



Understanding Your Your List

Module Two

Of

James Gladwin's List Building Course

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Welcome Back ! Now that you have put together a plan for growing your list in the first guide, let's talk about getting to know what makes your list tick, what information they are craving and...ultimately...what makes them want to buy and what they want to buy.

In this guide we'll talk about methods to help you UNDERSTAND your audience. While the next guide will include practical suggestions on COMMUNICATING with your audience. This lesson comes first because it includes important foundations for you to be able to communicate effectively with and understand your audience.

Note: Although we are moving relatively quickly through this course, please be sure to follow through on all your list-building plans. You're building your list for the long-term, so make sure you set aside time on a weekly or daily basis to continue working on those list building tools and methods.

Now, let's get back to getting to know your list. At this point, you probably have some or even a good understanding of your target market. But **never** let that **perceived** sense of understanding make you feel like you can assume that you can just sit pretty and just send out emails based on your current knowledge.

Here Are a Few Things to Keep in Mind:

- 1. There is always more you can understand about your current target market.** The learning process never really ends and even though it doesn't have to be time consuming, it requires continuous effort.
- 2. Your current subscribers will grow more sophisticated and educated as you continue to communicate with them.** It's a natural progression because, after all, you're providing great content and help to your readers so they can grow.
- 3. Your own approach and the type of subscriber you attract may change over time.** Obviously, your goal is to find subscribers that are not only engaged by what you have to say, but also want to buy stuff. To reach that goal, you may start to make adjustments to your own chosen target market. It's a natural part of the marketing process.

I know that all sounds complicated and possibly a bit overwhelming - after all, it sounds like you're marketing to a **constantly moving target**.

Well, truthfully you are marketing to a moving target, but if you hone your "understanding skills", keeping up with the changes can become second nature. You just need to develop the routines to get there and that's what this guide is all about.

Let's Start with the Good Ol' Target Market & USP...err UEP

If you've taken any coaching from me before, you'll know that I always seem to bring up two things - target market and USP (Unique Selling Position) - and you might even be tired of it hearing about it.

I apologize if it is tiring, but it's like eating your veggies - it's just so darned good for you. ☺

The truth is, most people run their businesses with an incredibly superficial understanding of these two concepts and, as a result, they just won't be able to connect with their audience like you're going to be able to.

Plus, defining your target market and USP (and we'll be calling it UEP for "Unique Emailing Position" for our purposes) for your business as a whole is just a small part of the puzzle. If you want maximum results, you need to define these 2 things for every component of your business - from each mailing list, to your blog, to each and every product in your product line. The fact of the matter is, the more you understand where your target is coming from and what motivates them to make each purchase, the more you're going to sell.

So let's go through this again and talk about how these concepts apply your mailing list:

- **Target Market:** The target market for your list is the specific group of people your list caters to. These are people who are interested in the type of content you provide and who want to buy the products you sell and recommend. The more you know about your audience, the easier it will be to connect with them and to sell to them.

When determining your target market there are two basic areas to explore and they are demographics and psychographics.

- **Demographics:** includes your target market's age, gender, maybe geographic location, income bracket, and other statistical type of data.
- **Psychographics:** is more vital to truly understanding your target market. Psychographics define your market's interests, lifestyles, opinions, values, and so on.

Most people stop at demographics, but those superficial things really keep you from really understanding what your readers want. Psychographics is what helps you go deeper into understanding your reader's point of view and how to sell more effectively to them.

Here are some more things to tap into:

- Understanding their wants, wishes, desires
- Knowing the problems they need solved.

These things are what really motivates people to spend their money and buy products. Yes, they buy to satisfy their immediate needs, but desire and emotional impulses is what drives people to spend their money readily.

Start by listing your target market's demographics and begin brainstorming the psychographics as well. There are no wrong answers as you're doing what you can to define a large group of people.

- **UEP (Unique Emailing Position):** UEP is an acronym I made up for our purposes (you won't find it in any copywriting or marketing guide that I know of) and it stands for Unique Emailing Position. ☺ I have chosen this name so that you can really try to imagine your USP in the terms of your email marketing.

In short, your UEP is what sets you apart from others in your market using email to reach their prospects and customers. Put another way, a UEP is some unique thing you offer to your readers that competition is not. It's the reason your subscribers sign up to your list, stay subscribers, open and act upon your email.

Here are just a few examples of a UEP. Your UEP will likely be very different as these examples won't necessarily be appropriate to all types of lists. These ideas is just to help you start thinking about your own UEP.

- Do you offer more in-depth information on specific topics?
- Do you provide the honest reviews other people are afraid to do?
- Is your list attractive because you provide easy-to-understand condensed information?
- Does your mailing list motivate people into taking action?
- Is your list a humorous look at your topic?
- Do you send more frequent up-to-the-minute information?
- Are you dedicated to answering your readers' questions and engaging in dialogue with them (Mind your time on something like this and look at the tips in the "Asking" section a little later in this lesson)?
- Do you offer exclusive interviews to people of influence in your target market?

UEP (or USP) is a concept that is often difficult for people because every business and mailing list is different. You need to really sit down, brainstorm and figure out your UEP because if you don't, it's hard to stand out from the crowd and compete in your market.

Here is one of the most important questions you'll ask yourself when formulating your UEP:

“Why would my subscriber sign up for my list, instead of someone else’s? Why would they continue to stay subscribed?”

Take a look at other mailing lists / newsletters in your target market. What are they doing that you can do even better? If you’re on any customer lists (if not, try to get on some), see how your competitors treat their customers via email.

If you still don’t feel you completely have your target market and UEP figured out, the rest of this week’s lesson will help you nail it down. The “tool set” on the following pages will go along way to define things even better for you.

Your Understanding Tool Set:

There are so many ways to learn about your target market and the Internet itself is filled with endless places for searches. In the coming pages, we will cover some of the most effective strategies you can use to deepen your understanding of your target audience.

Tracking Links:

One of the best ways to know what your subscribers are interested in is to track which links they follow in the emails you send. It doesn't matter if it's a link to an article, a product a free offer...track all the links in all your emails.

Keeping track of all your links will give you a deeper understanding of:

- **What type of content your readers are interested in:** If you link to an article or blog entry in your email, track the link to see how many click through to read.
- **What type of products they're interested in:** If they’re not clicking on product links, either they’re not interested or you’re not promoting the product well enough so they are interested in clicking.
- **Which free offers appeal to them:** Even if you’re giving away something for free or directing them to a free resource, track it.
- **Out of the people that click, how many take action:** Not only do you want to know how many people click the links, you want to know how many people bought, signed up for a freebie as a result of that click.
- **Which lists are more responsive:** If you have multiple lists you’re promoting to (ex. a subscriber list and a customer list), track the links separately to see who is really taking you up on your offers.

Caution with Built-In Autoresponder Tracking: If your autoresponder includes built-in link tracking, I would caution against using it. Tracking links in autoresponders tend to be long, nonsensical and come from a domain your subscriber don't recognize.

Instead, create and track your own links, so you can control exactly how they look and your readers will feel confident clicking them. Also, these types of autoresponder-only tracking systems only track CLICKS, unless they are somehow tied into your shopping cart.

Recommendation for Shopping Cart / Affiliate Program Tracking: You should be using the tracking in your shopping cart or in the affiliate program you're working with because that will not only tell you the number of clicks, but the number of sales, sign ups, etc.

But again, these types of programs create long links that won't be familiar to your readers and are so long they might break up in an email message. Take those links and redirect them through your domain name. The links will look much safer for readers to click, plus you can add your own call-to-action in your links.

For example: <http://www.myteddybearsite.com/sign-up-now.html> looks much better than <http://quickcart.com/sd3f/track/2010.asp>

How to Redirect Your Links:

There are many ways to redirect a link through your own server, but I personally use javascript links to keep things simple. These types of redirects will be tracked readily in your website statistics program as well.

Your Goal: Start tracking all the links in your broadcast emails. If you have prescheduled autoresponder messages, go back through them and ensure that you change direct links to links that are being tracked. Review your broadcast statistics a few days after sending out a broadcast email. For your autoresponders, check the statistics once per month and switch out under-performing content and offers to continuously improve your response.

Observation:

Observation is an incredibly valuable tool, but it's something not a lot of people do well. In order to improve your observation skills, you might want to keep an observation checklist that is appropriate for your target market. Once you've established a routine, it will become second nature to you and a part of your regular day.

Places You Can Observe Your Target Market:

Your Blog – Find out which blog entries are most popular and which links they are clicking. Look at which entries are most read *and* most commented because those aren't necessarily the same thing.

Ex. Often promotional type posts don't receive as much discussion as informational ones even if people are readily acting on your offer.

In addition to statistical observation, observe what your readers say in their comments. Commentary provides a wealth of information about your readers beliefs, viewpoints and preferences. Watch for trends from your readers.

If your readers include a website address with their comment, make it a habit to click through and see what they do, what they write on their blogs, etc. Of course, you're looking at individuals, but as you continue to do this and your readership grows, you can see some common things about your readers. Your goal is to gain the big picture, over time.

- **Your Forum, if You Have One:** You can make similar observations if you have a forum or some type of discussion area. Seed your own threads (i.e. starting your own threads for marketing purposes, to start discussions, etc.) to see what type of headlines people readily open, which discussions they get involved in, which links they click and offers they take.

Since your members will be starting their own discussions, you have an extra source of info about your readers. See what topics they write about, what questions they ask, what products they talk about buying and what advice they give one another. You can also look at the websites they include in their profiles.

- **Your Emails:** We already talked about tracking your email links in the previous section. That is for emails that you send out. You should also observe common themes and trends in emails your subscribers and visitors send you.

By the way, I don't suggest you answer every single email and engage each writer in a lengthy discussion. That is not a productive use of your time and doesn't necessarily help you understand your target audience in general.

Set yourself up to receive this valuable feedback and questions from your readers in a more efficient way...and we're going to talk about that in the upcoming section on "Asking".

- **Your Website Statistics:** Your website statistics can tell you a lot about your readers and target market. Your web host should provide you with detailed access to your statistics, but if they don't take a look at using something like <http://analytics.google.com>. You just need to enter a snippet of code into your pages or template and you're ready to go.

Here are a couple points for observation in your statistics:

Pages Viewed - This shows you the most popular pages and in the case of redirected links, you can see how often they are clicked.

Referral Traffic - This shows other web pages that are linking to your pages. Visit these links and see what others are saying about you, your content, etc.

Of course, there is plenty of other useful data you can derive from your stats, but those are the basics you can start with.

Outside Observation:

If you're just getting started or have low traffic levels than you can still observe your target market. Just look outside your own virtual real estate for clues.

WARNING: Outside observation can be very valuable, but realize that when you go outside of your own lists/customers/blogs, etc. the people you're observing may not be from your precise target market. It's always better to get information from the people you are actually attracting to your own business (your subscribers, visitors, customers), but outside observation can be helpful too – especially when you're just getting started).

- **Other target market blogs:** See what other target-market blogs are writing about. Observe their readers comments, follow their links, etc. Load the blogs into a feed reader, so you can quickly glance at headlines and review topics of interest.

It will allow you to organize your blog reading and search much more easily.

- **Personal blogs:** These days just about everyone has a blog. People share their thoughts, pose questions, talk about what they do and buy. Pay attention to this very importance source of intelligence. Here are a couple of places to search target market-related keywords that will return blog listings for you.
 - <http://www.technorati.com>
 - <http://blogsearch.google.com/>
- **Other Forums:** Even if you don't have your own forum, there is plenty to learn from forums reaching your target market. Don't get sucked into discussions that waste your valuable time, but rather observe the behavior, questions and discussions. Just search on Google for your target market + “forum” or “message board”, etc.
- **Social Networks:** Just like blogs, social networks provide an opportunity for users to share opinions, buying habits, etc. Places like MySpace.com and Facebook make it easy for individuals to have a voice. Use the search functions on

these social networks to find out what they're talking about related to your target market.

A Few to Look at:

- Facebook.com
- MySpace.com
- Twitter.com (you can do searches at <http://www.summize.com>)

There may also be target market specific social networks you can tap into for information, so search around for those.

- **Social Bookmarks:** As mentioned in our first lesson, social bookmarking is for people to share and vote on noteworthy news and interesting things they come across on the net. Search these sites to find out what is truly buzzworthy for your market.

A Few To Look at:

- Digg.com
- StumbleUpon.com
- Reddit.com
- del.icio.us

- **Product Reviews:** Search for user-written product reviews. Of course, you need to be careful when blindly searching as many reviews are written by biased affiliates who want to make a commission, but look for more genuine reviews and sites that allow comments on reviews. Those comments can be quite revealing.

If you sell consumer products, the following sites might be useful for conducting product review research:

- Amazon.com
- Epinions.com
- ReviewCentre.com

You might find more target market specific review sites as well.

- **Magazines, trade journals, newspapers, etc.:** Although the Internet provides a wealth of information about your target market, you can also look offline for helpful information. Offline publications are a good source of discovering:
 - Topics your readers are interested in learning about.
 - Products being marketed to your target market (through advertising).

- Opinions and questions posed by your market in Letters to the Editor-type sections.

Establishing Your Observation Routines:

Although observation is important, you don't want it to take up your entire day. Some of these items (particularly observation on your own virtual real estate) should be part of your regular routine, but be careful with the items on the Outside Observations. Just set aside a few minutes a day or half hour or so per week and stay focused on what you're there for. Or you might even outsource these tasks to someone who can put together reports for you.

Don't over think it or overanalyze. In most cases, there are no numbers to crunch...you're just gathering general information that fosters a better understanding.

Let's compare it to "real life" observation. From knowing your friends and family, you've come to understand them. You know what makes them tick, what would make them happy and how to communicate best with them. Learning this didn't require any heavy analysis. It came through time, experience and just plain old paying attention. You can do this with your own target market too.

Asking:

One of the most efficient ways to find something out is simply to ask. You can ask your subscribers:

- What questions they need answered.
- What types of online, downloadable tools they need.
- What types of products they currently buy.
- What types of products they wish they could find.
- Why your current customers purchased your products.

Warning: Sometimes People Say & Do Different Things:

Just one word of caution with asking and surveying your readers, especially when it comes to asking them what products they would be willing to buy, how much they would spend, etc. People tend to do different things than they say they will do, so even though I may survey on what they'd like to buy, I rely heavily on observation for making a lot of those types of decisions.

Still, asking can be a powerful tool and can help you come up with content to provide, products to offer, price points to test, etc.

How to Collect Your Data:

To collect your data, use a form that submits answers to a database. That way, you have all your answers in one place and you can do some statistical analysis. Having hundreds or thousands of emails saved in a folder can be very cumbersome, so do it right the first time.

To create simple one-question surveys, multiple choice or more complex surveys, try this program free: <http://www.easyinternetsurveys.com>. You can design multiple surveys to include as many or as few questions as you'd like. You can copy and paste the code into your web page or if you're not html proficient, Easy Internet Survey will host the pages for you.

To get to know your subscribers better, I recommend setting up the following – but use your own judgment in creating your own questions and surveys to best suit your market:

1. **A "Submit a Question" Survey:** Create a simple survey that ask your readers to submit a question on X topic (with X being the focus of your mailing list).

Tips for Minding Your Time:

- Ask your readers to be as specific as possible and to consult your online FAQ or Frequently Asked Questions (Don't have one? Make one!) to see if the question has been answered before.
- Tell them that you answer as many questions as possible, but due to volume of submissions, you can't possibly get to them all.
- Let them know they should *only* supply information they are okay sharing with the public as your answers will be published in the newsletter and in the FAQ. They should be subscribed to the newsletter to see if you answer their question.

Those specifications are very important as they will reduce your workload and expectations from your readers. I mean, we all want to help people, but you have to be careful with your time.

Promote a question submission page by:

1. Adding a prescheduled message to your autoresponder that goes out a few days after they initially subscribe.
 2. Each time you publish an answer, remind your subscribers where they can submit their own questions.
 3. Link to your FAQ in the navigation of your blog, content pages, etc. and make sure your FAQ pages have a link to the submission form.
2. **A "Buying Habits" Survey:** Put together a survey that asks what kinds of products your readers buy, how much they spend, etc. The questions you ask will

be guided by your unique target market, but if you'd like to get feedback on your survey questions, come up with a list and post it in your private discussion area.

A Few Hints:

- **Keep your survey simple.** Although you might be tempted to gather a lot of information, online and people in general users have a short attention span. Try not to make it too complicated or long in order to ensure more surveys get completed.
- **Offer a free gift for completing the survey:** Don't expect your readers to spend time filling out forms out of the goodness of their hearts. They're busy, just like you, so sweeten the deal. Give them a worthwhile free report, tool, audio recording or gift certificate. Just make sure it can be digitally and automatically delivered upon survey completion. That way, there is no extra work for

To make the delivery automatic, simply put it on the thank you page once they have completed the survey. Once they submit the questions, they are redirected to a page and you can put a link to download the report, gift certificate, etc. right there.

Promote Your Survey:

- You can add the request for help and your bribe to your autoresponder. This might be more suitable a few weeks after they are on your list and after they get to know you.
 - You can also add a link from your blog, content pages etc.
3. **A “Customer” Survey:** To find out what makes your customers actually buy your products, ASK your current customers. A few weeks after your product is delivered, automatically send them an email that asks them to complete a short survey. For this one you should also keep it simple and offer a free gift for completion.

This type of survey is a good source of testimonials for your sales materials as well. You can ask your readers to check a box if you have permission use their comments in promotional materials.

4. **An “Upcoming Product” Survey:** As you get ready to launch a product, you can ask for feedback from your readers. You might ask them about features, price points, etc. Personally, I don't conduct many surveys like this for reasons stated earlier about what people do vs. what they say.

What I prefer to do is give details about a product just about ready to launch and invite readers to ask further questions, get clarification, etc. That way, I can

discover any potential objections to buying and how to overcome them. It also provides information that I can use for a product-specific FAQ.

Let Them Get to Know You:

In the real world, one of the best ways to get to know someone is to let them know a little bit about you. When people feel they know you, there are more comfortable with sharing more of themselves. You can use the same approach with your subscribers...open up a little and see how they do the same with you.

- Share stories from your life that are relevant to your topic (ex. if you are talking about homeschooling teenagers, share your own experiences).
- Don't be afraid to share your opinions. Although your readers may not always agree with you, if you present your opinions in a logical manner, they will respect that and share their own.

Final Thoughts

We've covered a lot of ground and you now have a lot of possible techniques to get to know your audience better. Taking the time to go through your assignment will help ensure that you develop good habits into gaining a deep understanding that will make communicating with your list so much easier. We'll be going through the practical strategies of communicating next week.

This Week's Assignment

1. What is the target market for your main list? Include demographics, but take some time to come up with your psychographics as well.
2. What is your list's UEP? If you're still struggling with this, please ensure you do some brainstorming and research.
3. Make your tracking plan and report your progress (i.e. How will you track your links? Have you updated the links in your prescheduled messages?.)
4. Where can you observe your target market (list specific sources)?
5. Will you set up a survey? What questions will you ask and how will you encourage your readers to complete it?
6. How can you help your readers get to know you better?