

REPLACING
- THE -
RAINMAKER

WORKSHOPS

NICHE LEVELS AND HOW TO NICHE

This workbook accompanies the audio workshop. It includes speaker's notes, which summarize the content covered in the workshop. It also includes activities, which you'll complete during the workshop, and a continuing education assignment, which you'll complete after the workshop. The continuing education assignment gives you a chance to apply the theory you learned in a practical setting. At the end, there's a quiz to test what you've learned as well as space to make notes and information on where to go to learn more.

SPEAKER'S NOTES

Learning outcomes

- You'll learn how to create a blueprint that will guide you as you develop a niche.
- You'll learn how niches grow and evolve over time and what sort of commitment you should expect to make.
- You'll learn how to enact a number of strategies that are crucial for successfully growing a niche.

Building a niche

- Once you've decided which niche to pursue, create a blueprint to follow as you grow your niche.
- This will help you understand the investment that will be required, in the short and long term.
- The next step is to put specific strategies in place to help you succeed in your niche.

Why niche

- Serving a niche allows you to cater to a specific set of clients.
- With a service niche, your firm offers a single service that appeals to multiple industries.
- With an industry niche, your firm offers a broad array of services to clients in a specific industry.

Why niche

- When firms offer only generalist services, clients decide based on price.
- Niches help you make your value proposition clear.
- Developing a niche allows you to close more new business and command higher prices.

Niche levels

- Once you've chosen your niche, the first step is to create niche levels.
- Niche levels serve as a blueprint for launching and growing your niche.
- The fewer levels you have, the easier it will be to track how you're doing.

A long road ahead

- It takes a lot of time and effort to build and conquer a niche.
- Having industry expertise doesn't mean you already have a niche practice.
- A successful niche practice demands a lot more than industry expertise.

Track your growth

- A Level 1 niche is a starter niche.
- A Level 2 niche is a maturing niche.
- A Level 3 niche is an established niche.

Starter niche

- With a starter niche, you're mostly trying to get your niche off the ground.
- You'll perform market research, develop a client screening process and develop a referral source plan.
- You'll also develop marketing materials and create a website.

Maturing niche

- With a maturing niche, you'll build on the processes you've put in place.
- You'll publish journal articles and establish an industry business group and strategic partnerships.
- You'll also attend and exhibit at industry conferences and trade shows.

Established niche

- With an established niche, your niche is well respected and running smoothly.
- You'll generate unique industry media and speak at industry conferences and trade shows.
- You'll also host educational events and serve as an industry news media spokesperson.

Performance metrics

- The next step is to establish performance metrics by level.
- Performance metrics let you judge when you've moved from one level to the next.
- Typical metrics include number of clients, gross revenue by service and total revenue, among others.

Honesty is the best policy

- You need numbers to serve as a guide.
- You need to be able to track and measure your progress.
- Metrics help keep you honest as you evaluate your performance to date.

Rules of thumb

- Don't start a new niche until you've moved your prior niche from level 1 to level 2.
- Expect to invest three to five years to successfully move a niche from Level 1 to Level 3.
- Niche development doesn't happen overnight.

Appoint your champion

- The next step is to start implementing the strategies laid out in your niche model.
- Begin by appointing your niche champion.
- The niche champion corrals the group, sets targets and makes sure everyone stays on topic.

Who to choose

- Niche practice development provides an opportunity to develop senior managers en route to making partner.
- The most important skills for partners to have are the same attributes a successful niche champion will possess.
- Assign a business development-savvy partner to mentor the niche champion.

Build your team

- Choose staff members who bring a cross-section of experience to the team.
- All individuals should have demonstrated an interest in the chosen service or industry.
- The niche champion should hold lunch n' learn sessions to vet candidates.

Work together

- Delegate specific tasks with stated timelines and spread the workload among team members.
- Recognize and reward outstanding effort and contribution.
- Often a simple word of thanks is all it takes.

Conduct research

- To successfully launch a niche, you have to do your homework.
- Start by completing a thorough analysis of your target market.
- Knowing the market will help you create your business development strategy.

I spy the competition

- The next step is to learn about your competitors.
- Know where they shine and where they fall short.
- You'll need to know how you fit in the competitive landscape when you sculpt your claims.

Know the bar

- Understand the required service capabilities of a winning competitor.
- You can't compete in a niche if you can't deliver the services that your clients need.
- Think of it like a high jump bar — you want to know how high you have to jump.

Set yourself apart

- Use this information to craft your competitive advantage and claims.
- Your competitive advantage is what you do better than the rest.
- Your claims make up your competitive advantage.

Set yourself apart

- When you craft your claims, back them up with proof.
- You need to give your clients enough information to tell you apart from the competition.
- Avoid vague claims and use measures and metrics to provide proof.

Issue, solution, benefit

- Your client messaging should revolve around how what you do helps your clients.
- Connect your competitive advantage to the most common client issues.
- For each issue, articulate your solution and the benefit the client will enjoy.

Create an ideal client profile

- An ideal client profile identifies the types of clients you want to target.
- An ideal client profile should include both quantitative and qualitative measures.
- Your ideal client profile will guide you as you look for new clients in your niche.

Identify prospective clients

- Online tools allow you to generate a list of prospective clients based on specific search queries.
- These lists tend to be inexpensive, but they're not necessarily accurate or up to date.
- Hire a researcher to clean up the initial suspect list and convert it into a prospect list.

Provide training and certification opportunities

- Provide all team members with the necessary training opportunities to stay on the cutting edge.
- Encourage staff members to seek trainings outside of the firm.
- Encourage those who go through trainings to spread their knowledge by teaching it to others.

Speak and write

- Generate intellectual capital by speaking and publishing as much as possible.
- Putting yourself at the front of the room is a surefire way to build credibility and recognition.
- Industry conferences, B2B groups and board associations all offer speaking opportunities.

Join up

- Raise your visibility by joining industry-specific associations.
- Work to the front of the room by taking on positions of responsibility.
- When choosing an association to join, don't sign up willy-nilly for just any association.

Use the media

- Take advantage of the media outlets available to you.
- You can contribute articles to outside publications, start your own blog or launch a podcast series.
- If you're the go-to expert in your field, you'll stand out from your competitors.

Plan it out

- Create a niche plan.
- A niche plan guides your activities as you go about building your niche.
- Your niche plan should list your services, goals, strategies and any relevant analysis.

Summary

- Creating a blueprint will prepare you for the road ahead and help you allocate your time and resources.
- To build a niche, you have to appoint a champion, build a team, analyze the opportunity and raise your visibility.
- You can't do niches halfway; you have to commit.

ACTIVITIES

If you're completing these activities on your own, please write down your answers in your workbook. If you're completing these activities in a group, please write down your answers individually. Then share your responses with up to two other people. Look for commonalities among everyone's responses and discuss any differences.

Activity 1

What niche expertise does your firm tout? Using the "Niche levels" form located in the top right corner of your screen, detail the commitments you've made to each niche. In doing so identify whether the niche is level 1, 2 or 3.

Activity 2

For one of the niches you identified earlier, detail your understanding of your competition in that niche. What competitive advantages do your competitors claim and what competitive disadvantages could you take advantage of?

CONTINUING EDUCATION

For each niche area in which you claim expertise, create an issue-solution-benefit narrative and a questions roadmap to uncover whether prospective clients have a need for what you do best.

QUIZ

1. Serving a niche allows you to cater to a specific set of clients interested in a particular suite of products or services.
2. There are three niche levels discussed in this workshop. Level 1 is a starter niche, level 2 is a maturing niche and level 3 is an established niche.
3. In level 1, you'll perform market research, develop a client screening process, develop a referral source plan, develop marketing materials and create a dedicated website.
4. In level 2, you'll publish articles in industry or professional journals, establish an industry business group and strategic partnerships and attend and exhibit at industry conferences and trade shows.
5. In level 3, you'll generate unique industry media such as talk radio, speak at industry conferences and trade shows, host educational events and serve as an industry news media spokesperson.
6. It's OK to start a new niche before you've moved an existing niche from level 1 to level 2.
7. You should expect to invest one to three years to successfully move a niche from level 1 to level 3.
8. You should make sure you know where your niche competitors shine, and where they fall short. You'll need to know how you fit in the competitive landscape when you go to sculpt your claims.
9. An ideal client profile in a niche should include both quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitative measures include income, net worth, business revenue and number of employees. Qualitative measures include issues the client is trying to solve, specific product needs they have and intangibles like "pays their bills on time."
10. It's advisable but not essential to create a blueprint or niche plan to help you allocate your time and resources and prepare you for the road ahead.

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about additional workshops, or other Replacing the Rainmaker products and services, please visit ReplacingTheRainmaker.com.