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Want to find your niche? Hannah says:

- Go back to your clients and ask them, if they had to describe you to someone else, what are the kinds of things that they'd be saying? If we were in a corporate environment, we'd call this market research.
- Understand what your market wants and the kind of experience they're looking for to know where you're going to find it easiest to promote yourself.
- Set the kind of fee that you deserve.
- Get out your CV. Have a look at it and just remind yourself of all the fantastic things you've done so far and get feedback and testimonials from other people.

Hannah McNamara

by Eve Menezes Cunningham

Hannah McNamara says she started coaching “about 3 years ago. But I’d been using a lot of coaching techniques as a manager for a long time before then. When I did a little bit of NLP as part of my coaching course, it made so much sense. All the rapport building was absolutely crucial to get a good coaching relationship right from the start. It was also interesting to see that there were certain things that I was doing naturally anyway.”

Her history with marketing is much longer. Hannah says, “Some people would say I’ve always been in marketing. I actually started off from the age of about 16, doing a Business Studies A Level. My grandfather had had an advertising agency for years and he set up an international network of agencies. He was still travelling into the City well into his 80s. But unfortunately, he died when I was 18 so never got to see that I’d kind of carried on the family tradition. When I finished my A Levels, I did a Business Studies degree and specialised in all the marketing options.

“I was into heavy metal music at the time so set up the Rock Society at my university. We put on loads of social events and had a newsletter that I was sending out. Back in those days, there was no email so it was a case of photocopying all the newsletters, putting the stamps on and getting them sent out.

“My first exhibition stand was at Freshers’ Fair. We did all sorts of silly things. We got a rubber chicken and cut the head off so we could look really hard. Fake blood, yes. And we found that giving away sweets worked. That got a lot of people to our stand. So you can see, I have been marketing for a while.

“Just getting out there and talking to people is one of the things that has been really valuable since I’ve been in business for myself. When I graduated, I went into a marketing role straight away. It was a really good training ground for everything.

“When I started my coaching business I took a part time job in a furniture shop. That was really to brush up on my sales techniques because I felt a bit rusty. I thought I needed to get out there talking to people and get used to selling again. It’s much easier doing that with

somebody else’s product. And with furniture, they can see it. They can sit on it. They can imagine what it’s like to have their dinner around the table. I remember one family came in and they sat everybody around the table just to see if they’d have enough elbow room. Talk about giving people the chance to try something out before they buy!

“The same principle goes through to personal development and getting clients. You need to give people a bit of a sample of what you offer. Running things like workshops and events are a great way for people to sit around that dining room table and see if they like it.”

Hannah’s marketing experience led to clients “right from the start. People within personal development who didn’t come from a business or marketing background were saying to me, ‘You’ve got all this fantastic experience. Would you be my coach? Would you be my mentor?’

“I did go through a process of thinking, ‘That’s the old me. I’m this new person’ so I tried other things as well. But I kept coming back to the marketing. It’s also where I had credibility. People were looking for some sort of experience and for me to empathise with what they were going through.”

Hannah says that nicheing is important because people are “so busy these days that if they meet somebody who can help them on anything, their minds just go blank. They don’t have the time to think about what they actually want. When I was in my corporate life, the last thing I ever wanted to do when I was outside work was to think about what I wanted from my job or anything like that. Unless you can lay it out to them and say: ‘This is what I offer. Which of these particular services would suit you best?’ they just haven’t got the time to figure it out for themselves.

“Nicheing also means that you’re understanding the kind of person that you’re targeting. You can use all the right sort of language with them and create rapport through marketing without even having to speak to anyone. It’s also very valuable having a niche on the internet because when people are searching for particular key words, they’ll find you.

“When someone arrives on your site they need to feel ‘this is for me.’ The look of the

site has to be right for them. The right sort of imagery, the right feeling, the right language. Language is very important with internet marketing. For example, a professional services firm like a law firm doesn’t like to talk about sales and marketing. The phrase they use is ‘business development’. So if you’re putting a site or any marketing materials together for them and you keep talking about sales and marketing it’s a big turn off.

“Often, the skills that you have and that you want to distance yourself from are exactly the skills that clients are looking for. I do meet a lot of people who are all fired up from the training courses saying ‘I’ve been a teacher all my life’ or ‘I’ve been a nurse or a this or a that and I want to coach chief executives of large plcs.’ Whilst they are probably excellent coaches, they’re competing with people who’ve been chief executives themselves.

“Clients want to hear that someone has been able to get beyond the same pressures and do something different. You might end up moving people out of their jobs but it doesn’t have to be that way. It can be about helping people to create the emotional distance they need in their work, building their confidence in tackling issues as they arise, making them more commercially aware or something like that. Don’t ever discount the experience that you’ve got. Your life didn’t start the day you went on the training course. You’ve got all this experience but often people ignore it.

“I don’t think anybody ever stops coaching once they’ve started. I want to get out to as many people as possible. I’m looking into other ways of serving clients. Workshops, books and audio materials are all different ways that you can serve clients without having to do one to ones all the time. Not everybody can afford the one to one support when they really need it so offering clients a range of services like that is also a good way to build a business because then you’re not just selling your time.” ●

For more information and to buy Hannah’s book, visit www.nichemarketingforcoaches.com

And for articles, tutorials, interviews, a community area and a special trial offer, visit www.marketinghelpforcoaches.com