**How to Turn a Hobby into a Business: SoulCollage® Marketing Case Study**

By Suzie Wolfer LCSW

Amber (we’ll call her that) called me a couple of years ago wanting to grow her SoulCollage® business from a hobby to a small business. She had what my business coach called a “vanity” website. It was about her, not her clients. She was using [www.Godaddy.com](http://www.Godaddy.com) paying $6 a month for a 5 page site.

“The goal, no matter what you sell, is to be seen as irreplaceable, essential and priceless. If you are all three, then you have pricing power. When the price charged is up to you, when you have the power to set the price, there is a line out the door and you can use pricing as a signaling mechanism, not merely a way to make a living.”

 Seth Godin

So here are the principles and practices she used to grow her business from doing occasional groups to making as much as $2500 a month.

* **Website:** Make your website about your clients not about you. She discovered what was *“*irreplaceable, essential *and* priceless” about what she had to offer in her SoulCollage® practice**.** Though this sounds egotistical, it actually not about ego. It’s about finding out who your clients are and what you have to offer them. After a lot of thinking and managing her Inner Critic, she came up with 3 unique life experiences and skills that would be of particular value to her prospective clients: she was an artist, had lots of experience with fertility, adoption and grief issues, and loved outdoor activities. So she used this to aim her marketing efforts toward attracting mothers, artists and people who’ve experienced loss. She expanded and designed her web page to resonate with women who were missing their creativity, and who felt a little stuck because of loss issues. They saw themselves when they read words like “are you an artist at heart, but can’t find a way to access your creativity?” Rather than describing herself as “I’ve been doing SoulCollage® for 3 years now and offer workshops to help you get in touch with your creativity.”
* **Branding:** She realized then that this “brand” or platform as they call it in marketing, gave her a unique offering and value to her clients . . . how she was *“*irreplaceable, essential *and* priceless”. She was surprised to find how much confidence and energy she developed with she had a sense of her unique gifts. It gave her the energy to then reach out to local groups having to do with loss: church support groups, hospital programs for grief, adoption agencies and support groups. The more she reached out the more she found people who could benefit from SoulCollage® workshops to revive their creativity after a serious loss. Her “brand” helped her focus not only her website, but all her marketing materials including business cards, postcard, and brochures she created for free and produced for the cost of shipping at [www.Vistaprint.com](http://www.Vistaprint.com) . Her brand helped her select imagery from [www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com) that told her story and attracted people who could most benefit from her skills and experiences.
* **Life Time Value of a Referral:**  next we looked at her levels of service. Initially Amber saw herself leading workshops for friends and family. And couldn’t vision how she could turn that into a profitable small business. With help she designed 5 levels of service so that when someone took a workshop, got excited, the next step was easy for them to take:
	+ Level One: 4 hour workshops at local community colleges, churches, agencies anywhere she could set up a strategic partnership where someone else did the marketing and she provided a valuable workshop experience. She either charged $10 per person per hour plus materials, or she offered a modest group fee, knowing that even if it was free, she’d be developing her database/mailing list and getting people for her other levels of service
	+ Level Two: day long workshops which she priced at $10 per hour per person plus a $10 materials fee
	+ Level Three: weekend workshop or retreat
	+ Level Four: ongoing groups which she charged based on $20 per hour per person.
	+ Level Five: individual coaching with SoulCollage® which she priced at $35 per hour
* **Track your results**: this was a challenge for Amber since she did not have any type of database, and did not think of building a mailing list. She was a Mac person so started using [Bento](http://www.filemaker.com/products/bento/), a fabulous easy way to track almost anything. (or try [www.zoho.com/creator/](http://www.zoho.com/creator/) for a free online database that’s cool). She started to get names, emails and phone numbers from everyone she talked to, everyone she presented to, and is now in the process of creating newsletters using [www.constantcontact.com](http://www.constantcontact.com) . She currently sends out emails about her offerings just blind copying to her list. She is using her database to track referral sources, the services each person has used, as well as notes about their interests and background. So now, when someone calls her, she can quickly remember their details and know how to best serve them.
* **Practice What You Preach:**  Though it was surprising to us both, Amber was not using her cards very much. She mostly made cards but did not read them. So her “field” for SoulCollage® was not very strong though full of potential and excitement. I challenged to use her cards daily and within a month, her business had grown. And she became more amazed at what her cards taught her about business. When she was puzzled or troubled about something, she started consulting her cards and found depth and knowledge beyond the reach of her analyzing mind.

**Amber** has been working strategically on her business for about 18 months now. These are just some of the changes she made. In our last session, she totaled up her earnings for the month and was surprised to see that she made as much in one month as she did from her job. And she had a blast doing it. She is not a therapist or even a life coach, but has developed confidence in herself, knows what she is good at, practices the power of SoulCollage®. She enjoys being a source of strength and inspiration to her SoulCollage® clients and community. And her clearly defined and practical marketing strategy helps her clients find her.

To check out more SoulCollage® resources for facilitators, go to <http://www.counseling-portlandoregon.com/Small_Business_Resources.html>.