

## **Under-Earning and the Fear of Rejection**

**How you can get past rejection and increase your earnings.**

**By Robert Middleton – Action Plan Marketing**

**A**lan Johnson has been a coach for three years. He works with a wide variety of clients on issues related to life fulfillment and personal productivity. He gets rave reviews from his clients and finds his work very fulfilling. The trouble is, Alan doesn't yet earn enough income as a coach to support himself, and still has to rely on part-time projects outside of coaching.

**Marcia Grimaldi is a training consultant who has helped her clients produce many breakthrough results over the past five years.** But like Alan, most of her business comes from word-of-mouth and she never has a big enough client load to make ends meet. She's considering dropping out of self-employment and getting a full time job as an in-house corporate trainer.

**Alan and Marcia are both self-employed professionals.** Sadly, they are not the exception in the self-employed world, but the rule. According to Stephen Fairley, author of "Getting Started in Personal and Executive Coaching," 50% of coaches have less than 10 clients and make less than \$20,00 per year. The success rate amongst other self-employed professionals isn't much more encouraging.

**For people who have a commitment to making a difference,** helping other people, and charting their own destiny, the simple fact of under-earning is pushing many talented people out of self-employment before they have a chance to get established.

**There are undoubtedly many reasons for under-earning,** but ultimately it comes down to the inability to attract enough new clients. With a few more clients, both Alan and Marcia would have a solid practice and bright futures as independent professionals. For many, this is the frustratingly unanswered question: Why can't I attract more clients and make more money?

**As a marketing coach for almost twenty-five years, I have worked with hundreds of Alans and Marcias.** Most are talented, enthusiastic, and committed to their profession, but when it comes to marketing, they have little results to show. Clients trickle in from word-of-mouth referrals, usually not enough to sustain a full practice.

As we'll explore in this article, the reason most independent professionals don't attract enough clients is because of fear of rejection.

**I haven't done a scientific study of this,** but when interviewing new clients I've observed that their marketing ineffectiveness is almost always tied to this very common fear. Here are a few of the things I've heard over the past several years:

- I don't want to come off as pushy
- Nobody is interested in hearing about my services
- Word-of-mouth is the only way to get more clients
- If I ask for referrals it will feel like I'm begging
- Marketing is a bother and an interruption to people
- People won't want to listen to a talk I give
- No one will read what I write, so why bother?

**When questioned further, these coaches admit that what's under all of these statements is fear** – the fear of rejection. Not only are they afraid of rejection, they believe that marketing themselves will lead to rejection. Talk about being caught in a bind!

**One of the greatest needs of human beings is to be accepted and to belong.** When we are rejected, it is very painful for almost everyone. When it comes to marketing our services, and people are not interested in what we're offering, we feel rejected.

**When you started your practice you may have been very excited** by both the potential to help your clients and the prospect of being successful in your new business. You talked to everyone about your services. But before long you discovered that not everyone was as excited as you were!

**You realized that marketing your services was trickier than you thought** and that some degree of rejection was a simple reality.

**That person you met at a networking event seemed interested in consulting,** but when you followed up with them they failed to return your calls. You offered a complimentary coaching session to someone else but despite your best efforts they weren't interested in continuing. Another prospect showed real enthusiasm but when you told them your fees, they demurred.

**These ongoing experiences of rejection took their toll on you.**

**Your excitement waned and your marketing efforts diminished.** You found yourself more reluctant to go to networking events or to offer

complimentary sessions. Before long, you found yourself saying that the only way to get new clients was from referrals (not that you ever asked a client for a referral, as that also might result in rejection).

**It's at this stage that many independent professionals simply give up.** The pain and frustration of rejection and lack of success with marketing weighs so heavily that it no longer makes sense to press on.

**Are there ways to overcome this fear of rejection and succeed with marketing your business?** You know that if you could surmount this one obstacle, you'd attract more clients, earn more money and make the difference you've always wanted to make.

**In my work with clients over many years,** I've discovered two effective approaches to overcoming the fear of rejection. They work especially well if you use them in tandem.

**They are "Marketing Conversations," and "Changing the Story."**

Below I'll share the essence of these two approaches and how you can start to apply them immediately to overcome your fear of rejection.

### **Marketing Conversations**

**There are three key skills you can apply to marketing your services:** telling, listening, and asking. It's our failure to understand the subtle principles behind these skills that undermines our marketing effectiveness.

**Telling seems simple enough.** We think that means explaining how our services work. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nobody is interested

in how your services work. When you explain the process of your services to a potential client, it falls on deaf ears. Your telling generates little attention or interest. And if you are not getting much attention or interest, you'll never convert prospects into clients.

**Your telling needs to be of a different nature.** I call it the "language of results, solutions, and outcomes." When you are telling about your services, forget about explaining what you DO (what I call process-speak), instead tell about what your clients GET from working with you (results-speak). Share results they've experienced through success stories that came about as a consequence of your work with them.

**Compare these two approaches to telling:** "We sit down with you and work on determining your goals. Then we look at where you are now and the gap between the two. Based on this, we coach you to bridge that gap." Pure process-speak; your attention and interest factor is close to zero.

**I know that this might be hard to grasp.** We are so addicted to process-speak that we actually think it communicates. But it doesn't. The time to talk about process is much later – once prospects are showing real interest in how your services can help them produce better results. Then you can explain how your process works to get those results.

**It should always be the last thing you talk about, never the first thing.**

**Now let's try some results-speak:** "A client came to me with a goal he's been working on for two years with little results. He wanted to put on a fundraising event but he kept getting stuck. We worked together for a few

months and not only did he put on the event with great success, he raised over \$30,000 for his favorite charity."

**Notice that with results-speak, I don't need to know HOW you did it but THAT you did it.** When you practice the art of results-speak you get a whole lot more attention and interest and much less rejection.

**You need to do some serious thinking about the results you've helped your clients achieve** and then write down several of these success stories until you can tell them very spontaneously. When you have a new and better success story, add that to your repertoire.

**Next is listening.** This is another skill at which we all think we are proficient. But my observation is that most are barely competent at effective listening.

**If we are successful at using results-speak to communicate the value of our services, it's a good start.** But we usually blow it completely only seconds after by continuing to talk... and talk... and talk. Once you have attention, the most powerful thing you can do is start asking questions and listening.

**I challenge you to try this the next time you go to a networking event:**

**First get attention with a powerful story of client results** and then don't tell one-single-thing-more-about-your-services. Nothing! Find out about the prospect instead. They say: "That sounds great, how does that work?" You say, "Well there's a number of things we do to help clients

achieve results. But first, can you tell me something you've always wanted to do and still haven't done? (or whatever question would be appropriate to the service you offer)."

**Then focus with unwavering intensity on this prospect.** Learn about their dreams and desires. Ask about what stops them. Find out what they want in their life right now. And completely avoid talking about your services (other than dropping another success story or two). If you do this, a funny thing will happen. They'll want to know even more about how your services can help them. This is when you use the third skill of marketing: asking.

**"Ask what?" you say.** Ask for permission to send them some information and to follow-up. If you've communicated a valuable result of your services through Telling, and then learned about them through Listening, you have earned the right to Ask.

**And when a prospect is interested, they automatically want more information.** "I have an article I wrote called, 'How to Double Your Results in Half the Time.' Can I send you a copy? Great, I'd like to get your take on it. Then can I follow up with you next week? I'd like to know more about that project we discussed."

**Asking means taking the initiative to further the conversation.** And this conversation will consist of more Telling, Listening and Asking until you ultimately decide to work together. I call the combination of these three skills "Marketing Conversations."

**By engaging in low-key but substantive Marketing Conversations** you engage a prospect. They don't feel pushed or manipulated. Instead, they

find themselves drawn towards you. This in itself eliminates a large percentage of rejection.

**In the next part, I'll talk about 'Changing the Story'** and how that can lessen the sting of rejection.

### **Changing the Story**

**Rejection is nothing more than a story you tell yourself.** Someone fails to show interest in your services and you make up a story called 'rejection.' And when you identify with this story of rejection you end up feeling bad about yourself and then start to withdraw. It's a story that generates fear and avoidance.

#### **The story of rejection goes something like this:**

"That person rejected me. He wasn't interest in my services. Boy, am I a lousy marketer of my services. I'll never get this right, I'll never earn a living as a consultant."

**When we get hooked by the story of rejection,** we inevitably start feeling bad, unsuccessful, and discouraged. And those feelings lead to more thoughts and stories that don't get us anywhere.

#### **What if you told yourself a different story?**

"This person didn't show much interest in my services. When I told him a success story he didn't respond. Perhaps he just couldn't relate to that particular story. Or maybe he's a person who doesn't have many big



aspirations in his life right now."

**Where's the rejection in that story? There isn't.**

"What I can do is work on some other ways to talk about my business and be realistic in understanding that not everyone will be interested in achieving big goals."

**If after every so-called rejection, you do a reality check on what actually happened,** it's easier to tell a story other than a rejection story. The truth is, there are hundreds of reasons for someone not being interested in what you have to offer. It's nothing personal. It's just the way it is.

**When you think of it this way, many new options open up.**

**You can check out different networking organizations where there are more qualified people.** You can add some success stories to your repertoire; you can talk to more people at an event and not get stuck with someone who's not an ideal client; or you can go home and work at studying marketing techniques.

**Before you attend a networking event, tell yourself a story that will support your efforts:**

"My goal is to make one good connection at this event. I'll talk to at least five people, use my best results stories and really listen. I won't expect miracles, but at minimum I'll make a few good connections."

**In all my years of working with clients on their marketing** I've yet to

hear a real rejection story. Nobody has said anything like this: "I started to speak to someone at a networking event and he told me to get out of his face because I was just another scumbag coach!" Relax, it's not going to happen.

**I've also never heard of someone being rudely rejected on a follow-up call.** And even if they were rude, what does it have to do with you? Perhaps they were having a bad day or had a pathological fear of talking on the phone!

**Fear of rejection is the stance of a victim.**

**Somebody is doing it to you and you can't help but feel bad.** Get over yourself! What if it was impossible to tell yourself that story? What if you took some responsibility and learned some effective marketing communication skills instead?

**The good news is that there are many very successful independent professionals** who earn six-figure plus incomes. What they all have in common is they learn and implement some basic marketing skills, and they tell themselves stories that empower and motivate them.

**And there's absolutely no reason why you can't do the same.**

**Where do you go from here?**

**This article outlined some basic but potent ideas that can help you attract more clients.** If you'd like some guidance and support in applying these ideas to your business, I'd recommend, as a first step, to check out the Action Plan Marketing Club.

**The Action Plan Marketing Club is an affordable, yet comprehensive service** that provides the information, guidance, and support for you to attract all the clients you'll ever need, and to make the contribution you were born to make. Complete details can be found on the Action Plan Marketing website at this URL:

<http://www.actionplan.com/actionplanclub.html>

**For those who are more advanced with their marketing skills,** and want to take their business to a whole new level of success and contribution, we offer the **Marketing Mastery Program**. This is an intensive one-year program. You can learn more about this program at this URL:

<http://www.actionplan.com/apmmm.html>

### **About Robert Middleton**

**Since 1984 Robert has been working with self-employed professionals to be more effective marketers of their services.**

As a marketing coach, consultant, designer, writer and workshop leader, he has worked with thousands of clients.

**His online bestseller, The Info-Guru Marketing Manual** has helped thousands of self-employed professionals attract more clients with less struggle and effort. His Web Site ToolKit provides a complete template for building a client-attracting web site. His email newsletter, More Clients, has been published weekly since 1997 and goes out to almost 50,000 subscribers.

**Robert's approach to marketing and building a business is different than most marketers.** Although he understands that financial success is important, the path to that success is through

making a profound contribution. Robert has been a student of some of the best marketing gurus in the world as well as a student of those who understand what it takes to live a life that matters.

Robert lives with his wife, Saroj, and cat, Bindu, in the redwood forest of the Santa Cruz Mountains, in Boulder Creek, California.

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