

Filling the Pipeline: Using Research to Attract Right-Fit Clients

A practical guide for attracting ideal prospects who come to **you**.



You're Doing Great Work. Why Is Your Pipeline Weak?

You're smart. Your clients love working with you. It's frustrating when that doesn't translate into a steady stream of new opportunities.

Here's what we hear from experts struggling to become seen by their ideal prospects:

- "We want to show up where they can see us, but we're drowned out in a sea of pitches."
- "We're terrified of our efforts to connect looking spammy."
- "If we could only be invited to the pitch, I know we'd impress them."
- "We've actually had prospects tell us they wished they'd known about us before they signed their contract with another firm."

It's not that your expertise isn't valuable. It's that the people who need it most may not know where to find you. Or if they do, they may not realize you're exactly who they're looking for.

This isn't about effort or talent. It's often about visibility—and more specifically, the kind of visibility that builds trust with the right people.

Let's explore what that looks like—and how research can help you get there.

The Pipeline Problem

If you've ever been called a "best-kept secret", that might sound flattering. But it really means that your ideal prospects may never hear about you.

A lot of the smart, thoughtful experts we work with hear that a lot. It sounds flattering, but it may actually be the reason your pipeline efforts aren't delivering.

When we dig into this with clients, we ask questions like these:

- **Do you know where your ideal prospects go to get smarter about their work?** And are you showing up there consistently, in a way that feels generous and relevant?
- **Could someone take your content — your site, your posts, your deck — and swap in their own logo without anyone noticing?**

- **When people refer you, what do they say?** Is it something specific and distinct? Or just a general “they’re great to work with”?

If those are tough to answer, that’s OK. It just means there may be opportunities to connect more clearly and consistently with the people who are already looking for the kind of help you provide.

And that’s exactly what audience research can reveal.

Show Up in the Right Way for the Right People

**Original research gives you something most experts don’t have:
Clarity about what matters most to the people you want to work with.**

It helps you:

- Understand your prospects’ most pressing challenges, goals, and questions
- Know how they describe their problems, in language they really use
- See what they care about (and what they don’t)
- Craft messaging and content that reflects those realities with accuracy and empathy
- Know where to put your content where they’re already looking for help

When you base your visibility on real insight — not just assumptions about what’s keeping your prospects up at night — it gets easier to show up in ways that build trust before the first conversations (when most prospects are already nearly ready to finalize their decision).

A Real-World Example

Agency Management Institute

We first partnered with [AMI](#) in 2014 to conduct an annual research study of marketing agency clients: [The Agency Edge](#), and to publish the full results for agency leaders. And we’ve kept doing it, every single year, for 15 years and counting.

Today, The Agency Edge is something agencies schedule their annual strategic planning around. The results are unveiled yearly at AMI’s Build a Better Agency Summit and have been presented at INBOUND and Content Marketing World and featured by Adweek. As a result, agencies reach out to AMI for support and resources, already knowing and trusting the work AMI does.

“Our annual research is a foundational resource for our audience of agency owners and leaders. It gives them new insights and a definite leg up on their competition. And it has earned us their confidence, trust, and appreciation — and gained us new members as a result.”

*Drew McLellan
Agency Management Institute*

Check in: Are You Showing Up Where It Matters?

This short reflection might help reveal what's working and what might need attention.

- ☐ We've used research to identify our audience's top challenges
- ☐ Our messaging and content speak directly to those challenges
- ☐ We regularly show up where our ideal prospects spend time
- ☐ We've received referrals from people we've never worked with
- ☐ We often hear prospects say, "I feel like you've been inside my head!"

If you check 4 or 5 → Great! Keep showing up consistently.

If you check 2 or 3 → You've got a solid start — research could sharpen your focus.

If you check 0 or 1 → There's a real opportunity to connect more clearly and confidently.

Quick Start: Attracting the Right People

You don't need to overhaul everything. Just try this.

Step 1: Ask Five People

Reach out to 3-5 recent right-fit clients and ask: "What were you thinking or searching for when you found us?"

Write down exactly what they say.

Step 2: Look at Your Front Door

Pull up your homepage, your LinkedIn profile, or the last prospect email you sent. Do those challenges they cited — or the language they used — show up there?

If not, that's a good place to begin.

Step 3: Share One Insight

Take one challenge your clients mentioned and write a short post or article about it. Share your experience, your perspective, and your advice.

Make it useful. Make it generous. No pitching involved. Just be Relentlessly Helpful®.

That's how visibility becomes trust. And trust builds your pipeline.

How Else Can We Help?

At Audience Audit, we help experts who want to stop guessing and start showing up in ways that attract the prospects they want.

One-of-a-kind audience research is the engine that gives them that opportunity.

Let's talk about what original research could unlock for you.

Audience Audit® | Research for Relentlessly Helpful Experts.

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