1. The Foundation:

Abraham Lincoln once said, “Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.” This system is no different than Abe’s tree. If you don’t sharpen your axe and put in place the necessary foundational elements first, the rest of it won’t be nearly as effective. What we’re doing here is building a system that you’ll come to rely on for new leads and appointments for years to come. Trying to shortcut the process just isn’t worth it. The first step is clearly identifying who your ideal prospect is. Don’t make the mistake of saying “everybody” or “any small business owner.”

Trying to be all things to all people leaves your message vanilla, boring, and it won’t resonate with anyone. “If you market to everyone as a prospect, you’ll get no one as a client.” - Virginia Muzquiz

Your success will improve dramatically when you focus on a specific niche. It might be an industry you’ve had a lot of success with, or possibly, a specific type of person you like working with. Your niche could be demographic or psychographic. There are entire books on positioning and niche, and we only have a few paragraphs to speak to it here. Regardless, the key at this stage is to get very clear on who your ideal prospect is. Develop a one page cheat sheet including all of the criteria that you will use to find this prospect online. Prospect Profile Cheat Sheet Basics Here are some of the common pieces of data that you might include in your prospect profile cheat sheet if you are targeting people in businesses:

• Company Size • Title • Geographic Focus 43 • Seniority • Male/Female • Age • Department or Function Not going after businesses? Maybe your prospect profile will include information such as: • Male/Female • Income Range • Geographic Focus • Interests • Group Associations These are just samples.

Yours may look similar, or quite different. The key is to have a very clear picture of who your ideal client is. From there, you will be armed with the information you need to find the places that these prospects hang out in. It could be certain LinkedIn groups, or Facebook groups. Maybe your prospects hang out in niche forums or other communities. Most markets can be found in niche-specific LinkedIn groups, as there are over 1,000,000 of them. Don’t forget to look at Facebook though as certain niches are very well represented on Facebook and are more easily accessed there. Next, start joining these groups. Once you’ve identified and begun joining these groups, you need to spend some time understanding what kind of topics interest them. A cursory review of the conversations and posts in these groups will give you a good idea of which topics your prospects really care about. What are they asking about? Which discussions seem to have a lot more comments than the others? Create a list of topics that seem to be of interest to your prospects, and set it aside for later. You’re going to use this to position yourself as a trusted resource, but let’s not get ahead of ourselves. There are still a couple items pieces of our foundation left. Another awesome approach for getting an understanding of what your prospects care about, is to ask them! Whether through surveys or informal messages, getting direct feedback from your target market is a fantastic way to know exactly what kind of content will attract them. For our purposes here, you’ll want to use this feedback to decide what your MVP Flagship Lead Magnet should be all about. Your MVP Flagship Lead Magnet Your MVP Flagship Lead Magnet is an important piece of content that you will put together. It could be an ebook, a free report, or any other free resource positioning you as a leader, giving your potential clients a ton of value, and generally helping to gener- ate new leads. This kind of content can and should be created very quickly. In fact, our students have access to training showing them how to create this in less than 1 hour. The key is to not get too caught up in creating this content. That’s why it’s called the MVP (Flagship Lead Magnet). MVP stands for minimum viable product. This is not the time to create your life’s work, your magnum opus. It does not need to be a masterpiece. You can get amazing results with a fairly basic piece of content. The key is creating something. Yes, it should be compelling and intriguing to your prospects. If you’re at a total loss, then you might want to get some assistance in this area. (It’s something we help our students with). The best place to start is to look at the data you pulled together on what your prospects care about. Remember, you just spent time researching the stuff your prospects really resonate with, so you should have some good topic ideas. You’ll use this piece of content in a few ways. It will be integrated within your leadership platform and generate an ongoing stream of new appointments, without you doing anything. (More on that in the next chapter.) In addition, your lead magnet will also be used throughout your messaging campaigns. Used strategically, it will increase your response rate and be a key component of generating more appointments. Can you do without it? Yes. In fact, my company has many clients who achieve solid results without creating any custom content. As such, I won’t tell you that it’s mandatory. But a piece of content such as the MVP Flagship Lead Magnet certainly can improve your results. That’s why I recommend don’t spend too much time creating it. Optimize Your LinkedIn and/or Facebook Profile(s) The final component of your foundation is optimizing your LinkedIn and/or Facebook profile(s). Position yourself as a trusted authority in your space, real thought leader. When your prospects check you out, you want them thinking “Oh, this person looks like a peer. A real player in the industry. This is somebody I should connect with.” As opposed to “Uh oh, here’s somebody that’s gonna try to sell me something.” When it comes to LinkedIn profiles, most people talk all about themselves. How great they are, what they do, and so on. Instead, you want to focus on what your prospects care about. More importantly, you want them to feel comfortable connecting with you. Facebook is even easier. You might change your cover photo to include information about your leadership platform (stay tuned for that), or you might leave it just the way it is. It takes a certain strategic finesse to achieve that this expert effect, but our process systematizes it so that anybody can quickly achieve it. A big key to making it work is the positioning of your leadership platform.

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