

WHAT'S
YOUR
URP?

**Don't just make a living;
make a life.**

Andrew Gibson

*'Andrew shares the secret of how you can take back control of your own destiny'
Dr Ivan Misner - entrepreneur & the founder of BNI – the world's largest business networking organization*

WHAT'S YOUR URP? - Extract

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of three special people, without whom I wouldn't be sharing this and who sadly are not here to see it being shared.

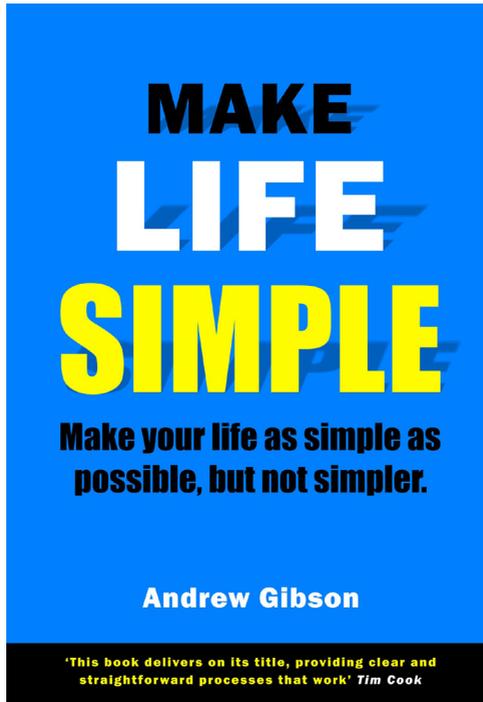
To my parents, Mike and Margaret Gibson, who brought me up in a house where to look out for others was the norm. Both worked in caring professions and brought me up to want to help others. I derive the greatest satisfaction when I help people make a difference, and this was instilled in me by them.

To my dear friend and colleague, Greg Vinnicombe, without whom I would not have discovered Solutions Focused Practice. As a Family Support Social Worker, Greg helped families in the most desperate and challenging situations. He was a kind, giving, caring and loving man, and was taken from this world too soon.

This book is dedicated to their memory and is testament to their legacy. It would not exist without them.

Also by Andrew Gibson

Make Life Simple



'Every journey begins
with a single step'

Lao-Tze

Foreword

I've worked with tens-of-thousands of Business Owners. And one thing I often hear them say is...

“I didn't think owning a business would be like this”.

When I ask what they mean, they talk about how hard they find it. How hard it is to win new business. How hard it is to get their work-life balance right. How hard it is to motivate their team to care as much as they do.

And when people find things hard, what do they do?

Well, they look at what everyone else does – to try to learn (ok, copy) from them.

But, doing this means you only see the things they do that are visible. The money-draining marketing. The time-draining social media stuff. And this just makes things seem harder still!

But here's the good news...

Things can be easier than they seem. You can achieve the Business

You can achieve the Business Owner's
goal of Easy Growth...
'Winning lots more work, without doing
lots more work'

Andy Bounds

Owner's goal of Easy Growth (or, as I like to call it – 'winning lots more work, without doing lots more work'). And that's where Andrew's book comes in...

He's created a simple guide to achieving Easy Growth - so you can generate, and then win, new opportunities without investing hundreds of pounds or hours.

For example, his concept of finding your Unique Referral Point – the thing which is so impressive about you, that people recommend you to their contacts. Get this right, and it becomes much easier to grow. After all, you're getting more warmed-up intros than ever before!

My advice? Grab a cup of tea, a pen and paper, and read this book as a step-by-step guide. Complete his exercises. Then, more importantly, check your answers with other people (because what you're impressed by is irrelevant – after all, you aren't the one paying for it!)

And one final thing – I love how the book starts by helping you balance your home-life and work-life. Why? Because you only have one life. And you want it to be as exciting as possible. Your business is a fundamental part of you achieving this. And this book will give you simple, quick, free and fun ways to do so.

Andy Bounds

Sales and Communication Expert

Best-selling author and international speaker

www.andyboundsonline.com

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My coaching journey started formally with the help of Natalia

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And finally to my family. To my late Mum and Dad, I owe everything. I wish they were here to see this book in print. To my sister Jenny and her husband Paul, they are an inspiration in business, running three successful companies that unbeknown to them fit the URP model precisely, and provide me with great evidence that this model works well over a long time. They also have provided such strong support and their advice has always been timely and to the point.

To my own family, my beautiful wife and
son, Natalie and Alex, the loves of my life.
Thank you for everything, now and for ever.

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Introduction

As an outcome of reading this book, you will love Monday mornings. And Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and every day of the week. My friend and mentor, Rick Armstrong, talks about ‘The Seven Day Weekend’, and indeed Ricardo Semler, CEO of Semco, published a book under this title in 2004 that takes a case study based approach referencing his own corporate experience. This book is intended to help you develop this for yourself on an individual scale, so here is my take on the concept as explained to me originally by Rick.

Most people enjoy doing the things they love doing with people they love being with at weekends, while ‘going to work’ during the week is a means of paying for the weekend of enjoyment. Even worse, many people reach the mid-point of their careers following this pattern, and then start planning for their retirement which may be in 10, 15 or even 20 years’ time. Why put up with this relentless grind when you could spend every day doing the things you love doing with people you love being with? We choose to like or not like the company we keep and the work we do. Once we choose to change our attitude to the thing we are

doing and the company we keep we may find we have, by definition, a 7 day weekend.

This book is not a primer for retirement, nor a means of finding early retirement. This is about making a living doing the things you love with people you love to be with. Read this book, and you will have the tools to deliver your own Seven Day Weekend.

The immediate challenge to this is of course, 'But I do what I do because I need to make a living!'. I can't guarantee that all readers will implement the ideas written here while maintaining their current levels of income. By reading this book, I will help you reassess the things you consider important. You may find that by enjoying a seven day weekend, you spend less on weekend activities and holidays as they are no longer the antidote to the Monday to Friday grind.

The first aim of this book is to help you to find a more enjoyable, satisfying, and consciously enlightened way of making a living. I will help you explore your core values, find ways to make more money while doing the things you are passionate about, and to find the people you want to be doing them with. This works whether you are a private business, a charity, or a 'profit for purpose' community company. This will also help if you are looking for a change in career due to boredom or frustration. I can't promise you will make a fortune if you follow my formula. My best hope is that you will notice differences around your

own emotional intelligence, personal satisfaction, increased fulfilment, and measurable improvements in health that will follow from all of these benefits. Does this sound too good to be true? Well, I have applied these principles to my own business, and with my many clients for many years, and this has worked every time.

The idea has broad application, however for individuals, the first premise is simple. Stop talking about what you do. Start talking about how you help.

Our culture defines us through the question, 'So what do you do?'. Even from an early age, caring adults showing an interest in children will ask, 'So what do you want to be when you grow up?'. It is perfectly natural to answer these questions with a job title, however there are two flaws with this approach.

First, the title you give yourself will be one small part of the range of products, services, ideas and concepts that exist within the field to which your label belongs. Second, the title you give yourself will be one small part of you, and all the skills, talents, knowledge and abilities you have are not included in one simple label. On the one hand the label is unclear, and on the other it fails to demonstrate your capacity and capability.

As a result of the limits placed on us by our label, defining ourselves by

a title actually reduces the opportunity to find new business. The label can even lead to loss of business due to someone else with your label destroying your reputation. For example, Investment Bankers deliver an important service to the economy, not least of which is the successful management of Pension Funds so many millions of people can enjoy a happy retirement. Yet, since the financial crisis of 2008, anyone with the label ‘banker’, even those kind branch tellers, suffered from abuse and reputational damage as bank customers did not differentiate between one form of banker and another.

In addition to being labelled by what we do, our society seeks opportunity to apply labels for most aspects of who we are. The application of labels is seldom helpful, and indeed often creates images which are deeply damaging. If you are a Muslim reading this book, or if you are a Migrant, you will already know what I mean. The labelling of people by skin-colour, gender, sexuality, religion, neighbourhood, or residential status has been used to classify entire sections of our global society, often to then make decisions that are “one size fits all”, and which seldom deliver as originally intended. This book is specifically designed to help you live a satisfying life by moving beyond the labels, and it will focus on the aspect of our lives we spend most time on – our work, or more specifically, the need to make a living. I will focus principally on the context of self-employment, however the principles also apply to your employment. In my honest opinion, it is easier to apply these principles to create your own work in the modern world

of zero-hours contracts and ever reducing employee protections. If the employer holds the balance of power in relation to their employees, this book will help you consider an alternative path where you take back control of your own destiny. If you work through the principles I outline here and can then find an employed role that meets more than your basic needs to earn money, then this book will have been useful. Despite the desires of society to assign a simple label and then to make decisions about categories on this basis, there is no one size fits all solution. This book will help each of us find our own unique solution.

We start by tackling the, 'So what do you do?' question.

My proposal is that we should answer the 'So what do you do?' question with a sentence that begins, 'I help...'. Ask yourself the question now, and see if you can answer with, 'I help...', thinking about who you helped, how you helped them, and most importantly the difference you made for them after you had helped. How many different ways have you helped people recently? I am confident you could list 15, 20, maybe 30 or more stories of specific people you have helped, and the outcomes you delivered for them. A part of the help you delivered will have been due to the thing you do, and for which you will naturally be labelled. However a major part of you as a rounded person will be all your other, unquantifiable skills, and this is powerful when unlocked. This is explored elsewhere with two concepts. The first is social capital, a term that captures the benefits that we have from our social networks.

The second is through a narrative based approach by telling stories of how you have helped people, and who you have helped. Fusing the two concepts leads to the idea that your networks convey your narrative, and so combined will develop and promote you in a helpful way. This happens naturally in so many aspects of our lives that we often don't realise it. In this book, we will harness this approach to help develop ways of making a living that are emotionally fulfilling.

The first section of this book will help you understand and develop your social capital with a view to realising the things you want to do, and the people you want to help as much for your own benefit as for theirs.

We will then look at how you use this process to make a living. If you are self-employed, this process will help you to find word of mouth referrals for the help you provide. If you prefer to be employed, you will have a better understanding of the roles that you will find fulfilling – those that deliver a seven day weekend.

One of the keys to unlock this is to work out the times when you are at your very best, your happiest, your most assured. When we engage people to provide us with products or services, we look for suppliers who are confident, passionate, knowledgeable and happy to help. If we are looking for this in others, it is reasonable that others will engage with us if we display these characteristics ourselves. I always ask my clients

to tell me what they are passionate about as when they answer, I see the characteristics I am looking for in a potential supplier or associate.

Note that this is not about helping you earn more money so you can spend more on weekends and vacation, or so you can retire earlier or wealthier. If you have gained in non-financial terms through improved quality of life, you will make different choices and your income may not be an issue. By being passionate in all you do, the money will follow, and there will be many intangible benefits that money just can't buy.

For many years, I worked in large corporations in Food and then in Hospitality. One constant was the concept of the Unique Selling Point, or Unique Selling Proposition – the USP. The USP was originally an Advertising Industry construct, trying to find ways of differentiating one brand from another in the minds of consumers. However, in my many years' experience as a business coach working with the self-employed, there is an expectation that a USP is integral to every business plan. In my opinion, there is no such thing as a USP. If you had a USP, you would have 100% of your market (until or unless you were copied). Even Google has only 92% of the on-line search market at the time of writing! There are very few who can claim to be genuinely unique in what they do. Whether we like it or not, someone else will do something very similar, and in most professions, there are thousands of people doing the very same.

Another popular idea is that we all need to find our own ‘niche’ in the market. I have found a way of doing this that does not require you to have unique products or services.

In this book I propose an alternative that makes it easier for you to find your niche by using your preferred clients and customers to define it. These are people to help who actually need your help. By being more specific about as many characteristics of these people as possible, the process combines the help you provide with the specific people you most want to help. This leads to an opportunity for you to do the thing you are passionate about to the benefit of others. I call this the Unique Referral Point or URP.

While it is impossible to find one thing you do that is unique, we all work with (or want to work with) a unique set of people. These are people we want to help with our products or services, who have needs that we can meet with our help. You have probably already helped people who fit this profile, so you already have credibility in this marketplace. Educate your network to share this narrative and you have your Unique Referral Point, and this makes it easier for you to start or grow your business, charity or service, or to find a career that delivers greater satisfaction.

If you are thinking that you can help pretty much anyone with pretty much anything, that remains the case whether you find your URP or not. The process outlined in this book will help you to find

the work that you want, however it will not stop you from receiving enquiries from people about things you might be able to help with. An interesting paradox is that the more tightly you define your URP, the more enquiries you will receive for other things!

The secret is to be specific in everything you develop. The only way we can distinguish ourselves is through working out the specific people we want to help, and the specific ways in which we help them. If we do this for ourselves and work consistently to develop our URP, it will be easier for us to find the people we can help, easier for us to engage with them, and in time, easier for our network to identify others who need our help. Even better, they will have a method of introducing us that is natural, helpful, and so fits with our social conditioning of making helpful introductions when the opportunity arises.

This sounds really simple, and as a concept it is. Yet as I network and meet new people, I find virtually everyone is keen to talk about what they do, and this on its own will not find you word of mouth referrals. Developing this strategy involves following the processes I outline in this book. So far the Unique Referral Point method has been applied successfully for every entrepreneur I have worked with across all sectors, and I regularly hear from people who have taken these ideas, worked with them, and are noticing amazing benefits.

As it draws from my own experience of working with clients and my

developing practice, I have written this book from the perspective of the self-employed or entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs develop networks of clients and suppliers, associates, and people they get to know through their daily activities. This network will initially be external, though as their business grows, they may start to form an internal network of colleagues.

The techniques apply also for those who are employed and who are happy to be employed. Depending on your position, your network will be a mix of internal colleagues and external contacts. For internal colleagues, you will have people in your network in positions that are senior, level, or junior to yours. The principles of developing your social capital and your narrative still apply, and developing a set of Unique Referral Points that reflect the differences you make for your employer will be helpful as you make progress in your career. For example, when I talk about ‘clients’, an employed person might consider their internal clients – their manager perhaps, or another department with whom they liaise.

I hope you benefit from reading this book, and that you find your next small steps towards your seven-day weekend after you have read it.

Your Passion

Are you in love with what you do? Does the thing you do provide personal satisfaction? Are you happy doing your thing for the sake of it, even if there was no money involved to pay you for doing it? I always ask my clients this question before we start working together.

There are numerous studies stating that more than half of the working population are unhappy with their career, their job, or the thing that they do. Reading the studies, there are an infinite number of reasons given for this, however my preference is not to analyse the reasons for unhappiness. I would like instead to propose an alternative based on what works for the millions of people who are happy every day.

Imagine you went to work, did something you loved doing, for people you loved being with, and at the end of the work, you felt like you had made a difference. Now think about your friends and family. Can you identify one person who fits this description? It is likely that you will notice them smiling, laughing and being relaxed. They will be comfortable in their own skin. Other measures of success that are

external such as a nice house or nice car may have come their way, however the chances are that they won't worry too much about material things. If you know someone who fits this description, ask yourself, what are they passionate about?

When we are passionate about what we do, that passion will come through in all our activities, and in a work context, in our dealings with our customers. This book is designed to help you navigate this process, however it starts with a simple question:

What are you passionate about?

Simple question – write down the one or two things you do about which you are passionate, which make you feel truly engaged and alive, and which bring deep satisfaction.

Now look at these, imagine yourself doing them, and think about how you feel at that time. What do you notice about yourself? Are you smiling now? Feeling confident, relaxed, happy? If so, and if these are desirable feelings, what would be different for you if you could feel like this all the time? It is these that are the true passions you have, and don't let the need to make money limit you.

I have helped hundreds of clients to realise that if you do enough of something you are passionate about then the money will follow. It may

be that you could make more money doing something else, and if it is your burning desire to make lots of money, perhaps this book isn't for you. If you would like to make a living doing something you love with people you love doing it for, then read on.

In this process, there are no wrong answers, just some simple principles, and the first is:

Do what you love doing, with people you love helping, and the money will follow.

There are numerous examples of people who have followed this principle and achieved financial success. Bill Gates was passionate about computers from his childhood, and spent every hour he could learning how to program. Ingvar Kamprad was passionate about flat-packing furniture and great design. Elon Musk is passionate about developing rapid recharging batteries, liberating electric power from the constraints of the charge-station. Jo Malone was passionate about scents and fragrances, and spent hours blending ingredients and making products from her home, overcoming severe dyslexia to follow her passion. Each of these passionate people became entrepreneurs almost by accident when others noticed their passion and helped harness it into a business. For every figurehead, there is a team of people helping. The passion for the product shines through, and the reason for the work i.e. the difference it will make when complete, is the motivation – not the

money that can be made if successful.

Gates, Kamrad, Musk and Malone are very rare in that they turned their passions into multi-billion dollar corporations, however this is not a requirement for everyone. We all know people in our network who are passionate about what they do, and when we think of them, it is with a positive feeling. The same feeling we enjoy when we do the things we are passionate about ourselves.

I had a conversation recently with a hero of mine. He is one of the leading lights in Solution Focused Practice (SFP) and has helped thousands of people to make progress in numerous ways using SFP. He works internationally, is a published author, a brilliant speaker and trainer, and is one of the best coaches I know.

We attended a conference in Frankfurt together, and as it was very busy, he and I only had a quick catch up on the final day as everyone was leaving. I needed a favour from him. I was working with a charity (Specialist Autism Services, Bradford, UK) and I was training them in Solution Focused Practice so they could help their members, all of whom are adults with Autism. In my training, I use one of his training videos, and I thought it would be nice if he recorded an introductory video for me that I could use in the training. He was happy to help and recorded a lovely video.

After doing this great favour for me, he then said something that for me was amazing. He thanked me for the conversation we had at a conference the previous year in Liverpool as it had transformed his outlook, and as a result he was happier, more relaxed, and was making just as much money as he had been before.

I confess, I only remembered the conversation briefly. One of the features of SFP is to recognise what is working well, and so we all pay each other complements. I wanted to complement his training videos and let him know I was grateful to use them in my own training courses. This was a natural thing for me to do. I didn't remember helping him, so I had to ask what it was I had said?

He simply told me that I had said the following:

‘Do the things you love doing and
the money will follow.’

He told me that when we had our conversation, he had been following projects that were likely to lead to money. He had lost sight of doing the things he loved doing. After our incredibly brief conversation, he went back to doing the things he loved doing, and found the money was coming in just the same as it had when he was looking for it.

I follow this principle myself in all I do, and I explore this with all of

my clients. I was taught this when I started my professional coaching career as a BizFizz Coach in Bradford in 2007 and I have found it works *in every case*.

The reason it works is very simple, and there are numerous quotations from through the ages to support it. As far back as Confucius who said, 'Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life', through to the 20th century author M Beck who said, 'The way we do anything is the way we do everything'. If you are in love with what you do, and you live it and breathe it when you do it, you have found the perfect place for professional and personal fulfilment.

Now, I can't promise this will work for everyone, however I spend a lot of time working with clients who would like to start a new business. Some of the most interesting conversations have been with the members of Specialist Autism Services in Yorkshire. I always ask them to tell me the thing they love doing, and then I ask them how they feel when they are doing it. With neuro-typical clients (i.e. those who do not have Autism), I might not go into their feelings, however with Autistic clients, this has produced some fascinating responses.

When one described how he felt as he drew his client's on-line gaming avatar, he described a feeling of calmness. When another spoke about racing go-karts, he described feeling positive, presenting himself better, and feeling confident. It was clear from both of these examples that the

feelings expressed were desirable and were not how they felt when they were doing something else.

Most people can detect the signs and signals that are shared when we interact with others. If you love doing the thing you do, that will come across. Perhaps you will be calm, or perhaps positive, well presented and confident. If you are, it is likely that the person you are talking to will receive these signals and will be reassured that they are talking with someone who knows their subject.

Ask yourself this question:

What do I love doing?

In Mansfield, a BizFizz colleague of mine, Steve, was approached by a client who wanted to start a new business as a painter and decorator. As a good coach, Steve established that his client's reason for this was that the local council was offering start-up grants for new businesses, and he wanted to access one of these to get started. Something in the conversation told Steve that his client wasn't passionate about painting and decorating, so just to sense check this, he asked what his client did for fun outside of work. The client's face lit up; he was a passionate hang-glider, and not only that, was a qualified instructor. He spent his weekends flying and training others, and it was clear that this was his passion. When given the choice, he would far prefer to make his living

doing this, however he didn't think that the local authority would have given him a grant to pursue such an unusual business. Of course, Steve helped his client to progress an application, secure a grant, and start his hang-gliding school where he was able to do what he loved doing with people he loved helping seven days a week.

It goes without saying that there are few hang-gliding instructors in the Mansfield area, yet there are many Painters and Decorators. Steve's client might not have had a large market to go for, however he was assured of a large share of that market by being passionate and highly qualified. Entering the competitive marketplace of painting and decorating while not being passionate would have resulted in the opposite outcome, and a life of simply existing during the week so you come to life on the weekend. Is that the way you want to live?

The People you are Passionate about Helping

Having explored your passion for doing something, with all due respect, I might have just asked you to focus now on developing a great hobby! The next stage is to think about the people that you would like to help. If we can find people that you can help by doing the thing you are passionate about, we have made a small step to starting to earn some income.

Who do I love helping?

I expect that many of you have answered this question with, 'Anyone I suppose'. This makes a lot of sense. If the thing that you do is helpful to everyone and anyone, then in principle, you could love helping anyone.

I sometimes find I ask this question and people tell me of the people that they *don't* want instead. This is useful to know, however it is hard for me to extract the people that you don't want from the universal population of 'anyone' and still find people for you to help. It is easier for me to think of the people I know that you want to help and there are some clear benefits to being more focused.

Ask again, who do you love helping. For example, do you love helping elderly people, or helping children? Do you love helping young parents, or people with no children? What about your desired customers' approach to life? Do they need to share your values for you to want to help them? If so, what are your values, and how will you know when someone else shares them?

There are an infinite number of possible combinations of adjectives, so let me help you.

Thinking of the last time you did the thing you are passionate about, has there been an occasion when you helped someone else with it?

Describe the other person, and list as many of their characteristics as you can. (Keep asking yourself ‘What else?’ until you have a long list.)

The next question is – would you like to help more people like those you have described now?

This is a simple principle – if you find something that works, do more of it. On this occasion, we have worked out the thing that you are passionate about doing, an occasion when you did it to make a difference for someone else, and then the characteristics of the person or people you helped realise that difference. What are the chances that there are more, similar people who would like a similar difference? We are on our way to finding some customers.

Let’s just apply another sense check. When thinking about this occasion, and thinking back to the time you have just recalled, how did you feel? If the feelings were positive, what did you notice about yourself that told you this was a positive experience? List the things you notice about yourself (and keep asking ‘What else?’)

Looking to the person helped, what did they notice that told them you were passionate about the thing you did for them? What else? List them too, and keep asking, ‘What else?’.

Now look at the list of differences you have noticed. Are there any

other times when you notice these? What are you doing then? If it is something other than the thing you have identified as your passion, perhaps these are ways of delivering the differences you seek for yourself, and these may be activities that are easier for you to deliver for others.

A Driving Example

A young man I supported in this way was passionate about Racing Cars. His stated ambition was to be a Formula One driver. He absolutely loved racing cars and had raced go-karts in the past. Unfortunately, he told us that he couldn't do this professionally as he didn't have a driving licence. It was also highly improbable that he would be able to get one.

So what do we do here? We have an impossible dream. Well, we followed the process.

Me: 'So how do you feel when you race go-karts?'

Lewis: 'I feel confident.'

Me: 'And what do you notice about yourself when you feel confident?'

At this point, Lewis's body language illustrated the things he said he noticed, as if suddenly receiving an injection of confidence:

Lewis: 'I straighten my back, I project more, and speak more clearly.'

Me: 'Are there any other times when you notice these things about yourself?'

Lewis: 'Yes – when I am with animals, and when I finished year one of my college qualification.'

On further exploration, it transpired that Lewis has completed year one of an Animal Husbandry qualification, and he loves working with animals. While it would be impossible for the racing career to deliver the feelings he wants, he worked out for himself that the same differences would be delivered by pursuing his activities with animals.

So, no matter how impossible or impractical your passion is, if you think about the differences you notice about yourself, and that others notice about you, then you can find lots of ways of delivering these. Also, by being aware of these differences, you will notice them happening when you start following your passion into helping others, and you will notice the complements and feedback that you receive that relates to how you want to be.

It all starts by defining what you are passionate about, and then thinking of ways that this makes a difference for others, and ultimately for yourself.

ACTION POINTS

Write down the things you love doing.

How do you feel when you are doing these?

What do you notice about yourself when you feel this way?

What do others notice?

Can you think of an occasion when you did these for someone else, or when someone else benefited from your activity?

How did you feel on that occasion?

Describe other occasions when you notice these differences.

And so on...

The Help Principle

I have met thousands of people who can explain at length their skills, qualifications, how they go about delivering their services, and often, how they are different from the many others who can do similar things. This is very interesting (sometimes!) but it is not very helpful to me. Unless I am prepared to spend a long time in conversation so that I can get a real understanding of what you do, I am never going to be confident that I can introduce you to my network and find you some business opportunity. As a result, the introductory conversations we might have will be something like:

- *'Good to meet you – so what do you do?'*
- *'And good to meet you – I'm an accountant. And what do you do?'*
- *'Great - I'm a business coach. So how's business?'*

And so the conversation will go on. Business will probably be good, or 'very busy', and after a while, the topic of conversation will change to something safer. Even worse for those just starting out, the next question is often:

- *'So how long have you been doing that?'*

For anyone just starting, this is a tough question to answer as how long is long enough? And does the questioner mean how long in total, or how long self-employed? I met a young graphic designer recently, and she was nervous about finding clients as she was only in her twenties, and so felt that clients wouldn't take her seriously. She regularly found herself in the situation outlined above, and sharing the length of her experience was not helping her to find more work.

So how about if we change the conversation just slightly by focusing on the help we provide:

- *'Good to meet you – so what do you do?'*
- *'And good to meet you – I help businesses to manage their finances and pay less tax. And what do you do?'*
- *'That sounds interesting. I help businesses grow their sales and profits'*

The logical extension of this conversation is 'So how do you do that?' which then enables an exploration of what each other does, however while one is explaining, the other will be thinking of specific people who might need that help. In this case, there is an opportunity to explore how the accountant can help the business coach's clients to pay less tax as they grow their business which could be of benefit to the coach for

one of her clients, and so could lead to an introduction. If you simply state what you do when asked, it is not obvious how this could be helped to happen. By talking about how you help people opportunity flows.

When exploring an opportunity, the thing you do is irrelevant to the initial conversation. What is important is the credibility that comes from demonstrating the ways in which you have helped others to good effect. Referring back to the young graphic designer, in her career, she has helped major high street retailers, and one company in particular she helped with a major re-brand where she designed their new logo. That high street retailer is listed on the FTSE-100 and is well known for delivering growth in challenging markets, partly through their re-branding. When you know someone has this level of credibility, what difference would their length of self-employed experience make?

For example, ‘Pink Elephant Consultants’ is a company I have made up. Their service is lending their clients elephants that they have carefully painted pink. The elephants are to be placed in reception, and there is a guaranteed uplift in sales of 40% after six weeks. Let’s look at the scenarios:

So what do you do – I do this...

- *‘Good to meet you – so what do you do?’*

- *'And good to meet you – I install pink elephants in the reception atrium of large companies.'*
- *'Really? So why do you do that?'*

In this made up example, the other party will probably want to know more and will ask questions such as 'Why?'. The answer may come, 'Because we can improve our clients' sales by 40% in six weeks this way', however the prospective client will now take some convincing and will be looking at the idea from a sceptical position.

Now let's role play the second scenario:

So what do you do – I help by...

- *'Good to meet you – so what do you do?'*
- *'And good to meet you – I help companies improve their sales by 40% in a six week period'*
- *'Really – how do you do that?'*
- *'I install pink elephants in the reception atrium of large companies.'*
- *'Fascinating. So how does that work?'*

I have shortened the likely conversation. The key point is that the Pink Elephant's representative has started with how they can help. Having answered, they can then give examples of companies where this technique has worked, and so their credibility grows. The evidence is

enough for the other party to be interested, and as we will see later in this book, this opens up the possibility of a useful introduction being made to someone who wants a 40% uplift in sales, and leaves all options open in their mind about how this can be done.

The Opportunity Paradox

Conventional wisdom is that by talking about everything you do and demonstrating your range of expertise through length of service and qualification, you will find more opportunity to do more for more people. The more people you identify who know about and might need your services, the more opportunity you will have to make a difference. If you are specific about ‘what you do’ then this will limit the opportunity you have to do it for others. However, there is a problem here. The ‘doing’ approach develops narrow thinking where you think of doing your thing for the same people that others are doing similar things for already, and so you try and find your niche by doing your thing differently. This then leads to attempts to compete on price, service, branding, marketing spend etc, and this is costly and ineffective for most participants in the specific sector. This also leads to a wide scope approach to your marketing activity which is likely to lead to higher costs, and to a broad range of enquiries from across the marketplace that will be hard for you to manage efficiently as you adapt to each specific request.

By focusing specifically on how you help and the specific people you help, the opportunity to help others actually grows. And the paradox is that the more specific you are about who you help and how you help them, the easier it is to find market sectors where no-one else (or at least very few) are competing. And further, the more specific you are, the more you will be noticed, and the more enquiries you will receive from people interested in whether your help will apply elsewhere.

Example - Video Gaming for the Elderly

The video gaming market is a huge component of the entertainment industry, recently overtaking film production in terms of revenue generated. Most games are marketed at an enthusiastic group of young to early middle-aged, predominantly male customers. So how could you expand sales into the grey market, attracting the elderly and infirm to grow your business? With a small group of delegates selected entirely at random, we came up with a solution using the Help process in a workshop format.

I often explore this with teams in a workshop. We usually end up with a business idea, here is one that worked through to an interesting proposition. The discussion is summarised below.

Tell me what you do?

- We develop video games

How does that help people?

- Helps with brain training
- Helps with digital dexterity
- Helps with relaxation
- Play for fun
- Helps with socialising through on-line connection
- Helps with mental stimulation through creative play

Who needs that help?

- The elderly
- People in care homes
- People in long term residential care
- People who are isolated

Where do we find these people?

- Care homes
- Charities
- Hospitals

- Clinics
- Social Clubs
- Community Centres
- Churches
- Friends and Family

How should we approach them?

Let's contact Care Home managers and ask them 'Could we meet for a coffee sometime? I have an idea that might help your residents to socialise, keep their brains active, and help them with relaxation. Can I come and pick your brains to see if you think it would work?'

Outcomes

In a very short process, we have established that the elderly and infirm often need social contact, mental and physical training, relaxation, fun and creative play or problem-solving puzzles. We have a product which delivers all of these, so the match is ideal. Working through this process gives us a way of introducing ourselves to our target clients in a way that they should find helpful, and therefore to which they should be receptive. The actual product we are offering is not important in the initial approach to the prospective client. If we could help the elderly and infirm with their list of needs by installing a pink elephant in reception, and if we could present a credible case that this would work,

the care home manager will still be interested in talking with us about this fascinating idea.

Now, compare that approach with an initial contact of the traditional approach. Imagine the call...

‘Hi, can I come and meet with you to discuss my new video games please? I think they will be great for your residents and I’d really like to come in and pitch my products to you.’

If you were the Care Home manager, who are you going to see for coffee?

How does what you do help people?

As is clear from most conversations about ‘work’, we can all be experts at defining what we do. Each of us brings a lifetime of qualification and experience to every situation, and we are all comfortable sharing these with anyone who asks. As a result, many conversations focus on what each person does, limiting the opportunity to take these skills and do them for more people.

The first stage of the Help process is to work out exactly what you do and then how that helps others. Let’s start with an example that will be familiar to most of us – the plumber.

Most of us will have need of a plumber at some stage, and to help us to choose their services, plumbers are usually very informative about the services they provide. I often see liveried vans, printed leaflets or business cards that look something like this:

ACME PLUMBERS

Specialists in:

- Boilers
- Central heating
- Bathrooms
- Kitchens
- Radiator Flushing
- Radiator Balancing
- Thermostats
- Drains
- Hot Water Storage Tanks
- Taps and Showers

This is an impressive list, and I am sure there are many other skills and services that could be added here. The thing is though, I honestly don't know if I need my radiators flushed, or if they need to be balanced. The good news for the plumber is that their customers have the ability to work out what they need because when you need a plumber, it is usually

for one of the following outcomes:

1. A warm house
2. Warm water from the tap
3. No leaks
4. New bathroom/kitchen/WC

When we are looking for a plumber to help us, it is because we need to address one of the short list above i.e.

1. Our house is cold
2. Our hot water is cold
3. Our system is leaking
4. Our bathroom/kitchen/WC needs to be replaced

In many ways, tradespeople are very fortunate when it comes to their marketing. Even though most of their customers won't have a clue what they actually do, plumber's customers have made the connection between the help they need and the service a plumber can provide to deliver that help. As we will see later, trades people are in the minority. It is highly unlikely that the outcomes you deliver are obvious to everyone if you are in the service sector for example. A simple sense-check. Think back to the last time you told someone what you did, and their next question was a guess at what that meant to which your answer was, 'well, not really' or similar polite correction. Is that a regular occurrence? If

so, your customers are not capable of working out the help you provide from your title, so we need to find a more useful way of structuring our conversations and activities.

If you are reading this and you are a trades-person, or you think your label helps you get business, the reverse of the above process is also true. The business opportunity you receive from your label alone is likely to be the same, simple stuff. Plumbers receive enquiries to service the house boiler every October (in the UK) as people switch on their central heating and find a problem. How does the plumber change their customers' behaviour so that they are engaged in boiler servicing throughout the year? More importantly for the sanity of the plumber, how do we raise the level of business opportunity to more complex and better paid tasks?

I am lucky enough to know a young plumber I will call P. P was keen to work with more Commercial clients, and he and I had a short conversation about this. I asked him to tell me a story about someone he had helped recently who was in a Commercial business. P told me that he recently helped a printing firm with a full climate control system that combined heating with air conditioning to provide a temperature and humidity-controlled environment. This is a significant step up from plumbing work as I understand it. So I asked P what difference this made to his client. P told me that the greatest levels of waste and inefficiency in printing come when the ink to paper process is affected

by the local atmospheric conditions. By accurately managing the print room climate, P was able to improve the printer's efficiencies and reduce their waste levels. If P shares that story through his networking and other marketing, he will soon find referrals to printers looking to save time, save money and make money – and the revenue generated for P's business will increase as he works on more complex and higher value projects.

The Customer Service Paradox

We are quite likely to speak with friends, neighbours and family to seek a recommendation. And what are the criteria we use to make a recommendation when asked? They are nearly all service related for example:

ACME PLUMBERS

Specialists in:

- Turning up on time
- Working quickly
- Not making a mess
- Leaving the site clean and tidy
- Being knowledgeable and giving good advice
- Doing the job well

Not one of these service related items has anything to do with the technical skills, qualifications and experience of the plumber. Those are taken for granted as basic levels of competence if you are to be referred from one client to another. What matters is that you can help, and you can help with a high level of customer service. The Customer Service Paradox is quite simply that it is rare for a client to have a complex technical understanding of what you do, and to then make a qualified recommendation on that basis. If your friend seeking a plumber asked you about their specific skills, you would rightly state that you didn't know. You will only notice the observable elements of their work, and these are listed above. Again, this makes it hard in most sectors to be recommended on the basis of what we do and is the reason why so many companies invest time and money in promoting their excellent customer service offer as a point of distinction from their rivals.

To apply the Help process to a plumber therefore, the liveried van and marketing materials should say something like this:

ACME PLUMBERS

Specialists in:

- Keeping you warm
- Keeping you clean
- Keeping you dry

These are the basic needs that a plumber will meet for their clients on a daily basis. More importantly, if you are good at these three things, your clients will be very happy to recommend you for the one that you fixed for them.

Here is an example conversation that is perfectly natural and will lead to more business for the plumber who keeps you warm:

- *‘Brrr – it’s a bit chilly in here’*
- *‘Yes it is. The heating’s on the blink and I need to get someone to look at it’*
- *‘Good news – I have the contact details for a plumber who specialises in keeping you warm’*
- *‘Great – could you please introduce me?’*

Becoming known for how you help people leads to more referrals. Once you have been put in touch with the client, your skills and expertise will be with you in the room, and to find out which of these you need to deploy, some structured research will be required.

Now let’s look back at our friend P. His help statement could be:

- *‘Helping Printers Save time and money by reducing waste and improving efficiencies’*

Notice that there is no mention of P being a plumber here. The label, 'plumber' is like the Pink Elephant in my imaginary consultancy firm. Leading with the label will put people off making contact. Leading with the benefits, the help provided, will encourage people to find out more, and if the first thing they hear is the story of help provided to another, then the label becomes less of an obstruction to a useful conversation.

Explore the needs of the client when you meet them

Working out how you help people is the first stage, and I have deliberately used an example that applies to the domestic situation of most people who will read this book. It may not be obvious about how you help people, however using the plumber as an illustration should help you to start this process for yourself.

The second stage is perhaps a very simple one for the plumber, though again it may not be immediately obvious. There are simple situations leading to simple solutions, and then of course there may be more complex needs leading to more involved projects. The only way to find out is to explore the needs of the client fully when you are conducting your research.

Our friendly plumber will be very familiar with this stage. In the vast majority of cases, a simple 'so what seems to be the problem?' will elicit the information needed for the plumber to focus their attentions on

meeting the need in hand. This is where ‘the house is cold’ enables the plumber to check the boiler, the radiators, the pipework, the thermostat etc. It would be a rare occasion when a client specified to the plumber that their house was cold ‘and they therefore needed the radiators to be flushed and balanced’. That is the skill of the plumber to diagnose, and then recommend a course of action.

If you don’t know, just ask

This stage merits more exploration however, even with a case that is simple on the surface such as the Cold House/Plumber interface. A few extra questions at the start of the process could help to recommend a choice of courses of action which will lead to various levels of benefits, depending on the actual needs of the client.

An experienced plumber will enhance their credibility and deliver a better solution by asking a full set of diagnostic questions. Through this diagnostic process, the plumber can work out a choice of courses of action and then can discuss these with the client before embarking on the one that will meet the greatest number of needs. This is more effective for both supplier and client, and following this process means that the client will choose the best path they can *afford*, not simply the cheapest course of action.

So how do we broaden this out to a process that works for all

organisations? The answer lies in developing a set of diagnostic questions for your own circumstances that focus on the solutions and outcomes that the client is looking for.

In the dim and distant past, sales people were tasked with selling and the most enthusiastic took this to heart. Venturing onto a motor dealer forecourt was a terrifying process as there was a likelihood that you would be approached by a salesman (usually a man) who would try and steer you in the direction of a specific car that they wanted to sell because it would meet their needs, not because it would meet the needs of the customer. A lot of cars were sold by this method, however the process was stressful, and 'second-hand car dealers' were tarred with a reputation. Thankfully, sales methods have moved on, and the approach is now completely different.

Whenever a help based conversation takes place, the priority task is exploration of the needs of the client. In vehicle sales, the best motor dealers have trained their teams so that the process has been revolutionised. The sales people will now make a point of introducing themselves to the prospective customer, and then leaving them alone to browse in peace. If the customer chooses to engage a sales person, the conversation will be about the needs and priorities of the client and then vehicles will be suggested that will be a match for the customer's needs. If a sale is concluded, the customer is likely to be happy with their purchase, and there is a likelihood that they will tell their friends

how happy they are and recommend the vehicle dealer as a result.

If you understand how you help people, your conversation with a prospective client should be along similar lines. Most of the initial questions at this stage are intended to gain information so, generally, they will begin with ‘What’. Here are some example questions that may apply to different situations, and which will lead to insight and information that will help you to work out the needs of the client:

- *‘What you are looking to achieve overall?’*
- *‘What objectives have you set (or been set) for this project?’*
- *‘What are the overall corporate (or department) objectives?’*
- *‘What other resources or activities will contribute to this?’*

In addition to this, there are questions to establish quantities and expectations, and most of these will be started with ‘How’:

- *‘How does this project fit in with overall corporate (or department) objectives?’*
- *‘How will you/we monitor and evaluate this project?’*

Once initial information has been gathered, and expectations have been explored, there are some more excellent questions that you can ask that will flesh out more context and more detail, and this is where you will start to get really valuable information:

- *'How will you know when the project has been successful? What differences will you notice?'*
- *'If we were sitting down in 12 months and reviewing a successful project, what differences would we be celebrating?'*

Listen for detail and you will find the opportunity

The more detail you can extract about the needs that are there to be met, the better able you will be to deliver the solution that will meet or exceed the needs of your client.

It therefore makes sense to develop as clear an understanding as possible about how the client would like things to be after your intervention. One of the most powerful questions you can ask to develop this is quite simply, *'What else?'*

Often, the first answer to a question is not the most helpful, nor the definitive response that you need if you are to develop solutions together. Asking *'what else?'* or similar, and often asking this many times, will produce a longer list of information which will be very useful when developing or delivering a project.

For example, if you go to the Doctor, you are looking for specific help with your specific problem. It is up to the Doctor to ask enough questions to make a diagnosis, and then to prescribe the best course

of action. Similarly, in business, it is essential that you gather enough information so that you can establish as many of the known needs as possible at the start of your project. This will help you to deliver a far more effective solution for your client which will be to all parties' benefit in the long run.

There is also a bonus to your credibility if you spend time exploring the needs in full. First, the greater number of needs uncovered, the greater the chance that you will not only be able to meet some of them, but will also have demonstrable experience of meeting something similar for another client. Second, by identifying a list of needs, you will be able to prioritise using the likely impact and urgency to determine which you should tackle first. You may also identify some quick wins that you can implement promptly and easily. This is only possible if you explore all of the needs and listen carefully to the client when making the first steps towards a possible project.

What do your clients want?

As an example, many years ago, I helped a local charity who had asked me to give them some advice about fundraising. They help children to improve their reading skills by offering direct one-to-one support, and they produce training workshops to help teachers as well. While they had a lot of success and a great track record, they were struggling to make progress in growing their client base as they were seen as a cost by

the schools they were targeting. Their approach had been to try to speak with head teachers at local schools. As anyone knows who has tried this, head teachers are very busy and are constantly targeted by sales people. As a result, they have a very effective set of filters to prevent any sales call from ever getting past their receptionist team, so this approach was hard work and unproductive. We needed to find another way.

The conversation I had with their Chief Executive took about 45 minutes and here are the edited highlights:

- *Coach – ‘Can you describe your services to me?’*
- *Client – ‘We help children to improve their reading skills through direct support, training workshops for teachers, and production of materials to support home activity’*
- *Coach – ‘So who benefits from this?’*
- *Client – ‘Children benefit through improved reading skills and increased reading age’*
- *Coach – ‘What differences do you notice when this happens?’*
- *Client – ‘Children are less disruptive in class and perform better in exams’*
- *Coach – ‘Apart from the child concerned, who else benefits from this?’*
- *Client – ‘Well, if there is less disruption in class, then everyone can study properly, and the overall standard of exam grades will increase.’*

- *Coach – ‘Ok, so if the overall standard of exam grades increases, who benefits?’*
- *Client – ‘The children themselves, and of course the school – it will get a better OFSTED report and will attract more pupils.’*
- *Coach – ‘Is there a financial benefit to attracting more pupils?’*
- *Client – ‘Yes – the pupil premium that comes with each pupil will allow them to access a bigger budget, and if their OFSTED is improved, more people will want to send their children there.’*
- *Coach – ‘So who benefits from increased budgets and better OFSTED reports?’*
- *Client – ‘The school staff, the head teacher in particular.’*
- *Coach – ‘Who else benefits if there is less disruption in class and the children perform better’*
- *Client – ‘The parents of the children will be pleased as their children will have better exam grades’*
- *Coach – ‘And where can you access parents at a school?’*
- *Client – ‘On the board of governors, at the school gates, through community activities, events, virtually anywhere’*
- *Coach – ‘So how could you approach a school now?’*
- *Client – ‘I could try and find out who was on the board of governors, and talk to them about better exam grades for their children and a better OFSTED report and bigger budget for their school’*
- *Coach – ‘And do you think they would be interested to hear from you?’*
- *Client – ‘Absolutely!’*

In this short conversation, we worked through to see who benefited. We managed to find a financial benefit which is very important if you are asking someone to pay for your services. If you can make a case based on saving money or making money, you can legitimately ask for a share of that to pay for your services.

Whatever service you are providing, you can go through this process. Here are some short examples:

<i>Professional Service</i>	<i>How you help</i>
Accountant	'I help people to pay less tax'
Business Coach	'I help people to make more money'
Marketing Consultant	'I help people to make more money'
Data Protection Consultant	'I help people to comply with the law and to avoid large fines, saving them time and money'
IT Consultant	'I help people to improve productivity and customer service, reducing costs and making money'
Personal Assistant	'I help people spend less time on admin, helping them to do more of the things that make them money'
Travel Agent	'I help people save time and money on business travel, helping them to be more productive'

When you read these statements as a client, the natural question is to ask ‘How do you do that?’ and this is the opportunity for you to tell a story about how you have helped someone similar, and the outcomes they enjoyed as a result as a great way to explain your services in a bit more detail. This is not the opportunity to provide a long list of services in the hope that the client needs some of them!

There are some services where the opportunity to help people is fairly obvious. If an Accountant tells you that they can save you money on your tax bill, that is pretty clear to most people.

Who do you really help?

For example, I recently met with an HR Consultant. They described themselves as having a portfolio career as they were doing other things as well as HR Consultancy in order to make a living. In our first phone call, simply by asking about what was in the Portfolio and then asking ‘what else?’ a few times, I found out that they are a specialist in the area of maternity and are highly qualified to advise companies about how to manage maternity issues both before, during and after. This is a significant step up from my own understanding of HR consultants. Suddenly, I can think of loads of clients where they have had maternity issues who would love to hear from them. Also, there will be HR Consultants who *don't* have that expertise and may be interested in calling them in to train and advise them, or in support of specific

clients. By specialising, it is easy to find referrals, and to become known as the expert in your specialism.

Of course, the same rules apply to my maternity consultant colleague as to any other service provider. Ask yourself the following questions to work through this process:

1. How do I help people?
2. Who would benefit from that help?
3. Who else?
4. Can we keep finding benefits for others until there is a financial benefit?

Repeating this loop until you find ways in which you can help specific people save money, make money, or save time (often enabling them to make money) is the key to finding clients and developing a strategy to approach them.

Applying to Products

The process applies to products, however the work that goes into working out how you can help people should translate into your marketing activities as well as direct sales. Whatever you are trying to sell, it is incredibly hard to distinguish your product from your competitors'. In a product business, it is still possible (though very

rare) that you will come up with a product that is both unique and marketable. However, most businesses offer products that are similar to their rivals', and many try to distinguish by product attributes such as reliability, quality, ethical values, or simple cost. If you refer back to ACME Plumbers, this is taken for granted now, and so 'our great customer service' is no longer unique.

In the days when these attributes were uncommon, this strategy would work well, however in the 21st century, every product is expected to have these attributes, so how do you develop your specific offer to be different from your competitors?

If you follow the help process outlined in this chapter, it is easy to define the ways in which your products help people and then you can feed this into your marketing plan. For your product, it should be possible to identify:

1. The needs that the product meets
2. The people who have those needs
3. Where to find those people, and especially those who can afford your product.

This should help you to be more targeted, and if the materials and copy you produce are based on the help your product provides, you are more likely to engage with your target market in a way that is lower cost, and

higher conversion for a given spend.

ACTION POINTS

Work out how the thing you do helps, and who it helps.

If you have already helped people, who did you help and what with?

Practice telling the good stories you have about how you have helped people.

If you have a small number of examples, where can you find more people who are similar and who might have similar needs?

If you have enjoyed this extract of

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