

Module 7: Developing the AI Business Strategy using the "Ignition" Process

Lesson 4: Marketing Strategy

Decoding Strategic Decision-Making in Marketing

Who are you selling to, what are you selling them, and what makes you different from your competitors?

These may seem like a silly question to ask, but you'll be surprised by how loose the answers are when talking to most leadership teams.

These are ultimately the questions you need to answer during the Ignition Process. With these answers, you can precisely calibrate your marketing efforts to get a better effect from marketing messaging, marketing ad creative, email newsletters, sales conversations, and more.

This lesson isn't intended to make you a marketing expert, but rather to educate you on what information you'll need during the Ignition event and how to pull that information out of the leadership team.

Who Are You Selling To?

Understanding your target market is a high priority for business and marketing strategy.

By identifying the specific group of people you'd like to serve (aka Your Ideal Customer Profile or Ideal Customer Avatar), you can optimize your product offerings and marketing campaigns to attract buyers.

Knowing its target market enables the company to deploy its marketing resources and budget with much better precision, communicate its value proposition to that target effectively, and ultimately, drive growth and profitability because they're bringing in more prospects who match the Ideal Customer Profile.

During this step in the AI Ignition Process, it is critical to remind the leadership team that successful marketing isn't just about casting a wide net; **it's about accuracy.**

It's about finding the right people at the right time with the right message.

A common misconception is: "If my product is for everyone, I'll attract more customers." It seems logical, but it's not. A company's marketing resources and budget are finite, and trying to market to everyone results in inefficient and unoptimized marketing efforts. Simply put, you can't sell to everyone.

As Dan S. Kennedy says, "When you market to EVERYONE, you market to NO ONE."

Here's that scenario: imagine you're in a room filled with people. You start shouting, trying to get everyone's attention. Some people might hear you, but many will ignore you or your voice will just get lost in the din.

This is what happens when you try to market to everyone. Your message becomes diluted, ignored, and less impactful, drowned out by the "noise."

However, if you walk into that room knowing *exactly* who you need to speak to, *exactly* what their needs are, and *exactly* how to solve their problems, you could walk straight up to them, start a conversation that resonates, and quickly get their buy-in.

It's the same when your company dedicates its efforts to a specific client avatar that it knows well. It's more likely your marketing messaging will match those avatars' pain points and see a better return on your marketing investments. Because the reality is not everyone will be interested in your product or service. And that's okay. It's actually highly desired. Focusing your marketing efforts on a specific group of people most likely to become your customers is far more effective. These are the people who need your product, can afford it, and are willing to buy it.

So, instead of trying to appeal to everyone, aim to help the leadership team understand their Ideal Customer Avatar intimately. Make your marketing message about them, their needs, and how your product or service can solve their problem or fulfill their desire.

The most successful businesses deeply understand their target market.

They know their problems, motivations, interests, etc. And then, those companies create offerings that directly solve their avatar's problems and speak to those motivations and interests. It becomes easier to craft a marketing message that lands with the avatar.

What Are You Selling Them?

Like the target market concept, we want you to target your products. Your customers are telling you what they want, either directly or indirectly.

In preparation for your Ignition, have the company provide the leadership team input from their customer service channels and online reviews, looking for patterns of features or services being requested or pain points that can be addressed with a new feature.

Suggest the product team follow the conversations on social media where their customer avatar is present so the product team can provide the leadership team with intel on what those groups are saying, wanting, and complaining about.

Have the marketing team subscribe to industry newsletters and join trade organizations to know the trends in the marketplace. Read Amazon.com reviews of your competitors' products (and your own). Don't just assume you know what your customers want.

Similarly, pay attention to buying habits.

During the Ignition Process, ask what products are being returned or subscriptions canceled. What are the common complaints or reasons why the buyer made those decisions? Identify what the customers were hoping to get from your products but didn't receive, and either adjust the product or adjust the marketing so that people know exactly what to expect.

Finally, where are you seeing a profit? Closely review how each product affects your bottom line, not just revenue. In your sessions with the leadership team, have them identify which products or services are most profitable. Do you need the others as loss leaders, or can you focus your resources on the earners?

You may find that 20% of the marketing budget is spent on a product that converts well but has a low net profit yield. And once discovered, a redeployment of that marketing budget can be assigned to your best sellers with the highest profit margins.



What Makes a Company Different from Its Competitors?

Verne Harnish of Scaling Up refers to what he calls *Brand Promises*. Gino Wickman of the Entrepreneurial Operating System, or EOS, calls it *the Three Uniques*. Go ahead and call this whatever resonates with you. But come up with a term for what makes you stand out in the marketplace so the company has a shared language.

Here's how we extract the characteristics that distinguish a company from its competitors:

Kill, Keep, Combine.

This exercise comes from Gino Wickman's book on business strategy, *Get a Grip*. With the leadership team, identify all the characteristics that define the company. Similar to how we created, then distilled, the list of core values, do the same process here.

Once the characteristics have been listed, identify what is unquestionably a characteristic of the company (**keep**), what can be categorized as important but not essential (**kill**), and what characteristics are similar enough that they can be grouped (**combine**). This can be a tough but necessary step. *If everything feels essential, nothing is truly essential.*

Now, looking at the list of what's left over after Kill/Keep/Combine, identify three that, when combined, will create distinction in the marketplace. These are the defining features that set your business apart. There might be one or two characteristics that your competitors can claim, but no one else can say they have those three qualities.

It is the COMBINATION of the three characteristics that make up your "Three Uniques." Ideally, They should be simple, specific, and deeply integrated into your business's practices and culture.

Let's explore examples of "Three Uniques" for an e-commerce business, a law firm, and a PR agency:

1. AfricaFirst (eCommerce Business)

Unique Product Selection: The e-commerce business offers a curated selection of niche products that are hard to find elsewhere. They focus on sourcing unique and innovative items that cater to a specific target audience.



Personalized Shopping Experience: The company provides a highly customized shopping journey using AI-driven recommendations and personalized product suggestions based on customer preferences and past behavior.

Fast and Reliable Shipping: The business distinguishes itself by offering lightning-fast shipping and reliable delivery options, ensuring customers receive their orders promptly, and contributing to a positive customer experience.

2. Dewey, Cheatem & Howe Law Firm

Industry-Specific Expertise: The law firm specializes exclusively in a specific industry, such as technology startups. This deep specialization allows them to provide legal solutions tailored to the unique challenges and needs of businesses in that industry.

Transparent Pricing: The firm is known for its transparent pricing structure, providing clients with detailed cost breakdowns for various legal services. This approach eliminates surprises and fosters trust between the firm and its clients.

Strategic Business Partnership: Beyond legal counsel, the law firm positions itself as a strategic partner, helping clients navigate legal challenges while aligning their legal strategy with broader business goals.

3. Solaris Communications (PR Agency)

Media Relationships: The PR agency boasts an extensive network of media contacts and established relationships with journalists, ensuring clients receive significant media coverage in top-tier publications.

Storytelling Expertise: The agency excels at crafting compelling narratives and storytelling, enabling it to turn even complex or technical subjects into engaging and newsworthy stories that resonate with the target audience.

Measurable Results: What sets this agency apart is its commitment to measuring and quantifying the impact of PR efforts. They provide clients with detailed reports on media impressions, reach, and other key metrics, demonstrating the tangible value of their services.



In these examples, the "Three Uniques" are the distinct qualities that set the business apart in its industry.

Having all of these unique attributes becomes a central part of the company's brand identity and value proposition, allowing them to attract and retain their ideal customers while gaining a competitive edge by being clear about what they are advantage by being clear on what they are and what they are not, experts at.

These named characteristics can now drive your marketing strategy and align your marketing team behind the characteristics they should focus on when communicating with your avatar. They should be highlighted in your marketing, sales calls, social media, content...everywhere. They don't necessarily need always to be messaged as a package, but all three should be attributes of the company's brand.

Now that you've identified **who your market is, what you're selling them, and what makes you different from the competition**, it's time to figure out your BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal), which we'll do in the next lesson.