



Your Marketing Funnel

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Sales Funnel / Marketing Funnel

What Is a Sales Funnel and Why Is It Important for Your Success?

The term 'sales funnel' is an important concept for all types of businesses. Your sales funnel is what leads customers to purchase your products or services. As they pass through the funnel, they transform from random prospects to qualified leads and, finally, to buyers. As the funnel narrows and prospects get to your sales team, they are already primed to make a purchase.

The Sales Funnel Explained

The sales funnel is a sieve that leads prospective customers through your sales process. It casts its net wide and then gradually weeds out unqualified prospects that are not likely to buy your product.

As the term 'funnel' suggests, it's wide at the top (the entry point) and narrow at the bottom (the point of purchase). At the top, a sales funnel attracts casual website visitors through a special offer that lures them in. You then use marketing techniques to offer them other deals. This gives you a chance to gather information about your prospects and further qualify them.

Why Businesses Use Sales Funnels

Sales funnels are important for a number of reasons. First, they make the sales process more efficient. Since only qualified buyers get to the end of the funnel, your sales team doesn't waste time dealing with uninterested prospects who are just kicking tires.

A good sales funnel helps to make your sales process more predictable. Sales are never fully predictable, but when your sales process is organized in a standard, systemized way, you can arrive at a good estimate of your ROI.

Finally, a sales funnel helps you track different metrics at different points of the process. It's organized into clear steps so that when there's a problem within your funnel, you can troubleshoot and tweak accordingly.

An Example of a Sales Funnel

Below is an example of a sales funnel in action. Imagine that you own a business that sells supplies and information about rooftop gardening. You create a blog about green roofing that includes a form on the sidebar where visitors can sign up for your list and receive a free eBook on the topic.

Once a visitor downloads the book, you begin marketing to them through emails, offering them exclusive content, helpful tips, and special offers. The offers gradually increase in price, leading them to your main product, a comprehensive collection of rooftop gardening tips with a fairly high price tag.

At first, visitors read your blog for information about rooftop gardening. At that point they may just be considering the feasibility of starting their own garden. Those who sign up for your list are truly interested, and the ones that jump on the email offers are seriously looking for a way to start a rooftop garden. The people in this segment of your list are the most likely to buy your kit, and therefore you begin marketing the kit to them.

Drive Them Away

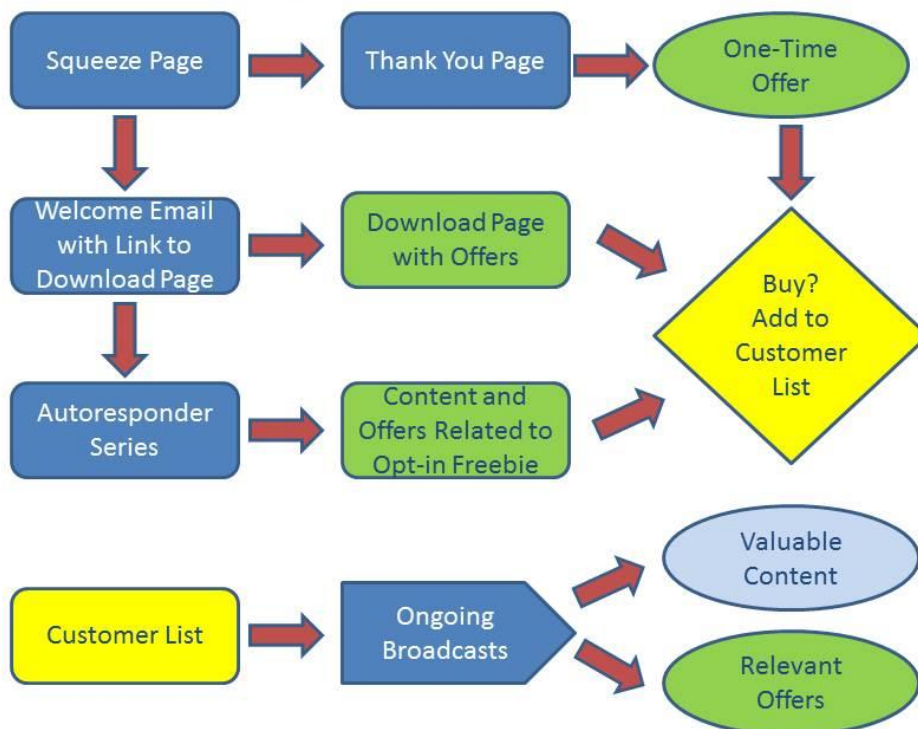
An important concept to remember about the sales funnel is that you don't need to appeal to everyone. You only need to focus on those who are truly interested in your product. When you lose subscribers, this is a good thing (as long as it's not too many) because you don't waste your time with those who will never buy. That's the magic of the sales funnel in action.

In the beginning, it may feel like you are narrowing your potential opportunities. But you will soon discover that the more focused you are, the better your results. Focus on a very select niche market, craft your funnel to reach that market, and you will be amazed at the outcomes.

Assignment:

- Do you already have a sales funnel? If so, compare the amount of sales you've made from your sales funnel vs. products you've sold through other methods.
- If you don't have a sales funnel already, start thinking about what part of your business would benefit most from creating one.
- Review the graphic – What Happens In Your Sales Funnel
- Use the **Sales Funnel Planning Checklist** throughout this course to make sure you've completed all the necessary steps.

Sample Email Sales Funnel



The Key Components of an Effective Sales Funnel

For a sales funnel to work, a few key elements must be in place. First, you need to consider the offers you make. These offers should gradually increase in size and ticket price, as you weed out those who aren't interested in buying your product.

Second, you must decide the ways in which you will keep in touch with your prospects and further qualify them. Through your offers and communications, you should be able to get your prospect list down to only the serious buyers.

By the time you get to the end of your funnel, you should have a list of loyal customers who you can sell to again and again, assuming you nurture that relationship.

Types of Offers

There are a variety of different ways to go about making your offers. The most common include:

- *Opt-In Giveaways.*
An opt-in giveaway is a freebie usually offered in exchange for the person's name and email address. This is the entry point to your sales funnel. The potential customer wants the free product, so they 'opt-in' by giving you their name and email address. You can then begin marketing directly to them through email.
- *Front-End Offers*
Front-end offers are paid offers that work just like freebies, but can actually be more effective. The key is that even though you charge for your offer, you keep the price very low. Charging for the product helps weed out the folks who just want a freebie and aren't interested in ever opening up their wallets at all. If they're willing to spend even just a dollar on a small product, you know that they have the potential to be serious buyers in the future.

- *Subscription Products*
Subscription products are low-priced but more profitable for you because you charge a monthly fee to subscribers. It is much tougher to get people to pay for a subscription though, so the content you're offering has to be really unique and valuable. But if these clients are willing to pay this monthly fee, they'll be much more likely to buy your high-ticket items.
- *One-Time Offers*
One-time offers are great because they allude to a level of urgency. These are offers telling the visitor that once they click away, the offer expires. In other words, they have to sign up and/or buy immediately or they will lose their one and only chance.

The way a sales funnel works is that the front-end offers are low-priced (or free) and low commitment. In contrast, your back-end offers gradually increase in price. These pricier back-end offers are what really qualify your prospects and tell you who your serious buyers are.

Keeping in Touch

It's important to keep in touch with your prospects. They shouldn't only be hearing from you when you're trying to sell them something. The follow-up emails you send to subscribers on your list should always offer them helpful content. The purpose of these emails is to stay on their radar and build a relationship with them.

The first step in doing this is the 'thank you' page. This is a small detail, but it's extremely important. After signing up for your list or purchasing the initial front-end product from you, redirect your customers to a page that simply thanks them for signing up and/or making a purchase.

You can also use this opportunity to make them another offer. You can use this opportunity to present a one-time offer or an upsell. Either strategy will help you to further qualify prospects. You know you have a serious buyer if they immediately take you up on that second offer.

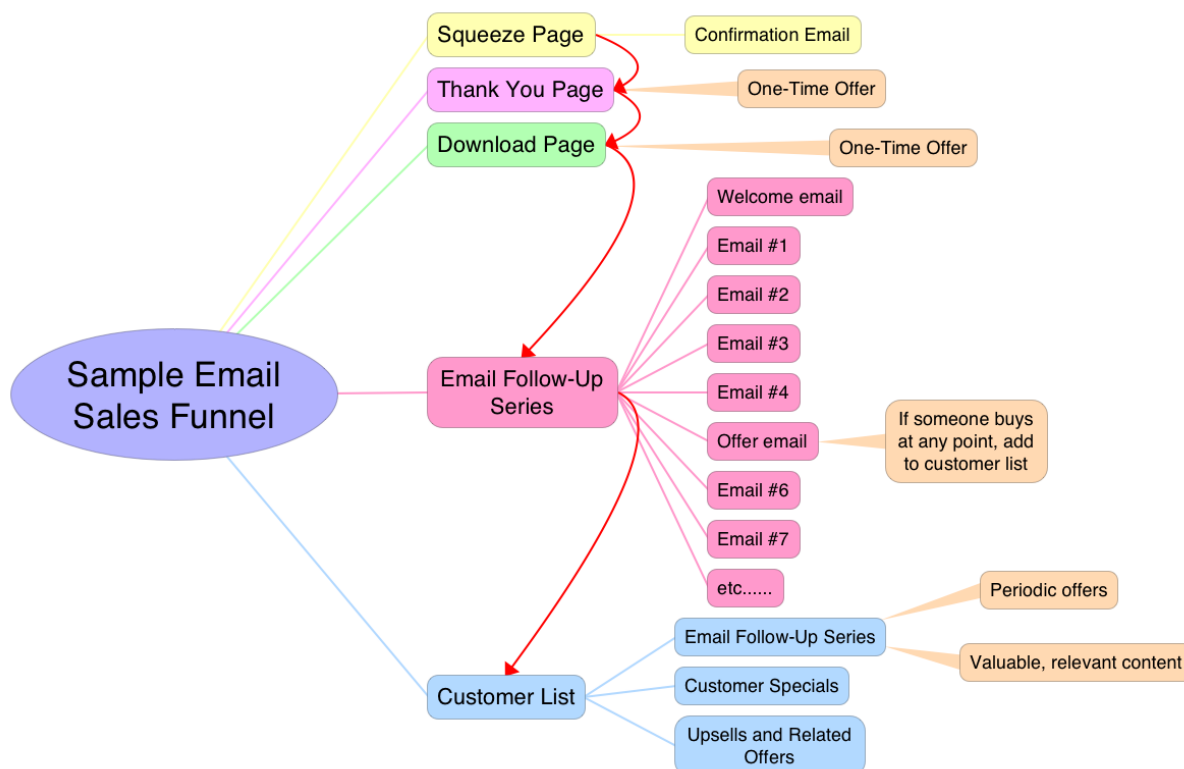
Sales Funnels and SEO

Remember the shape of the funnel – wide at the entry-point and gradually narrowing toward the main target purchase. Because you want to cast your net wide, the landing page where you make your initial offer should be search engine optimized in order to direct as much traffic as possible to your website.

Assignment:

Think about sales funnels you've been filtered through yourself:

- What were the components?
- What types of funnels did you find attractive or compelling?
- What components turned you off?



Ideas for Your Sales Funnel

All sales funnels have the same basic shape and characteristics – wide at the entry point and gradually narrowing as the prospect moves through it. Each funnel is similar, but no two are exactly the same. You have many options when it comes to working out the specifics.

Researching Ideas

Before you start thinking about the specifics of your sales funnel, there is some important research that must be done. Start by taking your product idea and making sure there's a market for it. No matter how enticing your offers or how well-crafted your funnel, you won't succeed if there isn't a hungry crowd eyeing the products you are offering.

You should begin by doing keyword research to see if people are searching for what you're planning to offer. You can conduct more detailed research by looking at products in your niche and niches that are similar to yours. This can be done through product marketplaces such as ClickBank.com or Amazon.com. On these sites, you can see if people are actually buying products related to your niche. You can also find out about the potential of your market by looking at similar products offered by your competitors.

Your Competitors' Funnels

It's always good to investigate the sales funnels of your competition. The point of this investigation isn't so much to get ideas as it is to find weaknesses within their sales process. You need to offer your prospects something unique that your competitors do not offer.

The best way to do this is to sign up to your competitors' mailing list and see how they market from the point of view of a prospective customer. You should also take advantage of some of their offers to see what you're up against. You'll be able to assess not only their sales funnels, but also the quality of their products and service.

Brainstorming for Your Funnel

Once you discover your market and the approach of your competition, start brainstorming what you'll do with your own sales funnel. First of all, brainstorm potential offers.

Knowing what your competition is offering will help you target what the market could really use. What kinds of products would help you qualify these potential buyers? You might consider freebies, small-ticket offers for the front-end, medium and large-ticket offers for the back-end, and one-time offers.

You'll also need to identify your traffic sources. Traffic sources include things such as search engines, social media, forums, blogs, content directories, press releases, information products, and anything else that will drive traffic to your landing page.

Planning It out

After your brainstorming, lay out your sales funnel in a visual way that allows you to see the big picture. You can do this by using tools such as mind maps, spreadsheets, timetables, and/or diagrams.

A good sales funnel is solid, well-planned, and detailed, but you also have to be flexible. Once you put it into action, be sure to carefully track your conversions to identify the strongest and weakest spots in your funnel. Troubleshoot and find ways to strengthen the weak points while replicating the strongest ones in order to improve your sales funnel.

Low Ticket Product Ideas

When you think in terms of low ticket products or services, you are talking about items that usually carry no more than a \$27.00 price tag. The most common average range for a low ticket item would be in the \$5.00 to \$9.95 range.

There are many of online and brick and mortar businesses that consider low ticket items to be the bread and butter of the business, the way that you keep the lights on every month.

Of course, in order for those low ticket items to keep a steady flow of basic revenue, there is the need to promote your offerings and entice new clients to give them a try. Here are a few ideas that may help you promote your low ticket offerings to fresh faces.

Special Reports: Spotlighting the low ticket items that are your biggest sellers to a wide range of customer demographics is a great way to get the attention of prospects.

A special report is going to essentially focus on two things: first, this is a product or service that has is being successfully used by hundreds of thousands of people right this very minute.

Second, this product or service can make a big impact in the quality of your life and work. Once you have it, you will not understand how you ever got along without it.

These types of special report promotions are meant to spotlight all the positive attributes of your offering. You want to talk about the great performance, the low maintenance, and of course the low price.

One thing that can help dress up a special report is charts and relevant graphics. Most people are visual in the way they relate to the world, so using a simple chart to illustrate a point, or inserting some other type of visual that is related to the subject matter will help to enhance and hold the attention of the reader.

Testimonials from current clients also are a big part of a successful special report. If at all possible, vary the industry types that are represented in your testimonials.

The broader the use of your offering in various parts of the business world, the more likely a prospect is to see the need to investigate a little more closely.

Special reports are relatively easy to produce and extremely cost effective to have available. The content can be used in a direct mail piece that can be reproduced cheaply.

The special report can be posted online, with a unique URL that can then be distributed far and wide by both manual and electronic means. The result is an effective promotional tool that has a very low cost to create and has the potential to yield big returns in a very short time.

Podcasts and Short Audio Sessions: Have you ever listened to those short audio clips that are on many web sites? They often are informative and can spur people to look more closely at a product or service.

Short audio sessions are not anything new. For decades, businesses have employed fifteen-second audio sessions to promote their products while callers were on hold, waiting to speak with a customer service rep.

Theater owners have employed them to get in a plug for concessions that are sold in the theater lobby. Who among us have not heard a short audio session while in the grocery store or in a discount retail store?

Given the history of the success of short audio sessions, it is no wonder that they are also working on the Internet as well.

To a degree, a short audio session makes the sales process via the Internet a little more personal, as the prospect hears a human voice. That alone makes the session an appealing way to reach a certain part of the populace.

Of course, a successful short audio session is going to be to the point and informative. It will give the prospect enough to ensure he or she will progress to the next level and seriously consider the offering, rather than simply scanning some text and moving on to another web site.

Settle on the subject for the session, make it crisp, clear, and easy to understand.

Trial Membership Offers: Everybody wants to get a bargain, but there are those that will sit on the fence forever before making a decision. A trial membership offer can be just what you need to get them to commit.

There are several things that are very attractive to a prospect. Among them are:

- There is no long-term commitment. If I don't like what I see during the trial period, I simply move on.

- I don't have to pay full price. Most trial offers will be at a discount, so very little revenue is invested.
- The trial offer gives me the chance to test drive and show the offering to other people who would be using it. I can find out up front if they see any advantages to using this new offering
- This gives me the chance to think of questions that should be answered before a commitment is made. I may think of something while in the trial period that I would not think of during a simple demonstration.

If you offer a trial membership, make sure you provided specific terms, as well as a way for the prospect to convert the trial membership into a full membership at any time during the trial.

Trial Software Offers: If software is involved in your product or service offering, you may also want to provide a demonstration version of the software that is good for a limited amount of time. Think in terms of some of the free electronic trail games you can download.

Many of them will allow the player to access and start a new game session for a specific number of times before the software becomes inoperative and they player will have to purchase the full version in order to continue.

Trial software should be representative of what the full version does, but you want to make sure that the software cannot be reconfigured to get around the limited time usage.

This is not a difficult task for anyone who develops software; all you will need to do is provide the perimeters of the trial time and you are all set.

As with the trial membership offers, you want your prospect to be able to upgrade from trial to permanent software at any point during the trial time, so make sure you include that in your package as well.

Promoting your low ticket items will keep your company moving along, providing the operating capital that you need to enhance your offerings and also develop more high priced offerings as well.

By utilizing these and similar ideas, you can effectively increase your client base without investing a huge chunk of your profits into public relations endeavors.

Mid Ticket Product Ideas

Having established yourself with some of your low ticket offerings, you will want to investigate the potential for up-selling your client by creating interest in your mid ticket products and services.

For the purposes of the discussion, you may want to think of mid ticket items as being priced in the \$37.00 to \$67.00 range per unit.

There are plenty of methods you can use to promote your mid ticket offerings. Here are some examples of methods that have proven track records of generating interest among existing clientele as well as garnering some attention from new customers as well.

E-Books: It seems that no matter what the type of product or service that is offered, an electronic book will be an ideal way to generate interest. Why? There are actually several levels on which an E-book attracts us. Here are three examples:

- In spite of the hype, most of us do like to read. We will read everything from sonnets to the backs of cereal boxes.
- E-books are easily stored. We can download them onto our hard drives and read them any time we like.
- E-books are often free or available at a fraction of the cost of a hard copy book.

When using an E-book to promote your product line, you will most likely have it available as a free download.

Providing a few online excerpts from the book as “hooks” will entice people to take the few moments needed to download the book and will also increase the chances they will actually read it after downloading.

You may want to also give them the chance to read a few pages before they perform a download, assuming you have the bandwidth required for this sort of activity.

Another potential way to keep the relationship going is to have a sign-up page where basic contact information is collected before the download commences.

This will give you the chance to follow up on everyone that downloaded the book and perhaps close a sale very quickly, due to the obvious fact of your diligence.

Paid Membership Sites: When you run a paid membership site, one of the things you must do in order to maintain and grow your client base is provide something that makes people feel like that monthly membership fee they pay is worth the cost.

As an example, you may include a short weekly or monthly newsletter as one of the perks of being a member of the site. Don't fill it with mindless fluff that circulates around the Internet constantly.

Make the information relevant to your customers, to your product line and most of all worth the time to read about. Use it to talk about upcoming enhancements to favorite products, do a spotlight on one of your customers and the work he or she does.

Along with the newsletter, make sure there is access to online pages that capture the attention of your customers. Perhaps you can arrange for them to download a coupon they can use locally as part of a promotion campaign.

You may supply a message board where clients can talk about how they employ the goods or services you sell. The point is to make the membership perks something that people will want to engage in often enough that they want to maintain access to those perks.

Software / Scripts: Software that fills a need with your customers can be a great thing. Depending on where you draw your majority of clients from, this can be just about anything from software that helps to catalog plants to software that helps to design a home accounting systems, to software that can be used to track sales efforts.

In short, you identify and anticipate needs within your client base and then come up with the software that will meet those needs.

Now, do you develop proprietary software or do you partner with someone and act as an agent for that partner? It all depends. If you can enter into an agreement that allows you to make a decent profit from the sale of the software and still offer it to your clientele at a price that is better than what they can get it for themselves, the answer is yes.

If you can barely get a better deal than standard retail, forget it and try to develop your own software products. If the profit is not there for you, and the savings is not there for your clients, then the project is of no value to either of you.

Keep in mind the software can cover just about any subject you want. For development ideas, why not query your current clients?

Ask them what type of software they would like to see, and what types of bells and whistles would be attractive to them. You may be surprised at how easily you can fulfill those wishes.

Audio/Video Sessions: Once upon a time, companies trained new people at large gatherings. These days, new employees attend audio and web conferences via the Internet, saving time and money to all concerned.

Audio and video sessions have applications in all sorts of ways. Did you know that there are churches that conduct Sunday School classes with audio and video links, so that members who are unable to get to the actual church can attend and participate?

One at a denominational level, there is a denomination headquartered in the Mid West that broadcasts both worship and business sessions of its bi-annual denominational conference to members all over the world, via live feed and data streaming.

Audio/video sessions using the Internet can revolve around all sorts of subjects, from how to fix a flat tire to detailed sessions on fixing broken relationships. They can include travelogues to exotic and distant places, helpful guidelines in dealing with a legal matter, and even something as simple as preparing a meal in twenty minutes or less.

Persons are often willing to pay on a per access basis or even a monthly subscription to have access to these types of sessions.

Selling this sort of service is not hard at all, once you identify the sectors of the population you wish to go after. Then it is a matter of securing the types of audio/video sessions that will click with your customers and making it easy for them to connect with the sessions.

Again, you may find it cost effective to partner with someone else, or it may be in the best interests of yourself and your customers to develop the sessions in house. You can evaluate your resources and make a sound decision on which way to go.

Mid ticket items are a great way to grab both a larger chunk of per unit profit, as well as create reliable revenue streams that you can depend on from month to month. Get some input from your existing customers and develop a nice suite of mid ticket offerings. You will be glad you did.

High Ticket Product Ideas

No suite of products or services is complete without some “diamond” level of offerings that are of interest to your customers.

While these may not appeal to more than a core group of your client base, the fact that you enjoy such a strong relationship based on the performance of your low ticket and mid ticket offerings will help them to trust you with these high ticket products as well.

When you think in terms of high ticket products and services, an average of \$297.00 to \$997.00 is a nice average range. Of course, there is nothing with going for high ticket products that are \$1,000.00 or more, depending on how they relate to your other products and the demographics of your client base.

Here are some ideas for high ticket offerings that may be a great fit with your business model.

Coaching / Mentoring: There is plenty of demand these days for professional coaches and motivational speaker. All across the country, people whose entire purpose is to inspire, instruct, and help people identify where they want to go in life are raking in very nice fees.

Motivational instructors and mentors are making their money with in person classes, but they are also doing very well with audio and visual sessions as well. Generally speaking, a class will be promoted and persons will be invited to register and pay a flat fee to attend.

Generally speaking, that fee will depend on the number of sessions that will be included in the series. Upon registration, the attendee will receive instructions on how to access the sessions via phone and/or the Internet.

The session will often allow for some degree of interaction, with the frequency and mode of interaction controlled by the mentor.

How does this relate back to your product line? Chances are you had to identify some specific applications for your offerings before you ever got your first sale. Some of your mentoring can be to help people understand how your other products save them time and money and in some cases help them to make more money and expand their business.

In a related note, if you have a number of customers who work in companies where dealing with customers is a daily thing, you can most certainly fill a void.

Among the mentoring sessions you could offer are such topics as how to defuse an angry customer, how to get a customer to tell you what is really bothering them and how to bring a former customer back into the fold.

You can draw on your own expertise as well as your experiences and come up with some motivational style mentoring classes that will be sure to be of interest to your customers.

Webinars and Tele-Seminars: Like mentoring sessions, tele-seminars are something that more and more people are comfortable with. They save time, definitely cut back on travel expenses, and allow attendees to get back to work more quickly, which helps to keep productivity high around the office.

When it comes to tele-seminars, you can offer subject matter you create and host in house, or you can become a means of providing a special guest speaker for a tele-seminar. Perhaps you can snag a best selling author who has written an exciting new book on Internet marketing.

Arrange for a one time tele-seminar where the author discusses his book and entertains questions afterward. The audience will pay a flat fee to attend and have the ability to participate in the question and answer session. For additional revenue, you can make the proper arrangements to record the tele-seminar and make copies of it available after the fact.

Exclusive Membership Sites: Everyone likes to feel special. One of the easiest ways is to create and manage an exclusive membership site. You can put together something that is specifically for a select group of persons, such as CEO's, chief financial officers, executive directors of non-profit organizations, or any niche market that is composed of people who could benefit from networking with their peers and can afford to pay a nice figure for that privilege on a monthly or annual basis.

Include in the membership discounts on items of interest such as trade magazines geared toward that market or savings on attended tele-seminars and mentoring sessions that are relevant to this exclusive group. By providing networking opportunities as well as the discounts, you can find yourself with a nice way to move high ticket offerings with no trouble at all.

Lucrative Service Such As Copywriting: Support services are something that will always make an impact with businesses. By offering to take over such tasks as writing copy for new ad campaigns or sales and marketing collateral, preparing brochures, and editing other basic types of correspondence that the company uses regularly, you can save them a bundle and make a nice bit of profit for yourself.

Here are some reasons why outsourcing to you would be advantageous, rather than keeping it all in house:

- They do not have to pay your taxes. You are not an employee, so Payroll does not have to keep up with you.
- There are no perks such as insurance, retirement, or vacation to calculate. Working essentially as a consultant, none of these factors enter into the picture. They save money.
- The company can focus on its business without devoting a lot of resources to ancillary matters. You are dealing with all that.
- No time spent in development. They simply have to approve the finished product.

While it is true that consulting does not come cheap, it still ends up being much more cost effective than keeping someone on the payroll. Between the salary and the benefits that would be required by someone talented enough to do what you are offering to provide, you could be talking about saving tens of thousands of dollars over the course of a year.

The fact is that you can make quite a tidy profit by pitching a deal that requires an opt in payment up front, with several smaller payments as each of the action items or projects are completed. This means some immediate profit for you, with the promise of more as the tasks are finished.

When it comes to providing high ticket offerings, knowing what your resources are and how well those match up with needs within your client base will help lead you to that type of high ticket products you can provide immediately, as well as help you prepare a laundry list of others that you hope to have set up and working in a short time.

In Closing: What Is Your Ideal Profit Strategy?

When it comes to developing your ideal profit strategy, there are several things you can learn from the basic Profit Funnel. Let's take a look at those elementary principles:

You Have to Start at the Beginning

Getting your foot in the door with a new customer is your top priority. We all know that their sales cycle can take a long time in some cases. But if you are going with a product or service that is relatively inexpensive and can be identified immediately with a need, then you can shorten that cycle a great deal.

Don't worry about making a huge profit off that first sale. Just get the sale and make sure the product works right. Your reputation and your future opportunities with that client rest on providing them with a quality product at a price they are happy with.

It is for that reason that these entry-level efforts are so important. Sure, the big profit is not there, although you may end up with a nice amount of profit if you are able to move a product or service in bulk.

But make sure you see this as laying a foundation for things to come and not just the beginning and the end of your efforts with this customer. If you handle the situation right, you will soon be in a position to make a great deal more inroads with this customer.

Once in the Door, Look for New Opportunities

Now that you have a satisfied customer who likes what he has bought and now has a reason to trust you, the time has come to look for other ways to broaden your business dealings with your client. Identify mid level products that you can offer to your customer, helping him to get ideas about how and where in the organization they may be effective.

Let your now excellent reputation precede you as you offer enhanced services that work with the original product offering, as well as more upscale services and products that can meet other needs within that company.

Keep in mind that as you expand your presence among various contacts associated with your main contact, there will be additional opportunities to begin the same process as outlined by the Profit Funnel with them. In addition, you will find that your clients are more than happy to act as references for you once you have provided them with multiple offerings that are doing a great job for them.

Anticipate Needs that may Happen Infrequently

You may have some high level services or products that will make a great impact on something your customer does once or twice a year. This is where your rapport with your client has come in handy. You know about these opportunities because you are trusted.

As you become aware of these chances to get involved with your high level offerings, make sure to demonstrate the value that you bring to the table. It is not just that you can save them more money, and most likely in these cases a great deal of money. You also can offer them at least as good and most likely better, than they have made do with in times past.

Keep in mind that though these high ticket chances may not come your way every month, the fact is that people remember when you had a hand in making them shine to their constituency at a critical moment.

Thus, if you offered consulting services that helped your client organize a successful week long conference with persons coming from all fifty states to attend, your client will remember you very fondly and you will no doubt be called upon to provide those same services next year.

Above All, Deliver What You Promise

Always keep in mind that all the goodwill that you have built up as you moved through the low ticket to mid ticket and finally high ticket offerings can be blown completely away with one simple failure to deliver what you promised.

There used to be a saying in the movie industry about a director – he was only as good as his last picture. That is also often the case with vendors who supply goods and services as well.

You can avoid disappointing your clients by making sure you do not promise them anything that cannot be delivered immediately. Far too often, salespersons say, “yes, we can do that” knowing full well there is nothing in place currently to deliver.

The result is that those that are backing you may or may not be able to come up with a solution. If they can't you have torpedoed your reputation with your customer, destroyed any hope of getting good word of mouth that could have opened doors for you elsewhere, and probably damaged the reputation of your company right along with your personal reputation.

Be honest about what you can provide and stay away from promising that which you know you don't have in place right now.

A Final Word about the Profit Funnel

The concept of the Profit Funnel provides a common sense approach to selling. You start at this point and continue to build on that success. But don't get the idea that you take one company through the funnel and you are done with them. Over and over again, you can use the Profit Funnel to create new contacts within an existing client, perhaps at different locations or different departments.

You may even be at several points simultaneously with one single contact, as you identify more and more opportunities within the realm of his authority. By keeping the model of the Profit Funnel in mind, you will never find yourself in the rut of going only after the lowest hanging fruit on the tree.

You will scoop up that fruit of course. But you will also continue to reach upward as you progress from one level to the next, maximizing the time and assets of your customer, making a profit for your company, and getting an ever nicer commission for yourself.

In the end, you are in complete control of developing your persona ideal profit strategy. No matter what your product or service offerings, chances are they fit the mode of the Profit Funnel. Incorporate the concept into your profit strategy and use the Funnel as a way to measure your current level of success.

You will find it an excellent tool for helping you to stay on track as you reach for your goals.

Assignment:

Start researching and planning your own sales funnel.

- Who will be your target audience?
- What do your competitors' funnels look like? Where can you improve?
- Use a mindmap tool, paper, or other format to draw out the components you want to put in your own funnel. Refer to the **Sample Email Sales Funnel** mindmap to help you plan.

What Are the Best Types of Opt-in Offers?

The opt-in offer is the entry-point of your sales funnel. This is a free product or service that entices the visitors to your site to sign up for your mailing list. Most people are reluctant to give away their name and email address for nothing more than the promise of quality content. Your opt-in offer is an incentive for doing so.

When considering what type of product to offer as an opt-in incentive, you have several options.

EBooks and Reports

EBooks and reports are some of the easiest products for you to create. An eBook is a PDF that can be viewed on any computer. A report is a short eBook that can be as few as seven to ten pages, as long as it helps the reader solve a specific problem. Aside from reports and eBooks, your PDF could be a resource guide, a mind map, a detailed info-graphic, or some other format that organizes information and/or makes it easier for people to digest.

Training Courses

Online training courses (or eCourses) are segmented courses that come with educational aids such as worksheets, note-taking sheets, chapter summaries, and so on. An eCourse guides the reader, step by step, through the process of solving a problem. An eCourse can be presented in PDF format or by using a series of emails, videos, or audios. You can offer it online, by download, via your blog, or as installments sent via email.

Apps and Free Software

Software programs also make excellent opt-in offers, especially because of their high perceived value. With the rise of mobile devices, mobile apps have become increasingly popular. These are small software programs that help users do something through the use of their mobile devices (usually smartphones). The great thing about this software is that people will use it often, which keeps you continually on their radar.

Free Trials

Free trials are offers that let prospects try out your service for a limited time. Without giving away your full product, people get a true taste of the value you offer. A free trial could be a limited-time membership to a paid website, a limited-time use of your service, or a free trial of a software program.

The Elements of an Excellent Opt-in Offer

People love free stuff! However, if their interest is to continue, even a free product offer must deliver results. It has to be irresistible to your target market and solve an urgent problem for them. Your offer needs to be something unique that people won't find at the same quality and value anywhere else. This is especially important considering your competitors are trying to target the same traffic that you are.

It can also help your cause if your opt-in incentive is a limited-time offer, because this adds urgency to the deal. The customer is afraid that if they wait too long, they may lose the chance to take advantage of the offer.

Finally, since your offer is the main thing that draws in your customers, it needs to be visible everywhere possible. Create a landing page for your offer and also put it on the sidebar of your blog and any other relevant sites. If it's just what your readers are looking for, they will become subscribers.

Assignment:

Brainstorm different opt-in offers for the start of your funnel and identify the one you will use. Use the **Opt-In and Product Offers Brainstorming Worksheet** to take notes.

- What specific needs does your market have?
- Which one can you solve that is directly related to the products or services of your business?
- What format makes the most sense for fulfilling the need you identified?
- How will you create your offer? You can create your opt-in offer from scratch, get a ghostwriter or developer to do it for you, or even use PLR as your base.

The Entrance to Your Sales Funnel – The Squeeze Page

Your squeeze page is absolutely critical because it is the entryway to your sales funnel. In fact, it works something like a sales funnel in itself – it draws the attention of your visitors with a good headline that identifies a problem, leads the visitor down the page with its compelling copy, and then calls them to action by giving them the sign-up form for future communication.

Selling Your Freebie

What many marketers don't understand is that in order to sell your free offer, you still have to advertise and promote it. It's natural to assume that everybody jumps all over an offer of free stuff, but it doesn't often work that way. First of all, there is already a great deal of free content out there. Why would customers want yours over someone else's? But even more importantly, they 'pay' for that offer with their name and email address. People do not easily give out that private information any longer.

Features and Benefits

An important part of the squeeze page is the features of your product. It's best to list the features as bullet points so they're easy to scan and read. In addition to describing each feature, be sure to tell the reader exactly how this feature will benefit them. In other words, don't simply list the features and expect them to fill in the blanks. After all, it is the benefit to the prospect that resonates with them on an emotional level.

For example, if you're offering an Internet security information product that explains the most common ways websites get hacked, add that this keeps your site safe so that you can rest easy at night.

Social Proof

Social proof refers to testimonials and reviews from other people who have previously claimed your offer. These endorsements add a great deal of credibility to your product. While they're not absolutely essential, they help entice people to sign up. Even if your deal is not a freebie, you might want to consider initially giving away your product to the first

few people who take advantage of your offer. Then you can use these positive product reviews to further promote your product.

Audio and Video

A short audio or video clip also helps to promote and sell your free offer. It can be something as simple as you saying hello and talking about how your offer will help the customer. This adds a personal touch, lends credibility, and gives people another way to digest your content.

Call to Action

The call to action is the section that tells people to do themselves a favor and sign up now. Your call to action should be interspersed with your content, as well as placed at the bottom of the page. It should also be placed near the top of the page, above the fold, so that those who don't need much convincing can sign up for it immediately.

Simple Is Best

Keep your squeeze page clean and simple or you'll risk losing prospects before you've had a chance to communicate anything. There should be no fluff and no distractions. This includes no superfluous outgoing links and no extra, unrelated content. Design your page so that there's just one thing prospects can do – sign up.

Your squeeze page should make bold claims about what you're offering the visitor. However, your offer has to deliver. If it doesn't, the recipients of the offer won't be satisfied and they'll be less likely to buy from you in the future, even if your offer is exactly what they need.

Assignment:

- Look around at squeeze pages that you like and note which aspects you want to use on your own. Look at your biggest competitors' squeeze pages for ideas of what already works.
- Write out the copy for your page, especially the features and benefits of your opt-in offer.

- Who will create your squeeze page? You can get someone on a place like Fiverr.com to actually create your squeeze page. Or, you can use a special squeeze page tool like Optimize Press or a squeeze page plugin.

What Are One-Time Offers and How Do They Work?

A one-time offer is an excellent way to qualify prospects early on in your sales funnel. It's most commonly an offer that you make to prospects as soon as they've shown interest in you by opting in to your email list. It's often a deeply discounted product or even another freebie. What makes it a 'one-time' offer is that it's only available for them right at that moment. As soon as prospects click away, the offer expires. One-time offers are also called OTOs.

Why One-Time Offers Work

One-time offers work because they add urgency. The visitor has to buy it right now or it won't be available again. It's an exclusive deal. OTOs also play upon the idea of scarcity. Since the offer is exclusive, this raises its value in the prospect's mind. They feel as if they are privy to something others are not. For prospects who are on the fence about taking advantage of the offer, the scarcity factor knocks them off that fence and right towards that "buy it now" button.

The Mechanics of a One-Time Offer

One way to implement OTOs is to present it to prospects immediately after they've shown interest. You can do this by redirecting them to your OTO on the next page they see after they sign up for your list or make a purchase.

By showing people your offer before they have even finished the opt-in process, your prospects are even more likely to grab the OTO because of what's called compliance. They have already accepted one offer from you, so they are much more likely to comply with your second request. They are also still focused on the benefits you have to offer and haven't been distracted by the freebie itself.

This strategy also works brilliantly for qualifying prospects. After you've given people a freebie, you can then offer them something at a low price. If they don't take advantage of the second offer, you know that they're probably only after the freebie. These prospects are less likely to make any future purchases.

The Exit Pop-up

Another strategy for OTOs is to use an exit pop-up. This is a pop-up window that appears when the visitor leaves the page. It says something like, 'Are you sure you want to pass up on this special one-time offer?' Although many visitors ignore these pop-ups and close them immediately, there are those who will take the time to read and act on them, especially if the copy is compelling and the offer is good.

OTOs for Your Email Subscribers

Another great strategy for using one-time offers is to send them to your email subscribers. Occasionally, make your subscribers offers that need to be acted upon quickly. You can then gradually increase the price of these offers in later emails. This naturally leads your qualified prospects to your back-end products.

When creating your one-time offers, keep in mind that they don't always need to be profitable for you. OTOs are often used as just one element of a sales funnel. They may simply get people to subscribe to your list or help you build a trusting relationship with your customers. Think of this as a way to lead customers through your sales funnel and qualify them. The high-ticket items you offer at the back-end, further down the funnel, are what will earn you the profits.

Assignment:

Brainstorm different one-time offers and identify one you can use in your funnel. Use the **Opt-In and Product Offers Brainstorming Worksheet** to take notes.

- Which offers are most relevant to your opt-in freebie?
- Which ones add the most value to your offer?
- Do you even want to have a OTO?
- Where will your OTO appear? E.g., on the thank-you page, download page, or as a pop-up?

- Where will you find your OTO? You don't have to create your one time offer, but can use something you already have instead.

Email Follow-ups – What to Send Your List

Getting people to sign up on your list is an important first step, but it's only the beginning of a successful sales funnel. Now you have to successfully market to them and transform them from prospects into customers. The point of an email list is to build relationships with your subscribers and qualify them. You need to keep in touch with them by continually offering a steady flow of new content and offers.

Fulfilling Your Promises

What should you give your subscribers? You should give them everything you promised them on your opt-in page. This may seem obvious, but it's a very important point. Your squeeze page makes bold promises that you need to deliver on. You should be continually sending your subscribers helpful hints, news on current events, exclusive content, special offers, and any other valuable information that will help them.

Keep Your Messages Relevant

Once you have subscribers on your list, you may be tempted to send them a variety of promotions. However, you really need to stick to only content that's relevant to what you initially promised. In other words, give them only what they signed up for.

If you send people content that's not directly related or that seems like it is coming out of left field, it could cause people to become disconnected and you'll most likely lose that prospect. This is especially true regarding promotions. Your promotions need to be laser-targeted to your audience. If you promote things that are irrelevant, your customer may feel as if you're trying to take advantage of them.

Content vs. Promotions

As a rule of thumb, you should be sending out a higher volume of valuable content relative to promotions. Over-promoting may feel like spam to them, even if you're offering good deals. It will seem like you only keep in touch when you want something from them. Think

of your email marketing campaign as a way to help your subscribers gain information, with occasional promotions being thrown in less frequently (with the purpose of eventually leading people to your back-end offers).

Listening to Your List

What kind of helpful content should you send out to your list of subscribers? You can find out by listening to them and paying attention to their needs. Your prospects and customers will tell you exactly what they need if you know how to do this correctly. You should research your market by connecting to them on social media sites, participating on forums, and reading blog comments. You can also come right out and survey your email list directly.

Further Freebies

As you market to your list, keep the freebies and good deals coming. Like your promotions, mix them in with the regular content you're offering. It's important that you continue giving your subscribers valuable content as you are nurturing the relationship. If you build strong relationships now, it will translate to sales later. This is what's called the 'wow' factor – exceeding people's expectations so that they absolutely love you and can't help but come back to your site.

How Much Is Too Much?

It's tricky to know how often you should email your list. Different niches, as well as different lists within a niche, respond differently. Emailing every day may be a bit too much for some markets. Two or three times a week is usually the minimum frequency. The only way to know for sure is to experiment. Try different frequencies as well as different times of the day in order to monitor your response rate.

Moreover, make sure you stay consistent in the frequency with which you email your list. Don't mail 5 times one week, then forget to email for then two weeks. People will forget who you are and might think they're suddenly getting spam emails.

Planning Your Follow-ups

Use all of the tools available to plan your follow-ups. It is best to have your entire email campaign mapped out before you launch it. Use mind maps, spreadsheets, and other tools to create a long-term plan. Never attempt to wing it, except for the occasional time-sensitive content.

Assignment:

Use the email planning worksheet or another tool to plan out the topics for at least 7 emails in your follow-up series.

- Make sure you have several emails that first provide valuable content that's relevant to your opt-in freebie, before you pitch a product or service.
- Use the P.S. area to refer subscribers to a resource or remind them of an earlier offer or valuable piece of information.

What Products Should You Promote in Your Follow-ups?

Follow-up emails to your subscriber list are all about building relationships and qualifying them as buyers. They're also the best way to actually convert your prospects to customers. The offers you decide to make to those on your list are extremely important in the conversion process and should be chosen very carefully.

Relevance Is Key

What makes a good product offer? A good product is one that is relevant to your target market. It should be directly related to the reason they signed up for your list in the first place. It solves their problems and addresses their needs. It's something they can put into use almost immediately.

If you offer something that isn't related or appropriate for those on your list, it will undoubtedly turn off your subscribers. To them, you're simply marketing whatever products you can because you got ahold of their name and email address. These irrelevant products will not build relationships nor generate sales. In the end, it will probably cost you subscribers.

Where to Find Products

You have two options when it comes to promoting products. You can use your own products or affiliate products. Obviously, the best products to offer are your own. These are products that are truly exclusive to your list and since you created them yourself, you know that they are of high quality and relevant to your customers. They'll also result in the highest profit margins since you're getting the full price of the product, rather than just a commission.

Offering affiliate products is a much easier way to go about selling to your list because you don't have to create the products yourself. However, you have to take the time to check and make sure your affiliate partners are offering high quality products.

You can search for affiliate products to promote by using an online marketplace such as ClickBank.com. Use the advanced search function and keywords relevant to your niche. Check out various vendors before considering their products. Choose only vendors that have a good reputation. Look for products that have high sales and few refunds. Affiliate networks offer all of these statistics.

Stand by Your Products

If you try to pass off just one bad product on your list, you may lose a good number of your subscribers. You'll lose that trust that you worked so hard to build in the first place. For this reason, every product you offer needs to be something you can stand behind.

The best way to make sure an affiliate offer is worthy is to buy the product and try it out yourself so that you know exactly what the product is all about. Another advantage of doing this is that your promotional content will be based on personal experience and you can speak from the heart when you discuss it.

Many or Few?

There is a great debate amongst marketers about whether it's better to offer many different products to your list, or whether it's best to focus on just a handful. Offering a number of products is perfectly acceptable, so long as they're outstanding products that provide what your subscribers want. However, always remember that one bad product or experience can ruin your list. The advantage of focusing on just a few products is that they're safer and much easier to promote.

Assignment:

Brainstorm or research offers you can promote in your follow-up series.

- Look through your own products and service offerings.
- Browse through Clickbank or other affiliate networks for ideas.
- Look at programs or people you are already an affiliate for.
- Revise the email series you planned in your last step if necessary.

Is Your Sales Funnel Working for You?

For a sales funnel to be effective and efficient, it needs to be carefully tracked and measured. In fact, tracking and measuring is the most important thing you'll do in your entire sales process. When you monitor each part of your funnel, you can see exactly what's working and what isn't, and what areas of the funnel need to be tightened up.

Traffic Sources

The entry point of your sales funnel is your landing page and its success depends upon traffic. You need to know how much traffic you are getting and where it's coming from. Traffic sources could be social media, SEO, paid ads, or referring sources. Always monitor your traffic statistics. When a source isn't pulling its weight, tweak it or drop it. Try to focus on sources that are bringing in a great deal of traffic compared to the time and money you spend on it.

Your Opt-in Conversion Rate

Your opt-in conversion rate tells you how many of the visitors to your page who see your offer actually take you up on it. This is an important statistic, because it tells you whether or not your landing page is working. If the conversion rate is low, consider spicing up your offer by improving the copy, offering something better, or making it a one-time only or limited-time offer. Start with tweaking your headline before you change anything else.

Testing Landing Pages

A tried and true method to tweak landing pages is to split-test. This means creating several different pages and seeing which one performs best. You can then analyze the best performing page to figure out why it works and apply this information to future pages as well.

Start by testing just one element on two or more different versions of the same page so you can be sure to compare apples to apples. Otherwise, you won't know what is actually working.

Site Activity

Monitoring your analytics will tell you what people are doing when they hit your site. You can discover how much time they spend on each page and what they click on. Bounce rate is a statistic that tells you how many visitors hit your site and when they leave it. When people don't spend much time on your page it could mean the copy isn't compelling enough to keep them or that your traffic sources aren't relevant to your offer. For example, you don't want an article you've written on mastering social media to lead to a landing page for a guide to blogging.

Sales on Back-end Offers

Keep tabs on sales figures for your back-end offers. If they're not selling like they should be, something may be wrong within your funnel. Identify the spots where you're losing prospects. You may also need to add more small ticket offers throughout the funnel to better qualify your subscribers.

Email Conversions

You can monitor conversion rates for your email promotions as well. If you are offering your subscribers the relevant products that they want and need, you should have a healthy conversion rate. Whenever you try out new offers, drop the ones that aren't converting. Look for areas in the funnel where there are many unsubscribers.

Tools to Help You Monitor

There are a number of tools available to help you monitor the effectiveness of your sales funnel. One of the most comprehensive is Google Analytics. This is a free program that measures traffic sources, time spent on site, bounce rate, and a whole host of other stats. Professional squeeze or sales page themes should offer other data as well. In addition, there are specific tracking software tools you can install and use to create separate tracking links for different campaigns.

For email analytics, autoresponder programs offer a wide range of stats to tell you how well your email marketing is going. They measure open rates, sign-ups, demographic information, and unsubscribe rates.

Social media measurement tools, such as Hootsuite, monitor your traffic and activity on social media. They can help you search and analyze discussions, as well as gather data on your followers. A good social media tool offers a dashboard where you can manage all of your different profiles at once.

Your Monitoring Routine

Monitoring is an ongoing task that must be done regularly. Divide your monitoring tasks into categories based on frequency; for example, you might have daily monitoring tasks, weekly monitoring tasks, monthly monitoring tasks, and so on. Every few months, set aside an afternoon for in-depth monitoring over a longer period of time.

Assignment:

Identify the elements of your sales funnel that you will be measuring.

- What will you measure at each stage of your sales funnel? You can refer to your map of the funnel and note the measures next to each component.
- What tools will you use for those measures, i.e. where will you find the data?
- If you already have a funnel in place, look at those measures and identify places you can improve.

The Best Tools for Creating a Sales Funnel

When it comes to creating the perfect sales funnel, you don't have to do everything yourself. There are special tools that can help to make it easier to automate, integrate, and analyze. There are three types of tools that are useful for your sales funnel – tools for creating sales pages, tools for following up with customers, and tools for selling your product.

Squeeze Page Tools

Professional tools that help you create and manage squeeze pages include the Optimize Press Wordpress theme, the Profits Theme for Wordpress, and the Premise plugin for Wordpress, to name just a few. They offer design templates that make creating squeeze and sales pages much easier. This speeds up the process so that you can make multiple pages for multiple campaigns, or split-test one campaign with several versions of the same page. The elements are there and you simply plug in your individual content.

These tools are designed to integrate easily with your autoresponder and make your email marketing faster and smoother. They also come with built-in SEO features to take over some of the work of optimizing your site. There are even other tools that make your site compatible for mobiles and for creating membership sites.

Email Marketing Tools

The most important tool for email marketing is a professional system called [Constant Contact](#). In fact, it's impossible to market through email without it. This program manage sign-ups, organize your subscribers, send your broadcast messages to subscribers, and track the results of your campaigns.

Tools to Help You Sell

A number of different software products help by automating the sales process. The most popular of these are shopping cart systems that are used by ecommerce websites such as

PayPal Buttons, 1ShoppingCart, Volusion, and Shopify. They take orders so that you don't have to. You simply load the program with the data it needs and it's ready to take orders. There are software programs that you download and run from your computer, as well as web-based services.

There are also measurement tools that help you estimate the ROI of your campaign. To use these programs, you enter the relevant data and they crunch the numbers for you. This is one of the most difficult aspects of running a business if you are not trained in finance.

Shopping Around

Most quality programs come at a premium price and many are not cheap at all. However, making the decision to purchase these tools is a serious investment that will save you time and allow your business to scale up. When traffic starts increasing, they will make it much easier to handle your growing business. By automating a number of essential tasks, these tools prevent you from having to outsource or hire staff to help.

Because these tools cost a good deal of money, you should always shop around before buying. Take advantage of free trials to see how they work and whether or not you like using them. Read software reviews and comments on forums to decide which tools best suit your given needs.

Assignment:

- What tools are you currently using in your sales funnel?
- If you're just starting out, what tools do you need to acquire?
- Start doing your research and getting recommendations. Select the ones that look easiest to use for a beginner.
- Do a final review of your Sales Funnel Planning Worksheet to make sure you have everything in place for a successful funnel. And start taking action!

*Contact me if you need clarity
around your existing marketing
funnel and how you would like it to
work to increase your business
income.*

*Jennifer Henczel
Marketing Motivator
www.marketingmotivator.com*