

How to  
**Grow Your Law Practice**  
through teaching-based marketing



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CONSULTING

# Teaching-Based Marketing: educated clients are better clients

## Welcome to Teaching-Based Marketing!

This phrase may be something you've heard before, or could be brand new. Regardless, you'll find the methods contained in this book to be both easy to understand and simple to implement. All of us research products & services using the Internet before we buy them, right? So, aren't your firm's potential clients doing the same thing? Take time to share your knowledge and expertise by using the 365 day-per-year repository you already own - your website. When you turn your website into a teaching tool, you'll attract new and better clients.

I already know what you're thinking: "But isn't this giving legal advice?" I know you're in a highly regulated industry, much like doctors, financial advisers, and other licensed professionals. However, attorneys like you have blogs, podcasts, webinars, etc. and they're using them to market their firm. How? By simply offering information, not advice.

Please think of it in this context: I'm hosting a weekly radio show, and you're my guest. Your specialty is business law. You and I have an opening conversation about your specialty, and you mention a few things that have changed as a result of new laws, Acts of Congress, and the like. After the introduction, we take call-in questions from listeners. Here's the first question -

"Hi! Thanks so much for taking my call. My business partner just died unexpectedly, and his wife now owns the half of the company. She wants to sell the firm to get the money out, but I want to keep running it. Do you have any thoughts?"

Here are some things you wouldn't initially say -

"Sell! Take the money and run."

"Buy her out."

"Just keep running it and hope she forgets about it."

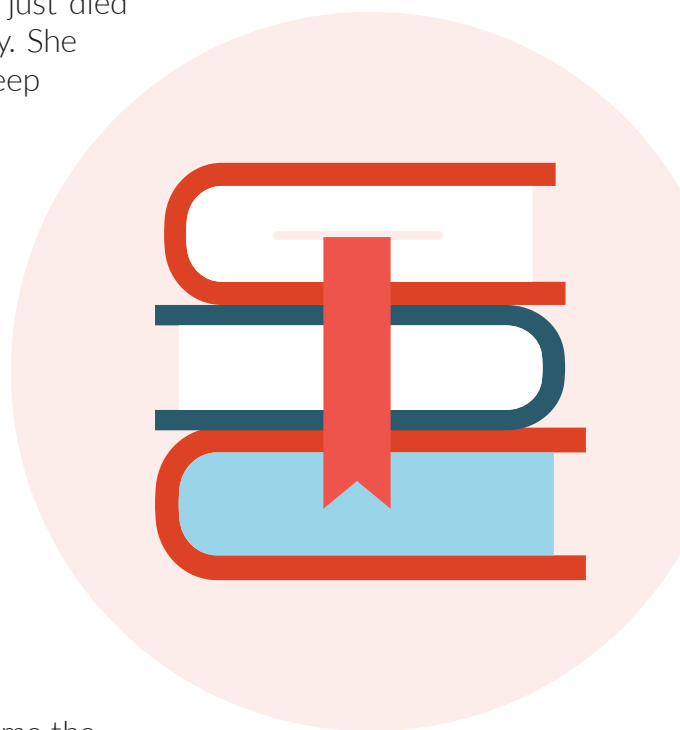
Here's what I mean - this caller isn't looking for legal advice during a call-in radio show. It's obviously an extremely complex situation. He's hoping you'll share some ideas of where to go for information. In other words, he's looking for a little education before hiring a professional to help (and give advice). Now, move this conversation from a phone call to your website. Couldn't you offer the same ideas proactively so potential clients like this gentleman could find you?

I hope you enjoy the book, and once you're done, please email me the answer to the following question:

"What do you see as the biggest challenge in implementing Teaching-Based Marketing at your firm?"

Thanks!

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# Your Website: a teaching tool to grow your business

## Why should you turn your website into a teaching tool?

Are your customers more informed than in the past? Do you find they're asking much better questions because they've been **teaching themselves with the resources on the Internet**? Of course. The Internet affected your industry just like everyone else's. What can you do to be the one answering the questions your customers pose? Look to the **website you already have to be a teaching tool to grow your business.**

Your website can become the best salesperson you employ, working 365 days a year without a break. If you're not taking the opportunity to teach your customers with your website, they're getting their information from a third-party site or competitor. Instead of being an electronic version of your brochure - or worse, a commercial stating why your company is so important - use the knowledge everyone at your company already possesses to **teach your customers with your website.**



Please watch the video or SlideShare (viewed over 3,000 times since being created in mid-December 2014) at the link below based on an article we wrote featured in Madison, Wisconsin's, InBusiness Magazine in December 2014. This article was also picked up by WisBusiness.com on Dec 18, 2014.

<http://www.slideshare.net/cobalt33/turn-your-site>

## The New Sales Cycle

**Reason #1** - Internet users say digital tech makes them better informed than 5 years ago on:

**81% - Things to buy**

**68% - My hobbies**

**49% - Local activities**

*(2014 Pew Research study)*

**Everyone knows a lot more before buying!**

**Reason #2** - Customers are choosing to delay commercial conversations with suppliers:

**57% - Due-diligence done before**

**first engagement with sales**

*(Google + Corporate Executive Board Study)*

**Over half their research is done without you!**

### Old sales cycle

- 1 - They call you
- 2 - Gather information
- 3 - Due-diligence

### New sales cycle

- 1 - Gather information
- 2 - Due-diligence
- 3 - Then, they call you

**People are going to get their information from somewhere. Will it be from you? Or will it be from a competitor of yours?**

### How do you teach on your website?

What questions do you get every week?  
Start answering them on your website!

# Why You Should Use Your Website to teach your customers

*Is your website simply a commercial or is it a source for customers to educate themselves? The Internet has evolved, and your website should, too.*

## The catch-all word: Content

For purposes of this article, we'll refer to writing, producing audio recordings or video recordings collectively as "content." Content will also encompass all of the existing copy on your website. Regardless of what we're using to communicate on your site, when it comes to producing content, we should begin moving from playing the role of salesperson to the role of teacher.

## But what should I teach?

Oftentimes, we face apprehension when it comes to producing content because we drastically overthink the process. The biggest mistake we all make - thinking we're writing for our peers. When we try to write for our peers, we tend to make the material too complex.

We should all take the following approach - write for the person who knows nothing about your business. You know why? Because the vast majority of people know nothing about your business. We all suffer from the Curse of Knowledge. When we assume our potential customers are as well-informed as we are, we tend to write content (and teach) with too high a degree of complexity.

Our customers don't care how smart we are (yet). They want to educate themselves before making that ultimate buying decision, and ever-improving technology has allowed everyone to do this. Think about how Google search queries have evolved over the past decade. Say you're a parent of a toddler, and you're searching for a car seat online. Here is the evolution of search queries in that brief period:

**2004** - Car seats

**2009** - Best car seats

**2014** - What is the best car seat for my toddler?

In sum, our customers are looking to us to provide answers to their very specific questions. When we use our website to provide these answers - if we use our expertise to teach - we will be the trusted source of relevant and trustworthy information.

## About that 57%...

Remember that Corporate Executive Board Company and Google poll we touched on earlier? Regardless of price point or complexity of purchase, the research shows 57% of the customer's decision is made before even talking to vendors.

So what does this mean to us? It means that due-diligence (i.e. research done independently) has now moved to the very front of the sales process. Instead of starting to shop for a car at the dealership itself, customers are researching vehicle options, prices, and potential inventory before stepping foot on the car lot.

Instead of touring open houses as a first step to buying a new home, purchasers are researching school districts, sales trends, and new vs. existing homes before putting on those little blue booties to protect the carpet from their dirty shoes.

Customers now know exactly what they're looking for before they even talk to you. So, the most important question for us is: Who's taking the time to educate them?

## Who's taking the time to educate them?

If your company's website is simply a way for you to toot your own horn, then you're missing the boat. The more quickly your company can evolve your website to become a teaching tool and not simply a sales tool, the more quickly you'll start to win more business. Begin producing content to put on your website today by asking the following question - "If I was a potential customer of my business, what are the first things I need to know?" Start there, and your educational repository will begin to grow.

# 3 Steps To Growing Your Law Practice through blogging

*Remember when you were a 1L? You weren't quite a wet-behind-the-ears undergraduate freshman, but the whole legal realm was probably still a bit overwhelming. You watched *The Paper Chase* and you mentally prepared yourself to be asked any question at any time. But then something amazing happens. You wander into Torts and the professor says something you'll never forget. You find out that the correct answer to a question was never, "yes," or "no," but, "probably yes," or "probably no." Didn't that feel great? You never had to know or have all the answers, but, depending on the situation, you'd have a lot better idea than the Average Joe.*

Upon graduation, the answers you do have will allow you to teach the 99% of the population that didn't attend law school. Did you know sharing these concepts on your website will yield better results than most every other marketing or advertising option?

## Step 1: Write legal articles for the average person

Forget everything you know. Okay, that's an exaggeration, but only a slight one. We all suffer from the curse of knowledge in our respective industries, and the legal realm is no exception. Go on any law firm's website, and more often than not, any articles published there are about complex topics. Why? The author wanted to impress his or her peers, as opposed to writing in terms your typical client will understand.

Instead, consider using this formula for your articles:

- Write down the general questions you get asked all the time by clients
- Answer those questions like you would in an initial meeting or consultation
- Conclude the article with a call to action

## Step 2: Write general legal articles consistently

Form a strategy to which you will adhere. A sample is in the picture here. When you write consistently, two things will happen:

- You'll get better at writing articles that attract clients you want
  - Search engines will see you as more important



Why does this concept work so well? First, inertia dictates that writing begets writing. As opposed to writing complex briefs for the court, as an example, you can give your brain a rest by writing for a non-lawyer. If you simply write like you're speaking, the words will flow quickly and make much more sense to the lay person. Also, search engines "reward" you when you are updating your website more often.

What better way to update your site than through frequent article publishing?

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# 3 Steps To Growing Your Law Practice through blogging *(cont'd)*

Just as importantly, you'll notice yourself using these articles to email to clients asking the questions about which you've written, saving you considerable time drafting ad hoc responses or making phone calls. In fact, if your paralegals and assistants know where to go to get your articles, they can use these as responses on your behalf.

## Step 3: Measure how this helps grow your law practice

You have Google Analytics (or another analytics package) running on your website, right? If not, please contact us so we can give you a brief primer. If you do, get ready for the best part of these efforts – you will see exactly what articles people read, share, and eventually act upon, and you'll know the topics about which you should write more. In business planning, we oftentimes refer to this idea as split testing or A/B testing. We can easily ascertain what resonates with our prospective client and do more of those things.

Going a step further, once we see what specific article attracted a prospective client to your website, we can measure his or her behavior. Did that person read one article or several? Did he or she click on the link to read your bio? Did the visitor fill out a form? Unlike traditional advertising, we can easily gauge the efficacy of web-based marketing, and accurately attribute practice growth to these efforts.

## Example blog posts for a business law practice

Let's say your firm specializes in business law, and as a result, high net worth individuals. On a regular basis, could you see yourself answering these questions?

- How can I avoid probate with my business and assets?
- Do I need a buy-sell agreement for my partnership?
- How do I protect my personal residence from a lawsuit?

If I'm a client or prospective client posing these questions, I'm initially asking for an education, and may eventually pay you for your advice. Because of this, an initial consultation will generally consist of educating this individual about these topics, right? Before that consultation, if your prospective client could avail himself or herself of articles you've written already answering these common questions, think about how much more in-depth you could go with that conversation. In a situation where you're competing against another firm, this could make all the difference in the world.

# What Neil deGrasse Tyson can teach us about business

*Do you recognize the name Neil deGrasse Tyson? He's an astrophysicist, cosmologist, author, host of the 2014 version of the show Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey, and director of the Hayden Planetarium in New York City. Why would this brilliant scientist be a regular guest on the Daily Show on Comedy Central? Why would he have made appearances on The Tonight Show and Late Night with Conan O'Brien? Astrophysicists aren't necessarily sought-after guests, right? Dr. Tyson is, though, and his popularity continues to grow. Without deliberately doing so, he's sharing a crucial lesson with all of us who are not astrophysicists.*

## Why do we like Neil deGrasse Tyson so much?

Is it because he's a brilliant astrophysicist? Do you know any astrophysicists that are not brilliant? Is it because he's on TV a lot? Nope. The vast majority of people on TV couldn't pack the Riverside Theater in Milwaukee two nights in a row. Is it because of his great mustache and tendency to wear solar system-themed vests? Hmm...maybe.

Sakichi Toyoda, founder of Toyota Industries (parent company of Toyota Motor Corporation) died in 1930. However, an idea he devised can help us figure out why we like Dr. Tyson so much. Are you familiar with the 5 Whys concept? When you have a question or problem, ask "why" five times to help you find the answer or solution.

## Neil deGrasse Tyson continues to rise in popularity

- Why? He's on TV more and more.
- Why? Companies will pay a premium to advertise during his programs.
- Why? Consumers have a positive association with him.
- Why? He makes people feel smarter
- Why? He takes really, really complex topics and makes them simple.

## What's the lesson for business owners?

The last "why" from the example above is the critical answer from which we can all learn. Our customers know we're smart, especially when it comes to the business we're in. What makes them trust us, though, and what makes them want to do business with us, is when we are able to speak in terms they understand. Regardless of our industry, there are complex topics involved that we know much, much better than our customers.

What if Neil deGrasse Tyson just wanted to show everyone how smart he was? He could give incredibly complex presentations and have the audience's head spinning in less than 60 seconds. What kind of appeal would he have, then? He would amaze a group of his peers, but most people would just be confused. Dr. Tyson, better than almost anyone else on the planet, is able to take incredibly difficult concepts and put them in terms a 10-year-old can understand.

Don't you love it when you feel smarter as a result of learning something new? Think of the last time you helped your customers experience this sensation. They initially knew very little about the solution you would offer, but because you took the time to teach them, they became much more educated buyers. Then, when they chose to do business with you, there was no question in their minds that they were making the right choice.

Marketing is getting people to buy things that they are glad they bought. Manipulation is getting people to buy things that they later regret. You can have more of the former, and nearly eliminate the latter, by following Neil deGrasse Tyson's example. Talk to your customers in terms a 10-year-old can understand. You don't need to be on TV to do this, though. You can use your website to teach them. Notice a theme developing here?

# News Articles vs Educational Articles: why one expires

*One of the questions we hear all the time is, "Should the articles we publish on our website eventually be taken down?" In other words, should these articles be put in the trash and replaced with something fresh and new? What this question implies is that there are two specific ways to write content for your website, and they can be roughly classified as either "news" or "educational." Keeping these two categories in mind, this article will help answer the question, "news articles vs educational articles: why one expires."*

## News articles vs educational articles

There are two very distinct classifications for articles on your website - they will either be written to inform the reader about a current event, or they will be geared toward teaching. Until a company embraces using their website to teach their customers, articles published on their site will almost always be news-related. More often than not, this is news about the company itself. Company milestones, new employees, and promotional pieces are usually included here. Since these articles are tied to a certain point in time, and since they're about a specific event taking place, these articles will inevitably diminish in value. Eventually, these articles will reach the end of their shelf life, and "expire."

Educational articles, on the other hand, offer you the opportunity to turn your website into a teaching tool. What questions are you hearing from customers and prospective customers consistently, month after month, year after year? If you start answering their questions on your website, these articles will remain relevant. Why? Instead of news about your company, these articles **solve the problems of your customers.**

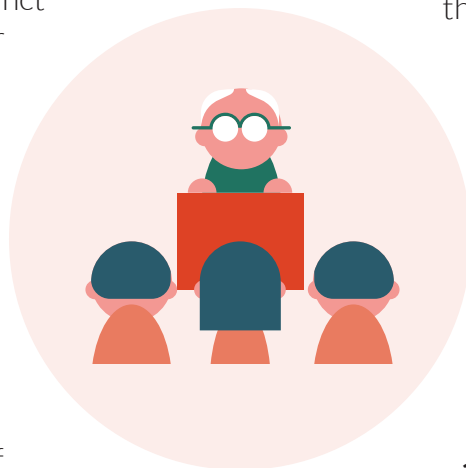
## When to write news articles on your website

We won't disparage news articles completely. News articles are fantastic for some industries, especially those affected by annual updates to laws enacted by Congress. Every year, accountants, attorneys, financial advisors, and many others have new important information to disseminate to their clients. In addition to the emails, letters, or newsletters sent to these clients, **an article published on the company website will be the best way to get discovered by new clients**

**online.** If a potential client is searching for the new 401(k) deferral limit for 2015, that person will start with a Google search, right? If that information is not available on the website as an article, Google will pass it right by.

A final thought when it comes to news articles - if your company hasn't already started using your website as a teaching tool, please consider **writing articles that answer your customers' questions**

**first.** As interesting as news articles can be, the best way for your company to get found online is by creating timeless content. As an example, the 2015 401(k) deferral limit article will be relevant this year, but not in 2016. An article such as "When does a 401(k) make sense for my company?" will continue to yield search traffic to your website every year, because it helps answer the question of the reader. **Instead of just providing information, it provides education.** Since we all have finite time available to write articles, you'll see the best Return on Investment from writing educational articles first.





# Versus-style blog articles why you need to write them

*A friend of mine was recently considering one of two Toyota models to buy - the Camry and the Avalon. What's the first resource people use when researching everything? Yep, Google. So, he typed "Camry vs Avalon" into Google. Like me, this friend lives in Madison, Wisconsin, but the first search result he received from Google was an auto dealership in New Jersey. Why would that be? In our area of Madison, WI, we have local choices for buying a Toyota, so why didn't one of them show up first? Or even on the first page?*

## The appeal of versus-style blog articles

Versus-style blog articles appeal to the part of our brain that wants to put things in rank order. We all like to know where things stand against their peer group, and that's why every magazine and newspaper in existence features Top 10 lists or Best of 2014 lists. This also applies to "Best Places to Live," "Best Places to Retire," etc. that show up annually to help sell these publications.

Versus-style blog articles use a best-of methodology and refine it to be even more specific. Typically it's a two-way (or possibly three-way) comparison of things that are closely related. Once we've read a versus-style blog article, we will know the distinct differences of the things being compared. So how does this apply to my friend searching for the Toyota?

## Versus-style blog articles help you capture virtual real estate

So, "Camry vs Avalon" shows a Wisconsin-based Google searcher an auto dealership in New Jersey. Why? They wrote the best and most relevant article before anyone else. Look at the websites from much, much larger businesses they outrank with the #1 spot from Google on this query:

- Autotrader.com
- Toyota.com (!?!)
- Cars.com

Simply put, Google has one purpose with its search function - give its users the best answer to their question. The auto dealership in New Jersey wrote this article, and planted their flag firmly at the top of the Camry vs Avalon search query hill.

Now, this shouldn't dissuade local dealerships in Wisconsin to write a similar article to appeal to my friend. However, these local dealerships need to be aware that there's already an article occupying that top spot. Since that article is the #1 search result, it gets more important every day. Why? Moz.com (one of the most well-respected companies on search engines) sums it up this way: *"The #1 Google search result is clicked on 31.24% of the time, while 71.33% of the searches from the first page result in a click."*

So, when your website appears as the first search result - or at least on the first page - you have a drastically better chance of having the visitor come to your website. Google will reward you for these clicks by making your website even more relevant, and it will be that much more difficult to unseat you from the search query throne.

## Versus-style blog articles and your business

How can you use versus-style blog articles to your advantage in your business? Think about questions you're asked by customers that could be framed in that fashion. Here's a key - it should not be an opinion piece. If you read the Camry vs Avalon article from above, you'll see it doesn't say, "Buy the Camry (or Avalon)." It's written to teach the buyer so he or she knows the distinct differences of each vehicle. This buyer can then make an educated buying decision. So...

- If you're an accountant, consider writing something like, "LLCs vs S-corps: what you need to know."
- If you're an attorney in Wisconsin, consider writing, "Wisconsin trusts vs Wisconsin estates: what's the difference?"

# Will SEO actually help your business?

*Search engine optimization (SEO) is a great way to help drive traffic to your website, but also a very misunderstood term. "If my business were ranked first on Google searches, then we'd really start doing well," is not an uncommon statement from a business owner. You may have received cold calls from companies guaranteeing the top spot - or at least a place on the first page - of Google search results. What if that company could do what is promised? Will SEO actually help your business?*

## What really is SEO?

Google and other search engines use algorithms to identify the most effective ways to answer search queries and these algorithms perform world-wide searches in less than a second. Imagine if a search engine had to scour the whole Internet each time you searched for something. With Youtube alone adding 100 hours of video every minute of every day, the process would take forever. The algorithms automate this process by searching the web and ranking relevance. You type in, "How to Tie a Tie," (the most common How-to search of Google for 2013), and Google already knows where to take you based on past searches.

SEO is structuring your website so a computer program can find a relevant answer to a question. If your customers or prospective customers are searching for, "How to Tie a Tie," and your site has the best and most relevant answer to that question, you're rewarded through a higher rank. How do you assure you're the best and most relevant? Produce content answering that question better than others. As you become more relevant, you become more relevant. The more visitors coming to your page for whom you can answer the question, you're ranked higher.

## Vanity SEO vs functional SEO

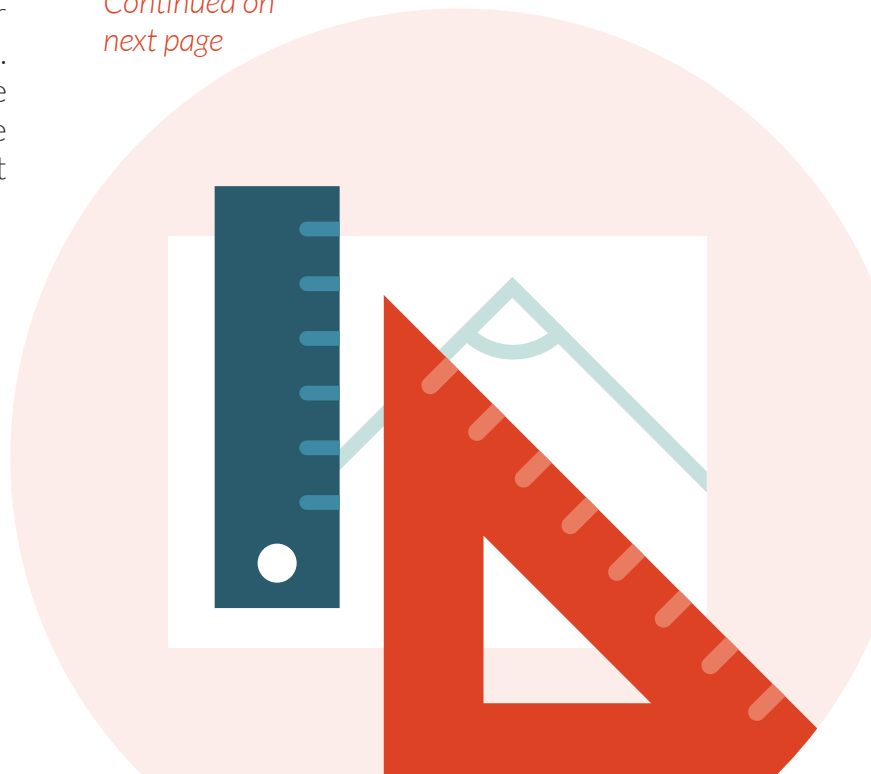
Being ranked first on a Google search is great for bragging rights, isn't it? Is it helping you actually

grow your business, though? However you've achieved that ranking, we need to be sure that when a prospective customer clicks on your site, he or she finds something relevant. Otherwise, you have a website visitor who generates no revenue for you. In the parlance of business plans, a user, and not a customer. Vanity SEO is ranking highly on Google and not converting those prospects to customers.

If your company's website is like most, it might simply be an electronic brochure. Your company's history, what you do, who works there, awards, etc. are all good to know, but what does it do for your potential customer? Does he or she care about your mission statement or your Director of Finance? Not yet. This visitor wants to know why he or she should do business with you. If your website is all about you, and not about them, this person has no reason to choose you over a competitor.

How do we create functional SEO? We engage a visitor once he or she visits our website. The visitor gets the answer to the question he or she has, and, more importantly, sees a clear and distinct call to action. If this visitor wants to buy something from you, is there a clear path of engagement?

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# Will SEO actually help your business? *(cont'd)*

## Congratulations! You're first on Google.

Wave a magic wand and poof! your business ranks first on Google searches. What searches, you say? Whatever searches your potential customers are typing into Google. "I don't know what my potential customers are searching for," you might say. This topic is not just important, it's a critical distinction. Whom are you trying to attract to your website, exactly? Start with this idea -

- Think about who is an A+ customer of yours
- What questions did that customer have when he or she was just a prospect?
- Start answering those questions on your website

Spend some time segmenting this set of customers and write down what problems of theirs you've fixed. These will be our most viable prospects, and the topics we discuss on your website will help attract their attention. Once we take the time to answer those questions, we now have permission to ask for their business. Remember, questions have a problem embedded within them. Think about these questions and the problems implied within them -

**Question:** "What are the best foods to eat for losing weight?"

**Problem:** I'm looking for a solution to a weight problem for myself or someone else.

**Question:** "What alternatives are there to a shock collar?"

**Problem:** I'm looking for a solution to a barking or misbehaving dog.

**Question:** "What does it cost to set up an LLC?"

**Problem:** I'm looking for solutions to protect my assets or to mitigate my business liability.

## Direct your visitor what to do next

After answering their question, direct your visitor how to purchase your products or services by proposing a solution to the underlying problem. If your website is simply an electronic brochure for your company - and not a teaching tool - this back-and-forth virtual discussion will not happen on your site, and the visitor will be at a dead-end.

Are you paying someone to do SEO for your company now? Is this person explaining why it's so important to consider what happens on your website AFTER a visitor actually clicks on it?

