

# A-LINE'S GUIDE TO DEFINING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCES

5 Practical Steps to Discover the  
Best Recipients for Your  
Organization's Marketing



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With the increasing accessibility of tracking and analysis tools like CRM's, Google analytics, social media insights and more, it's never been easier to discover and define specific target audiences for your organization (and then monitor their responses as well.) The end result is a more strategic approach that yields better results – and often with leaner budgets.

## What is a "Target Audience," Anyway?

Most simply, an organization's target audience is comprised of specific people, who based on their needs and interests, will take action to buy, use, and promote your products and services. For many local businesses, this begins with people who live and work within a specific geographic region. But the definition can (and should) go far beyond that to include insight into shared traits such as interests, needs, age, gender, income, budgets and more.

## Why does a Target Audience Matter?

When it's time to make a post on social media, offer a discount or promotion, purchase advertising space, or choose an event to sponsor, your target audience should always be the deciding factor. Just because you have the opportunity to advertise in the most widely distributed local publication or hop onto the hottest new social media platform doesn't mean you necessarily should. If you can't ensure that a good portion of the readership closely aligns with your best potential customer demographic, it's a waste of your time and marketing dollars.

## Define your Audience in 5 (Practical) Steps.

There are countless ways (and a multitude of marketing firms) to help businesses define their best audiences. And admittedly, some approaches are more scientific than others. But for most small and local businesses, we recommend a practical, less intensive approach that you might even find fun.

Successful marketing is no longer about how many people know about your products services. Instead it is about reaching the right people, with relevant messages in ways that resonate directly with them.

# 1. Ask and You Shall Receive.

Ever heard the tale of the wife who had faithfully eaten the end pieces of the bread loaf for nearly 20 years of marriage thinking she was sacrificing for her partner? Turns out, her husband had secretly been pining for those end pieces she choked down sandwich after sandwich.

Moral of the story? Don't assume your customers love something about your products or services. Always ask! Perform surveys online with tools like SurveyMonkey, post questions through social media outlets or even pick up the phone and interview a handful of your favorite clients. Most likely, you'll need no formal statistician to help interpret the results. Themes and shared traits will almost certainly become apparent if you just ask the right questions to get them.

\*Involving your  customers in research gives them a the chance to help shape their future experiences with your organization. Let them know what you learned, and share your plans to take action based on the things you discover.

# 2. Do Some Digging.

How many times last year did you sit down and review your organization's database? Whether it's an old-fashioned Rolodex, your email contact list, social media insights, or a super-slick CRM, just a little bit of digging might result in a whole new understanding of your audiences.

Notice everyone is coming from a very targeted geographic region? Suddenly see an increase in new contacts around a certain holiday or time of year? These are all clues to follow.

Undoubtedly, with just a little bit of digging you'll begin to see some commonalities among those who are interacting with your business and what sets them apart from those who aren't.



*Got a Facebook Page? You're holding the (free) keys to a very informative overview of your target audiences.*

## 3. Forms Required.

Pretty much every website has a contact form these days. And for good reason: it's an effortless way to capture information from self-identified audiences who find your organization online.

However, too often forms only require an email address and nothing more. Consider requiring further information as visitors reach deeper into the site as a way to learn more about the demographics of those who find your site useful.

Offer white papers or promotions for download, but ask for defining information from leads to access them. For example, if you are trying to determine which social media outlets your audiences frequent, ask visitors to share which accounts they use. Want to figure out the age of your best customers? Include a birth date as a required form field.

We recognize that not all visitors will want to provide this information. (After all, you'd never ask someone's age upon just meeting her!) But as opportunities present themselves, including a few demographic questions on forms might be a great way to learn more about your audiences without overstepping your bounds.

**\*Shorter forms on landing pages and websites usually result in more leads, while longer forms typically result in fewer, but higher quality leads.**

## 4. Consult the Experts.

At this stage in the game, you've probably begun to find several connections between some of your best customers and more promising leads. Most likely, there are countless sources that have already done research on these groups.

Seek out secondary research and the data within. Glean what is relevant and compile the information that is most useful for your purposes: data about your industry, your market and the potential customers you have already identified. Use your findings to fill in the gaps and provide details you might not have gathered through other avenues.

**\*Trade associations serving your industry are often great sources of professional market research to help you build accurate target market profiles.**

## 5. Paint a Picture.

The final step in defining a target audience is developing a customer profile or a detailed description of your ideal customer. At this point, you should be able to include relevant demographic information and some basic data about them.

But like any masterpiece, the most effective profiles provide a much more detailed (and artistic) overview. Include any relevant and creative information that might help you resonate with potential clients more directly considering everything from their values, interest, attitudes, lifestyles, whom they trust, where they find their information and more. Most importantly, make certain that you understand the most important aspects of your organization that will keep them engaged. When these tie directly into your audience personality, you're primed for communicating with them effectively.

## Rinse and Repeat.

There you did it. You've got a great understanding of your audience and you can begin to approach marketing with their wants, needs and interest always top of mind. But, like with everything in branding, you can't just end here.

Regularly monitoring and reviewing your target audience behaviors, interactions and responses will give your organization insight into trends and patterns that might affect your target market's relationship with your business and perhaps even open doors to completely new and undiscovered potential leads.

If you're doing a good job of tracking your target audience's interactions with your website, social media, requests for information, sales and more, you'll most likely be ready to repeat this process every few years.

## Do More with A-LINE.

Figured out your target market and want help communicating more effectively? Need a hand tracking their behaviors online? [Contact A-LINE](#). You might just be part our own target audience and we'd be pleased to know you better.

### About A-LINE Interactive

A-LINE Interactive helps brands create and maintain successful web presences. We are dedicated to elevating the online presence of businesses and organizations in Spartanburg, SC – the community we call home.

