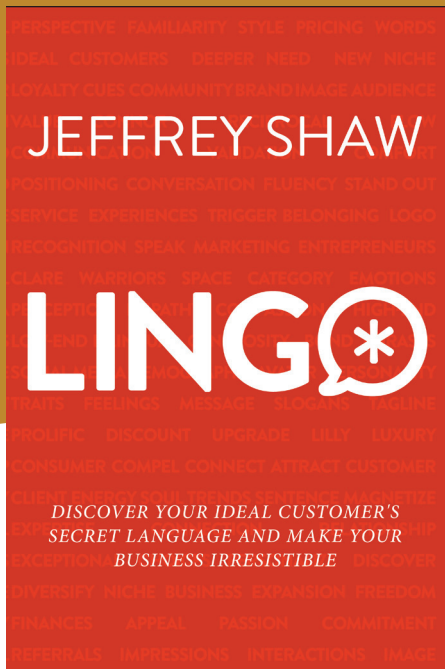


JEFFREY SHAW

LINGO

*DISCOVER YOUR IDEAL CUSTOMER'S
SECRET LANGUAGE AND MAKE YOUR
BUSINESS IRRESISTIBLE*



WHAT MAKES LINGO RELEVANT NOW?

Several concepts make LINGO a necessary topic of discussion in the areas of marketing, branding, communications, public relations, and entrepreneurship.

- Speaking the “secret language” of ideal customers is the evolution of buyer personas and avatars. Knowing their demographics and personality profiles is no longer enough. Consumers today demand a deeper and more individualized understanding of whom they are to gain their attention and earn their trust.
- Customer-service based businesses are attempting to satisfy too broad an audience and rarely exceed expectations. A customer-centric business is built speaking the secret language of a specific customer base, exceeding expectations, and creating loyalty.
- In the past, niche marketing encouraged being known for one thing and/or reaching a single target market. It’s a restrictive business model. The new niche is speaking the secret language of a market space within which you can create diverse offerings. It’s an expansive business model.
- The Pareto Principle in business has meant that 80% of income comes from 20% of customers. That is to say that eight out of ten customers were not worth the effort. In today’s high speed, demanding world, that’s an unproductive ratio. The goal of secret language strategy is to attract ideal customers so that all customers are worth the time.
- The mindset of many people is shifting from a quantity-of-hours to a quality-of-life goal. They realize that hard work on its own doesn’t get them where they want to go. It’s the secret language of reciprocal communication that changes the nature of success from pushing hard to preparing to receive.

THE PERSONAL STORY BEHIND LINGO:



I was twenty-three years old and had been struggling for three years to get my high-end portrait photography business off the ground in my very rural hometown about two hours north of New York City. One day, a lady came into my studio, and I made my very best pitch about the value of family photographs and the importance of handing down memories from one generation to another.

She looked at me and said, “I’m not sure how I’m going to pay my rent. I don’t have the luxury of worrying about my children’s memories.”

In that moment, I realized I had been barking up the wrong tree. I had built my business without understanding the market I was in. The luxury product I was offering did not align with the lower socio-economic scale and values of my market. The business was failing, and I needed to start over. I wondered what market would match my values for longevity and quality, and realized she provided the answer: those who can afford luxury—the affluent market.

There was just one problem: My only understanding of the affluent market came from watching Bing Crosby’s Christmas specials on TV as a kid. Unlike my own lower-middle-class family, those people seemed to enjoy sitting around the fireplace together, wearing nice sweaters, and singing songs. I knew there was a lot for me to learn to serve the affluent market.

The only way I could imagine I could educate myself to the lifestyle of the affluent was to visit high-end stores. So I made the two-hour trek to go to the one store I had heard about that was high-end: Bergdorf-Goodman on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. Bergdorf-Goodman is a one-of-a-kind department store unlike any other that caters to an exclusive clientele. As exceptional as the store window displays are, many visitors to New York City pass right by the exquisite storefront and never realize it’s there. Let’s just say it’s not meant for everyone.

As I entered Bergdorf-Goodman through the revolving doors in my far-too-casual pants, a doorman greeted me. As I looked past him, I realized I may as well have landed on a different planet. What was this place with its crystal chandeliers, warm, subtle lighting, and impeccably dressed clerks? It certainly didn’t have the fluorescent lights and blue light specials I was accustomed to! As I stepped forward, a strange tapping noise interrupted the dignified low hum of the place. I realized it was a metal plate in the bottom of my shoes that had come through from wearing out the soles of my shoes. I had never walked on marble before.

I suspected the seventh floor, Decorative Home, would have some small, decorative item or accessory that I could afford with the twenty bucks I had to spend. Twenty dollars didn’t go very far in a store like this, even in 1987. But I had an objective: I wanted to understand the lifestyle of the rich and famous. Specifically, what happened when they went shopping?

The only thing I could afford was a tiny votive candle. I asked for the candle to be gift-wrapped. The very nice sales lady,

who I hoped thought I was the rich heir to a fortune who could get away with being inappropriately dressed, walked me over to the gift wrap department. I was introduced to a woman on the other side of an opening in the wall whom I was assured would help me from there. Thinking this was someone I could more easily relate to, I leaned forward through the opening in the wall and said, "Excuse me. I'm trying to learn how to make something look and feel expensive. Can you show me how to wrap this?" With a slight grin and a wave of her hand, she invited me into the back room of the gift wrap department.

She proceeded to show me how to wrap the candle in an abundance of tissue paper. Wads of tissue paper! Suddenly, she stopped and looked up at me as if to say the most important thing that I needed to hear.

"Don't use any tape," she said with conviction far greater than the point seemed to warrant. Coming from a family that wrapped Christmas presents with duct tape, I couldn't imagine why you wouldn't use tape. "These people are very particular and caring. Before a woman gives this as a gift, she will untie the ribbon, open the box, and unwrap the tissue paper to be sure the candle is perfect." If the wrapping had tape, you wouldn't be able to do that without harming the packaging.

My mind froze. The awareness of what I just heard was greater than I could handle for a moment. I realized that I would never have known such a thing as not using tape. I wondered what else I didn't know. Plenty, I'll bet. Of course, it made sense. I intended to serve a clientele and a lifestyle I knew nothing about. It was as if I had learned an inside secret. In that moment, I learned that every market has a secret language. What motivated my parents to spend their hard earned money was very different than what inspired customers at Bergdorf-Goodman.

As I looked around, I noticed the beautiful assortment of home decorative items delicately displayed on skirted tables in separate rooms, each like its own boutique. It was a far cry from the aisles of metal shelves I was used to. Designer names prominently displayed creating a sense of custom and high-end. The entire environment and culture of the place was speaking to their ideal customer. "No tape" was part of the secret language of the affluent market.

I realized that my business wasn't failing because I wasn't good enough or because I was charging too much. My business was failing because I wasn't speaking the secret language of the market I wanted to be in. After getting to know my ideal customers well enough to speak their language in every aspect of my business, everything changed. Within a year I was not only serving the market I wanted to serve, I had a waiting list of ideal customers who were thrilled to have found me.

Every market has a secret language--high-end, low-end, and everything in between. Armed with a far better understanding of what the world looks like from the perspective of the affluent clientele, I returned home prepared to build a new business speaking the secret language of the clientele that I felt would most value what I had to offer.

THE 5-STEP PROCESS TO DEVELOP THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF YOUR IDEAL CUSTOMERS



Step One: Know the **PERSPECTIVE** of Your Ideal Customer

Perspective builds understanding.

A customer-centric business is built for the customer and requires knowing how the world looks from their vantage point. It's the proverbial, "walking in their shoes." The entire reason I went to Bergdorf-Goodman was to understand the worldview of a clientele I wanted to serve but knew nothing about. Starting with understanding the perspective of those you are going to serve is an essential first step to understanding their secret language.

Something to keep in mind is that often, not always, but often, our ideal customer does not live the way we do. That may mean we work with customers who have more money than us who can afford our services. That's true of most businesses serving the high-end as was my case. Or, the reverse may be true. I assure you, everyone sitting on the board or in the marketing department at Walmart is earning more than their target market. It could also be that you do live a similar lifestyle to your ideal customer, but they are a different age or gender demographic. When there is a significant disparity between you and your ideal customer, it is imperative that you understand their perspective.

The goal is to understand what makes your ideal customers tick: what they see at the retail stores and restaurants they go to; the type of service they are accustomed to receiving; what makes them feel comfortable and what doesn't; how things are priced; the pace and feel of the environments in which they spend their time. You want to understand every detail. As you get to know them, approach understanding their perspective with deep empathy and have a strong desire to understand without judgment.

Getting to know your ideal customers on a deep level is one of the most kind and loving things you can do as an entrepreneur. First of all, you're building a business for them. That's kind. Secondly, desiring to know someone's perspective is an incredible act of generosity. Isn't that the case in the most loving personal relationships? When someone takes the time to fully understand your likes and dislikes, it's meaningful. When someone important in your life accepts where you're coming from without judgment, that is loving. So the spirit of understanding your ideal customer's perspective is kind, loving, and empathetic. Completely non-judgmental. Think about it. Why would you want to judge those you are going to serve?

Understanding their perspective is also different than "fake it until you make it." To "get" someone does not mean you have to be like them, and they will feel your authenticity or not. You want to remain genuine to who you are with the empathy and desire to serve that enables you to fit right into their world because you understand their world.

Step Two: Create FAMILIARITY for Your Ideal Customer

Familiarity creates comfort and stands out.

Who would have thought you could create an uproar over a biscuit? Apparently I can. As is true for most American families, my family has strict traditions when it comes to Thanksgiving. We gather at my mother's house for the traditional Thanksgiving dinner with turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce, and biscuits. For as long as I can remember, the biscuit of choice was the kind that came in a cardboard tube you would smack on the edge of the counter until it exploded open to reveal the white doughy biscuits. As kids, we would argue over who got the privilege of taking tube to counter.

One year, well into my thirties with kids of my own, I suggested to my mother that she let me make biscuits from scratch. I enjoy baking and I'm also trying to bring a touch of sophistication into my otherwise very simple family. I spent days planning this: choosing the best recipe; making the dough; cutting the biscuits; baking them just in time so they were slightly crispy on the outside, soft and steamy on the inside as you split them open. I truly thought I had created the perfect biscuits and raised the standard of fine dining for my family. And there was an uproar. Everyone had a fit that I had broken a tradition. My younger cousins felt robbed of their opportunity to break open the tube of biscuits. There was criticism that my biscuits, while tasty, were heavier than the "normal" biscuits. It was a complete smack-down. Not only were they not impressed, they were angry. I realized then you just don't mess with tradition.

What is familiar to us creates comfort. It's human nature. With an understanding of your ideal customer's perspective, you can now create environments and experiences that are familiar to them, whether it's brick and mortar or a website. That's not to say it has to match any of their other experiences exactly, or that you need to copy what others have done. You can be innovative. But if you want to meet your clients where they already are, if not literally, then figuratively, make the feel of your business similar to what they are already experiencing.

The best way to do this is by going where your ideal customer goes, whether that's restaurants, retail stores, websites, social media, brands they buy, companies they are currently doing business with. You want to capture the feeling and perhaps even the look of what feels comfortable to them. Notice how simple or busy the environment is. For example, on the high-end, what is comfortable will tend to be simple, subdued, and clean. On the low-end, a certain amount of chaos is expected, as if too "put together" would imply you're overcharging.

Familiarity also stands out. Imagine you are on a bus in a foreign country and you don't speak the native language. All the conversations going on around you become white noise, not unlike the noise of marketing we experience today with so many marketing messages coming at us all day long. We stop hearing anything in particular because it's all so loud. As you ride along on, someone suddenly speaks your native language. You will hear it above all else. Or, again, you're in a place you've never been before. Most of what is around you is new and unfamiliar. You suddenly recognize a familiar logo, say Starbucks or McDonald's, and it stands out.

Creating a sense of familiarity will give your ideal customer the comfort of knowing they are in the right place, and your business will stand out above the noise.

Step Three: Present Your Business in the STYLE of Your Ideal Customer

Style is the decision maker.

Research has shown that a goldfish has an attention span of nine seconds whereas the average human has an attention span of eight seconds. Yes, we have a shorter attention span than a goldfish. That's one reason why the secret language of style is so important in helping your ideal customer choose you.

Think about your latest experience walking in a mall. As you stroll along, you are on constant alert, deciding almost instantly which stores you want to go in and which ones you don't. There's the store that's too high-end or is geared towards a younger clientele, so you stay away. Other stores may grab your attention and make you curious. Online, we go to websites,

scroll through our choices, click when something grabs us, and pass by those that don't.

What causes us to decide what stores we want to go enter or what shoes to click on? It's style. The style resonates for us. Knowing the style of the secret language of your ideal customer helps them make a quick decision to choose you. The secret language of style confirms whether your ideal customers sense they are in the right place. They decide almost instantaneously.

Once you understand their style, in order to use the secret language of style to your advantage, you also need to understand the components of style. Three components that make up the style of a brand: personality, voice, and price point.

Personality:

The personality of a brand is the outward, visual side of the feeling that your brand captures. The personality of your brand must be easily identifiable. It could be humorous, classic, spiritual, edgy, youthful, and so on. Whether your brand personality is similar to your own or completely made up such as the Geico gecko or Aflac duck, the personality must shine through.

Voice:

Whereas the personality of your brand shines brightly for all the world to see, the voice of your brand is a consistent undertone. It's far less about what people see and more about what they feel. It's how you want your brand to be perceived. The voice of a brand creates consistency and stability, making a brand very attractive to their ideal customer.

Price Point:

When someone describes the cost of something, they may say, "I don't know if we can afford that. It looks (or feels) expensive"? They may not know the price, but are evaluating based on how the brand looks and/or feels. Does your brand style seem like your actual price point? If you were your customer, based on what you saw, would you be surprised by your prices? Not portraying price point in your brand style is one of the core reasons businesses work with less than ideal customers.

Step Four: Attract Your Ideal Customer with PRICE

Pricing creates perception.

The price of your products and services have a tremendous impact of how your business is perceived. The secret language of pricing is both psychological and visual. You can sway customers, favorably and unfavorably, by the pricing structure of your business.

The first impact is the price itself and what it says about your business. The more specific the price, the more it tells prospective customers that your prices have been strongly considered and they can be assured they are receiving the very best price. The more specific the price the more it attracts the price-conscious customer. This is why Walmart is known for their rollback pricing. Merchandise is priced to the one-hundredth of a cent to assure their ideal customers that they are not paying even a fraction of a cent more than they should. On the other hand, to attract customers who value simplicity over price, you want pricing to be rounded off to the next whole number. Think Target. They promote value over price, so there's less emphasis on the price itself. On the very high-end, it's not only essential that pricing be simple, but that it be high enough to convey quality and prestige, because pricing creates perception.

Pricing is also purely visual. How prices are presented can completely sway perception. Think about the typical \$99 instead of \$100. Not breaking the three-digit one-hundred-dollar barrier looks cheaper even though it's only a dollar's difference. On the other hand, that can be perceived as being "clever," which can trigger suspicion that one needs to read the fine print. The more specific the price is, the more you appeal to customers who are price conscious. If you're a dollar store, yes. If you want customers who see quality over price, no.

One of the biggest mistakes I see in small businesses is a break in communication when it comes to the perception of their pricing. If you present your offers at \$99 instead of \$100 or attract customers with low-end initial offers when your actual prices are much higher, customers will complain that they've been misled. On the other hand, some businesses try to keep away the tire kickers and present themselves at a much higher price point. Neither scenario is ideal. You want both the actual prices and the way your pricing is presented to be aligned with the psychology of your ideal customer. If you want price-conscious customers to know they are not paying a penny more than they need to, then price down to the one-hundredth of a cent. If you want customers who care less about price and put value and quality above all else, then round off prices, be more vague, don't nickel and dime them, and talk about it less.

You can entirely change how your business is perceived by price. Whereas often businesses think of price as a barrier, pricing that is aligned with the secret language of your ideal customer creates attraction.

Step Five: Speak to Your Ideal Customer with the WORDS You Choose

Words are cues.

You now have a deep understanding of your ideal client, an understanding that goes far deeper than cursory demographics, profile, behavior. You get them.

Now it's time to communicate in a way that magnetizes your ideal customer and filters out the rest. Use their secret language in a way that creates perfect alignment, as if only you and your ideal customer understand each other. This is what makes you stand out above the rest. It's a level of clarity that speaks loudly even in the most subtle of ways.

The 3 C's of effective use of words are:

- Compel
- Connect
- Clarify

Compel

You want your choice of words to be so compelling to your ideal customer that, if you were standing on opposite sides of a crowded room, you would instantly connect. Gone are the days of pushing your agenda and sounding salesy. That causes people to back way up. Instead, you want to use the right words and strategy to inspire the people who get you to walk closer. The best way I know to compel your ideal customer is using what I call Self-Identifying Questions.

Self-Identifying Questions are the questions you pose that bring up thoughts of an internal struggle for which they realize you have the solution. A question I use often is, "Are you tired of working really hard, but hardly getting ahead?" I want my ideal customer, hard-working entrepreneurs, to see that question and say, "Yes! I am tired of working hard and hardly getting ahead!" The important thing is, they see that I have a solution to offer. With compelling Self-Identifying Questions, your ideal customer is drawn in by feeling instantly that you get them, because you do. You have spoken to something that's already on their mind.

Connect

How do you create instant resonance with your ideal customer in a world with a very short attention span and in a noisy market? You have to create an instant connection that stops your ideal customers in their tracks.

We create such a connection with what I call a Stand Out Statement™. It is a sentence of three to seven words intended to “stand out” and grab the attention of your ideal customer, and hardly resonate at all for others. The Stand Out Statement™ has a very different effect than slogans and taglines. Slogans and taglines can be attention-getting and clever, but often lack any feeling of true connection. They are often more about the business than the customer. On the other hand, a Stand Out Statement™ is all about the customer based on your deep understanding of them, and they can feel the connection.

Clarify

Every business must constantly clarify what they do and whom they are for. No business is for everyone. The goal of LINGO is to speak the secret language of your ideal customer--not everyone. Therefore, you want to “enunciate” clearly and be heard. This means saying more with fewer words. Ever ask someone what they do and they ramble on for ten minutes? They lost you almost instantly.

It means using fewer words in sharing your company story, the passion behind your enterprise, the core message of your business. Being clear about what you stand for and avoiding any miscommunication through the process of doing business with you is crucial to the customer experience.

The strategic use of words can compel your ideal customers toward you, create an instant connection, and provide an exceptional experience, which keeps them coming back.

HOW TO APPLY THE SECRET LANGUAGE IN YOUR BUSINESS



The New Niche

The traditional definition of niche has been to focus on one area of expertise, or to serve one market segment, or perhaps both. While such laser focus works for some, it can be very confining for many creative thinkers and not the best business model.

The new niche is the space you own, the area of expertise you are known for. It's the end to the sentence, "Oh, so and so, they are the go-to resource for _____." You own a space when your ideal customers can easily fill in that blank. Think about how easily you can identify the space of well-known brands such as Apple (cool technology), Geico (convenient insurance), and Volvo (safe cars).

The new niche is its expansive, whereas traditional niche is restrictive. When you make our business known for one area of expertise, you begin to see many more opportunities and clienteles that can benefit from your expertise.

There are three big benefits to the new niche:

1. **Creative Freedom**

Your growth as a business can go very horizontal as you create many things that seem different, but are held together around your area of expertise. It's hard to think of any company that's done this better than Apple. Because we trust them to create cool technology, they have the latitude to create anything from computers to music devices to self-driving cars, and we will buy it all.

2. **Diversity**

As the range of your offerings expands, so too does the number of people you can serve. As a coach, I started working exclusively with photographers. Then I realized that the challenges photographers faced are not unique to being a photographer. There are challenges that are inherent in being a creative person in business, such as struggling to see your value and name your price. Once I realized that my niche was coaching the uncommon entrepreneur, I could then see the range of entrepreneurs and businesses I could work with.

3. **Multiple Streams of Income**

The problem with being in too narrow a niche is, it leaves a business vulnerable in a rapidly changing world. You don't want to have all your eggs in one basket. A new technology can make your business, or an entire industry, irrelevant. Creating many things and broadening the range of those who can benefit from your expertise give more financial security.

Create a Stand Out Brand

In speaking the secret language of your ideal customers, branding is everything. Secret language branding communicates the secret language to your ideal customers when you're not present. So often today, you're not there when potential customers are checking you out.

The brand image is a conversation. After all the work you've done to learn the secret language of your ideal customers, what could be better than actually getting in conversation with them? The goal of your brand image is to speak clearly to only your ideal customers, letting them know what you stand for, the values you share, what you are expert at, and that you "get" them. It's true fluency--when you are able to have a two-way conversation.

To create a stand out brand, it is often more effective to make clear your unique perspective is in your area of expertise, rather than try to be different. The problem with trying to be different is, there is so much competition, there's not much room left for different. However, your perspective on why you do what you do is one-of-a-kind. What will attract your ideal customer is making them curious about your unusual perspective. What will make them bond with you is if they agree with it, which reinforces the feeling of getting one another.

Your perspective, how you see the world, and what led you to this area of expertise, is a combination of three things:

The impressions that events and people had in your life.

Your involvement in the world through your educational experience, work, relationships.

Realizing that everything and everyone you've interacted with has played a role in your perspective.

When it comes to literally speaking the secret language of your ideal customer, branding is everything. Your unique perspective combined with the visual elements of brand image such as design elements, fonts, graphics, all play a crucial role in connection and communication. It's the cadence of the secret language, the rhythm and fluency that gets you in sync with the right people.

Build a Community

You want a business where all your customers are the right customers who pay you what you're worth and a community of loyal customers. You want to create as tight a circle as possible where people keep coming back and refer your business to their friends. Speaking the secret language to a specific group is what creates a community.

Here are three ways to build a loyal community.

1. Grow a Community, Not a Database

Instead of looking at your customers as a target market, a database, or consumers, build a community of followers linked by common threads of lifestyle and values. Your customers are not people who pay you, do business with you, or names on an email list. They are each beautifully unique, yet there are commonalities. If everyone in your community were to meet, they would "get" each other. This mindset of community ups the ante on how you relate to those your business serves. It increases your responsibility to build trust and maintain a high level of integrity.

Pop stars have done this so well. Taylor Swift has her Swifties, Justin Bieber has his Beliebers, Lady Gaga has her Little Monsters. Grateful Dead has its Dead Heads. On my podcast, Creative Warriors, I always refer to our community as Warriors. We are held together through our common ambition to make a difference in the world through our work.

2. Identify Their Deeper Need

If you want to get to the heart of what makes someone think you "get" them, understanding their deeper need is the way. The deeper need is what your customer really needs but doesn't realize or wouldn't think to ask for. It's the very powerful non-verbal part of the secret language. Has someone in your life ever done something for you

that touched you deeply, as if they knew exactly what to do or say and you didn't ask for it? Have you ever been so comfortable in someone's company that nothing needed to be said? That's the beautiful, energetic, non-verbal communication that touches a deeper need, and it is often more powerful than words.

3. **Let Them Have an Experience**

Focusing on the idea that "what consumers are really paying for is the experience" has become so overused, it's lost its effectiveness. The truth is, your customers expect to have a great experience. You may have promised a great experience. If you just meet their expectation, is that really a great experience? Probably not. Even a great experience that exceeds their expectations might not be memorable.

When businesses create experiences for their customers, it becomes a one-size-fits-all experience. Ever watch people at a concert? They're hardly seeing the experience in front of them and are focused on creating their own experience on Snapchat, Instagram, or Facebook Live and sharing it with their tribe. In today's social-media-driven, autonomous "I want to do it my way" world, it's better to encourage them to create their experience. Encourage engagement and give them the freedom to express themselves. They will create a memorable experience for themselves and share with their friends, expanding your community.

There's a different level of responsibility and care when you think of your business as building a community. Your customers will feel that, be far more loyal, and will be more likely to spread the word about you and your business.

Your Ideal Customer

There is simply no more productive way for you to have a successful business than to only work with your ideal customer. With the wrong customer, you can't create exceptional value; they will never be fully happy. You'll jump through hoops, do a dance, sing a song, and never satisfy them. Meanwhile, they have sucked up valuable energy needed for your ideal customers.

Let's look at the benefits of working with your ideal customer:

- Your ideal customers are waiting for you to show up. It's your job to show up, speak their language, and make it easy for them to find you.
- Because you "get" them, you know what's going on in their heads. This makes it much easier to create self-identifying questions which you will use in marketing.
- Since they "get" you, there is a bond, which inspires loyalty in them.
- They want you to succeed and will be eager to share your business with their friends.
- There's a mutual commitment to creating the highest value experience which enables you to be at your best at all time.
- Ideal customers are the easiest to work with.
- They already value what you have to offer so you don't have to prove it.
- Ideal customers tend to travel in circles of people just like them so spreading the word about your business is easier.
- Interacting with ideal customers is joyful.
- They respect your efforts and gladly pay you what you're worth.
- It's easier to create and expand your business because you understand their needs.
- Ideal customers are loyal, lessening the pressure of having to acquire new customers.
- Because there's a similarity in buying behavior amongst your ideal clients, your business is steadier and more stable.

Doing business with your ideal customers is the best, most efficient, profitable, and life-fulfilling way for you to build the business of your dreams.

THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF SUCCESS



Entrepreneurs are working really hard but hardly getting ahead. The long hours, effort, and worry seem to grow at a more rapid rate than the reward. The good news is a lot of the struggle can be avoided.

While strategies such as what's presented in LINGO will build a successful business, I'd be remiss if I didn't share one of the most important lessons I've learned along the way. Success doesn't come from all hard work. Success also comes from within yourself. Up until now, LINGO has been entirely about your ideal customer. The people you are building a business for. Now the attention is shifting to being about you.

Consider these my success hacks, the mindsets and practices that have provided actual results for me, as well as for many clients.

Find Where You Belong

The objective of building a business that speaks a secret language is to work only with your ideal customers: the ones that see your value, pay what you're worth, are the easiest to work with, and therefore are the most profitable. By working with ideal customers you have found where you belong, amongst a community where you can create the most value and that brings out the best work in you.

It can be challenging to find where we belong, whether it be in a marketplace or in life. The fact that so many creative thinkers and innovative people often say they felt like outsiders, even misfits, growing up has always intrigued me. I refer to it as the Validation Paradox.

The Validation Paradox is that, while we are trying to find ourselves, who we are and how we can serve, we need others to accomplish this. We cannot find ourselves in isolation. It takes finding where we belong first and then interacting with that community to find ourselves.

There's an African term, ubuntu, which loosely translates to "a person is a person through the affirmation of others." Also, perhaps, "I am I because of we." Ubuntu points out that we don't find ourselves, our truths, our purpose in life, our authenticity, our why, or even our best work, on our own. It takes interconnectedness with others to find those qualities in ourselves.

The notion of the Validation Paradox, that you need others to find yourself, should inspire you even more to work only with your ideal customers. When you find yourself working with your ideal customers, you do your best work, which causes people to want to spread the word, which opens up more opportunities, and you grow some more, getting even better at what you do. The compound effect of working with your ideal customers is everything.

Co-create with the World Around You

Reciprocal communication is a two-way communication between you and the world around you. It's a way of preparing the environment that surrounds you to receive what you have to give so that it gives you what you want in return. It is a two-way unspoken communication that, when there is fluency, you give and receive as naturally as breath.

The clearest way I can explain this is regarding goals. Over time, the nature of achieving goals has changed. It seems to no longer be as effective to overwork in order to hit your goals as it is to strategically prepare the world around you to receive your goals.

Think about some words of wisdom that have been trying to teach you this. When people are hoping to find a life partner, people will often say, "It will happen when you're not looking for it." We've been hearing this message to not push, but haven't really fully understood the dynamic at play to understand what the alternative is. As goal-setting, hardworking entrepreneurs, we think, "what choice do I have other than working hard to hit my goals?"

Put forward the right action and lessen the grip on outcome. This is the true nature of success breeds success. The less need and demand we put on success, the more likely it is to happen. The universe responds well to ease. If you put your focus on giving, you are more likely to receive. While many spiritual practices support this notion, be it karma or "you shall reap what you sow," it's also as simple as knowing that if you do nice things for others, without strings attached, they are far more likely to do things for you. If you care about the positive impact you can create through your work more than the money, the money is far more likely to follow.

Ease can be so difficult for us hardworking entrepreneurs. We are used to pushing, to making things happen. That may be what got you where you are. That doesn't mean it's going to get you to where you want to go next. Pushing will inadvertently cause things to back up or push back. That's the nature of resistance.

In no way am I suggesting you don't have to work hard to be successful. It may even take exceptional hard work to get a business started. Like a plane on the runway, the hard work is in the take off. And yes, it is the resistance against the wind that gives a plane flight. But the ease comes when the plane flies with the jet stream, working with the current and not against it. You get to where you want to go faster when you work with ease.

Getting to know your ideal customer's secret language is a step in the process of opening up to and understanding reciprocal communication and co-creation. Initiate action, with clear intention of what you want, focus on the impact and not the result, lessen the grip, and allow it to happen.

Maintain Daily Practices

There are too many ideas about how to create success, and they seem too daunting to stick to, so hardworking entrepreneurs with limited time don't stick with any of them, perpetuating the cycle of working hard and not getting anywhere. Persistent practice is most important.

Do you know when it's most difficult to stick with your practices? When they start to work. It's when people start seeing results from their efforts that they either get too busy (because the practices worked) or they don't feel as much of a need. When you go to the doctor for antibiotics you get explicit instructions to finish the entire prescription, even when you start feeling better so you don't have a relapse. It's the same with your practices. Don't stop when they work. Consider these six practices a lifestyle change, and they will provide you with the life you want.

First, let's change the way you think:

1. Ask yourself: Do you believe there are forces working on your behalf?

If you believe achieving success is all up to you, then you are limited by what you think you can do. If you believe that anything is possible, and there are forces working on your behalf, then you truly can see success beyond your expectations. In whatever you "expect," you have predetermined the outcome. Believing there are forces working

on your behalf expands your mind and busts through any self-imposed ceiling. It allows you to think bigger than you are.

2. Be highly conscious of how you view others.

You must not hold negative opinions about successful people or harbor any fear of who you will become as a successful person. If you are jealous of the success of others, you are jeopardizing your success. Consciously or unconsciously, you will block yourself from gaining the success you want. Becoming highly conscious of your views of others is a major “unblocker” to clear the way for your own success.

3. Connect what’s in common.

Do you feel as though you’re all over the place, as if you have too many interests and are going in too many directions? Realizing what is in common in what appears to be a chaotic mess is the biggest jumpstart to get up and get going that I have ever witnessed in others and experienced myself.

Now let’s create success with specific actions:

1. Create affirmations.

Affirmations are a combination of both art and science, ethereal and logical, left and right side of the brain. While there is evidence of neurological effects of affirmations, in my experience, you simply start seeing more of whatever it is that you have created as an affirmation. Know what you want, and you are far more likely to see it. Affirmations need to be specific, affirmative, and repeated often.

2. A “What’s Going Right” Journal

Journal what’s going right in your life. You can hear ten compliments and one insult and all you can think about it the insult. We automatically focus on anything that is a threat to us. It may not be the threat of a lion entering our cave, but it might be a threat to our confidence or self-worth or a threat to our feeling of satisfaction with a job well done. Our brains ensure that the negative by far outshines the positive. The “What’s Going Right” Journal reverses that. It forces you to take note of what’s going right in your life. The “What’s Going Right” Journal creates a tangible, positive flow like nothing else I’ve ever seen. When you start paying attention to what’s going right, guess what happens? You start seeing more things going right!

3. 6. Productivity begins the night before.

With all the different hats you wear as an entrepreneur, you will need to be highly productive. The best way to have a productive day is to start the night before. This includes getting enough sleep. Consider setting your alarm for when you need to go to bed instead of when you need to wake up. It’s also helpful, with ease, to consider what the next day holds for you. As you sleep, your subconscious brain will go to work sorting through decisions and solutions to problems. Finally, implant a positive thought about the wonderful day ahead that you’re going to have, feeling rested and ready to go!