DAY 1

TUTORIAL #1: Acquire The Right Clients
Acquire The Right Clients

Hello and welcome to our FREE “Grow Your Practice in 5 days” video training course.

My name is Peter Finlay and together with my colleagues Richard Brewin and Steve Hackney we can assure you that as you watch this series of videos, thousands of accountants just like you, from all areas of the world are already benefiting from what you are about to discover.

But before we start I just want to set the scene, so to speak.

First, this course will have the biggest impact if your firm focuses mainly on non-audit clients and is a local or regional firm.

Second, it’s for ambitious firms – firms that are dissatisfied with their current level of growth and are keen to see their business attract more of the right type of clients and operate more effectively and profitably.

And third the course is perfect if you’ve tried everything and you’ve reached a point where you don’t know what to do to take your firm to the next level (whatever that is).

To ensure you get the most out of the course, each part is delivered to you every day for the next 5 days and includes the following materials for each part...

1. A video tutorial like this.

2. A copy of the transcript.

3. And a simple ‘One Page Action Plan’ covering the steps you need to take to apply each strategy to your firm.
To our knowledge there is simply nothing else available anywhere in the world, at any price, which provides so much practical and proven advice...

Never mind absolutely FREE of Charge.

But don’t be mislead, although this course is free it doesn’t mean it’s full of worthless information. It has until quite recently sold for several hundred dollars and has been responsible for helping us to acquire members throughout the world for the Accountants Growth Programme.

Now, there isn’t any obligation whatsoever, on your part right now, you can enjoy this course, without any cost whatsoever.

But we hope that in time and if there are any places left, you will join our existing members and together we can help you to dominate your local competition, helping you to quickly reach your target, whatever that should be.

But more on this later. I’ll give you full details of the programme at the end of this course.

Okay, that’s all the housekeeping completed. Let’s get started...

First, let me start by telling you that you CAN create a thriving and very profitable accountancy firm IF you know the secrets to success.

You see selling and marketing your accountancy services (as I'm sure you're well aware) in this new economy is very different to how it was done a few years ago, even as recently as 2 years ago! But many firms in the industry are still using the same tired old strategies that simply don’t cut it any more.

A wise man once said, “If you’ve stopped growing, you’re actually shrinking.”

Nothing is more fundamentally true when it comes to an accountancy firm. If you’re not acquiring new clients then you are almost certainly going backwards. Even if you are great at servicing clients you will always lose a small number through natural wastage: mergers, acquisitions, retirement, bankruptcy (particularly at the moment), death and relocation.
So alarmingly, if your firm has slowed it won’t be long before it starts going backwards.

There’s another economic trend you need to consider...

Recession and growth have historically been cyclical. The belief therefore during a recession has generally been that if you can just survive the hard times then the good times will come around the corner.

However, there seems to be an increasing view coming from many leading economists, which we share, that this time it’s different.

This is not the start of a cycle but the beginning of a whole new world in business terms. Business will never be the same again. You can’t just wait for the good times to come. Even as recovery eventually comes (whenever that will be!) businesses have got to operate fundamentally different to how they’ve always done if they are going to succeed because client / customer needs and expectations HAVE changed and will continue to do so over the coming years. This is now as I’ve already said a NEW ECONOMY.

For accountants, this is crucial.

Doing things differently is no longer a marketing man’s mantra but a business essential. You can’t hide in your shell and wait for the sun to come out.

However, the good news is, with the right advice and good old-fashioned hard work you can buck this trend and create a fast-growing and dominant firm. A firm that grows month on month. A firm that not only works with the right type of clients – but works with the clients you really want.

That’s why we wrote this course.

Surprisingly, our research over the last couple of years has shown us that there is very little support material for accountants looking to grow their firms. Maybe this is a result of the industry’s general success over the last twenty years. Maybe it wasn’t needed. Maybe complacency had set in?
Without question, the baby boom of the 60s and early 70s led to a very large number of firms being created. Supply has finally outstripped demand. More alarmingly, the customer has become more discerning. So competition is rife and acquiring the client is harder than ever.

But just when you thought it couldn’t get any worse...

To top all of that, most business owners think that accountants are now like the banks – they’re all the same. And guess what? This means if they think one firm is the same as the next – they then choose on price. So through the industry’s own apathy it has created a price-sensitive market.

Gone are the days when you could set up your accountancy firm and clients would beat a path to your door. Gone are the days when people relied exclusively on their accountant for their services. Gone are the days when the competition didn’t really matter.

This new economy we’re in now is a very different, more challenging environment for you.

Those that acknowledge this fact and then DO something about it will be the winners. But thousands of other accountancy firms will continue to struggle day-in, day-out to achieve results.

It’s a grim picture for many.

Of course it’s only grim if you do nothing about it. Remember, if you keep doing what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you always got.

You subscribed to this course because you see it as the first step of doing something about it. We of course don’t know your exact personal situation, but we do know you want improvement in your firm. And we do know for whatever reason you’re not happy with things as they stand at the moment. Realising this, you’ll be pleased to know, is part of the battle.

Next it’s all about what you do. You need to get busy and start implementing a range of strategies that will help you...
• Stand out from the crowd

• Attract clients easily

• Remove price and fee from the mind of the client

• Provide added value that no other firm can compete with

• Acquire the right type of clients at the right fees

• Achieve everything your skills, effort and experience deserve

That’s why this course is so important. It’s to give you proven solutions, to each and every one of these things. But be warned. Although growing your firm is down to some basic fundamentals, many of the things we talk to you about will fly in the face of what you believe to be true right now.

You have to trust us.

This stuff works.

It doesn’t matter if you’re a sole trader or in a firm with three or four partners. But to get results you have to change what you’re currently doing. You have to be different. You cannot hope to achieve all you want with an attitude of ‘this will never work for my firm’. You have to open your mind to the opportunities that present themselves to you in this course. And if you do, then you’re going to enjoy the results of your efforts. We promise you that.

Above all else this course will first explain what you need to do, then tell why you need to do it and then describe in step-by-step detail how to do it.

One last thing...

As you progress through the course you'll often find yourself thinking - that's obvious - I know that, what's so remarkable about that? When you sense yourself doing this STOP yourself and ask 'Am I using this strategy in my firm right now?'
Quite frankly, if you're actively applying 2 or 3 of these strategies and doing them RIGHT I'll be surprised - that's why this stuff will be so powerful for you!

Don't close your mind and think that it won't work for my firm. Believe me we've tested EVERYTHING. Richard built and sold his practice from scratch using these strategies. And right now firms throughout the world are getting fantastic results using them! Edit 4

So let’s look at what I’m going to cover with you during our time together today....

By way of introduction, I’m first going to reveal why accountancy firms stop growing. This will give you a fascinating insight by pinpointing the actual reasons why firms struggle and of course how to either buck the trend or prevent it from happening to you all together.

Then we’ll start with the first strategy.

Okay let’s get started...

To understand why growth slows or stagnates in any accountancy firm, we first need to look at how a typical firm evolves and why the frustration starts to mount as this growth slows. We call this the ‘Growth Roller-Coaster’.

Take a look at this illustration...
The starting point is the beginning of an accountancy practice, usually created by a sole practitioner or a small partnership. Typically, the partners are very hands-on at this stage with few, if any, staff and modest resources. In the early months and years the firm grows very well.

Clients receive a high degree of partner attention with high levels of expertise and client-care as a result. Costs in the modest operation are relatively low and the firm can respond quickly to client and market needs.

Word is spread by clients and referrers about the great, cost-effective service and new business is easily gained. The practice quickly expands to a peak at point A, driven by the personalities and skills of its owning partners.

In an ideal world, two conditions will now be met. Firstly, the partners will recognise that they have reached the pinnacle for a personality-driven business and secondly, the business and financial performance will be at a level that completely satisfies them. In reality, neither is the case.

What happens in the real world is that the partners continue to drive forward. However, with the growth there now come problems…
Staff and resource levels have been increased to serve the growing client base, increasing costs and tying up partner time. Partners themselves come under increasing time pressure, being torn between client, staff and practice needs. Falling service levels and rising costs see the growth constricted and dissatisfaction around the firm grows in its place.

Have you ever heard yourself or a colleague say, “This was so much easier in the early days!”

Now the partners find themselves at point C. Right now, you are likely to be at some point between A and C.

Reality has dawned and the firm is at a crossroads.

Do you remain a personality-driven practice and attempt to claw your way back to point A by downsizing, culling clients and try and raise point A to a higher pinnacle?

Or, do you undertake the investment (mostly in time and effort) required to move forward and become a systems-based firm at point C. I guess as you’re taking this course, it’s highly likely this is what you want to achieve.

Interestingly both types of firm can be successful with the right planning and management. But, too many firms find themselves falling into the trough in between simply because they’ve didn’t consider early enough what their fundamental strategies and goals should be. Instead emphasis is placed on the process functions of the practice like, delivering compliance, support and advisory services to clients and essential marketing and management of the business is overlooked. Growth, consequently, is flawed.

Let’s look then at the high-level view of your firm (which can be any accountancy firm). As I mentioned earlier, it has three key components…

1. **Process**
   The mechanics by which any accountancy practice ‘produces’ its saleable services – compliance, support and advisory. This is how you generate fees.
2. Marketing
The generation of new clients, the retention of existing clients and the maximisation of client value (this course focuses on this particular component). This is how you acquire and retain clients.

3. Management
The running of the business – its performance management, strategies and goals. This is where you generate profit and wealth.

When a firm is growing steadily and reaching the partners’ objectives, the 3 functions work together to create a harmonious cycle…
In reality, the majority of Partners are taught process skills from school days, through professional studies and onwards. We are taught how to read and write. How to do sums and answer questions. You develop expertise in how to do ‘things’.

In other words, your expertise and skills invariably lie in the **PROCESS** function. Consequently, with the skills and knowledge loaded towards the Process function, firms can only grow whilst there is capacity within the Process function to do so.

But without the same relative development in the management and in particular marketing functions either side, **growth becomes limited**…

The cycle now starts to look very different…
So the solution is simple…

You need to start putting more effort into the marketing and management functions of the firm to realign the balance.

This doesn’t mean you neglect the process function. It just means you work smarter and allocate your time and effort better to include these two crucial areas of your firm.

So, there is little doubt as to why most firms do not achieve the growth objectives the partners have set and why now is the time to make the transition from a process-led firm to a management- and, in particular, a marketing-led firm.

Our goal is for you to have a systems-based firm that’s set up to achieve your objectives. The rest of this course shows you how to achieve growth through a series of proven sales and marketing strategies that you can automate. Strategies which will stand the test of time. Strategies that get results.
So now you know why your growth is being held back, let’s start focussing on putting that right. It all starts with this first strategy...

This first strategy is without question THE most important and it’s the one that virtually EVERY firm gets wrong.

Get this right and you’ll attract the right clients at the right fees. Get it wrong and you’ll acquire the wrong types of clients – clients that only care about cheapest price. Clients that you just don’t want in your firm.

In many respects this strategy is the ‘holy grail’ of building an accountancy firm. Every firm searches for it, yet few find it!

You know what it is, but equally I can guarantee you’re doing it wrong. It’s what we call your Target Market.

To get the best possible results from each of the other strategies we’re going to reveal to you over the next 5 days you must first, and most importantly, clearly identify the type or types of businesses you are looking to target.

THE TARGET MARKET REPRESENTS THE BUSINESSES YOU’RE GOING TO FOCUS ALL YOUR MARKETING ON.

The ideal Target Market is a clearly identified group or groups of businesses which...

1. Need – and more accurately ‘want’ your services
2. Can afford to pay for your services
3. Can be easily reached by your marketing efforts
4. Have similarities, known as demographics or characteristics, that enable you to ‘group’ them together

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to try and be ‘all things to all men’.
Yes, there is success to be found using this approach, but by focusing on one or more carefully chosen target markets you’ll be far more successful, and this success will be achieved much quicker than with any other approach.

So why do so many accountancy firms try to be all things to all men? In most cases it’s because they’re afraid to ‘limit’ the number of businesses they specifically target. They think if they reduce the number of prospects, they’ll risk their whole livelihood!

Nothing could be further from the truth. Let me explain…

We’re often asked – “If I limit my market, won’t I be reducing the chances of doing business with more people?”

Yes you will. But to succeed in today’s new economy and competitive market place you need to concentrate your marketing on a small number of well-chosen target markets, into which you pour all of your resources.

Of course, if you focus on a smaller group or groups you may miss the business from outside the target group. But what actually happens is you increase the amount of business you receive from the target group.

This is because you are specifically meeting the target market’s needs and requirements. You are saying to them that you are THE accountant who knows about their situation – their problems – and their concerns. No other accountant specifically meets their needs in this way and therefore the firm is seen as the logical company to turn to.

So you must define who your target market is BEFORE you do anything else.

This diagram clearly shows the differences between conventional marketing (mass marketing) and ‘world-class’ marketing that we adhere to (target marketing)…
The Mass Marketing Approach

The Market Universe

The prospects who could buy your accountancy services – ‘Mass Market’.

Businesses Who Are Unlikely To Buy

The white space represents businesses that are unlikely to buy, but they all receive the same marketing message from the business which results in needless and excessive expense.

Businesses Who Are In A Position To Buy

The dots represent businesses who are in a position to buy. Note how disparate these are. The white space in between represents everyone else in the mass market. You have to spend much more money to get ‘lucky’ and hit the right people/businesses.

The Result

High cost to reach buyers. Response and acquisitions are low because you’re targeting everyone with a ‘mass market’ message – i.e. it doesn’t directly appeal to the buyers. Greater effort (on your part!) required to qualify out bad prospects – if you’re targeting everyone, you’ll also get a large number of poor prospects and YOU DON’T WANT THAT!
This red circle represents the market universe. In other words all the businesses that could buy your services.

These black dots represents the businesses who are in a position to buy.

And the white space represents the businesses that are unlikely to buy, but they all receive the same marketing message from you.

Notice you have to spend much more money to get ‘lucky’ and hit the right businesses.

So what’s the result of this approach?

First there’s a high cost to reach buyers.

Second, response is low because you’re targeting everyone with a ‘mass market’ message – i.e. it doesn’t directly appeal to the buyers.

Third, greater effort is required to qualify out bad prospects – if you’re targeting everyone, you will also get a large number of poor prospects.

When you see it shown like this it makes sense why so many marketing campaigns fail and so many firms really struggle to grow. Nothing is working in your favour.

Now let’s take a look at the target market approach...
The Target Market Approach

The Market Universe
The businesses who could buy your accountancy services – 'Mass Market'.

Businesses Who Are Unlikely To Buy
The white space represents businesses who are still unlikely to buy, but they all receive the tailored marketing message from you once the enquiry has been generated by your marketing efforts. Notice there are fewer now!

People/Businesses Who Are In A Position To Buy Outside The Target Market
Even this approach isn’t perfect – but it’s close! You can’t hope to ‘catch’ everyone. There will still be other people/businesses outside the chosen niche(s) that you ‘miss’. But notice how few there are.

Target or Niche Market
(a smaller segment of the Market Universe)

People/Businesses Who Are In A Position To Buy
See, now that by concentrating your efforts on a carefully selected target market you ‘capture’ a high proportion of potential buyers. Plus, once you’ve generated the enquiry your message then also needs to be completely focused on this group so client acquisitions are increased significantly.

The Result
This gives you the ability to concentrate your efforts on a more targeted group. Target marketing increases the likelihood of a sale. And enables YOU to take a big slice of this target market.
Once again the red circle represents the market universe.

This blue oval is the target market.

These black dots represent the businesses outside the target market who are in a position to buy. You can’t hope to ‘catch’ everyone. There will still be other businesses outside the chosen target market that we ‘miss’. But notice how few there are.

These green dots represent the businesses inside the target market which are in a position to buy. See now that by concentrating your efforts on a carefully selected target market you ‘capture’ a high proportion of potential buyers. The message is completely focused on this group so response is increased significantly.

So what’s the result?

Identifying a target market gives us the ability to concentrate our efforts on a smaller, more targeted group. That means we can spend more on targeting each prospect, or even enables us to cut our spend.

It also increases the likelihood of a sale and enables us to quickly capture a big slice of this group.

You don’t have to restrict yourself to just one target market either. You may find it necessary to focus on two or more target markets depending on the service you provide. For example, you may have three target markets…

- Primary – could be Start-up businesses
- Secondary – say $1m to $2m turn over businesses
- Tertiary – say $2m - $5m turn over businesses

…or even more focused industry based Target Markets…

- Primary - Dentists
- Secondary - Media companies
- Tertiary - Legal
You would need to ‘speak’ and ‘communicate’ very differently to each target market once the enquiry has been generated because they are so different. For example, you cannot speak the same way to a start-up business as you would to say a $5m business – so why do people do it?

Here’s a simple but very powerful example of why defining your target market or niche is so important…

Let’s say a start-up business needs an accountant. Their first choice is to perhaps look in the Yellow Pages under the ‘Accountancy’ category. Although there are a number of ads, the first one reads…

‘ABC Chartered Accountants. Tax preparation, auditing, bookkeeping, payroll services, help for start-ups, management accounts, and so on.’

The second ad reads…

‘XYZ Chartered Accountants. Specialising in helping start-ups get their businesses running quickly, profitably and effectively.’

Which firm of accountants are they likely to choose? The answer is obvious.

If you can create this bond between the business and the target market I can guarantee you’ll grow your firm quicker than you could ever imagine.

Above all else it is absolutely critical you go for the ‘low-hanging fruit’ (the easiest businesses to acquire).

For example, if your firm currently has a majority of businesses with a turnover of $100k to $500k you SHOULD NOT be targeting $2m + businesses. Not right now anyway. Edit 7

We also know that the closer the business is to you (in terms of location) – the more likely they are to use you. So start targeting the businesses closest to you and work outwards. So how do you target the low-hanging fruit? Well we’ve created a very simple diagram showing the key characteristics you should look for…
The Target Market Characteristics

Here’s a more in-depth look at each characteristic…

Industry:

What types of businesses do you want to target? Are there some industries that you want to stay clear of? For example a number of our members in the Accountants Growth Programme never want to work with charities, whilst a few others love working with them!

There are three key factors which influence the selection of the industry…

1. Your industry experience

You may want to target industries where you already have experience.
2. Your industry credibility

You may want to target industries where you already have credibility.

3. Your likes and dislikes

You may have preferences already about industries that you like or dislike. This will obviously have an impact on the choices you make in terms of the industries you select.

Decision Makers:

An important consideration is choosing businesses with a simple decision-making process. Clearly the larger the business the more likely the number of decision-makers increases, making the sale more difficult.

Keep it simple and go for owner-managed businesses with no more than say 3 directors.

Age Of Business:

Clearly there is an age range of businesses from start-ups to well-established companies. Obviously start-ups come with a number of challenges especially the fact that 80% of them fail in the first 5 years. So are you bothered about how well established a business is?

Turnover / Number Of Employees:

Both these characteristics are easy indicators for choosing your target market. However this is where THE biggest mistakes are made with virtually every accountancy firm.

As I said earlier, just because you have a range of clients say from start-up to say $2m or $5m or even $20m turnover doesn’t mean you should target this range. This is a huge mistake.

What you need to do is look at your existing portfolio of clients and analyse the turnover range of your biggest grouping of clients. For example you may have 20% of clients below $100,000, 60% from
$100,001 to $500,000, 15% from $500,001 to $1m and 5% greater than $1m.

Using this example, whether you like it or not, your firm is good at acquiring, keeping and servicing clients with a turnover from $100,001 to $500,000. Edit 8

This represents your ‘low-hanging fruit’. These are the easiest businesses for you to acquire.

If you’re looking to grow quickly, it’s foolhardy to go after larger businesses because your firm just isn’t seen by the market as one that’s associated with their type of business.

I hope that make sense?

Your target market is NOT a wish list. Your target market should represent the businesses that are the easiest for you to acquire. Nothing more, nothing less.

Location:

As proximity is often an important decision for many business owners when choosing their accountant, you should start with businesses closest to you and work outwards.

There are so many businesses close to your office, you really don’t need to go too far away. Every day you drive into work. How many businesses do you pass that aren’t your clients?

Once again not targeting businesses close to you is a big mistake firms make. As a general rule the closer you are to their business the more likely they are to appoint you – all things being equal.

Profitability:

How concerned are you about working with profitable companies? This is a difficult measure because most databases are out of date in regards to their financial data.
So let’s recap...

Here are the key learning points from this first tutorial...

1. First... Accountancy firms stop growing because the partners don’t focus enough time and energy in the management and more importantly the marketing element of the firm.

2. Second... Identifying your target market is THE most important thing you can do.

3. Third... Use the Target Market Characteristics to identify the profile of your target market.

4. Fourth... Always go after the low hanging fruit – they are the easiest businesses to acquire.

Now please turn to the ‘One Page Action Plan’ that accompanies this tutorial and start putting together your perfect target market. These are the businesses that you’ll be concentrating all your marketing on.

Looking To Accelerate The Growth Of Your Firm?

If you want an EASIER way to acquire more of the right type of clients, then the Accountants Growth Programme could be for you. To find out if you qualify, click on the link below to watch this short 5 minute video...