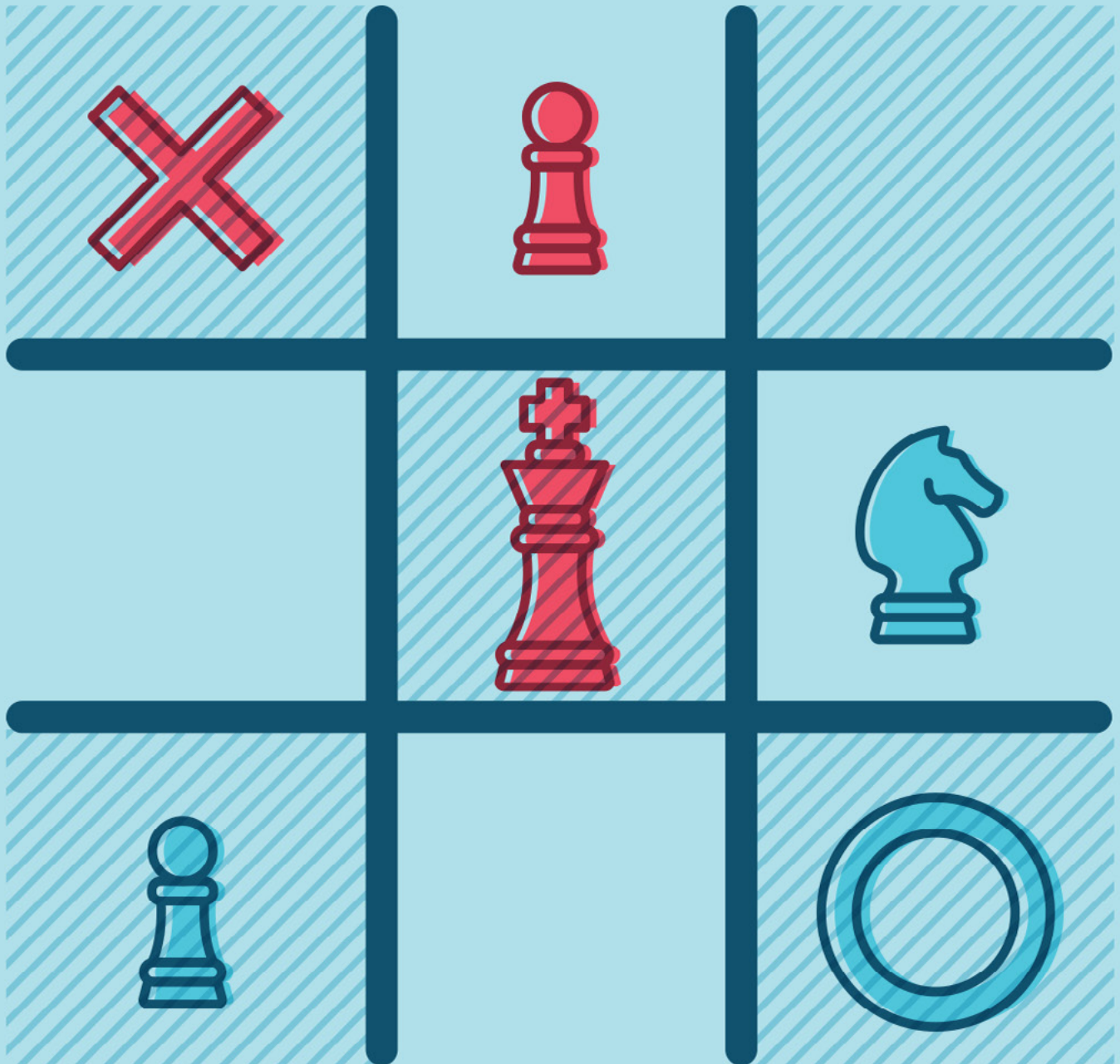


How to get more clients for your design agency





To help you stop searching for clients and start booking more business, we've compiled 6 proven strategies for finding more clients. This 24-page ebook will cover everything from optimizing processes to creating successful client relationships to defining a marketing strategy. Let's get started!

1. [Optimize your time by streamlining your processes](#)
 2. [Focus on a niche and become the expert in your field](#)
 3. [Build strong relationships by networking](#)
 4. [Define your marketing strategy \(and follow it\)](#)
 5. [Book new clients by adding new services](#)
 6. [Leverage the business you currently have to make more](#)
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01 Streamline your processes

Before you start adding big-time clients left and right, you need to be sure that your business has the processes in place to support speedy growth. And trust us – it’s much easier to optimize those processes now, before you have a bunch of clients in the pipeline!

The most successful agencies and freelancers continue to refine their workflows over time in an effort to build better relationships with their clients and coworkers. Take a look at your onboarding process, workflow, and business tools. Is there room for improvement? Let’s break each of these down.

MAKE YOUR ONBOARDING PROCESS VALUABLE FOR YOU AND YOUR CLIENTS

Onboarding new clients is a basic and necessary process that, when done properly, can make client relationships more functional, effective, and fuss-free. It starts with that very first phone call or email. Not every client who comes to you for your services will actually know a lot about what you do, so it’s up to you to help them understand the true value of your work and process.

“Not every client will know what you do, so it’s up to you to teach them the true value.”

This is also the moment where you need to weed out anyone who might not be a good fit for your services, before the relationship gets too far. For example, they might not actually need the services you offer. Or worse, they might not actually be able to afford the work you do. (Something you definitely want to learn as early as possible!) Your communications must filter out these not-clients, all while conveying the tone you’d want to use with actual clients.

A few options you could consider:

MAKE YOUR WEBSITE DO THE WORK FOR YOU

Click around your website, or better yet, ask a friend to navigate around it. How obvious are your services? Does it clearly state who your ideal client is? Are your prices easy to find? By adding a little transparency to your site, you can use it to start weeding out some of the people who won’t be a good fit for your business. Not only will this save you from having an outrageous number of emails to respond to, but there’s also a higher chance that the prospects that do reach out are who you want them to be.



USE QUESTIONNAIRES TO COLLECT ALL THE INFORMATION YOU NEED

When you're trying to decide if a client is a good fit, there are probably a series of questions or data points you like to have for everyone you work with. Streamline the research phase by creating a form that gathers all that information in one place. This will allow you to skip the back and forth emails and keep everything organized for each and every client. If you don't have a standard prospect form yet, you may want to start asking questions like:

- **Who are your major competitors? (Including links to their sites)**
- **What services are you interested in?**
- **What is your budget?**
- **What is your deadline?**
- **What is the main goal you're trying to achieve?**
- **Who are your customers?**
- **Can you provide examples of work that you like (or dislike)?**

“Streamline the research phase to skip the back and forth discovery emails.”

Once you've done the most basic filtering and have an ideal client to work with, set up a meeting to discuss the items you've gathered in the research phase. The most important part of this meeting is the opportunity for both sides to get a feel for each other and confirm that you'll work well together. Of course, you're also trying to agree on the project's scope, purpose, target audience, timeline, and deliverables.

Before your potential client leaves, let them know that the next step for you is to prepare a proposal and send it to them via email. This is another way to communicate who you are, what you offer, and exactly what you're going to provide the client.



In that proposal, you should consider including:

- **Your mission – what your agency believes about design.**
- **A short project brief that reflects your understanding of what their needs are, based on that initial meeting.**
- **The scope of the project, explaining specifically what you mean when you describe each piece. (Remember: They're not a pro like you!)**
- **And of course, the cost estimate.**

Once you hash out the details of pricing and come to an agreement, send over the contract. This includes the agreed-upon scope of work (including number of concepts, revisions, phone calls, etc.), the final fee (and when each part of the payment is due), the usage agreements, and terms. Once that's signed and dated, the full research phase begins!

“Yes, you’ve said some of this information before – say it again. It’s best to over-communicate!”

This is where that onboarding form can save you a ton of time – it gives you a great place to start without having to call another meeting about the client, plus you have the added benefit of going straight into the project with a solid idea of who they are and what their business is. Use input from the client, and then complement that with your own independent research.

Dig through data and explore the client's industry and competitors. This will give you a 360 view, allowing you to proceed with confidence when you're ready to start the project.

One of last things you should be doing throughout the onboarding process is setting a tone that lets your client know exactly what they can expect from you during every phrase. Let them know how you're going to move forward, when they can expect to hear from you next, and how they can contact you. Yes, you've said some of this before – say it again. While you've gone through this process hundreds of times, they likely never have. It's best to over-communicate, to ensure everyone's on the same page at all times!

**A quick and efficient onboarding process means you'll have more time to work on projects, and in turn, more time to onboard new clients!
Next, let's talk about your own workflow.**



MAKE YOUR WORKFLOW WORK FOR YOUR TEAM

Now that you've breezed through the onboard process, make sure your own workflow is easy and streamlined for everyone to understand and complete. Quality comes from consistency, and consistency comes from process.

Before we get any further, let's make one thing clear: We're not talking about crazy approval structures or time-consuming documentation. We know that every function in a creative business can't be standardized, and we know that as creatives, most of us don't want to be stifled by stiff, structured process documents anyway. (Unless you're really into that kind of thing, in which case, be our guest!) We're talking about taking a good hard look at your workflow and identifying any areas for improvements, before you have a surge of clients right in the middle!

Throw a meeting on the calendar with your team to talk about your workflow, and then start by describing the standard project process from start to finish.

Once you've identified your process, it's time to look for ways to optimize it. Ask everyone in the room questions like:

- **What parts of the process work well?**
- **What part of the process don't work well?**
- **What pieces take the longest time to complete?**
- **Are there any steps that are duplicated?**
- **Are there any steps that tend to happen too late (or too early)?**
- **Is communication between team members fluid throughout?**
- **Is communication with the client fluid throughout?**

Note: While it's okay to discuss edge-cases that might disrupt the normal process, be careful not to let those dictate change too much. Remember to focus on the standard workflow, as that's what you'll encounter the most frequently.

“*Quality comes from consistency, and consistency comes from process.*”



Once you've talked through everything, end the meeting with an action plan. What are you going to change? What are you going to test? (And then what day are you going to re-evaluate that test to determine the long-term solution?)

While it's not practical to write a step-by-step, start-to-finish list of instructions for every step in your workflow, you can certainly break down things like design templates, content creation, mockups and wireframes, and other deliverables that should be consistent for every client you work with. These will evolve as your business does, but understanding and improving your process now will help you lay a foundation for a reliable client relationship and framework for onboarding new team members.

If your workflow breaks down while you're in the middle of multiple projects, you're going to lose a lot of time, and struggle to onboard more clients. It's important to polish up your process now so your business operates like a well-oiled machine, no matter how many clients you have in your pipeline!

The final piece of the puzzle? Having the right tools.

FIND THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

Having the right software, hardware, and tools to streamline your business's workflow is going to be a huge key to your future success. Not only can the wrong tools completely disrupt your process, but if you're recommending problematic providers to your clients, it reflects poorly on your company. (And usually results in more work for you, meaning less time to onboard new clients!)

When you think about the tools your business uses, there are quite a few categories you'll want to make sure you're happy with.

“*The wrong tools can disrupt your process, meaning less time to onboard clients!*”

FILE STORAGE

Once you have a rock-solid hosting setup, the next step is to make sure your internal organization is in tip-top shape. Avoid the timeless tale of the designer that saved their work on the wrong computer or the developer that overwrote the codebase by establishing where things get saved. Dropbox is a great solution for visuals, and Google Drive works well for documents. Bonus points for establishing a naming structure, which will ensure you don't get mixed up between clients!



PASSWORD PROTECTION

As you start to onboard more clients, you're undoubtedly going to be in charge of more passwords. And there's no better way to keep track of credentials than with a password app like 1Password or LastPass. This will allow for some super speedy collaboration (as you won't have to try to pass credentials back and forth), plus you'll have the peace of mind knowing that long, secure passwords are stored somewhere secure (and you don't have to memorize any of them)!

WEB HOSTING

As I'm sure you can guess, having a reliable web host for both your own site and any client sites can truly make or break your business. There's nothing that can both a client relationship faster than having a site hacked or shut down for a week because of a cheap hosting provider. There's a strong chance your clients will be completely unfamiliar with web hosting, so it's up to you to set them up with a host that's fast, safe, and supportive.



When you host your client sites on Flywheel, they'll get a blazing fast site, nightly backups, hacker-free security, and dedicated WordPress support. On your end, you'll get enhanced workflow tools, simple collaboration tools, and a partner for your creative business.

We're not just here to host websites. We're here to help you grow your business. Want more information?

[LEARN MORE ABOUT FLYWHEEL](#)

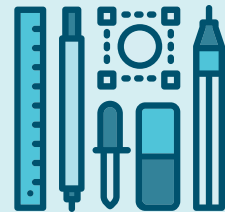


PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Countless creative businesses rely on project management tools like Asana to keep tasks on track and organize workflows. While some prefer to use these tools strictly internally, some prefer to invite their clients, also. It's a great way to be completely transparent about what stage the process is in, and can even help streamline communication with clients, too. Just be sure to explain expectations with these tools during the onboarding process, so your clients don't get carried away!

Looking for some new tools? Our Creative Toolbox has over \$6,000 worth of deals and discounts on software, digital assets, WordPress themes and plugins, courses, and more!

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With all of these processes and tools in place, your agency will be a well-oiled machine that's ready to take on an influx of clients and bigger (and better!) opportunities! Now on to the next question: Which clients will you focus on?

02 Focus on a niche

If you want to spend more time booking new clients, you need to spend less time fumbling through unfamiliar needs. And the best way to do that is to carve out a niche for your agency.

THE BENEFITS OF ESTABLISHING A NICHE

Specializing in a particular industry allows you to narrow your focus, time, and energy. It also positions you as an expert on the needs and challenges of a specific group of clients (making you the go-to solution when they have a new project in mind). Plus, since you'll be working with the same types of people and projects again and again, you can further refine your workflows, increase productivity and revenue, and capture your own corner of the market.



If you or your team hate the idea of turning away clients, remind yourself that by carving out a niche, you're providing the right clients with educated, dedicated resources that are relevant to their business. Your knowledge of their field will create an exceptional experience that they might not find elsewhere. Plus, you can always lead the clients you can't take on to another business that might be a better fit. (That business might just return the favor one day!)

If you're still not sold on the niche concept, try this: check out your past work and see how many hours your team spends collecting information and prepping work for your clients. If you charge per project, calculate how much money you would save if you already had all of that research and info from past projects. For example, if you have to spend five hours researching and you charge \$75 an hour, you've lost \$375 in revenue, because you could have spent those five hours working on other projects. Sounds pretty good now, right?

“By carving out a niche, you're providing the right clients with educated, dedicated resources for their business.”

To summarize, defining a niche allows you to:

- **Become an expert in a field and provide invaluable knowledge to your clients**
- **Streamline your processes specifically for that field**
- **Focus on new work instead of trying to understand a new industry**

While there are plenty of business that succeed without a niche, we certainly believe the benefits are worth it. At the very least, it's helpful to identify a broad niche of people that you enjoy working with, that way you can recognize them as soon as they come knocking.

HOW TO DEFINE YOUR NICHE

Now the question becomes: How do you know which niche to go for? If your work currently spans tons of industries, here are four tips to find the right focus for your business.



ASSESS YOUR BUSINESS

Look closely at the work you've been producing as a whole. What's been successful? What causes stresses for you and your team? Where do you make the most money? What projects have you enjoyed the most?

In this phase, you want to try to identify your strengths and weaknesses, as well as your passions (or things you dislike working on). While it's not impossible to jump to a niche you haven't tried before or aren't familiar with, it helps to start with what you know and you're passionate about.

BE SELECTIVE WITH YOUR SERVICES

Odds are that at some point in your business, you've accepted work that was outside the scope of what you'd really like to work on. Take all the areas of expertise as a team and narrow them down to the ones you can present confidently to clients. You could be best at digital marketing and web design, or WordPress development and consultancy. Branding, strategy, content, SEO, and eCommerce are all other services you're probably familiar with, but narrow it down to two or three at most.

This doesn't mean you can't explore those other services if the time and client are right, just don't make them the main focus of your website. Reserve the "extra" things you do for the clients you're really excited about working with instead of broadcasting them to everyone.

“Identify your strengths and weaknesses, along with your passions.”

CHOOSE YOUR CLIENTS

It may seem counterintuitive (because up until now, the client has chosen you) but now is the time to determine which industries you enjoy working with the most. Which ones have you had the most success with? Think about your full portfolio – do you prefer working with nonprofits? Small clients? Restaurants? Local businesses? Corporations? You may find that you've earned a stellar reputation within a certain sector without realizing it.



ASSESS YOUR SCOPE

Once you start to get an idea of what your niche might be, take a second to determine its potential size. Is it a large or growing category? Are there other competitors in that space? Can you offer these clients something unique?

You may find that it's larger than you were hoping for, or maybe even smaller. By doing a final assessment once you've identified your ideal niche, you'll be able to scale it back or hone it in until you're comfortable with the size of the audience you're targeting.

USE YOUR NICHE TO BOOK MORE CLIENTS

Once you've chosen an industry and specialties that you feel confident in, the next step is to understand your target market. Listen and learn; don't make assumptions about what your customers want if you can avoid it. Start with any clients you've already worked with in this sector and identify common requests that you've received from them. Make a list of services and sub-services they'd be interested in, then create a pricing/offering list that specifically provides them with what they're looking for. This will help future clients in the same niche quickly identify that you're the business to go with.

Next, narrow down the common questions that come up when working with clients in this particular niche. Do you reach certain roadblocks or experience certain issues every time? Are they completely unfamiliar with your work, or do they tend to have strong opinions? Use these questions to modify your communications to best serve these customers.

“Listen and learn; don't just make assumptions about what your customers want.”

Become familiar with the particular developments and common concerns that affect your customers' businesses. Research and create new products and services that fill their specific needs; they'll be confident in hiring your company if they know you specialize in their industry and are comfortable solving their unique challenges. Ask for feedback every step of the way, especially if you're still unfamiliar with certain aspects of their business.

By gaining such a knowledgeable understanding of your niche, you'll be able to streamline the onboarding process to book clients faster and speak to future clients faster. Just remember...



DON'T BE AFRAID TO ADAPT AND EVOLVE

While establishing a niche has a number of benefits, you might stumble and make a few mistakes here and there. Maybe your niche is too small or it doesn't have the budget to support your company's costs. If you start to encounter roadblocks, don't be afraid to switch things up. Just because you've chosen a niche doesn't mean you're stuck to it! Stay flexible and be open to change as different opportunities arise.

And remember that even after you define your target market, your customers' needs will likely change over time. Keep listening to your customers and set up services and systems that will meet or exceed their expectations. With those processes in place, you'll be able to adapt and keep your business above water!

Now that you have your niche, it'll be super easy to pitch your services to potential clients. Now, let's talk about how networking can help you start to actively find them (instead of hoping they come to you)!

03 Get out and network

The key to finding clients by networking is to stop thinking about it as "networking." People want to purchase good and services from businesses and people they know, like, and trust. Build those lucrative new relationships by focusing on connecting and understanding people, rather than just tossing your business card in their general direction.

Networking is going to be one of the simplest and most effective ways of getting more clients for your business, so encourage your entire team and collaborators to be actively involved in the process. We like the philosophy that "everyone is a sales rep" – that is to say, all of your employees represent your company, whether or not they're directly interacting with customers. Building a great reputation for your company goes beyond just the sales team. Whether you're hitting an industry event, getting dinner with friends, or just interacting with people on Instagram, you're rolling or scrolling by valuable opportunities to create new connections and clients.

So how do you maximize the impact of going to events? Step one: know how to strike up a conversation.



HOW TO TALK TO ANYONE (AND EVERYONE)

First and foremost, you want to make a good impression. Avoid awkwardness and make your next networking event actually enjoyable with these four ways to start, hold, and end a conversation with strangers.

1. HAVE A GO-TO TOPIC OR QUESTION

Dull moments of silence can be awkward for everyone around, but if you have a go-to topic or question ready to use, you can avoid those lulls in conversation entirely. It can be a recent trip, book you've read, or hobby you've picked up. That's right – it doesn't have to be work related at all! By just striking up a conversation, you'll start to build an authentic relationship. Chances are it'll naturally flow into work at some point, and then when you launch into your pitch, you'll have more context about who you're actually talking to.

2. TELL STORIES, NOT STATS

Don't drone on about your occupation. Instead, tell a good story with a clear point or punchline. It can be related to your work, but avoid just repeating your elevator pitch. Remember, potential clients might not really know what it is that you do or how it can help their own ventures. By telling stories, you'll be able to paint a better picture and help them imagine how you could fit into it.

3. END CONVERSATIONS THE RIGHT WAY

While networking events are beneficial for finding new clients, it's pretty rare that you'll actually make a deal then and there. Realistically, the goal of

networking is to generate leads to follow up with once the event is over. And that means the end of the conversation is often the most important. It's going to define how people remember you, so make eye contact and don't be rude or abrupt. If you're going to hand them a business card, be casual and concise, not pitchy or pushy.

“If you're going to hand someone a business card, be casual and concise, not pitchy and pushy.”



4. BE OPEN

You never know who you're going to meet at events, and the next person you talk to could be the one that leads you to your next business opportunity. Even if they don't seem like a potential client, they could bring referrals to you, or maybe even turn into a partner one day! Moral of the story: Give everyone a chance, and just get to know people. Booking new clients is all about building those relationships.

Now that you know how to get the most out of networking, let's talk about the best opportunities to put your skills to the test.

WHERE YOU SHOULD BE NETWORKING

Depending on your personality and your niche, there are two different arenas you can tackle networking: in-person events and online groups. If your ideal clients are mostly local, then getting out in your community is going to be critical to your success. If you focus on clients around the web, however, you may see more success focusing on online communities. Either way, both types can be beneficial to making new relationships and booking new clients.

“Booking new clients is all about building new relationships.”

IN-PERSON NETWORKING

Traditional face-to-face networking will always be a great way to build relationships with new clients. Attend local meetups and professional events for creatives and be ready to make a memorable first impression! You'll want to try to identify events that your ideal clients will attend (think industry events), but also events that you're interested in for your own professional goals. Remember: Connecting with other creatives can still bring clients your way, simply by building those relationships and growing your referral network.

A few things to keep in mind when attending a networking event:

- **Polish up your portfolio and bring your (current!) business cards**
- **Be presentable and representative of your brand**
- **Ask questions and show genuine interest in who you're talking to**



Don't just look for ways to sell your services; mingle with copywriters, developers, designers, and other creative pros. You can learn amazing things from other people from tips on finding work to managing clients to finding partners for future projects. It'll extend your network that much further and ultimately create a lot of value for your business.

Pro-tip: the real networking opportunities at a conference or event are going to be at any kind of reception or post-conference party. Keep an ear to the ground for info about these kinds of events and tag along. Not only will the atmosphere be more relaxed, but you'll also have the conference/event as a good basis for starting the conversation.

ONLINE NETWORKING

Even if you're all about in-person events, don't forget about the power of social media! Twitter and Instagram are great ways to connect with others if you're running a creative online business. Use these platforms to showcase your personality and your work.

Identify the problems, issues, and needs of your target audience, then address them through your social media posts. Create content that genuinely helps people. Establish trust by providing solutions, sharing knowledge, and demonstrating industry expertise. The next time one of your connections, friends, or followers needs your services, they'll know you're available to help.

“Establish trust by providing solutions, sharing knowledge, and demonstrating industry experience.”

Beyond producing your own content, you can also use social media networks to build authentic relationships with your clients or other creatives that could refer clients to you. Seek out industry forums or groups where you can actively engage in conversations and get to know others. These online connections can prove just as valuable as in-person relationships.

Actively seeking out new clients with networking can prove a successful strategy, but it does take time and energy. Beyond just making connections, you need to make sure you have a solid marketing strategy in place.



04 Define your marketing strategy

If you can juggle your current clients like a magician and networking events are a total piece of cake, the next step is to get your company's name out there and create hype around your work!

OUTLINE YOUR GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

The first step to any marketing plan is to determine how much time you realistically have to dedicate toward marketing efforts. If your team is small and scrappy, it might not be a lot at first. That's okay, as long as you do make marketing a priority. Even one hour a day can have major impacts on the number of leads coming to your site!

It's difficult sometimes to find time for your own projects when you have existing clients on the line, but keeping your own efforts fresh and representative of your brand is crucial to continually booking new clients. Think about it: If it's obvious that your content hasn't been updated in six months, to a potential client poking around your website, they might think you've gone out of business. That's why it's crucial to keep your portfolio updated, your social channels active, and your information current.

“*Keeping your marketing efforts fresh is crucial to continually book new clients.*”

To start outlining your action plan, begin with a site audit. What updates do you need to make to feel confident that any potential client that lands on your site will reach out for a quote? (Pause on your portfolio though – we'll get to that in a second!) Think about any business changes you're considering also, whether that's a new niche, new rates, or new services. It's not a great experience if your site says one thing and your onboarding team says another, so make sure all information is accurate.

These updates you discover from your site audit should be the first action items you tackle. From there, you can start to think about additional marketing efforts such as social media marketing or content marketing. We'll talk about those more specifically later, but in this phase, it's wise to think about what you're interested and set some goals around it. Maybe you'll try to write one blog post a week or start a Facebook group for your target audience. Whatever you settle on, just remember that your ultimate goal is booking more clients, so your efforts should, in some way, bubble up to that.



Once you've got your action plan and you've set some goals, it's time to look specifically at your portfolio.

SHOW, DON'T TELL

If you're able to demonstrate that your business offers creative problem-solving solutions and strategies, you'll impress any and every future client. Find a way to showcase your work and use this content to promote your business. Keep in mind that anyone who hires you is looking for a way to differentiate themselves; you need to do the same. Be sure that your marketing gives a clear-cut impression that you don't sell canned solutions or the same products again and again.

Don't be afraid to be transparent with your process and create a detailed list of what a business can expect in return for their investment. It'll demonstrate not only your results, but also the creative methodology and resources that bring your promises of a beautiful design to life.

When thinking about your portfolio, try to include:

- **A project that you're really proud of. (You could even consider showcasing it!)**
- **A project that the client was really proud of. (And then add a case study to it!)**
- **Projects that align perfectly with your niche or target audience.**

Don't feel obligated to put every single project ever in your portfolio. Aim for quality over quantity, and focus on the examples potential clients will find the most interesting and relatable. That's the best way to ensure your portfolio enhances your marketing efforts and helps to bring in new clients.

With your website and portfolio in place, you can start thinking about different forms of marketing, such as content marketing.

CRAFT A CONTENT STRATEGY

While creating content does take time, if you can spare the resources, executing a content strategy is an incredible way to position yourself as an expert, get in front of potential clients, and explain why they should use your services. Without a content strategy, there's likely a void in your business's digital presence that leads to infrequent/inconsistent social media posts, irrelevant articles, and a lack of cohesive brand messaging.

“Keeping your marketing efforts fresh is crucial to continually booking new clients.”



At a minimum, you should consider creating a content calendar to keep track of your strategy. Determine the frequency you'd like to post, what platforms you want to be present on, and the topics you're going to focus on. While your first instinct might be to only share completed projects or information about your services, remember to provide genuine, useful content for your audience. By giving away important information for free, they're more likely to return to your site, and therefore, more likely to give you their email or even start poking around your pricing.

Inject strategic content into your agency's culture. Encourage team members to promote your business through intentional social posts. This will ensure you'll constantly create new content that's brand-compliant and on-target. Plus, you'll connect your brand to your team's social network. That's how you engage people who don't know you and get new followers.

Strategizing for your agency goes beyond marketing and content. Determine what services to sell and what your best bets are by committing to a culture of learning.

05 Book new business by learning new skills

A surefire way to drive your creative business into the ground is to stop learning, stop growing, and instead, allowing the competition to pass you by. To keep pace with your competitors, your business needs to be in tune with all the technological changes that are happening in the industry.

Reserve a small slice of your work week to discover what's old, what's new, and what's next, and then think critically about how you can apply those techniques to your work or your marketing efforts to book new clients!

COMMIT TO CONSTANT LEARNING

Whether it's coding, creating copy, video production, or entrepreneurship, there are areas where you can continue to develop and grow your team's talents (and your own). Your entire staff has the potential to learn new things that will impress your clients, expand your imaginations, boost your skills, and improve your passion for the industry.



Most of all, you need to be open to learning because new trends are always emerging in the industry. By keeping up with new skills and information, you'll keep your creative business ahead of the competition, instead of falling behind with outdated practices.

SOME NEW SKILLS TO LEARN

Not sure what services to add to your business? Here are some skills that pair perfectly together:

- **Brand strategy**
- **Web design and/or web development**
- **SEO/content strategy**
- **Blog writing**
- **3D animation**
- **Site maintenance**

“*Challenge yourself to further your abilities and understanding of your business's services.*”

If you're in a leadership position, take time to develop your own business skills and to understand the talent of your team. If you have the budget, reimburse staff members for taking classes or attending seminars that can build their skill set. The return on investment will be obvious when you can sell a client on something other agencies aren't capable of producing.

BE PROACTIVE IN THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

As a decision maker, it's unlikely that someone is actively telling you to learn new skills, take an online course, or attend a seminar. Challenge yourself to further your abilities and understanding of your business's services.

Your agency can't always experiment on client sites (and you probably shouldn't!), so make time to play. If you want to learn how to code a WordPress theme, open a new file and start creating one. Want to figure out if you should be selling content strategy to clients? Draft up a plan for an existing client as a practice run.

If you want to incorporate these ideas into your work, then make a conscious effort to try one new thing that you haven't done before with every client or project you work with. It'll keep your portfolio interesting while continuing to develop your skills.



TAKE A BREAK FROM THE EVERYDAY DESIGN GRIND

It's easy to become buried in the world of web design and never come up for air, but you can find some of the greatest sources of inspiration outside of your own industry.

Many of the skills that it takes to be a great CEO, creative director, web design, copywriter, or salesperson can be cultivated through your hobbies or activities outside of work. Pursue other interests and you may discover a new perspective, develop a new ability, or come up with a new idea that you never would have thought of before.

06 Leverage your current clients

While it's important to focus on booking new business, managing your existing client relationships is arguably the most important part of any creative business. Besides the obvious fact that you want them to have a great experience working with you, your current clients are also a major source of new business. That's why it's important to never think of a contract as a one-off transaction; always look at the lifetime value of your clients. Chances are that one day, that client could pass along work via referral or want additional services for you. Hello, new revenue!

First, let's talk about the power of referral business

ENCOURAGE REFERRALS

No matter how great your marketing tactics are or how many networking events you go to, there's always one strategy that'll work the best: good ol' word of mouth.

People want to use services they can trust, and nothing establishes a strong sense of reliability like hearing first-hand experience directly from a friend. While your business can't spread the word itself, you can encourage your past and present clients to do it for you.

Consider setting up a referral program to reward clients for bringing new business your way. You could offer a discount count on their next side design, create some free social graphics for them, or buy their company a pizza party. Whatever it is, make it you and make it special to encourage a little buzz around your services!



Referrals are also great for your business because often, a lot of the onboarding work has been done for you. Your clients will naturally answer some questions on your behalf as they're talking you up to their friends, making the sales cycle shorter and helping you get the contract signed faster. Plus, there's a decent chance that your existing awesome clients know other awesome people, so you know you'll be working with great people!

So how do you get great referrals?

CREATE AN EXCEPTIONAL CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Whether you love the client you're working with or things start to go south (because let's be real, it happens), it's important to have a set of guidelines in place to make the process run smoothly so you can deliver an exceptional experience every single time.

Remember: Even if you hit a few bumps in the road, you want to end on a high note so your clients always speak in a positive light when they talk about your business

To do that, you need a framework that will allow you to capture and build relationships with the best clients out there.

DELIVER

Always, and for everything. Deliver on time. Deliver on budget. And deliver on expectations. Don't settle for "good enough." Put the effort in to strive for exceptional!

“Don't settle for “good enough.” Put the effort in to strive for exceptional!”

BE BETTER AT CONFRONTATION

While the world would certainly be a better place if everyone got along and projects always went smoothly, that's just not always the reality. Be honest and push back on feedback you disagree with. Remember: the best ideas are usually uncomfortable and require risk-taking, and often, the work will be better for it.

LOOK FOR PARTNERS

Think beyond just booking clients and create relationships that set you up for success with engaging work that you love. Knowing what you want from a dream client will make finding them that much easier!



MASTER THE ART OF THE UPSELL

Now comes the real secret to growing your business: the upsell. While finding new clients is important, you'll always be wondering where you're going to find the next one. By creating a recurring service, however, that existing clients can continue to pay for over time, you'll establish a reliable income that doesn't rely on booking new business.

Recurring revenue is income that hits your bank account at set intervals, such as once a month. When you price your services in a recurring manner, it allows you to predict how much money you'll bring in without having to rely on new clients. Dry spells become a thing of the past because even if you don't book any new projects, you can rely on a check from your existing clients with recurring payments. And when you can reliably estimate how much money you'll bring in every month, it makes a whole bunch of other business decisions and budgeting discussions a billion times easier.

This best part of a recurring revenue structure is that it's super easy to apply to your services, and can even be an add-on for fixed-price projects. For example, let's say you run a small agency that designs and develops websites for your clients. When you book a new project, you might charge \$2,000 for the initial site design. Nice! Then when it's time to take the site live, you could offer your client a recurring monthly maintenance package for \$50. This could include the cost of web hosting, a few site updates per month, WordPress theme and plugin updates, you name it!

The package and price tag will be as unique as your own business, but the idea is that they include quick services that you can perform monthly, and therefore charge monthly. And as long as you pick services related to your main offering, they'll be a super easy upsell. If you build a website for a client, for example, you know they need to host it somewhere and will likely enjoy extra security updates!



Learn how to make the most with your current clients so you can stop worrying about finding new ones. The next free ebook in this series will help you continue to scale in a simple, reliable way.

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