Week 2: Finding your initial customers

Craig Zingerline

Today's agenda

- Quick recap from week 1
- Get ready to have discovery conversations

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Last week's homework

- Build your user hypothesis
- Start persona development
- Built a role matrix for >1 persona

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Sendscore value proposition

"Improve email campaigns with 3+ actionable insights" -- Sendscore
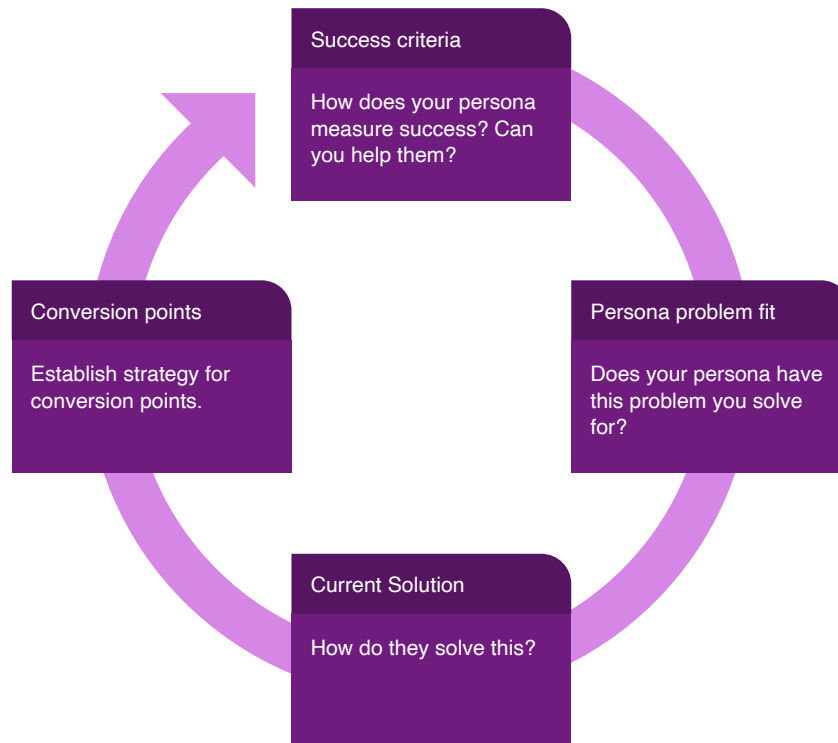
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This is my v1 persona

My v1 persona, slightly expanded:

"I believe that every email marketing manager wants to improve their key email metrics - open rates, CTRs, open to click.

Therefore, if I provide a service helping them do that, I make them better at their job."

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Validation to conversion

Success criteria

How does your persona measure success? Can you help them?

Persona problem fit

Does your persona have this problem you solve for?

Current Solution

How do they solve this?

Conversion points

Establish strategy for conversion points.

Success criteria

How does your persona measure success? Can you help them?

Remember our original questions? Validate against these.

Does your product save the person time or money, make them more productive, look or feel better? Does it handle some other sort of utility? Does it save them time, energy, and or entertain them?

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Persona problem fit

Does your persona have this problem you solve for?

Do the necessary work to validate yes or no.

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Current solution

If they do have this problem, how do they currently solve it?
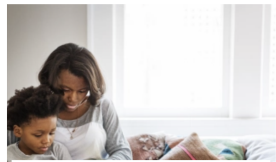
What products or services do they use?

What do they read or consume?

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Red Tricycle targeting parents of young children

Success criteria
"I'm always looking to be a better parent."

Persona problem fit
One way to be a better parent is to find and do amazing things with my kid(s). It's often hard to find great things to do.

Solution
Red Tricycle helps parents find amazing things to do with their kids [so that they form great memories].

Current solution
Friends, Google, Nextdoor, Forums

Sandboxx targeting supporters of military recruits

Success criteria
"I want my kid to feel supported when they go to bootcamp"

Persona problem fit
Writing letters to them will help them feel supported & get them through tough times. Right now it takes too long for letters to arrive.

Solution
Sandboxx makes it super easy to digitally compose & send letters that get delivered overnight.

Current solution
Handwritten letters

Don't skip this validation

Early adopters are different than most other users.

Don't assume you know your buyer until you have some scale.

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How do we start?

First, some hustle

It's almost cliche by now, but it's true that almost every startup starts by hustling to find initial customers.

Let's assume you've already done some of this.

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Early efforts

Almost always start with friends & family.

Then, it could be:

- Cold prospecting on LinkedIn
- Micro paid campaigns
- Organic strategies
- Social threading (conversations in Quora/Reddit/Twitter)
- Using tools like Respondent or SurveyMonkey
- Giveaways, contests, influencers

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You may be here for a while

Until you figure out a channel that you can start to scale in, you'll likely be trying different things to raise awareness & find potential customers.

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My initial personas

Learning phase

We now need to start learning about our potential customers & understanding what gaps we might have on our original hypothesis and value proposition.

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Email marketing specialist

Job / role	Decision maker?	Measure success	Current solution	Targeting pool size
Email marketing specialist	No	Increase campaign results (unvetted)	Unknown	Medium (>200k)

I **don't yet know** how an email marketing specialist measures success.
I'm also **not yet sure** what current solution they might be using.

My goals are to:

1. Validate how this role measures success
2. Validate if this role would be helped by my solution
3. Validate what current solution(s), if any, this role currently uses to help ensure success
4. Understand if there is conversion potential

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Director of email marketing

Job / role	Decision maker?	Measure success	Current solution	Targeting pool size
Director of email marketing	Yes	**Unknown**	Talking to peers, using tools like Zerobounce to improve email list.	Large (>1M)

I **don't yet know** how an email marketing specialist measures success.
I **think** the use tools and talk to peers.
I suspect they I'm also **not yet sure** what current solution they might be using.

My goals are to:

1. Validate how this role measures success
2. Understand if there is conversion potential

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VP Marketing

Job / role	Decision maker?	Measure success	Current solution	Targeting pool size
VP Marketing	Yes	Impact that email has on company growth	Talking to peers, using tools like Zerobounce to improve email list.	Large (>1M)

I **think** a VP of Marketing likely could benefit from my product.

My goals are to:

1. Confirm by seeing if there is conversion potential

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Our action items

Validate how this role measures success - outreach script

Learn how success is measured

Hi {name} - I'm doing some research for my startup, and was wondering: as a {title/role} how do you measure success for your job? I'd be grateful if you could give me a quick reply. Cheers! Craig

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Problem persona fit - conversational script

Find persona fit

Hi {name} - thank you for the clarity. How do you {impact the success metrics}? Do you use products, tools, or services that help? Or do you have online resources that you use?

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Conversion focus script

Start to introduce the offer

Hi {name} - really appreciate the reply. I mentioned I'm working on a new startup and what we do is help {quantify the problem} by {the solution}. Would you be open to checking out our site and seeing if you'd use a product like this?

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Starting point: LinkedIn Outreach

LinkedIn + Plugins

LinkedIn for B2B, Marketplaces, and some consumer startups is a great way to learn.

We'll focus on my B2B use case and initial persona for now.

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What about consumer?

If you are focused on consumer acquisition we'll cover that in the coming weeks.

But one angle that often works is a partnership distribution model.

- Red Tricycle with contests / promos
- Quasi competitors aka manual steps you're trying to automate

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Outreach via LinkedIn / Octopus CRM

Sourcing via LinkedIn / Octopus CRM

Email marketing specialist

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Validate success

Validate success - email marketing specialist

Quick stats

I sent 20 LinkedIn connection requests with my message on day 1.

Roughly 20% accepted.

I received some replies almost instantly.

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Validate success - email marketing specialist

Erik Ewertsen
Email Deliverability Specialist
7 seconds ago

Hi Erik – I'm doing some research for my startup, and was wondering if as a Email Marketing Specialist, how do you primarily measure success for your job? Is it around email metrics like opens/clicks/CTR or something else? I'd be grateful if you could give me a quick reply. Cheers! Craig

See less

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Craig Zingerline · 8:07 AM

Hi David - I'm doing some research for my startup, and was wondering if as an email marketing specialist how do you primarily measure success for your job? Is it around email metrics like opens/clicks/CTR or something else? I'm grateful for any input! Cheers! Craig

8:07 AM

Hi, Craig

· 8:08 AM

We track open rates and click-through but our more important metrics are replies and appointments

To answer your question directly, yes. The KPIs like open rate, CTR, unsubscribe rate, ect, are leveraged primarily to decide which campaign or automated campaign needs optimizing.

Hi Craig, thanks for reaching out!

How I measure success solely based on email marketing is on the following factors

-Sent/Delivered
-Opens
-Clicks
-CTOR
-Spam
-Bounce
-Unsubscribe
-Replies

For other metrics there are
-Projected Revenue
-Earned Revenue
-Engagement throughout journey and length of time spent in journey before conversion
-A/B testing
- Where did the customer click on in the email (as in which CTA, if there are multiple links)

That's an overall basic view of email. If you have any questions feel free to ask

Have a great weekend!

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Hey Craig,

When it comes to what measures success for me it depends on what the goal is for the email. Most of the time you want engagement so I look at writing content that is going to have the customer click on the email so I focus purely on open rates and CTR. If it's an informational email than I put a lot of thought into getting a high open rate.

In the end I usually focus on email metrics, but I also focus on the content to ensure it's fun to read.

Hi Craig! Thanks for reaching out. How I measure success is through multiple aspects of my job.
1. Yes: email metrics
2. Monthly Revenue generated from emails
3. Understanding why we are sending what we are sending and why are we sending it to each audience.

That's exciting you are in this process with a business. Please tell me more about it!

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We've learned...

- Measurement is important
- Opens, CTRs, other metrics tracked
- Good content and tracking conversions seems to also be key

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Problem persona fit

Problem persona fit

Craig Zingerline · 11:37 AM

Thx again for the metrics earlier. Another quick question - how do you impact these types of metrics? Do you use products, tools, or services that help, or do you go to places online to learn about best practices?

To impact the metrics I use the marketing automation reporting and data built into it. I also use tableau for complex and in depth reporting. For basic data pulls I use SQL. Each marketing automation system has a different approach to pulling data depending on which system you use.

For email deliverability I use return path (which is also built in salesforce)

For email rendering (to make sure the emails go out correctly to each email sender) I use litmus to make sure everything looks good on multiple platforms

I learn best practices from staying abreast on current email marketing trends and also I am a part of women of email which a international community of women who work in various roles in email marketing. (Edited)

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Problem persona fit

Thanks Britnee! Appreciate the reply! Other than your email provider, are you looking at different best practices or using any tools/products? I've used Zerobounce for making sure email lists are scrubbed every once in a while, but curious what pros are using.

> We do not use outside tools at this time, and I am honestly unfamiliar with Zerobounce. I will say maintaining your mailing list is very important. Removing those that unsubscribe regularly is critical. If you can do specific segmenting of your audience for receiving the different messages, that is very beneficial as well.
>
> We do regular A/B tests with subject lines and CTA language as well. With covid, there has been more experimenting with sending during the less traditional days of the week and time of day.

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Problem persona fit

• 12:42 PM

I'm not email marketing for myself so I guess to better answer your question I measure success by having retainer deals with clients who pay me monthly for my services. When I have as many clients as I can keep up with I'm happy and consider that success. My clients have their own email lists and marketing calendar and A/B testing or what ever they do. I just write the emails to help them sell their product or service. I guess if the rates aren't what they want they would drop me and hire someone else.
Does that answer your question?

Craig Zingerline • 12:43 PM

Totally does, yeah that makes a lot of sense. Really appreciate your candor. Cheers

• 12:44 PM

Happy to help! What is your start-up?

Craig Zingerline • 12:48 PM

I run growthuniversity.io and have a spin-off experiment that I'm running while teaching a program on "finding your initial customers" that I'm calling
Sendscore: https://gumroad.com/l/sendscore

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Quick take - current state

What I've learned:
- Starting to understand the way my initial persona measures success
- Starting to find some persona problem fit
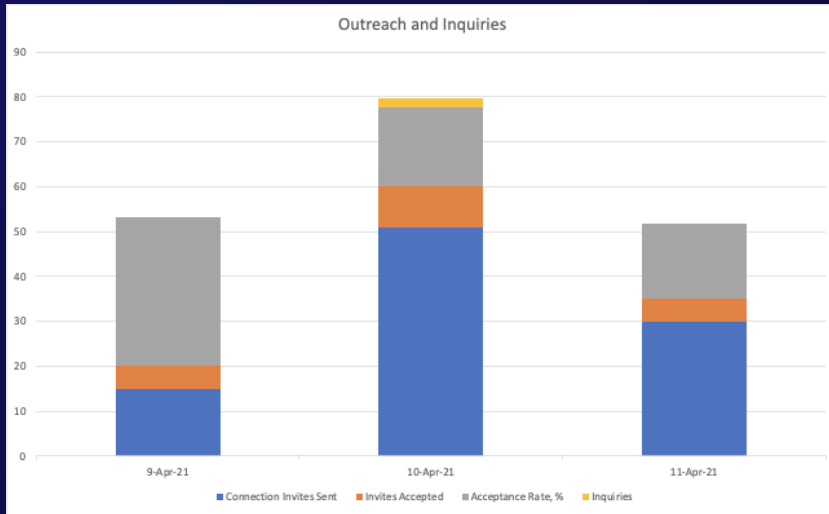- People love answering questions about their job/success

What's next?
- Start thinking about conversion points for initial persona
- Run the loop on other personas

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We've learned...

Some fragmentation of tools, lack of consistency:

- Tableau
- SQL
- Returnpath
- Litmus

Need to capture more data as replies come in.

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What we've learned

- Roughly 100 connections sent
- 20% accept
- 25% of them reply
- 10% of new connections become inquiries

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What do I do next?

For the other two personas I have, I'll next plan a similar similar script and outreach effort.

The goal is to validate what we don't yet know about these personas. And potentially find new ones to target.

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Persona view

Job / role	Decision maker?	Measure success	Current solution	Targeting pool size
Director of email marketing	Yes	Unknown	Talking to peers, using tools like Zerobounce to improve email list.	Large (>1M)

Action items:
- Validate how this role measures success
- Confirm tools / generate ideas around potential competitors

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Persona view

Job / role	Decision maker?	Measure success	Current solution	Targeting pool size
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Action items:
- Confirm tools / generate ideas around potential competitors

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Live demo - Octopus / LinkedIn

Homework

1. Build your validation script for at least one persona
2. Find the persona on LinkedIn (or using email if that's better for you)
3. Start initial outreach to uncover new findings

Upcoming sessions will handle B2C as well as phone based customer discovery. We'll also move into conversion points and landing pages.

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Thanks!