

# Know Your Ideal Client

**By Colleen Francis**

You may have seen that Audi commercial featuring Star Trek actors Leonard Nimoy and Zachary Quinto. The “old-school” and “new-school” Spocks race their cars to the golf course – Mercedes-Benz vs. Audi – in a battle of one-upmanship. It’s a blend of pop culture with images of success: high-end technology, swanky cars and famous actors.

This commercial illustrates that Audi knows its market: the young, hip and economically thriving. Forget all other drivers. This is what I call “ruthless discrimination.” Having the ability to say “no” to others in favor of your ideal buyer.

The most profitable companies in the future will be those who, like Audi, choose a target audience. Why? Because markets are rapidly growing and adding new buyers. That means more demand of time and energy for selling. That is, if we keep thinking all buyers are created equal.

Too many sales teams sell to those who don’t meet ideal targets or who won’t ever buy. The best companies I work with, however, clearly define their target market and sell only to them. They say “no” to buyers that don’t match their criteria.

Think about it. Ruthless discrimination frees up time for your most promising customers, allowing you to reduce closing cycles and sell more with less time and energy. Another bonus? With an ideal target, you can customize your information to attract that target buyer (as explained in my previous article, *Control the Info Flow by Colleen Francis.*)

Now you’re thinking, “Great! But how do I get started?!” It takes two steps to find your target clientele. First, identify what they look like.

## **Target ‘worth’ and ‘willingness’**

Base your best buyer list on your most lucrative and sustainable clients – making them your benchmark. Look at your current customers and ask yourself:

- How much are they worth to me?
- How willing are they to buy?

Better yet, consider the figure below, *Your Ideal Target.*



List the companies that have “Worth To You” vertically and “Willingness to Buy” horizontally. Place those that match both criteria in the bottom left square. Then, record the clients with both characteristics in the top right quadrant.

Now, note any further similarities:

- Are they from specific industries?
- Similar in size?
- In similar geographic areas?
- What’s their organizational structure? (Public, private, family owned, non-profit?)
- What’s the title of the buyer?
- What’s the average order size?
- How long did they take to close?

Once you’ve answered these questions, you’ll be closer to finding your ideal target. Let’s move on to step two.

### Find your niche

This time, we’re identifying your ideal “market segment.” By doing this, you’ll build solid relationships and establish a proven reputation more quickly than with a broad market approach. You likely have ideal customers and segments now but – if you’re like most salespeople – they’re a small portion of your client list. And you haven’t clearly identified them!

Ask yourself, “Who are my best buyers?” In the business market, your ideal clients might be the biggest companies – Fortune 100 if you sell internationally or the largest businesses in your area if you sell locally.

If you're in the consumer market – a dentist, real estate broker or financial adviser – your top customers are likely in the best neighborhoods. They have the most money and biggest sphere of influence. Look at your client list, identify where your best ones live, and then market to more customers in those neighborhoods. You'll use the same amount of effort to nurture this ideal buyer as a general buyer – and I guarantee it'll bring you higher profits!

Consider further what your current clients all have in common:

Are they...

- Privately held or publicly traded?
- Government organizations or consulting companies?
- International or domestic?
- All run by women?

Once you've found that common thread weaving together this "best of the best" list, use the same criteria to ruthlessly discriminate with potential clients.

### **Achieve record growth**

Donald's goal, when he first came to me, was to reach a million dollars in sales from temporary staffing jobs. His database revealed his best customers were in one specific market. We told him, "Be the number one provider," for all the companies with that particular need.

Next, we recommended he expand that group. Since the customers were all food producers, we asked him to consider the beverage, dairy and pet food industry. To branch off from that one target he was pursuing. As a result, Donald *exceeded* his target by 90 percent. Instead of a million in sales, he achieved *\$1.9 million!* He zeroed in on a market and expanded to even more ideal clients. He displaced the competition by becoming an expert in his area. Sales became effortless. Amazingly, Donald achieved this record-smashing growth while those in his staffing market were being upended by the recession!

Targeting and becoming specialized works for small companies like Donald's as well as for large firms. Consumer credit giant Experian segments its most strategic sellers by target market. Antivirus giants Trend Micro and McAfee also create sales teams by market size, and The Royal Bank of Canada divides its sellers by product type and scope of market. All are great examples of companies in a "nonstop sales boom."

We've now found your ideal buyer and you can start ruthlessly discriminating. Find what works best for you. Whether it's focusing on a specific geographic area, product specialty or service offering, the possibilities are endless. The key is finding customers you enjoy working with and vice versa. Determine their needs and concentrate on selling in a way that fulfills those needs.