is associated with a brand. And certainly before any materials are created. Your audience's perceptions will shape everything you do, including the naming, the pricing and all the tangible ways you might communicate with them, such as web sites, brochures and ads.

Don't invest a bunch in materials until you know who you're communicating with and what you want to say to them.

One of my clients had professionally-designed and printed brochures that were not effective, and they weren't sure why. The imagery was high-tech and digital, with lots of gold. When we talked with prospects about their impressions based on the brochures, we learned the brochures conveyed the service was probably targeted to a big business and was quite expensive. In reality, this was exactly

the opposite of my client's market, which was providing affordable service for small businesses.

Had this differentiator been explained to a designer in the beginning, such an error could have been avoided. And, now that they've identified their value and developed a brand, their materials better reflect this point of difference.

Even if you have to start with black and white business cards without a logo, don't invest a bunch of time and money in materials until you know who you're communicating with and what you want to say to them.

Mistake #6: Keeping a good thing to yourself.

Maybe they expect their customers to have psychic powers, but some businesses just don't communicate. Whether due to busyness or to shyness, lack of funds (or scarcity mentality) or to other unhelpful assumptions, they don't get the word out about themselves.

Most of these businesses are doing *some* kind of communication, whether by having a storefront, a web site or a Yellow Pages listing. But beyond that, they have no marketing communication activities going on, and they usually don't have as much business as they'd like, either.

When I ask about their marketing strategy, they frequently answer the same thing: word-of-mouth. Benefiting from word-of-mouth marketing is great, but relying on it to grow your business - independent of any overt communication from you - is risky. What will the "word" in the mouths be? It's best to take charge of the message and set about spreading some words yourself, too.

There are hundreds of effective and inexpensive ways to get the word out about your business, such as building a web site, using direct mail and email, networking and public speaking. The tactics are out there, but the strategy of Getting Known needs your conscious commitment. Be sure you have more than one way of engaging your ideal customers happening at all times.

Mistake #7: Not telling the Whole Truth.

My clients have incredible gifts that take the form of valuable services and products. They're often reluctant to speak persuasively about what they offer for fear of seeming immodest. By underselling, they are not telling the Whole Truth about the benefits they offer, and they miss the chance to help as many people as they can, and to flourish in their business. It's as much a mistake as over-promising things they cannot do.

Telling the Whole Truth about what we offer means saying everything that is unique and special and better than any other option out there. A good way to do this is to listen to the words used by satisfied customers. They will tell you the value of your service based on their own experience of it. Using this language and feedback, you can make promises to other potential clients about what to expect from your brand.

One of my clients is a gifted healer who intuitively knows just which therapeutic techniques to apply to bring relief to those in pain. When we discussed her brand promise, she was reluctant to tell her Whole Truth. In fact, she has helped countless people whom medical professionals and prescription medications could not. Although she has heard this from her own satisfied clients, she hesitated to make even the slightest claim about how she could help those in pain.

“Don’t hide your light under a bushel,” I told her. “Our responsibility as stewards of the gifts we’re given is to make them available to those who need them. You don’t promise anything that isn’t true, and you should definitely speak up about what you know you can do.” Her physical therapy practice is flourishing.

Both underselling and overpromising are untruthful.

Another way of not telling the Whole Truth is overpromising. I’m not referring to outright deception, but to that which happens when someone is desperate to get the sale. Maybe bills are due, or they’re just starting out, or they just really want to work with a particular client. This imbalance – too much need on one side, not enough desire on theirs – is the birthplace of bad promises.

Before you make a commitment about something you’re unsure of, don’t really want to do or aren’t sure you can control, stop! One happy moment of pleasing the client or winning the sale may cost you hours or even months of hard work and stress.

Mistake #8: Making it all about you.

As important as it is to tell your truth, the bulk of marketing communication has to be about the value it brings to *them*, your clientele. To do so, you have to shift your focus to thinking about and talking about things from the perspective of your intended audience.

Talking incessantly about yourself is not only the *most* unenlightened mistake, it’s also the one most frequently made. Multinational corporations are no exception;

nearly all marketers get to stewing in their own juices and forget who they're talking to.

A car ad I just saw online reads, "We must hold this up as an example of cutting through the bureaucratic b.s. and getting something to the marketplace." What? First of all, who are they talking to? Are they conveying any benefits of buying their car (unflatteringly referred to in their own copy as "something")? What was their intention with this ad – to congratulate themselves for navigating their own system? I don't know, since neither the words nor the image engaged my interest enough to click.

Smaller businesses do no better. One local billboard showed its news team with some caption about "award-winning news." Who cares? What does it mean to the viewer? Does it matter to you if your news team, realtor, ad agency or other service provider wins awards? What about what they do for you, like give you "news and weather in the first 5 minutes" or "traffic on the :10s." Personally, specifics like that get my attention.

It's okay to talk about your brand, your company and yourself – eventually. But what prospects want to know before anything else is whether you can meet their

Until prospects know how your solution can benefit them, their interest in you is limited.

needs and how your solution will make a difference in their lives. Until those questions are answered for them, their interest in you is limited.

Start by naming them in your communication. For example, instead of saying, "We distribute air

filtration systems that represent the latest technology," you can engage your listener by addressing them and their needs. If you are speaking to a parents' group, you could say, "As moms of toddlers, you may be concerned about the increasing asthma rates of children and how allergens in the home affect them." Only if this gets their attention should you begin to talk about your product.

Mistake #9: Not planning. And when you do, not following the plan.

Marketing communication must be clear, compelling, authentic and consistent.

"Consistent" means regularly and reliably reaching out to your audience with news and information about your brand that gets their attention. Since it may take several interactions to engage your audience, and even more to get to a purchase, consistent marketing communication is critical to the success of your business.

A written marketing plan is the best way to keep your communication activities on track. You may feel like you have a marketing plan right up here (point to your

head), and you check in on it whenever you need to. I find that kind of thing just doesn't demonstrate to the Universe the kind of commitment you're going to need to grow your business. Writing it down gets you one step closer to manifestation.

Marketing plans give business owners more focus and less temptation, since they know where their marketing dollars are going.

Marketing plans should include specific intentions, strategies, tasks, responsibilities, timing and budgets. The questions you need to answer in it are: What do I intend to achieve this year? What is my brand identity and promise? Who needs what I do, and how will they find out about me? What services and products will I offer them? What can I say that will get their attention? What activities will I participate in to grow my business? What support do I need to accomplish this? How will I measure my progress?

Keep your marketing plan simple and brief. Unless you want to get loans or outside investment, no one needs to understand it but those involved in your business. However, it needs to be visible to everyone working with it, and ideally, you should review it on a weekly basis. This will ensure you're always clear about your destination and where you are on your journey.

My favorite quality of entrepreneurs with marketing plans is how focused they are. They yield less often to temptation, since they've thought about all the possibilities, anticipated them and know when they're going to pursue certain opportunities.

A boutique owner I work with turned down print ads in favor of awnings for her store front and special events. It was easy to deal with persistent ad sales people, since she was quite clear on the order in which she planned to do things. Despite the great deals they were offering, she knows where this year's marketing dollars are going. Next year, she'll be calling them.

It's no good having a plan you don't follow. So what do you do if something in it becomes obsolete? If you get swamped with new business, or there are production delays and you run out of product, or an unforeseen opportunity arises, what should you do? Keep your plan alive by revising it regularly. I use simple Word documents and Excel spreadsheets that help me change things when I over or underachieve.

I could name dozens more unenlightened value communication mistakes, but these are the basics. Hopefully, you've recognized some errors and considered ways to turn

around your communication. A few small corrections could make a world of difference in how your intended audience responds to your messages.

Value Delivery

Many people think marketing ends with the first two steps above, but value delivery is actually the most important step in the whole cycle. It's where your client's expectations get fulfilled or disappointed, and it's also the area in which one can feel tempted to sell out. It's hard for me to choose the worst value delivery mistake, so I'll start with the one my clients are happiest to stop making:

Mistake #10: Working with the wrong clients

I can't tell you how relieved people are to find out that they don't have to work with *anyone* they don't want to work with (the height of selling out). If you have clients that don't pay you or don't pay on time, don't appreciate you, abuse your time, get on your nerves or do anything other than bring out your absolutely best self, then you should *not* be working with them.

Working with the wrong clients is bad for your business for a number of serious reasons. The worst one is that you often don't do your best work in these situations. Maybe the obstacles prevent it, or you feel unsafe opening your heart up and letting your gifts flow, or you may just feel resentful and not want to help this client as much as someone who appreciates you more. The kicker here is that not doing your best work usually means you can't later point to the success you achieved, and you probably won't get a testimonial or a referral to others. The situation is basically lose-lose.

Working with those who bring you anything other than joy is vocationally, financially and spiritually depleting.

Working with those who bring you anything other than joy is vocationally, financially and spiritually depleting. (For more on vocational depletion, see mistake #11.) There's not enough money to compensate for time spent on the wrong client, especially since they usually use your time and talents poorly – resources that could've been invested in your appreciative clients. That makes the whole endeavor simply unprofitable. And selling out on your values by giving to those who don't honor you fully is the very essence of spiritual prostitution. You have to stand up for yourself, and that must start today!

The two ways to avoid this mistake are simple but not necessarily easy. You must clarify, in unambiguous and specific detail, exactly whom you DO want to work with.

Make a big list of the qualities of clients who really appreciate you and what you do, and then look for these qualities in the prospects you are attracting. Be sure to tell those who refer business to you exactly what you're looking for.

Next, just say no to those who are not your ideal clients. Step 1 is recognizing the wrong client, which you can usually do with a good interview process. (You don't have to work with someone just because they want to work with you!) Step 2 is turning them down or away politely. Step 3 is better managing the ones you do accept to work with, since many times we create monsters by not speaking up for ourselves early in the process.

Red flags usually show up to warn us right away if we are attentive. I look for things like being late for the first meeting, displaying personality traits I don't like (negativity, scarcity mindset) and poor listening skills. If I don't feel people can receive information from me, then I can't help them.

Sometimes I don't get a chance to say no. Usually, I will test a few boundaries,

Don't ignore red flags like poor listening skills, being late or unprepared and not wanting to pay you.

like saying, "Gosh, that's a negative attitude you have about that situation. I'm sure with a little focus it could improve." People who don't respond to that invitation will typically conclude the conversation on their own. If they don't, I turn them down: "You know, after having heard about your issue, I don't think I can help you." If you can refer someone, you could turn them away by saying, "Why don't you call my colleague, I think she may be able to help."

I believe in starting off on the right foot immediately by nipping any sign of an issue in the bud. If I come to a meeting for which no one is prepared or the client's very first payment is late, I'll say, "I think we need to clarify the conditions of work on this project to be sure you still want to continue." Several unacceptable working situations in my past would almost certainly have gone smoothly had I spoken up when I first noticed an issue.

[**A word to those who sell products,** or services that don't require a lot of close contact. I know you suffer from this issue as well. In your business, the wrong clients are those who return more than they purchase, monopolize your customer service lines, return things they've damaged or worn out, custom order items that can't be resold (which they return anyway). Define your ideal customers in a comprehensive list and see if things don't improve. I think you'll be surprised.]

Mistake #11: Not working from the center of your gifts

When you are working from the very center of your gifts, you are doing those things that *only* you can do. These God-given talents, which you have chosen to utilize in your business, are of immense value. The benefits they deliver are what make your services special, unique and better for your intended audience than anyone else's out there. The very tippy-top of Joy Mountain is when you are doing nothing - all day, every day - except offering, sharing, nurturing and growing the best of your skills.

The main reason my clients have tended to stray from the center of their gifts has been fear. They accepted work they didn't want to do for fear no other work would come their way. They accepted the wrong projects, because they feared they wouldn't make enough money without them. They said yes instead of no, because they feared they might disappoint someone. Instead, *they* are paying the real price by compromising their integrity and selling themselves out.

You *can* avoid this mistake! Talk up services that make the best use of your gifts, or introduce new ones, and don't offer services you no longer wish to do. Put more focus and effort on your favorite aspects of your vocation, and trust the Universe to send you clients who are looking for that. When you fear you might let someone down by refusing him, you could refer him to someone else. Or you may find the truth about what you do is exactly what he is looking for.

*Only do
what only you
can do.*

I was at a networking event once when someone said, "You should come talk to us about our PR." Even though I was excited about the possibility of getting a new client, I knew this would be a bad way to start the relationship. PR is way far from the center of my gifts. "Actually," I said, "I don't really do PR. I do brand marketing." This wasn't a very good way to communicate my value, but it nevertheless got his attention. "Oh?" he replied excitedly. "Well, *that's* what we really need." And they did. It was such a great reward for telling my truth!

My abiding belief is that if we all do exactly what we were sent to the planet to do, the world would function pretty much perfectly. The way I do my part in that is to help those who want to deliver their gifts through a business do so more consciously and effectively, and to thrive in the process. Unleash your gifts!

Mistake #12: Blowing the delivery

How is it possible to mess up the part in which you do exactly what you are the best at doing? It could be a case of losing focus, or, some might say, "going

unconscious,” or taking your eye off the ball. Since poor performance is just deadly for your business, we need to put in place a few measures that help us ensure super-satisfied customers every time.

The main reason for a blown delivery is not meeting expectations. The buyer doesn't feel what she received lived up to the promise she heard from you. As we discussed earlier, you can best avoid this kind of disappointment by not being tempted to overpromise, by not taking on the wrong client (perhaps he's *never* satisfied) and only working from the center of your gifts (where you're strongest).

You must manage expectations all along the way. I know that some of us, when we suspect things are going wrong with a client, want to avoid them, for fear of potential confrontation. This is very counterproductive.

Sometimes, in the struggle to acquire new clients, we “check out” once the sale is made. Maybe you relax now that the pressure to convince them is off. You may have a junior member of your team take over. Or, you may be back out prospecting again, since you need a steady stream of customers to survive.

*As soon as you're unsure, reach out immediately to them:
“I wanted to see how you're feeling about our work
together.”*

Don't wait for your client to be discontent. As soon as you are unsure how someone is feeling about your service, reach out immediately to them. Ask open-ended questions about the experience they're having: “I wanted to check in and see how you're feeling about our work together.” Then, without being defensive, simply inform them how you are fulfilling your promise. “Here's what I've done so far, and these are our next steps.”

Be sure to stay present with your clients in a way they can see and feel. Allow yourself to use time with your clients, or time you've designated to work independently on their projects, to make your unique contribution to them. How have you successfully done this in the past? How can you channel your talents at this moment to benefit your client most? These are the thoughts I hold as I work with or for my clients.

Mistake #13: Disappearing on prospects and past clients

You know the scenario: you meet someone at a networking event and feel a connection but never hear from them again. You might even have a referral for them, but after a while, they kind of fade from your memory.

Similarly, I've had great experiences with stores, hotels and service providers who never bothered to contact me again. I certainly would consider spending more money on them, but they just don't cross my mind.

Don't make the same mistake!

When you feel a connection with a prospect, or when you have a good working experience with a client, stay in touch with them. Share information that might be of benefit to them, congratulate them on successes you hear about, and invite them to events they might enjoy. Keeping the sales pitch to a minimum ensures you stay top of mind without pestering.

A web designer acquaintance contacted me recently to ask if I could substitute for him at a meeting. I hadn't heard from him in ages but was happy to oblige. After a few other random meetings and chats, I asked him to design a site for my clients. Had he reappeared a few months earlier (or stayed in touch better to begin with), he'd have certainly had two or three other projects from me.

The value delivery stage happens any time you are contributing to your clients, even before they start to work with you, and continues as long after as you want. The relationship never has to conclude if you have more to offer.

Mistake #14: Separating your business from your spirit

Some feel charging money for their services pollutes their gifts. Author Caroline Myss says that part of the journey for modern mystics (and I'd add, the rest of us) is to live *in* the world instead of in seclusion, and to follow where our spirit leads us. Thriving in this modern world requires money, and luckily, you've been endowed with a way to earn some! Those who feel called to their vocation can rest assured they have been guided to a path to flourish in a material world.

I've also experienced the need to guard my spirit in my workplace. I've worked in environments so openly destructive, competitive and toxic that no one ever witnessed the best of my skills. "I'd like you to bring more of your creativity to this job," a boss once told me in an evaluation. "Fat chance," I said to myself. Without trust and safety, I would never give them access to the very sacred place from which my creative gifts flowed.

The beauty of running a socially responsible and values-driven business is that *you* are in charge of the creating a safe and trusting environment in which your gifts can flow freely. You can decide which gifts to offer and to whom. You can bring your best self to your business.

Be alert to times when you're tempted to hide away some aspects of yourself, or to pretend you're something you're not, for the sake of your business. These are chances to sell out, or alternatively, to embody your truth more fully.

A massage therapist came to me, struggling with the decision to wear scrubs or not. In the interest of "everything communicates," she felt this would seem more professional, although she preferred to wear tie-dyed t-shirts that she made herself. "Would you rather work with someone who wants a massage from a person in scrubs or one who wears tie-dyes?" I asked. The answer seemed obvious, but she feared that being her true self would hurt her business.

In fact, it's the opposite.

The more you live into the truth of who you are, what your values are and the gifts you are here to deliver, the more powerfully you attract *exactly* the people you want to work with. Quite often, when we worry what people would think about the choices we make in our business, we're thinking about our critics, not about our *intended* audience. Our intended audience is looking for the best of what we have to offer.

*The more you live into the truth of who you are, the more powerfully you attract **exactly** the people you want to work with.*

Two clients have begun to embrace more deeply who they are and what they offer the world through real estate services. Being themselves, instead of what they thought they should be (thinner, more serious, more professionally dressed, less fun-loving), has been more than just liberating. It's also brought them a slew of clients. One realtor said to me recently:

"I just love the people part of it. We are so blessed to have such terrific clients. Almost every one of them is very reasonable, with a good attitude and a sense of humor. I don't know how we get them -- maybe it's that Universe thing you keep talking about -- but we look at each other and say, Oh my Gosh, I love these people!"

The way she describes the clients is a mirror image of how I would describe her. We attract what we put out there.

I hope you will feel encouraged to be yourself in your work, for the sake of your spirit, your business and our world. Every day is more meaningful and every value exchange more precious when we invest our true selves in it.

If you've been making any of these unenlightened marketing mistakes, I hope this report has given you new awareness as well as alternatives to consider. May the road to your abundant success be open and welcoming!

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