# Lesson 1. Target Audience

## Step 1. Pick one Persona

Okay, so the first step is to pick one target audience segment for our product.

It will be our hypothesis. Meaning — from now on, we think it best fits our product. We will test it on customer interviews. And if it’s wrong, we will come back and pick another segment.

Here are three examples of target audience hypotheses.

The first one, Startup Founders without a marketing experience. We don’t focus on every Startup Founder. We target only those with development or design experience who struggle with marketing.

Or Lead Generation agency owners with < $2000 monthly revenue. If we think this revenue milestone is important, we should highlight it in our positioning.

The formula is simple. Pick the broad audience and narrow it down with 1-3 criteria. The more you narrow it down, the better job you are doing.

And you might be confused now “But I don’t want to have just one segment. I want other people to buy my product too”.

Don’t worry; they will. But your product and marketing will be focused on speaking to one Persona. So you will get better Conversion with it.

Remember this. You have two options:

* Start narrow, get success cases, and broader your audience later
* Start broad and just lose the competition to big players.

I hope I got you convinced. Now let’s prepare for our interviews.

## Step 2. Run 10+ interviews

Your hypothesis should be validated. And the only way to do it is to talk to 10+ users from this segment.  
  
 Talking to your potential customers is the most effective way to get insights for your product. Sure, there are other tactics like surveys, but they won’t get the same level of insights.  
  
 Here is how to get effective interviews

* 1. Source leads
     1. If you have customers, just send the email with a Calendly link. If not, you need to source leads on Twitter, LinkedIn, Polywork, and other social media platforms. Make sure each person meets the criteria. Otherwise, you will get people who don’t represent the desired segment.
  2. Ask great questions
     1. You will only have 30-60 minutes with each person. So you better ask great questions that will generate insights. Focus on asking about previous experiences and actual events that happened. This way, you will more likely get real answers and not polished ones. Important — don’t expect people to tell you what you should build. Instead, deeply understand their content and motivation and match it with your product.
     2. Here are 10 general questions you should ask. If this is your paying customer, change “solution X” to your product. If they use a competitor, ask questions about it.
        1. Is problem X important to you? Why?
        2. What event has triggered you to research solutions for problem X?
        3. How have you tried to solve it? What were the results?
        4. What have you liked about solution X? What were the disadvantages of this solution?
        5. What benefit of solution X is the most important to you? Why?
        6. What 3 features were a must-have for you in solution X? Why?
        7. What objections have you considered before buying solution X? Why are they important to you?
        8. What was the most compelling fact to buy solution X?
        9. How have you felt after solving this problem with solution X?
        10. If you were recommending solution X to your friend or colleague, how would you describe it?
     3. Try to ask at least 2 follow-up questions for each big question. In these questions, people tend to share the most significant insights unconsciously. So here are 6 great follow-up questions:
        1. Why?
        2. Can you give an example?
        3. Can you elaborate on X?
        4. How have you felt about X?
        5. What was in your head at this moment?
        6. Can you walk me through what happened next?
     4. Don’t try to make notes during the interview. You will just get distracted and miss the critical insights. Instead, ask to record a call and focus 100% on the conversation. You will have plenty of time to watch the recording and write down its insights.
  3. Summarize lessons
     1. Create a Notion page with all interview questions. Summarize each interview response in one paragraph with a key conclusion. Find similar patterns and unique ideas. Focus on findings and not the amount of text.
     2. If your target audience hypothesis is validated (and it makes sense to create a product for this segment), then you are ready to describe the Persona in detail. If not, pick a new hypothesis and run more problem interviews. You need at least 10 interviews to get somewhat statistically valid data.

## Step 3. Describe your Persona

You are ready to make your persona shine. We will go from one sentence to a detailed portrait you can visualize. But instead of focusing on demographics and hobbies, we will focus on buying journey.  
  
 There are 9 points you need to nail down to bring your Persona to life.

* + Name
    - It’s better to give the name of the real customer. This will make your Persona feel more real.
  + Role
    - What’s its professional or personal status? It can be a startup founder, product manager, student, mother, etc.
  + Problem
    - What issue do they want to solve? Be concise and specific. Mention the biggest problem your product aims to solve.
  + Pains
    - What negative consequences of this problem drive them mad? These pain points can be experienced every day, and that’s what makes the problem so important.
  + Jobs-To-Be-Done
    - What does your Persona want to achieve? What is the job that they hired you to do? This is your JTBD.
  + Motivation
    - Behind every JTBD is selfish motivation. Figure out what drives your target Persona to complete their JTBD.
  + Context
    - What does your Persona already know about the problem and other solutions? What do they feel right now?
  + Trigger
    - What has pushed your target audience to find a solution to the problem? Understand the trigger that nudged your Persona.
  + Barriers
    - What stops your Persona from changing the status quo? Understand barriers that are stopping your target audience from using your product.
* Think of the Persona as a set of blocks.  
    
   The first one is “Problem & Pains”. People have a problem that results in pain points that drives them mad. Without the pain points, people wouldn’t feel motivated to search for solutions.  
    
   The second one is “Jobs-To-Be-Done & Motivation”. To solve the problem means to get the job done. People are looking for the perfect solution to achieve this goal. And what drives them to complete this search? Motivation. Motivation is a set of reasons that make JTBD more desirable.  
    
   The third one is “Triggers & Barriers”. Events that push your Persona to search for solutions are called triggers. Events that push your Persona away from buying the solutions are called barriers. Simple.  
    
   The last one is “Context”. People don’t exist in a vacuum. You need to know their environment to understand the nature of previous blocks. You need to know their context.  
    
   We will rely on the Persona Framework in every step of the course. Make sure you spend enough time studying it.

## Step 4. Segment your target audience

You have your key Persona to focus on. You will build product and marketing around it. But the truth is other people will also buy your product. You need to understand them.

We don’t have time to run 10+ interviews with each segment. But we have time to segment all other personas into three buckets:

* Future focus
  + We don’t focus on these personas right now. But if the product idea is validated, we will also scale our marketing to target these personas.
* Just the money
  + We don’t focus on these personas right now, nor will we in the nearest future. It’s okay to get money from them, but we don’t have long-term interests in these segments.
* Worst customers
  + We don’t want these people to buy our product. They will do more harm than good. Our marketing should push these personas off.

This exercise makes it easier to focus on just one Persona. Because you don’t completely disregard other segments. You just prioritize them.

## Links for the curious

* Book “[The Mom Test: How to talk to customers & learn if your business is a good idea when everyone is lying to you](https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/52283963-the-mom-test)” by Rob Fitzpatrick
* Video “[Eric Migicovsky - How to Talk to Users](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MT4Ig2uqjTc&ab_channel=YCombinator)”
* Article “[A Cheatsheet for User Interview and Follow Ups Questions](https://stephaniewalter.design/blog/a-cheatsheet-for-user-interview-and-follow-ups-questions/)”
* Article “[A Framework for Building Personas](https://medium.com/@irasnadaas/a-framework-for-building-personas-24f6ed16fb1)”
* Article “[Find Better Problems Worth Solving with the Customer Forces Canvas](https://blog.leanstack.com/the-updated-problem-interview-script-and-a-new-canvas/)”
* Twitter Thread “[There are only 4 questions you *really* need to answer to get started](https://twitter.com/KateBour/status/1451262731659751425)”

# Lesson 2. Market

## Step 1. Pick one nemesis

So the first step is to pick up your nemesis.  
  
 Why is that important? Because great marketing is based on storytelling. And storytelling is based on the fight between good and evil.  
  
 You already have the hero — your product. Now we need to find an enemy to fight. This conflict will make your positioning more memorable and impactful.  
  
 There are three types of nemesis:

* 1. Your product vs. Legacy Solutions
     1. Most problems are solved with inefficient approaches that people hate but still use. Your product is trying to change the paradigm.
        1. Remote OK vs. Office Jobs
        2. Bubble vs. Coding an MVP
  2. Your product vs. Big Player
     1. Every niche has a big player that doesn’t deserve its customers. By fighting the big company, your “small” product looks bigger in the customers’ eyes.
     2. Plausible Analytics vs. Google Analytics
     3. Telegram vs. Whatsapp
  3. Your product vs. Specific Competitor
     1. The spiciest option. Pick one competitor, and show how you are better for your target audience.
     2. Beehiiv vs. Substack
     3. Podia vs. Gumroad
* How to pick a nemesis? Usually, it will present itself after the customer interviews. Because most people will complain about this solution. The golden rule of positioning — don’t reinvent the wheel; listen to your target audience instead.  
    
   One more thing. Having a nemesis doesn’t mean badmouthing. It’s all about the right framing. You use nemesis weaknesses to make your solution strength look better.  
    
   Your goal is to show your Persona that their problem can be solved more efficiently. That your product is better than a specific solution, and they can achieve greater results with you.  
    
   Now it’s time to analyze our nemesis.

## Step 2. Analyze existing solutions

Competitor research is an underrated marketing tactic for Solopreneurs. You can get tons of insights about your target audience by analyzing what your competitors are doing.  
  
 Successful companies have already researched their target audience. They experimented and made mistakes. And now they are doubling down on what’s working.  
  
 By analyzing their experience, you will be on the same page with them. Here is how to do it.  
  
 First, we won’t analyze every competitor equally. We will spend 80% of the time studying your nemesis and 20% on other 3-4 solutions.  
  
 Second, you want to understand both strengths and weaknesses of your competitors. Why? Because no solution is 100% perfect or 100% terrible. Even yours.  
  
 Strengths will show you why people love these solutions. It will be hard to outplay your competitors on their field. So, we will take notes and pick our fights smarter.  
  
 Weaknesses will show you why people hate these solutions. You will get paying customers easier by fixing these disadvantages in your product.  
  
 How to find these points? You need to analyze your competitors with various platforms:

* 1. Competitor’s Website
     1. Your competitors have a lot of secrets to share. They highlight their best features and hide weaknesses to make the offer better. They also list testimonials with important (in their opinion) benefits. This is a gold mine of insights.
     2. Gumroad’s Heading 1 is, “[Go from zero to $1](https://gumroad.com/)”. It’s clear that Gumroad focuses on newcomers. They probably don’t have the feature set for more mature Creators.
  2. G2 / Capterra / Trustpilot
     1. Platforms with verified testimonials are incredible. You can get a quick overview of the strengths and weaknesses of any product in minutes. Focus on testimonials with 5 stars (promoters), 3 stars (doubters), and 1 star (haters).
     2. Gumroad [testimonial](https://www.trustpilot.com/reviews/63a84c4e2338b6d417a6b62c) on Trustpilot. Huge opportunities around email marketing and customer support.
  3. Reddit / Quora / Niched Forum
     1. Confused users ask a lot of questions on the Internet. You can better understand what’s wrong with your competitors by analyzing these questions. You can use it both in your product and content marketing.
     2. [Feedback on different platforms](https://www.reddit.com/r/ecommerce/comments/107uvon/which_platform_is_best_to_sell_digital_assets/) on Reddit. This advanced user highlights “website-builder” as the key feature. The solutions with a “too basic website builder” should be studied in detail.
  4. Twitter / Facebook / Instagram / LinkedIn
     1. People love to complain about poor products and praise good ones on social media. And if the post is engaging enough, it’s a good sign that they are not alone. Find these posts with keywords about your competitors.
     2. [Twitter discussion](https://twitter.com/sveta_bay/status/1615196270976434177?s=46&t=jE_Bkj5xEmZVopLaLJTMug) about different platforms. This user lists barriers keeping him with Gumroad even though he wants to switch. Solving them can get tons of paying customers.
  5. Facebook Ads Library / TikTok Ads Library
     1. Watching competitors’ ads is like reading their marketing strategies. You can determine their target audience, value proposition, sales objections, and offer reinforcements. Leverage this free shortcut.
     2. [Teachable ad](https://ads.tiktok.com/business/creativecenter/topads/7174135852863209474/pc/en?period=7) on TikTok. Teachable connects its platform to earning money. And it reinforces the offer with the cost “of just $30 bucks”. You can create a new marketing campaign with the same template.
* Remember, your goal is not to analyze every possible marketing aspect. Your goal is to get a list of insights for your product and marketing. Don’t seek quantity; focus on quality.

## Step 3. Find trends to leverage

Competitor research is done. But the market is bigger than the list of existing solutions. It’s also an environment in which competitors live.  
  
 And this environment is constantly changing. Benefits that were important 5 years ago are irrelevant now. Acquisition channels that will be mainstream in 3 years are appearing right now.  
  
 You can either depend on the change or control it. The second position is way more powerful. Especially if you are a Solopreneur.  
  
 They say the rising tide will lift all boats. So your goal is to find the best tides for your product. Here is how. There are two types of trends:

* + Existing
    - They are becoming mainstream right now. And leading competitors already benefit from it. You are already late to control the trend. But you still need to leverage it in your marketing and positioning.
    - Remote work, boot camps, short format video
  + Future
    - These trends will be mainstream in the next 3-5 years. Some companies are already adapting. But this number is not yet significant. You still have time to become the leader of the trend. But be ready to be misunderstood in the beginning.
    - Asynchronous work, DIY education, short format text
* How to find trends? There are 3 key sources:  
  + Customer Interviews
    - People can tell you what has changed in solving this problem and what they want to be changed in the following years. Listen to their thoughts with a grain of salt, but don’t ignore them. For example, my key takeaway from interviews with MakerBox customers was the “short format education” trend. Busy Entrepreneurs need clarity, and they need it fast. That’s why our content is concise and straightforward.
  + Competitor Research
    - If you spot the same tactics in different competitors, something is happening. These patterns are the trends that you should watch closely. For example, more and more SaaS companies stopped asking for a credit card for a free trial. This trend of non-aggressive sales will get more significant in the future.
  + Other industry changes
    - Industries don’t exist in a vacuum. If something changes industry X this year, it could shift industry Y in a few years. For example, it happened with on-demand entertainment. This trend started with movies, and now it’s everywhere.
* Again, don’t rush to list every trend as possible. Focus on the trends that deeply influence your product and your target audience. And make sure each trend is somehow validated.  
    
   It’s critical to embrace the fact that trends are bets. You can’t win them all. But being right once can have a huge effect on your business.  
    
   Take some time to find your trends. Find similarities between existing trends or anomalies for future trends and constantly ask, “Why?”. Connect the dots, and the answer will present itself.

## Links for the curious 🔗

* Book “[Blue Ocean Strategy: How to Create Uncontested Market Space and Make the Competition Irrelevant](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/4898.Blue_Ocean_Strategy)”
* Article “[You Need a Nemesis](https://www.animalz.co/blog/you-need-a-nemesis/)**”**
* Article “[16 Market Research Tools To Uncover Actionable Insights](https://neilpatel.com/blog/market-research-tools/)”
* Article “[How to Perform a Best-in-Class Competitor Analysis (w/ Template)](https://buffer.com/library/competitor-analysis/)”
* Article “[How to Spot Business Trends (That Matter)](https://blog.hubspot.com/the-hustle/spot-business-trends)”
* Video “[Competitor Analysis Framework: The 5 Step Guide You MUST Follow](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4Qs3dLIPsg)”
* Video “[Find Profitable Business Ideas By Studying Weird Trends](https://youtu.be/vSp97E9yi5I)”

# Lesson 3. Transformation

## Step 1. Pick your big idea

The first step is to pick the big idea for your positioning.  
  
 Your big idea is the promise of a specific bright future. It will be big enough to get the movement around it. The movement of different products and communities. And you will be the leader of this movement.  
  
 You will not sell your product directly through this idea. But you will get remembered for this idea. Here are a few examples:

* + The big idea of Bubble is that you don’t need to code to build a business. This idea promotes other no-code tools too. But Bubble leads this movement.
  + The big idea of Plausible Analytics is that privacy matters. A lot of analytical tools followed this movement. But again, Plausible benefited the most.
* People remember big ideas better than sales offers. Because offers are centered around the company, and big ideas are centered around the customer. People tend to care more about themselves.  
    
   Here is how you can come up with a perfect big idea for your product.  
    
   Think of the ideal scenario for your Persona. The future in which every solution works flawlessly. Your Persona is happy because all of their goals are achieved. Everything is perfect.  
    
   What one change led to this future? This is your big idea, your big promise.  
    
   Your product will fight for this change. Other solutions will fight for this change. Because this is what separates your Persona from the bright future.  
    
   Here are a few examples:  
  + Meditation app — “Prioritize yourself”
    - Manifesting the idea of putting yourself first will be big enough to unite different self-care apps. And, of course, indirectly promote meditation.
  + AI-powered copywriting tool — “Work smarter, not harder”
    - AI, automation tools, and productivity apps are very alike. They all sell the same idea — don’t work more hours; use your time more effectively.
  + Chat widget SaaS — “Nothing can beat talking to the people”
    - In the age of bots and automatic marketing funnels, people seek people. That’s why selling the idea of human touch in marketing is a quick win for a chat widget.
* And the essential part. To pick the right big idea, you must believe in it sincerely.  
    
   Don’t choose something that just sounds nice. Choose the idea that you actually believe in and will be ready to defend in the future. Otherwise, people will sense the lie.

## Step 2. Define your transformation

Now it’s time to apply your big idea to your product. Let’s define your product’s transformation.  
  
 Transformation is the heart of our positioning framework. It shows your users what value they can get from your product. It shows your users how their life will change with your product.  
  
 And why is it important? Because people value results more than the process.

* + No one enjoys using complicated SEO tools. But at the same time, Entrepreneurs desire free traffic from Google. Founders still need complex SEO tools to get this free traffic. But they don’t want to buy them. They want to buy the results.
  + People hate abs exercises but want to look fit. You won’t be successful if you describe in detail what excellent abs exercises you have. But you will get tons of paying customers by showing the results of your workouts.
* Let’s talk about the elephant in the room. Seling the transformation may feel weird. And sometimes, Entrepreneurs overuse it. You’ve seen these agencies that say, “we connect businesses with technologies to make an impact”. But in reality, they just create landing pages.  
    
   Selling transformation can be more elegant. Instead of saying these buzzwords, these agencies could write, “Start selling your SaaS in 7 days with a new landing page”. Straightforward and result-oriented.  
    
   Here is how to create an irresistible transformation for your business:  
  + Understand the state A that your target audience hates
    1. You got this under the Problem and Pains in the Persona Framework. It will be easier to understand the desired state by defining the state people want to escape from. Don’t forget about your nemesis in this block.
  + Understand the state B that your target audience desires
    1. You got this in Jobs-To-Be-Done and Motivation in the Persona Framework. This is the reason why people buy your product. This is their goal.
  + Describe the transformation in 1 sentence
    1. It’s time to connect states A and B in one pitch. You’ve got one sentence to convert your target audience. Focus on the results that are the most important to them.
  + Try to mention
    1. Promised value (What results will you bring to me?)
    2. Time to value (How much time do you need to deliver the results?)
    3. Key objection handled (Why should I give it a try?)
* You will not always be able to mention all three parts. Sometimes time to value is not essential. Or there is no key objection that pushes users away. But the basic rule of thumb — if you have all three components, you are doing a great job.  
    
   Let’s look at great examples of transformation.  
  + For a no-code website builder, it’s “Start selling with your new website in 1 hour without coding”
  + For an online course, it’s “Get hired as a Software Engineer in 6 months without quitting your job right now”
  + For an email outreach tool, it’s “Have tons of booked meetings without spending nights on the copy”
  + For a newsletter database, it’s “Get high-quality traffic from your audience's favorite newsletters”
* Each example is different. And only the first and second have all three components. But the critical part stays the same — they sell the results, not the process. We don’t sell an online course; we sell a new job.  
    
   And each transformation fights its nemesis. For example, a no-code website builder lets you get your first sales in 1 hour without spending weeks on a simple landing page. Coding as a nemesis makes our transformation more convincing.  
    
   For a newsletter database, the nemesis could be low-quality traffic from ads. It’s not in the sentence, but we still have space to fight it on the landing page. The key idea remains — your transformation should be different from your nemesis.  
    
   Not everyone will get excited about your transformation. And this is perfectly fine. We only care about our target Persona. We want them to stop for a second and think, “this is exactly what I need right now”.  
    
   And if they have doubts. We will persuade them with transformation benefits.

## Step 3. Describe transformation benefits

Not everyone falls in love with your transformation at first sight. Most people don’t understand that they have a problem or don’t know the benefits of solving their problem.  
  
 It’s your job to tell them about the benefits of this transformation. So they can decide if they want to spend their time and money on this.  
  
 You should connect transformation benefits to Motivation in the Persona Framework. They will make the transformation more vivid and desirable. Simple.  
  
 To make these benefits more convincing, we will target three different groups:

* 1. Rational benefits
     1. Objective value from completing the transformation that can be measured (money, time, etc.). People estimate these reasons with logic (e.g., “more money is good for my financial situation”)
  2. Emotional benefits
     1. Subjective feelings from completing the transformation that are important to the person (confidence, joy, calm, etc.). People estimate these reasons with their “heart” (e.g., “I deserve to enjoy the work after all these years”)
  3. Social benefits
     1. Subjective image from completing the transformation your users want to translate to others (being smart, strategic, innovative). People estimate these reasons with their “pride” (e.g., “I want others to think I am sophisticated”)
* You want people to crave these benefits so they will want to complete the transformation. And if they want to complete the transformation, they are ready to buy your product.  
    
   This approach may sound complicated, but in reality, it’s not.  
    
   If you just sell the product, you will repeat the same 3 sentences over and over again. And if potential users didn’t buy on the first try, there is no chance they will buy later.  
    
   But with transformation benefits, you have more space for creativity. You can highlight different benefits from different angles. For example, you can present your transformation with emotional benefits and your offer with rational benefits. This way, it’s easier to keep your users engaged.  
    
   And the best part — you don’t need to promote your product aggressively. It comes organically as the next step to complete the transformation your users already “bought”.  
    
   Forget about spamming people with your product. Transformation benefits let you sell without “selling”.

## Links for the curious 🔗

* Book “[$100M Offers: How To Make Offers So Good People Feel Stupid Saying No](https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/58612786)”
* Article “[What is Jobs to be Done (JTBD)?](https://jtbd.info/2-what-is-jobs-to-be-done-jtbd-796b82081cca?gi=d43907ef361e)”
* Article “[My guide to brand positioning](https://marketingexamples.com/brand/positioning)”
* Article “[How to Come Up with the Big Idea for Your Content Marketing Strategy](https://www.convinceandconvert.com/content-marketing/content-marketing-strategy-idea/)”
* Article “[Startups: Tools Are Bought, Transformations Are Sold](https://www.onstartups.com/startups-tools-are-bought-transformations-are-sold)”

# Lesson 4. Product

## Step 1. Define your product’s emotion

You will write a lot of copy. Landing page, documentation, onboarding, ads – it’s hard to be consistent. You try to describe the transformation from different angles to target different emotions. The result? Confused users and lost sales.  
  
 I want to make your life simpler. That’s why we will pick one emotion that your product and marketing will spark. This will be the users’ aftertaste you want to achieve every time you communicate with them.  
  
 It will save you hours of aligning your copy across different channels. When in doubt, you will think — What content, product feature, or marketing campaign can spark this emotion? No need to brainstorm and reinvent the wheel every time. Instead, work in the system.  
  
 Different emotions turn your transformation upside down. Think of the fitness app that transformation is “Get a six-pack in 6 weeks without gym equipment”.

* + If we pick “challenging” as an emotion, this will be a product for high-performers who want to suffer every day to get the best result.
  + If we pick “empowering” as an emotion, this will be a product for newcomers who want to build the habit of doing fitness.
* Two different products. Two different marketing approaches. But both can work.  
    
   Your goal is to pick the right emotion for your product. This emotion must be connected to your transformation and Persona’s Jobs-To-Be-Done, Context, and Barriers. If your users want to be supported, don’t challenge them. And if they want a fun experience, don’t bore them with trust and reliability.  
    
   How to do it? Start by listing 5 possible emotions. Combine each emotion with your transformation and see if it clicks. Pick the one that works best. Don’t overcomplicate it.

## Step 2. Connect features with benefits

In the previous lesson, we discussed that people don’t buy features. Most don’t care if you have specific feature X or not. They buy the transformation, the result that your product can give.  
  
 But here is the deal. They still need to understand your product’s features. Because features describe how your product will deliver the promised value in the transformation.  
  
 People make an emotional decision by “buying” your transformation. And they need features to “justify” this purchase for the brain. Otherwise, they will view this purchase as “irrational” and “not a priority”. You don’t want this to happen.  
  
 Okay, so we need to describe features after all. But the common mistake Entrepreneurs make here is they list every feature their product has. Usually, something around 6-9 features with a dry description of how this feature works. There are two mistakes here.

* 1. First, people can only remember 3-4 features. Anything else will be forgotten in seconds after closing your website. You don’t need to list every feature; you need to list features that will “sell” your transformation and product.
  2. Secondly, people don’t care how your feature work. They care about the benefits your features can get them. They want to understand the micro-transformation for each feature.
* So here is what we will do for your product.  
  1. List 3-4 key features
     1. You can only pick the most critical features. If these features were missing, your product would not be your product, and people would never buy it from you. As you can see, dark mode, confetti animations, and password reset don’t fit this description.
     2. For an email marketing tool, it can be a feature to create “automatic marketing funnels”.
     3. For a screenshot tool, it can be “different stylish backgrounds”.
  2. Describe the benefits
     1. Define the value that your customers will get from using this feature. You have 2 sentences to persuade your leads. Don’t forget about your transformation and the product’s emotion to make the description more consistent.
     2. For an email marketing tool, it can be “Close sales on auto-pilot. Easily experiment with different lead magnets, discounts, and Call-to-Actions to increase the Conversion Rate.”
     3. For a screenshot tool, it can be “Make your screenshots pop without spending hours in Figma. Grab your users’ attention with one of the 30 stunning gradient backgrounds.”
* Your feature shouldn’t bore users. They should reinforce your transformation by making it look more realistic and trustworthy.

## Step 3. Describe your Activation step

To make the sale, you need to turn a random website visitor into someone who understands your product's value. So, in other words, they need to “buy” your transformation, and the product features behind it. You need to activate your users.  
  
 Founders often view this step in the marketing funnel as a single event — “we give a free trial to play with the product, so they understand the value of our offer”. You can do better than this.  
  
 In reality, there are multiple Activation steps.

* 1. When people read your landing page, they should experience Activation because they better understand the features’ benefits.
  2. When people read your Twitter threads or marketing emails, they should experience an Activation because they connect with your marketing’s emotion deeper.
* So, the better you understand the moments people stop for a second and say, “this is the product that I need to buy right now”, the more you will sell. Because you are not growing by getting more website visitors. You are growing by getting more activated users.  
    
   Here is how to do it.  
  1. List 3-5 Activation moments
     1. Go beyond free trials and product demos. You can sell your transformation in marketing channels too. Activation shouldn’t always be about the product features; you should activate users about the big idea and the product’s emotion too.
     2. For an email marketing tool, it can be a free trial, a professional product video, and a Slack community of email marketers.
     3. For a screenshot tool, it can be a free plan, a showcase of the best screenshots, a design newsletter, and a partnership with an influencer.
  2. Describe how you will sell your transformation in each activation moment.
     1. Clarify what feature benefits you can spotlight and how your product’s emotion will glue everything together. Be specific; list the exact tactics you will use in each Activation step.
     2. For a Slack community of email marketers. Our team will send a daily tip on how to use the product more effectively. Moreover, we will send a weekly case study with a customer on how they used our tool in their business. This content will bring clarity to users, and they will use the product more often.
     3. For a partnership with an influencer. They will tweet images with a screenshot tool and then record a video about it. People will see the power of the product and desire to use it themselves. An influencer will give a discount for an annual price to nudge more sales.
* You might wonder, “Why are we doing it right now?”.  
    
   Because we don’t want your product and marketing to live two separate lives. Positioning only works if you are saying one idea over and over again. Both in your product and marketing funnels.  
    
   And the better you plan it, the better people will understand the awesomeness of your positioning. If your activation ends on the half-baked free trial, you will get disengaged users who just don’t care. But if you have multiple polished activation moments, you will get users who crave to pay for your product. Because they get why it’s incredible.  
    
   So, plan your activation. Make your product and marketing work together.

## Links for the curious 🔗

* Article “[The Octalysis Framework for Gamification & Behavioral Design](https://yukaichou.com/gamification-examples/octalysis-complete-gamification-framework/)”
* Article “[When and why to add people to the user activation process](https://gopractice.io/product/when-and-why-to-add-people-to-the-user-activation-process/)”
* Article “[How your startup can sell benefits not features](https://www.starttech.vc/blog/2019/sell-benefits-not-features/)”
* Article “[Design for Emotion to Increase User Engagement](https://www.toptal.com/designers/product-design/design-for-emotion-to-increase-user-engagement)”
* Article “[The Ultimate Guide to Emotional Marketing](https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/emotion-marketing)”
* Playbook “[Activating new users](https://amplitude.com/user-engagement/engaging-new-users)”

# Lesson 5. Sales

## Step 1. Define your offer

Positioning is not about catchy Headings 1. Because, at the end of the day, your goal is to sell more, not entertain more. That’s why you need a sales offer.  
  
 What is a sales offer? It’s a concise answer to a reasonable question from the customer — How much does your transformation cost, and what will I get?  
  
 This is what people pay you money for when they have already “bought” the transformation and feature benefits. It’s a final part that we can’t mess up.  
  
 The offer consists of two simple parts:

* 1. Price
     1. How much does your target audience need to pay to complete the transformation?
     2. It’s essential to match the price with the transformation. Because not every product should cost $10 monthly. Sometimes it’s more reasonable to take an upfront payment and a commission from the result. It depends on the transformation that you are promising.
  2. Conditions
     1. What’s included and what’s not included in this price?
     2. In some products, it’s critical to give lifetime access. In other products, it’s necessary to add team members. Finally, sometimes you need to limit feature usage to frame your customers. List 4-5 critical conditions that your target audience should care about. These conditions should be aligned with the features that we described in the previous lessons.
* You might think this is a boring exercise. And to be frank, it is. But it makes your positioning sharper. It connects target audience research, transformation, and feature benefits to the checkout process.  
    
   A clear offer guarantees that users will understand what they are paying for. Because they don’t have time to think about what you want to say. Your copy is either clear, or it’s ignored. And unfortunately, ignored products don’t get a lot of sales.  
    
   That’s why we spend so much time aligning transformation, product, and sales. So your users will see the same idea, features, and benefits everywhere. We want to make their decision-making process as simple as possible.

## Step 2. Handle objections

People are always excited until they see the price. Then they suddenly have all sorts of doubts:

* 1. Do I really need to buy this product?
  2. Can they deliver the promised value?
  3. Do I have time for this right now?
* And surprisingly, price is not the problem. The problem is that people are not convinced enough to pay this price. They have objections that paralyze the purchase decision.  
    
   Your goal is to handle these objections before it’s too late. Meaning your whole marketing funnel should build trust and affinity. This is the only way to ensure that your offer will be seen as a great opportunity, not an unpleasant cost.  
    
   Good news — it’s not that hard. You just need to complete two tasks.  
  1. List all possible objections
     1. Aim for 7-10 objections. Different people will have different doubts. But your job is to handle them all. Get inspiration from Barriers in your Persona Framework.
     2. Almost every product needs to answer these 5 objections
        1. Why can’t I ignore this problem?
        2. How can you guarantee the promised results?
        3. Why should I trust you?
        4. Why is it so expensive?
        5. How is it better than competitor X?
     3. But make sure you also have unique objections to your product. They are usually connected to your transformation, features, and pricing conditions.
  2. Write a compelling answer to each objection
     1. It will be a tough exercise. You have 2 sentences to write a convincing answer on why your users shouldn’t worry about this objection. Don’t lie, change the topic or manipulate. Instead, write a specific and concise reply that you genuinely believe in.
     2. Sometimes you won’t have a sound answer to the objection. In this case, make a note of this weak point. Having 1-2 objections unhandled is okay, but don’t make this a common practice.
* You will use these objections every time you write a copy. And instead of suffering every time you answer those tough questions, you will just pick an answer from this document. Easy.

## Step 3. Pick your offer reinforcements

Handling objections will justify your offer to customers. But a “justified” offer doesn’t sound that exciting. That’s why you need to have offer reinforcements.  
  
 These reinforcements are small things that make your users say, “wow”. People won’t solely buy your product because of these things. Because they still need to connect with your transformation and features benefits. But these reinforcements nudge your customers to buy the offer right now.  
  
 What can be an offer reinforcement? Well, almost everything. From limited deals and faces of opinion leaders as your customers to showing your statistics transparently and having sick animations (especially if your product is made for designers).  
  
 Offer reinforcements should spark amusement and desire in your customers. People should want to pay you money, not struggle with giving you just an email. This is how you get a tribe of loyal fans.  
  
 Here is an example. Let’s say you are selling a marketing coaching program. Your transformation will be “Go from MVP to $1000 MRR in 2 months”. Your features will be live support, weekly meetings, and actionable marketing templates. And your offer will be a $500 upfront payment and $500 after hitting a $1000 MRR. This is your positioning in a nutshell.  
  
 How can we reinforce this offer?

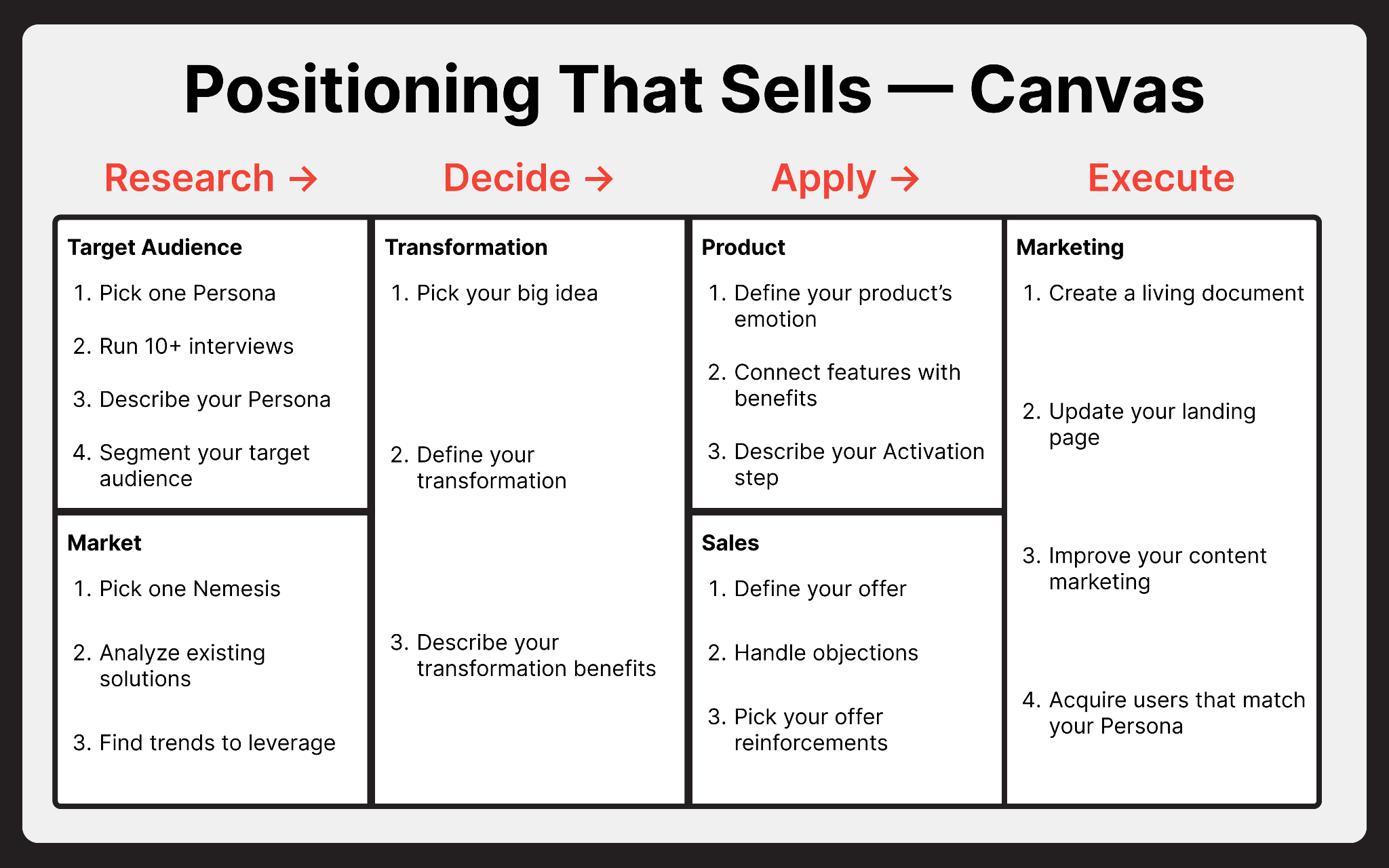
* + Having a closed Slack community of Solopreneurs sounds like an excellent addition. You will not buy this coaching because of the community, but it surely makes the offer better.
  + Or having an encouragement of a famous Solopreneur on the landing page. Sure, they didn’t complete the program, but their endorsement makes an offer more trustworthy.
  + Or, finally, shipping a free marketing book to a new customer. It’s a small thing, but it makes you look nice. And why not buy from a nice person?
* So, your goal is simple. List 5-7 small things that will make your offer more desirable. Aim to surprise people with a positive emotion that will be stuck in their memory. This is the only way they will care about your offer the next day.

## Links for the curious 🔗

* Ebook “[Pricing Psychology](https://www.nickkolenda.com/psychological-pricing-strategies/)”
* Article “[How to Optimize Your SaaS Pricing Page in 2023 - Complete Guide](https://cieden.com/how-to-optimize-your-saas-pricing-page-in-2022-complete-guide)”
* Article “[How to Overcome the 12 Most Common Sales Objections](https://mailshake.com/blog/sales-objections-2/)”
* Article “[How To Smash Through User Objections On Your Landing Page](https://nerdsdoitbetter.com/how-to-smash-through-user-objections-on-your-landing-page/)”
* Article “[How to Create an Irresistible Offer](https://growthmarketer.co/irresistible-offers/)”
* Video “[How To Craft A Godfather Offer](https://youtu.be/OE4u-PFYSns)”

# Lesson 6. Marketing

## Step 1. Create a living document



There are 5 key parts in our positioning framework. That’s a lot.  
  
 So, having the whole framework on one page will make it easier to use. You won’t waste time switching between tabs and connecting insights. Instead, you will just skim your positioning to refresh critical conclusions.  
  
 And you will come back to this page a lot. Every time you need to update your landing page, write a marketing email, or generate an attention-grabbing hook tweet, you will open this document and use your positioning. This is the best way to ensure that all your marketing campaigns hit in one spot.  
  
 But here is the trick. This document is not a sacred book that you can’t change. Quite the opposite, actually. Whenever you learn something new about your target audience, nemesis, or sales offer, you should open this document and update it. That’s why it’s called a living document.  
  
 I have two templates for you. A Notion document if you prefer structure and writing. And a framework picture to embed in Miro, if you like creativity and visualization. Pick the best option and update it with your content.

## Step 2. Update your landing page

Your landing page is the best place to see the results of your positioning.  
  
 If you did an incredible job, enjoy the higher conversion rate and more sales. If not, analyze what went wrong, update your positioning, and try again.  
  
 I want you to succeed from the first time. So today, we will create a landing page structure that consistently sells your positioning. And you can use this structure in almost any product. Here is how it works.  
  
 Our structure has 7 key blocks. And in each block, we use insights from previous lessons.

* + Hero Block
  + Heading 1 — Transformation (How will my life change after your product?)
  + Product Visuals — Activation (How will your product deliver the promised value?)
  + Social proof — Objections (How can I trust you?)
  + Problem Agitation
  + Persona’s Context, Problem, and Pains (Why should I care?)
  + Your Nemesis weaknesses (Why should I switch from my current solution?)
  + How it works
  + Activation (What does it take to achieve the transformation?)
  + Transformation benefits (Why should I complete the transformation?)
  + Social proof
  + Objections (How can I be sure I can achieve these results?)
  + Offer reinforcements (What famous people can recommend your product?)
  + Key features
  + Features through benefits (How will your product deliver the promised value?)
  + Offer reinforcements (What is remarkable about your product?)
  + Pricing
  + Offer (How much do I need to pay, and what will I get?)
  + Offer reinforcements (Why should I pay right now?)
  + Transformation (How will my life change after your product?)
  + FAQ
  + Objections (What about issue X?)
* Moreover, you should align every block around your big idea and the product’s emotion. Understand how you will use them with each landing page block. And then check if you managed to present all ideas. Remember, your Persona should have the same incredible aftertaste with each landing page block.  
    
   So the next time you will update your landing page, don’t try to brainstorm creative copy. Instead, open your living document and just use those ideas to have a more consistent and convincing landing page. Again, your goal is to sell, not entertain.

## Step 3. Improve your content marketing

Solopreneurs love content marketing. It builds trust through value, costs almost $0 to manage, and doesn’t feel as pushy as ads or cold outreach. I am 100% with all of you on this.  
  
 But posting the same tool listicles on Twitter or writing generic SEO articles with AI is not content marketing. You can do better. Especially with the power of your new positioning.  
  
 In this simple exercise, we will rethink your content marketing. So it will grab your Persona's attention better and sell your product more organically. Sounds like a dream, right?  
  
 Here is how to do it.

* 1. List 5-10 potential content topics that your Persona will love
     + Get inspiration from Pains, Motivation, Triggers, Barriers, and Nemesis
     + Write about topics that are interesting to your audience, not to Twitter and SEO algorithms. How? Go back to your Persona and understand what drives them mad or makes them happy. This is the content they are looking for.
     + For example, if you sell podcast software, your target audience is creators. And one of their biggest pains is that building a home podcast studio is expensive. This problem is far more important than following the best 50 Creators on Twitter or learning about YouTube trends this year. They crave to solve it.
  2. Plan content that sells your product organically
     + Get inspiration from Big Idea, Transformation, and Transformation benefits
     + Don’t just write generic content around each topic. Instead, solve your Persona’s problem from a unique angle and sell your transformation. Important, every piece of content should sell it, not just a brief CTA at the end of your articles. Your goal is to make your Persona realize that your product is essential to solving their problems. This is what content marketing is about.
     + Don’t write a generic listicle, “20 Best Microphones for Creators”. If your big idea is that everyone should be a Creator, you should double down on it. For example, write an article, “How to create a professional home studio with $100”. You will need to be creative and research this problem a lot. But this content will sell your product 10x better than the generic one.
* Don’t forget about different content formats too. Twitter threads and Blog articles are fantastic. But there are Ebooks, TikTok, YouTube videos, and online courses. You should pick the format that your Persona prefers. If they enjoy watching Instagram Reels, don’t create 5000-word guides for them.  
    
   This simple exercise will ensure you create content your Persona wants to consume. And this content is selling your product, not just getting views for the sake of it. Likes don’t pay the bill.

## Step 4. Acquire users that match your Persona

Your landing page is ready to convert. Your content marketing is ready to nurture. Now it’s time to acquire users that match your Persona.  
  
 Unfortunately, when Founders do User Acquisition, they usually make at least one of these three mistakes:

* 1. Trying to be everywhere
     1. They repost their content on Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn even though they have less than 1000 followers everywhere. Instead of nailing one acquisition channel before going to the second one, they fail everywhere.
  2. Going to cold traffic before selling to hot traffic
     1. There are tons of quick wins to get traction. You can get 10 paying customers by launching your product on Product Hunt or investing 6 months in SEO. What sounds like a reasonable acquisition channel to nail first?
  3. Not leaving their comfort zone
     1. Some Founders are used to writing blog articles even though this acquisition channel doesn’t work for their new product. They would grow way faster if they did influencer marketing or community building. But it requires trying new marketing tactics and being okay with failing initially.
* Learn from these mistakes. Your user acquisition should be based on your Persona’s needs and behavior. And it should be aligned with your transformation. No one will believe your product’s emotion is “support” if you do annoying clickbait cold outreach.  
    
   Don’t try to attract as many website visitors as possible. Focus on getting as many users that match your Persona’s description. They will spend more money easier than any other segment. Because we’ve made your positioning exclusively for them.  
    
   Here is how to do it.  
  1. List 10 specific acquisition ideas
     1. Your already know your Persona. You know how to grab their attention. Now brainstorm tactics you can start using today to get more eyes on your product. The goal is to be specific. If you can’t describe your acquisition tactic, it’s not worth doing.
     2. Not just “I will build in public on Twitter”, but rather “I will post gifs of my product and share feedback from early adopters for 2 weeks”
  2. Pick 3 acquisition ideas to execute first
     1. Don’t try to do everything at once. Prioritize quick wins and nail them first. Some ideas take time to execute, so it’s okay to have 3 acquisition tactics simultaneously. If you are done with an idea, you can add a new one from your backlog. But always keep no more than 3 acquisition ideas on your to-do list.
     2. For example, you can launch a marketing freebie on Product Hunt or send 100 cold DMs on Twitter for a free beta test. Pick tactics that work for your Persona and your product.
* Bottom line. Your Persona would love to give your product a chance. But this can only happen if you acquire them properly. With respect to their attention.  
    
   It doesn’t mean creating a unique acquisition tactic — no, don’t reinvent the wheel. Instead, personalize time-tested acquisition channels to your Persona’s needs and context.  
    
   And most importantly. Think from the beginning — does this channel help me to sell the transformation? If not, don’t waste your time and money. There are better alternatives.

## Links for the curious 🔗

* Article “[Ultimate Landing Page Checklist for Indie Entrepreneurs](https://blog.makerbox.club/landing-page-checklist/)”
* Article “[10 Tips to Increase Landing Page Conversion Rate in 2023](https://blog.makerbox.club/10-tips-to-increase-conversion-rate/)”
* Article “[My step-by-step guide to landing pages that convert](https://marketingexamples.com/landing-page/guide)”
* Article “[How I promote my content](https://marketingexamples.com/content/sharing)”
* Article “[How to Use Twitter for Thought Leadership](https://www.animalz.co/blog/twitter-for-thought-leadership/)”
* Article “[Growth Loops are the New Funnels](https://www.reforge.com/blog/growth-loops)”
* Playbook “[Influencer (Creator) Marketing](https://www.demandcurve.com/playbooks/influencer-creator-marketing)”
* Video “[Gustaf Alstromer - How to Get Users and Grow](https://youtu.be/T9ikpoF2GH0)”