The Scientific Art of

FINDING & CATCHING CLIENTS

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Introduction

Imagine a steady supply of clients. Not a flood one month and a drought the next. A steady line of people who want what you do.

How would that change your life?

It sounds like a far-off dream. It isn't. There are more phones in the world than people. Somewhere, right now, someone is searching for what you offer. Your job is to find them, catch them, and keep them.

This book shows you how. It gives you concrete strategies and tactics. Some help you find new clients. Others help you get more from the clients you already have.

Here's the plan:

1. **Serve, don't sell.** Why you have clients, not customers.
2. **Fish five ways.** Five methods to find new clients, from hand gathering to traps.
3. **Know your clients.** A database, a handwritten note, and a system that remembers for you.
4. **Measure.** The most important word in marketing.
5. **Get a yes.** Seven copywriting techniques that move people to act.
6. **Prioritize.** Why a checklist beats a schedule.
7. **Build on four pillars.** Where to spend your time, and how to set your price.

Each chapter ends with a question and a small exercise. Do the exercise. Reading about fishing never caught a fish.

Find them. Catch them. Keep them.

Chapter 2: Five Ways to Catch a Fish

Henry Ford wrote this in 1922:

“Business is never so healthy as when, like a chicken, it must do a certain amount of scratching around for what it gets.”

A business can’t exist without clients. Without them, the money dries up and the lights go out. The companies that last know two things. They know how to get more from their current clients. And they know how to find new ones.

Clients can come from anywhere. Thanks to the internet, your next client can live a thousand kilometres away. They can be fifty years older or younger than you. They might not even speak your language.

To grow your profits, you can do two things:

- Raise the **quality** of your clients.
- Raise the **quantity** of your clients.

There are many ways to do either. Let’s borrow a lesson from one of the oldest pastimes in the world: fishing.

I count five basic ways to catch a fish. Why does one person use a net and another a pole? It depends on their goal. Each method has its own strengths. A healthy business uses a balance of all five.

Here they are, and what each one means for your business.

Hand gathering: talk to people

You wade into the water and pick crabs off the sea floor with your hands. It isn’t clean. It isn’t pleasant. It isn’t

efficient.

But it works. And it's easy to start, because you need no equipment. It's the only method that needs no bait. It's also the method that puts you closest to the fish.

Hand gathering is a great way to start a business. It only needs time and patience. Anyone can make a cold call, send a cold email or knock on a door. Even the worst salesperson in history makes a sale eventually.

The real prize is what you learn. On the front line, you hear what your clients need, what they want and what they like. Most businesses start here. Then they move to where the bigger fish are.

Get in the water.

Angling: bait and research

Angling is the classic picture of fishing: a pole, bait, a hook, a line and a sinker. You might catch a bigger fish. You need a little money for equipment. But you stay dry, sitting on a dock or in a boat.

Angling takes patience. You wait for the fish to bite. So you need a good lure, something that draws your prospects in. A lure can be a gift, a free consultation that is easy to book, or a big promise you can keep.

Angling also takes research. The comedian Steven Wright said there's a fine line between fishing and just standing on the shore like an idiot. Research is that line. You need to know where the fish are biting.

Here are four places to look for clients:

- **Where your competitors fish.** Where do your successful competitors find their clients? Do they advertise online, in a directory, or on posters around town? If it works for them, it can work for you.
- **Complaints.** Go to the big online stores and review sites. Find the top sellers in your industry. Read the reviews, especially the bad ones. Those people have a need, and their current supplier let them down. If you find nothing for your service, be careful. You may be heading into an uphill, upwind battle.
- **An audience you build.** Make or share something people care about. With the right angle, you can make people care about almost anything. Then the fish come to you.
- **Your current clients.** Ask them who else needs you. You don't need to push. If your service impressed them, they'll pass your name along.

Bait the hook. Know the water.

Spearfishing: aim at one

Hand gathering, angling and spearfishing are all about quality. Each one is more targeted than the last.

With a spear, you go after the big ones. You don't waste your throw on a small fish. Sharks and whale sharks are within reach. But you depend on your tools and your skill with them. You tune both to the fish you want.

Spearfishing takes accuracy, investment and patience. Each fish behaves a little differently, but they follow similar patterns. Your first throw will probably miss. With practice and better tools, your aim improves. In time, one short,

focused burst lands the big one.

In business, a spear is a planned series of contacts with one client. It might be a letter, then a gift, then an email, then a free lesson. Every business is different. But for every business, some mix of contacts brings the client in and closes the deal. Your job is to find that mix.

Pick one fish. Aim.

Netting: wide and fast

Cast a baited net and you catch many fish at once. You also catch everything else. You drag home seaweed, junk and fish you don't want. That costs time and energy. It's fine if you plan for it. A net is about quantity, not quality.

In business, a net is broad advertising: online ads, billboards, television, radio, magazines and classifieds. It can bring big results fast. It also eats money.

A good net campaign runs for a long time. Each campaign learns from the data of the last one. We'll come back to that in Chapter 4.

Cast wide. Expect seaweed.

Trapping: catch while you sleep

Trapping is the secret to big, steady catches. A trap fisher goes from trap to trap and collects the fish that are already there. You never wait for a bite again.

A trap takes longer to set up than the other methods. You need to know where the fish are. You need a trap that can catch and hold your target. Most fishers only set a trap

where they have already fished by hand or with a pole.

In business, a trap is a system that brings in good clients without you. It's the best investment you can make. With a trap in place, you can focus on your work. You stop worrying about where your next client comes from.

The strongest bait for a trap is your expertise. Share what you know, and clients will respect you and come back.

For a digital service, you could:

- Offer a free report that gives away tricks of your trade.
- Keep a blog.
- Share videos that show people how to do what you do.

For a physical service, you could:

- Give a client a jersey from their favourite team.
- Run a regular contest.
- Become the regular expert on a local radio show.

Set the trap once. Check it often.

Think About It

Which of the five methods do you use today? Most people use one or two. Pick one method you don't use yet. Write down one small way to try it this month.

Chapter 4: Measure

There's a line people credit to Thomas Edison about his lab: there are no rules here, we're trying to get something done. No one seems able to find where he said it. But it fits this chapter. You don't need rules. You need results, and a way to see them.

Here's the most important word in marketing.

Measure.

A lesson from history

In 1923, Claude Hopkins wrote a short book called *Scientific Advertising*. I think it's the most useful book ever written about advertising. It has outlived every tool and invention since, because it isn't about tools. It's about how ideas spread.

His main point? Measure your investment.

Hopkins treated each advertisement like a salesperson. If a salesperson doesn't bring in more than they cost, you let them go. An ad is the same. Every dollar must earn its place.

So he started each new campaign small. He ran a few cheap experiments and measured each result. Then he spent big on the one that worked best.

You can do the same with a few dollars and a spreadsheet.

Test small. Scale what works.

Measure what matters to you

It's hard to improve when you don't know where you stand.

Two marketing professors, John Hauser and Gerald Katz, put it in four words: you are what you measure. Pick your numbers with care, because they will shape what you do.

- Want more clients? Count how many new clients you get each day. Note how each one found you.
- Want more profit? Track the money you spend and the money you receive each day.

Count what you want more of.

Data, data, data

Collect data whenever you can, on whatever you can, however you can. Start with questions like these:

- Are most of your clients men or women?
- How old are they?
- What time of day or season do they usually buy?
- Are they sports fans?
- Do they have children?
- Do they love television?

Each answer tells you where to fish and what bait to use.

Use information to your advantage

Most businesses aren't personal anymore. That's your opening. When you collect information about your clients on purpose, you gain huge leverage. When you use it well, you surprise them, impress them and close the deal.

- Imagine your mortgage broker remembered your child's birthday.
- Imagine your insurance agent gave you the new album from your favourite artist.
- Before you meet a new client, look them up online. Where do they work? What are their hobbies? Use what you find to open the conversation and put them at ease.

Think About It

What is the one number that matters most to your business right now? Write it down. Start counting it today, and check it every week.

Chapter 6: Priorities, Not Schedules

I could make a thousand comparisons between working for yourself and working for someone else. Maybe one day I will. For now, one difference stands out. It's how each person manages their day.

How do you plan your day?

Does your day look like this?

Monday	
12:00	Wash the car
1:30	Paint the house
2:00	Clean the kitchen
3:30	Take a walk

If so, you're doing it wrong.

I've tried it. It works for a while. Then you fall behind, and tasks slide to the next day.

A schedule puts the focus on how long a task takes. A checklist puts the focus on finishing the task. The next time you plan your day, try this instead:

Monday

1. Wash the car. *(done)*
2. Paint the house.
3. Clean the kitchen.
4. Take a walk.

Prioritize instead

Your intentions are clearest in a checklist.

Look at the schedule above. What's the most important task?

You can't tell.

Now look at the checklist. What's the most important task?

The one at the top.

Put first things first.

Be task-driven, not time-driven

When you're driven by time, one activity grows into two. When you're driven by tasks, you can focus on the result you want.

Our culture is obsessed with the clock. Some physicists even argue that time, as we feel it, isn't real. Either way, a clock can't tell you what matters.

Here's the odd part. When people must get something done, they use a checklist without thinking. Think of a wedding or a big party. But at work, most of us go back to the schedule.

Finish tasks, not hours.

My priorities for me, or yours?

The easiest way to feel busy is to react. You answer your co-workers, your boss, your clients and the news. It feels productive. That's why it's such an easy trap.

It’s also the surest way to get nothing useful done.

So ask yourself each morning. Is this list my priorities for me? Or is it everyone else’s priorities for me?

Set your own list.

Make your tasks bite-sized

Small, simple tasks are easier to finish. They’re also harder to forget. Look at this task:

- Take a trip to Wales.

That’s a huge task. You need to book flights and a place to stay. You need to check your passports. You need to save spending money. Break the big task into small pieces and it feels reachable. It’s also harder to forget:

1. Book the flights.
2. Book a place to stay.
3. Check the passports.
4. Save spending money.

Small tasks get done.

Think About It

Write tomorrow’s plan as a checklist, not a schedule. Put the most important task at the top. Break any task that takes more than an hour into smaller steps. At the end of the day, count what you finished.

Chapter 8: Your First Catch

You now have a full tackle box. Five ways to fish. A database. Handwritten notes. A habit of measuring. Seven ways to get a yes. A checklist. Four pillars and a way to price.

Don’t try to use it all at once. That’s a schedule, and you know how schedules end.

Use a checklist instead. Put one thing at the top.

Here’s the one thing to do this week. Open a spreadsheet and list twenty people you know. Pick three of them. Write each one a short handwritten note. Thank them for something specific. Put the notes in the mail.

Then count. How many replied? How many sent someone your way? Write the number down.

That’s the whole method in small. You gathered by hand. You built your database. You connected personally. You measured.

Next week, do it again. Then pick the next item on your list.

Start small. Measure. Repeat.