Session 8:

The Full Prospecting and Follow-up Sequence

NOTE: If you haven't already, watch the roadmap recap video included on this session's page before continuing with this week's audio lesson.

In this final lesson, we're going to tie the B2B Biz Launcher roadmap together. We'll start with a discussion of what to do when you land a client. We'll then discuss what to do if you don't land your first client sometime in the next few weeks. And we'll wrap up with some final thoughts and next steps.

You've Landed a Client ... Now What?

There are few things that are more professionally gratifying than landing your first paying client. It's an amazing feeling and accomplishment—and it's important that you celebrate the occasion in a way that's meaningful to you.

Landing your first couple of clients is not about the money. It's about the opportunity and the boost in confidence it will give you. It's more of a symbolic win than anything else. So think of your first client win as the most important thing that could happen in your business *... because it really is!*

Something I've learned in my years of freelancing is that clients (especially B2B clients) want to have a trusted and dependable go-to writer. They don't have the time or desire to shop around or to keep switching from one writer to the next. The cost of bringing someone new on board is just too great, in terms of time, resources and potential mistakes.

So be willing to invest all the time and energy you can into this new client opportunity. Don't shortchange the client, because the only one who loses when you do that is you. Here are some ideas on how to create a true win/win with your new client.

Delight Them. If you enter each relationship with an attitude of doing an amazing job—of truly *delighting* that client—you will have just made a client for life. Because even if your main contact leaves that company, the chances of him taking you to his next company are sky-high.

How can you delight your clients? Here are just some of the ways:

- Always meet your deadlines
- Always do what you say you're going to do
- Keep them updated on your progress, even when they don't ask
- Be a real pleasure to work with
- Be pleasant and professional ... always (and don't complain)
- When problems arise, work with them to get them resolved
- Bring ideas to the table; give them more than what they asked for
- Develop personal relationships with your contacts; take them out to coffee or lunch if they're local.

Get to Know Them Personally. I have a client who, for a number of years, took me out to dinner every December. It started out by me taking him out to a steak dinner. But over the last two years of our working relationship, he picked up the tab. We became good friends and we've stayed in touch since then.

Am I suggesting that you should become buddies with all your clients? Not at all. But if you strive to serve them in all the ways I've just mentioned, don't be surprised if you get invited to dinner, or to drinks, or to their company Christmas party. That's when you know you've become much more than a writer. You're now a trusted partner.

Take a Real Interest in Their Businesses. Also, make it a point to take an interest in your clients' businesses. A few years ago I was talking casually with a client about some of the big accounts he and his company were trying to land. As I listened to him, I realized that I personally knew someone who was an 18-year executive at Home Depot, one of those target companies.

So I called up my friend and set up a conference call. In that call, my friend was able to provide my client with invaluable insight into Home Depot (including the names of some key decision-makers). Needless to say, my client was very appreciative of this gesture. They recognized that I had gone above and beyond for them.

Go Deeper. Once you grow more familiar with your client's business and you've built up a decent track record with your main contact, it's okay to ask, "Are there any other people in your company who might have writing projects they need help with?"

If your contact mentions someone else, ask to be introduced! So if your contact says, *"Well, Sandra Thompson is our public relations person, and she might be able to use your services,"* all you need to say is, *"That's great! Would you mind introducing me to her?"*

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Ask for Referrals. Besides asking for internal referrals, you should also ask for referrals outside of the client's organization. The way I do this is when I'm praised. For instance, say I just wrapped up my third project with a client and my contact tells me how impressed she and her team were with my work, I'll respond with something along these lines:

> *"Wow, thank you, Sarah! I really appreciate that feedback. You know, I've been meaning to ask you: Can you think of one or two colleagues outside of ABC Company who could benefit from my __________ services? Much of my work is referral-based, and I'm always looking for good clients."*

Why this approach works:

- The client is in a positive state of mind regarding your work. So she's more likely to agree to this kind of request.
- I asked for just one or two referrals; I didn't make this an open-ended request.
- I focused the request on a specific type of project. Yes, I can do many other things, but it's easier for people to think of someone when you're specific.
- I said that much of my work is referral based. And what I'm implying here is that I depend on referrals to keep my business healthy, and I would really appreciate her help. This increases the chances that she'll help me.

Do NOT offer discounts or other incentives for getting referrals. I've found that this approach does more damage than good. It sends the wrong signal and can easily backfire.

Suggest Other Projects. Another way to go deeper with clients is to suggest other things you may be able to help them with. I've found that too often clients hire you for one thing and they just assume that's all that you do. They don't realize that there are many other projects you could help them with.

So once you have a couple of projects under your belt with a client—and once you've received good feedback—ask them about what comes next in their marketing pipeline. That will often spark a conversation that will give you a chance to make some suggestions or offer some additional services.

Sometimes you don't even need to ask. You'll just know, based on the work you've done, that there will be additional work required.

The more work you do for a client, the more efficient you'll become writing their content (because you'll already have most of the background information you need). And as you keep your fees fixed, that means your internal hourly rate will go up, because you'll be able to get the same fee while spending less time writing that document.

Also, the more work you do for them, the more indispensable you become. If you've been working for a client for two years, think about all the knowledge you've accumulated on their company, their products, their customers, their market. It would cost them too much time, money and energy to hire another writer!

You Have NOT Landed a Client ... Now What?

You've sent out 100 warm emails in batches of 10, but you haven't landed a client yet. What should you do?

First, keep in mind that it takes time to land a client. So even if you've been hard at work and sent your first 100 warm emails in one week, don't expect something to happen immediately. It takes time for prospects to respond. And it takes time to take interested respondents to a phone conversation and to becoming a client.

#1: Follow Up With Non-respondents

The first thing you'll want to do is follow up with every prospect who didn't reply to your warm email. Do this about *two weeks after sending your original warm email*. Here's the best way to do this:

1) Go to your "Sent" folder in your email application
2) Find the warm email you sent your prospect
3) Click "Forward"
4) Add some new copy about another core differentiator
5) Ask again if he/she would like to connect
6) Hit "Send"

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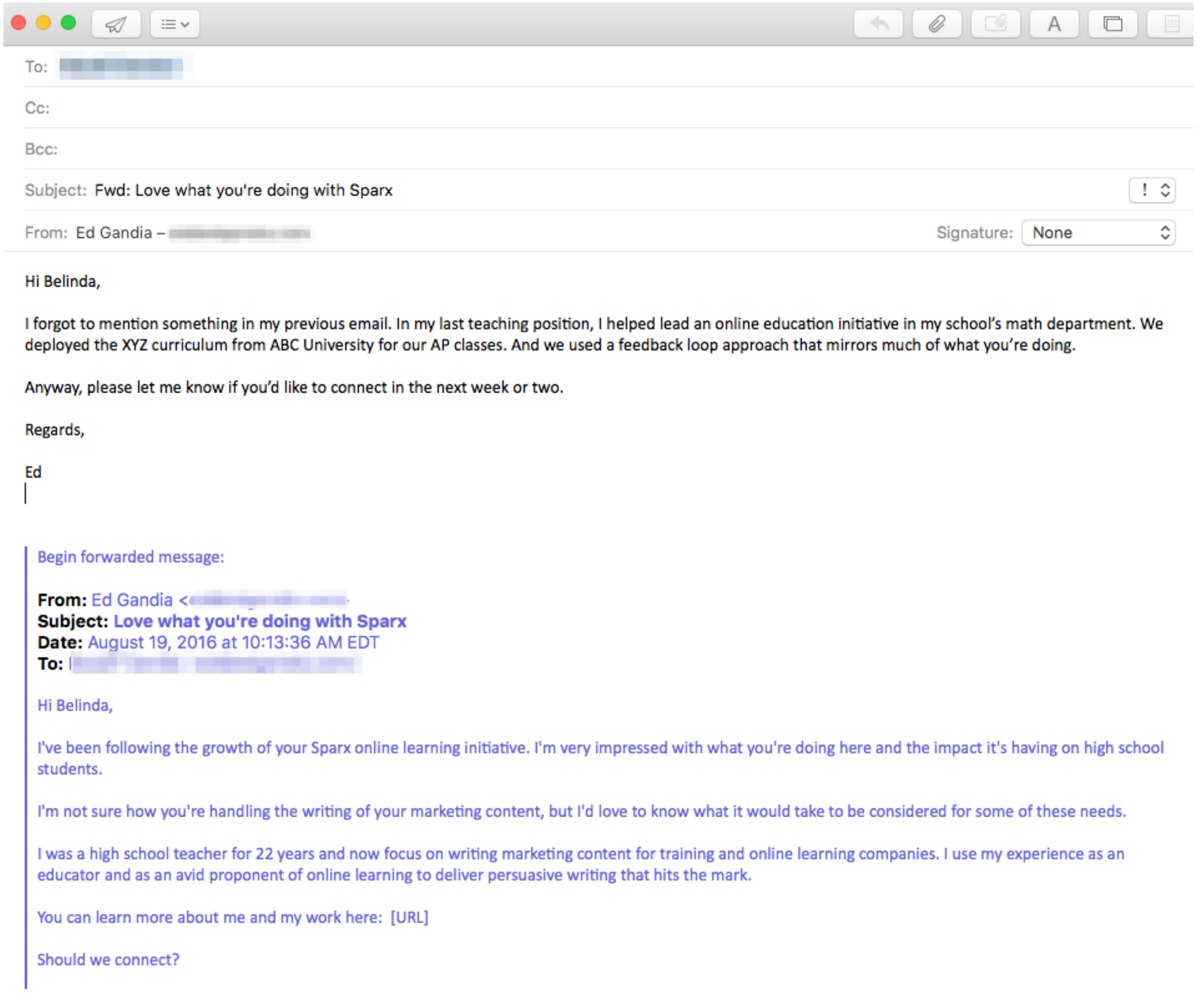
To: [redacted]

Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Fwd: Love what you're doing with Sparx

From: Ed Gandia – [redacted]   Signature: None

Hi Belinda,

I forgot to mention something in my previous email. In my last teaching position, I helped lead an online education initiative in my school's math department. We deployed the XYZ curriculum from ABC University for our AP classes. And we used a feedback loop approach that mirrors much of what you're doing.

Anyway, please let me know if you'd like to connect in the next week or two.

Regards,

Ed

> Begin forwarded message:
>
> **From:** Ed Gandia <[redacted]
> **Subject:** **Love what you're doing with Sparx**
> **Date:** August 19, 2016 at 10:13:36 AM EDT
> **To:** [redacted]
>
> Hi Belinda,
>
> I've been following the growth of your Sparx online learning initiative. I'm very impressed with what you're doing here and the impact it's having on high school students.
>
> I'm not sure how you're handling the writing of your marketing content, but I'd love to know what it would take to be considered for some of these needs.
>
> I was a high school teacher for 22 years and now focus on writing marketing content for training and online learning companies. I use my experience as an educator and as an avid proponent of online learning to deliver persuasive writing that hits the mark.
>
> You can learn more about me and my work here: [URL]
>
> Should we connect?

The idea with this follow-up is to see if you can spark some interest on a better day… and to do it in a more professional way (as opposed to the traditional "Did you get my email?" approach).

If you don't get a response, move on. No need to do anything else with that prospect. We're looking for low-hanging fruit.

#2: Nurture Not-Yet-Ready Prospects

The most common scenario you'll experience is the one we just discussed: most prospects simply will NOT respond. That's just the nature of prospecting and direct response.

Don't get discouraged. Everyone struggles to find prospects who are ready and willing to engage.

And that's not just in the world of creative services. It's also true in virtually every B2B market. When you're marketing a "considered purchase," only a certain percentage of the target market is actively looking for what you sell.

Here's what I've found:

On average, only about 10 percent of qualified prospects are actively searching right now for someone who provides your services.

What about the other 90? Forty percent will *probably* have a need for your services sometime in the next three to 18 months. These are your not-yet-ready (NYR) prospects.

And the rest won't be looking anytime soon!

The key is to stay in touch with that "40 percent" group—the NYR prospects, the group most freelancers ignore.

I call this process "lead nurturing." And once I saw the impact this kind of follow-up had on my income, it quickly became a critical part of my marketing and sales process as a freelancer.

Whom Should You Nurture?

Which prospects should you nurture? And how do you nurture them without turning them off?

It's simple: You want to nurture every prospect who indicates potential interest in your services but doesn't have a current need.

A simpler way to look at it is to nurture every qualified prospect you come in contact with, *except the following*:

1) Prospects who, after some degree of follow-up, say flat out, "We have no interest or need for a writer."

2) Prospects who are not (or don't seem) qualified—either because you looked them up and can tell they wouldn't be a good prospect, or because after a conversation or email exchange you realized that they would not be a good fit.

So why the delay? Why do so many prospects take this long to make decisions? There are two key factors at play here: timing and trust.

Landing a new client requires both the right **timing** and a certain level of **trust**.

The timing for hiring you needs to be right. You can't create urgency inside the prospect's organization. But you *can* stay in touch until they're ready.

You also can't build trust overnight. It takes time, patience and a sincere desire to add value to your prospects. To do that effectively, you need a smart, methodical and sincere lead-nurturing effort with your NYR leads.

What Should You Send?

If you're keeping up with your industry, target market or craft, you'll automatically run into great content you can use for nurturing leads. So you'll want to subscribe (and stay on top of) industry publications, newsletters and blogs.

You can send:

- **Useful and relevant articles and resources.** Articles, checklists, cheat sheets, templates, process maps, step-by-step plans, shortcuts, worksheets, scorecards or other tools you've come across (or create as you grow). Don't have anything like that in your files? Why not create a few of these assets by documenting how you go about creating some of your work?

- **Helpful articles and tools.** If you come across helpful and practical articles, reports, tools, apps, utilities, software or websites that would help your prospects do their jobs more easily, bookmark that information. Become the person who brings those valuable ideas to your prospects' attention. They won't forget you!

- **News stories or general announcements.** Interesting news reports can work well. But so can general announcements about new things you're doing in your own business.

- **Handwritten cards and other creative items.** Get creative! Handwritten cards stand out in a world of electronic and mass-produced correspondence. The personal touch goes a long way toward staying top of mind with NYR prospects.

The **Pocket app** enables you to "clip" and store articles and other content from the web. Once it learns your clipping patterns, it makes recommendations of relevant content you might like. Which makes it easier to find other great, relevant content.

What should you say in your nurturing email, letter or card? Keep it short and simple:

Hi John,

Ed Gandia here. I'm the medical devices copywriter who contacted you back in December.

I'm writing because I came across this article recently and I thought you'd find it interesting:

[URL]

Hope you're doing well.

Ed

How Often Should You Write?

Scripted and ***Marketing Donut*** found that 44 percent of people give up after one follow-up. Yet 80 percent of sales require five follow-ups.

That doesn't mean you email five times with an "Are you ready for me?" message. Five or more attempts means you stay in touch in a relevant and personalized way over a period of time.

In general, sending something every two months is about right. Again, assuming the prospect responded favorably but said the timing wasn't right (e.g., "We're all set for now, but I'll keep your information handy...")

How Do You Track Your Follow-up?

A simple spreadsheet will do when starting out with your nurturing program. Add a prospect per row and use a column to track what you sent that prospect (and when).

Once this activity becomes a habit, consider implementing a contact management system. Here are some popular options:

- **www.highrisehq.com**
- **www.contactually.com**

- **www.zoho.com/crm**
- **www.hubspot.com/products/crm** (this one is still free as of this writing!)

Resist the temptation to automate this process with emails or services such as “SendOutCards.” Remember: The personal touch is key to effective follow-up!

Finally, don’t overthink this. The idea is not to optimize your follow-up. The idea is simply to try and stay top of mind with prospects who aren’t ready to hire you today. Even 50 to 80 percent compliance with your nurturing efforts will get you way ahead of the game.

#3: Start Another Batch of 100 Warm Emails

Think of your first 100 emails as your baseline practice. This next group of 100 is where you get to apply what you’ve learned from sending out your first 100.

Here again, do this in batches of 10 so you don’t get overwhelmed. And work on refining your email scripts based on prospect feedback and new insights regarding how to best talk about your value.

Why keep this up? Because the Law of Averages says that you can make up for a lack of results with increased effort (i.e., more “at bats” or more tries).

I’ve had coaching clients send out 150 – 200 (or more) warm emails before they finally landed their first client. Sometimes it takes this much. You should be ready to keep at it until you succeed.

#4: Send Warm Emails to Carefully Targeted Marketing Agencies

As you start working on your second batch of 100 warm emails, you may want to consider sending some of these warm emails to marketing agencies and marketing firms.

Marketing firms and agencies (I use these terms interchangeably) already have clients and assignments. They’re already *connected* to dozens of clients and hot prospects. And much of their work involves copywriting. So when you land one, it’s like getting ready-made work (just add water!).

In most cases they'll either have a go-to freelance writer or copywriter, or they'll have an in-house staff writer. But that shouldn't stop you, because you never know what their needs are or how they'll change.

What's Good About Agencies?

When you approach an agency about helping them with some work, they're typically going to think about work they already have on their plates or work that's already booked. So you're stepping into the process after most of the pitching and selling has been done and the work is already secured. You don't have to spend days or weeks or months wooing the actual client.

And as an added bonus, you might find yourself working with clients or on projects you wouldn't have landed on your own as a freelancer. Fortune 500 companies usually work with agencies, often several agencies. So, if you want to work on big-scale projects with big-scale budgets, agencies are one way to go.

The other nice thing is that agencies are used to hiring freelancers. So when you reach out to them, you can rest assured that they're always on the lookout for writers and copywriters.

What's Not So Good

This isn't to say that everything about freelancing for agencies is rainbows and sunshine. Agencies have a reputation, often warranted, for outrageous deadlines. As my buddy Pete Savage likes to say, "There are two types of deadlines in the agency world: tight deadlines and impossible deadlines. And they expect you to meet both." So, if you decide to use this strategy, be prepared for some crazy hours.

Also, agencies don't typically pay their freelancers until the client pays the agency. And that can take months. If you need money in the door now, you might need to negotiate some kind of partial payment in advance or at least 30 days after you've submitted your work.

How to Land Agency Work

Now, having said all that, it doesn't mean you shouldn't give agencies a shot. They can be a great source of projects with a shorter ramp-up period.

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So which agencies should you go after? It's generally easier to get work with smaller agencies, at least at first. The larger the agency, the harder it is to navigate through the maze and get the attention of the right person.

In smaller agencies it's often the owner, principal or president who's in charge of hiring freelancers. They're the ones you want to reach.

And generally speaking, you can't go wrong sending your warm email to the **creative director**. That's always a safe bet.

Highlight Your Differentiators!

When agencies hire freelancers, they're looking to fill knowledge or expertise gaps within their firms. Maybe they've landed a new client in an industry where they have little experience.

Or maybe they *have* lots of experience in that industry, but they don't have a go-to writer with a background in that industry or target market. Or maybe they have a client who needs a type of service they haven't offered before, such as white papers. So if you have that industry knowledge or writing project expertise, you're a good candidate!

Avoid being just a hired hand or a warm body. There are millions of writers. But very few who already know the X industry. Or writers who know the X industry (or a specialized topic) *and* can write a good case study.

Bottom line: Leverage your background, career experience and/or core differentiators! That's the key to getting work from an agency when you're a new freelancer.

So when searching for possible agencies to target, find those that seem to focus on your target market.

A simple Google search is a good place to start. For example:

Medical devices marketing firm

Educational technology marketing firm

And here's what a solid warm email could look like when approaching the creative director of an agency or marketing firm:

SUBJECT: Educational tech writing

Hi Sarah,

I've been checking out your work for the past few days. Impressive stuff!

I know you guys do a ton of work with ed tech clients. That's why I'm reaching out.

I specialize in writing for the ed tech industry. And I was curious if you ever worked with outside writers ... and what it would take to be considered for a future project.

I have 9 years of experience in ed tech and have work for companies like X, Y and Z. I understand the rapidly changing dynamics of the business and can hit the ground running on client projects.

Here's a page on my site that will tell you a bit more about my experience:

[URL]

Would it make sense to connect?

Ed

A Word About Fees. When you land work with an agency or other firms with clients, you can expect to be paid a percentage of what the firm charges their client. So will probably end up making less than if you worked for the client directly. A good rule of thumb is that you can expect to earn 30 to 50 percent less than you would charge a direct client.

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And it's worth mentioning that when you get agency work (or really, when you get any kind of work), it's always a good idea to use a written agreement. Make sure the agreement specifies the number of revisions included.

#5: Send Warm Emails to a Few (Targeted) Graphic Designers

This isn't something I've personally pursued. I have worked with designers on several projects, but I haven't used this partnering strategy deliberately. However, I know several writers who do. One of them is my friend and colleague Peter Bowerman, author of *The Well-Fed Writer*, who grew his business by partnering with designers.

The idea is simple. Just like many marketing agencies need to write copy as part of the work they do for clients, some designers also like to offer their clients a service package that includes both design and copy.

If you can become their go-to writer, some of these designers can provide you with a fairly steady stream of work. Not enough to make them your only client, but enough to add some diversity to your prospecting efforts and income stream.

Local networking events are a great place to meet designers. Of course, you can also treat them as prospects and approach some of them with warm emails.

If this is something you're interested in pursuing, Peter Bowerman has written the definitive field guide to how to do this right. It's a meaty PDF guide titled ***Profitable By Design! Tapping the Writer/Designer Partnership Goldmine*** (that's an affiliate link).

Common Questions and Concerns

The B2B Biz Launcher roadmap is proven. It works if you work it. And these final five steps are absolutely key to generating positive results.

But I sometimes get questions at this point of the journey about what to do if things just aren't working. I get it. I've been in plenty of situations where I followed the plan, but it was harder than I imagined. Or I had little to show for my efforts after giving it a solid try.

So as we wrap up, I'm going to share some advice on what to do if you find yourself in a difficult situation.

What Would You Do If You Had NO CHOICE?

I get amazing clarity when I imagine myself stuck in an impossible (or extreme) situation.

For instance, what if someone broke into my house, pointed a gun to my head and said, "If you don't land a client by this time next week, you're toast! Get to work and I'll be back next Thursday."

If my life was on the line, what would I do? If the wellbeing of my children were on the line, what would I do? How hard would I try?

One of the most moving films I've ever seen is *The Pursuit of Happyness* [sic]. In that movie, which is based on a true story, Will Smith is struggling to keep his family afloat. His wife leaves him with their young son, he's evicted from his apartment and Smith is forced to somehow raise his kid while trying to find work.

(I highly recommend the movie ... but have a box of tissue ready!)

As a father, words cannot describe how sad and moving this story was for me. And I want to give you a better idea of what I mean by having no choice.

Scene 1: In this first scene, Smith's character has just been evicted from his apartment, and he's trying to figure out where he and his son will sleep that night.

He refuses to tell his young son the truth about their current reality and instead comes up with a way to turn their situation into a game:

> **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1TC-pegncQ**

Scene 2: In this next scene, Smith's character finally lands an opportunity—a low-paying, six-month stockbroker internship with financial firm Dean Witter. Because of his dire situation, he *must* be better and try way harder than anyone else in the program.

While he and his son live in a homeless shelter every night, Smith shows up for work every day ready to do whatever it takes to produce results for his employer and land a full-time job at the firm.

For Smith, it's not about career advancement. It's about survival. It's about doing whatever it takes to earn enough to get an apartment and provide a good life for his son, whom he

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loves more than anything in the world. Here's the clip:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPBBnS4br9w

What would YOU do in a situation like this? How hard would you try? How far out of your comfort zone would you stretch?

When I struggle to get results, I think about this movie and ask myself these difficult questions. Truth is, you and I have options. We're not sleeping in a homeless shelter tonight. And it's not a life-or-death situation.

So we don't HAVE to get the result. But we would if we absolutely had to. (Food for thought.)

Scene 3: In case you're wondering, Smith landed the job. So just in case you're not crying yet, here you go:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56fngopihOo

Should You Try Other Marketing Tactics?

Should you try other marketing strategies or tactics at this point?

My advice is to stick with this plan until you've landed your first two or three clients. Trying other approaches takes time—time you could be spending knocking on prospect doors and getting some results.

Once you've landed a couple of paying clients, if you're itching to try things like direct mail, attraction marketing, Google AdWords or other ideas, go for it. But I would still limit your time spent on these strategies to no more than 20 percent of your marketing time and energy.

How Long Is This Going to Take?

That's the million-dollar questions, isn't it? How long will it take to land your first paying client? Or once you have that client, how long will it take to get to, say, $1,000 a month? Or $2,000 a month?

It's different for everyone, which is why I never make predictions or promises. There are way too many variables involved to give you a straight answer.

The thing to remember is that the best way to land that first paying client and to grow from there is to focus on taking baby steps—daily, consistent and deliberate baby steps.

That's what this program is all about. It's about making incremental progress, not about achieving overnight success.

It's more important to turn your prospecting into a daily habit than it is to do it perfectly. Because once it's a habit, you can then refine what you're doing until you optimize your performance. But until that happens, trying to get it just right is only going to overwhelm and discourage you.

The Power of Baby Steps—An Important Reminder

I want to leave you with one more video the encapsulates the philosophy and approach needed to reach your first critical milestone—the one we've been working toward in this program—and that's the concept of stair-stepping your way to success one baby step at a time.

Do yourself a favor and take just five minutes to watch it. You'll be glad you did:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qX9FSZJu448

It's been a pleasure teaching and coaching you over the past few weeks. And I look forward to hearing all about your success!

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