



ASSOCIATION OF ESD PROFESSIONALS

# HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

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# THE LONG & WINDING ROAD TO BRAND-BUILDING



Do you want to build your ESD brand, but you're not sure where to begin? Let's take this step by step. Branding is a complex process that requires us to make many foundational decisions about our ESD practice. Namely, we must define our:

- 1 Audience or Market
- 2 Mission
- 3 Voice
- 4 Services or Product
- 5 Value Proposition

If it sounds like a lot, that's because it is, but it's nothing you can't handle. Rather than overload yourself with too many tasks at once, use this how-to guide to focus on defining your target audience or market. This guide is designed to give you a clear sense of direction as you begin building your brand and as you start to identify your audience.

We recommend you block off some time and get the ball rolling with the questions and exercises outlined in the following pages.

Let's go!

# HOW DO I DEFINE MY TARGET AUDIENCE?

## 1 || HOW WILL DEFINING MY TARGET MARKET HELP ME BUILD MY BRAND AND MY PRACTICE?

By defining your target audience, you will be able to do a few things with greater ease and aptitude:

- 1 Adapt your offerings to suit the specific needs and desires of your clients or students.
- 2 Craft your marketing message (your way of speaking about your offerings) to reach your target audience.
- 3 Stay connected to the idea of your audience—less abstractly, with more substance—through the process of designing curriculum, writing blogs or social media posts, and crafting class descriptions.

### VOCABULARY CHECK



We are using the terms “audience profile,” “target audience”, “ideal student,” “client profile,” and “target market” more or less interchangeably. While each term has its own nuance, feel free to use the terminology that makes the most sense to you. At the end of the day, this brand-building process is for your benefit!

## 2 || BE SPECIFIC

“If you serve everyone, you serve no one.” —unknown



It is powerful to accept, even celebrate, that the way you teach and train ESD is particular to you, that you have your own style. You conduct your trainings in a way that is specific to your personality, and you may have one or more specialties. You also may be interested in teaching a certain type of student or client. Maybe you feel drawn to people from a certain community or with certain abilities or needs. You may want to charge your clients what the market will bear, or you may want to provide your services at a discounted price or for free.

Each of these things goes into clearly defining a specific target market. When you are able to answer questions like the ones listed below, you be able to hone in on a student or client profile and then define your target audience.



### 3 || YOUR AUDIENCE SHOULD WANT YOU, TOO.

Hopefully, your audience wants exactly what you can provide—and feel passionate about teaching.



- 1 Are you going to teach classes weekly, monthly, or periodically? Will you teach at camps or retreats? Some combination?
- 2 Are you going to have a mobile business? (Will you go to your students where they are?)
- 3 Will you use a brick and mortar space for your ESD courses?
- 4 Do you have one or more specialty?
- 5 Do you enjoy teaching a particular type of student, those with certain abilities or interests? Maybe you want to teach people who also practice martial arts, or maybe you want to teach people who work in hospitality, for example.
- 6 Do you want to teach ESD to specific communities (whether geographically defined, defined by identify, by lifestyle, or by experiences like abuse or other traumas)?
- 7 Will you be teaching in more than one language?
- 8 Can you (or do you want to) provide online courses?

Not everyone will be interested in your ESD offerings, and you may be interested in teaching people with specific interests or needs or from particular communities. This clarity can enable you to focus on the people most likely to be interested in your classes—your target market.

If you weren't able to answer every question, the next steps of the branding process should help.

# MEETING THEIR NEEDS



Now that you have answered at least some of the questions above, you have taken the first big step toward figuring out who you think would be most interested in your courses. The next step is to flip that exercise on its head. Decide what type of courses will best fit your audience by returning to the substance of what you will be offering.

Modern marketing revolves around creating needs and insecurities—telling consumers what they want to hear (this is evident in many marketing materials out there for self-defense classes that feature dark, scary streets, a scared, subdued woman, and a villain with a knife or gun. You’ve seen them). Most marketing is fear- or scarcity-based. In the case of self-defense training, that can feed off of, and into, a status quo where a woman’s safety depends on limiting her freedom and agency. Not so empowering.

What if you tossed fear-based marketing out the window and tried to understand what your audience truly seeks and needs? What if you created a genuine brand that reflected the services you are providing. One of the best tools for doing that is the audience profile.

An audience is not a fuzzy concept of shadow figures; rather, it is made up of real, human individuals with real needs and interests, real eyes and ears, real hearts. You create for them.

One of the most interesting things about getting to know your clients is digging beneath the surface and exploring what their biggest fears and challenges are, what they yearn for, how they want to self-actualize, why and how they make the choices they make, and their wildest dreams. Then, if you are a good listener, and are diligent in your brand-building and product or curriculum development, maybe you can meet them where they are.

# create your CLIENT PROFILES!

To get started on your brand-building adventure, create at least two specific profiles of your ideal student/client. (But don't stop at two if you're having fun. Fun? You may be surprised!) Give each one a name, age, gender, profession, hobby, income, passion, fear, desire, goal, and an interest.

## 1 || HELPFUL QUESTIONS FOR DEFINING YOUR AUDIENCE

### ? What type of person do you want to work with?

A few ideas to get you started:

- Single Moms
- Mothers & Daughters
- Fathers & Sons
- Teen Girls
- Hikers
- Bartenders
- Nightlife Crowd
- Entrepreneurs
- Solo Travelers
- Dancers
- Teachers
- Parents
- PE Teachers
- Martial Artists
- Non-Martial Artists
- Yogis
- Nurses
- Part of cultural community (e.g., LGBTQ+, Native American/First Nation)
- Part of a geographic community, country, or region
- Speaks certain languages
- Has experienced specific or general trauma (e.g., women who have suffered from domestic violence, food servers who have suffered workplace violence)

### ? What else do you know about them? Try making some educated guesses!

- What Instagram or TikTok profiles do they follow?
- What books, news sources, or websites do they read?
- Where might they find an article or ad about your ESD practice?
- What are their values, core beliefs, and driving motivations?

## 2 || LET'S TAKE IT EVEN DEEPER AND GET SPECIFIC!

### ? Who is your ideal client or student?

- Where do they like to hang out?
- What do they do for fun?
- What are their hobbies?
- What are their stress points?
- What problem are you solving?
- What issue in their life do you have an answer to?
- Are they at a specific stage in their life?
- With respect to trauma, is there a specific group you'd like to work with?
  - People who just experienced an adverse situation.
  - People who are still in the thick of abusive relationships.
  - People who had adverse situations in the past and they are in their healing process.
  - People who want to instruct others.



## ? If you could work with any type of client, who would it be?

All of these questions are leading you to one critical piece of understanding about your ideal client and target audience: What is their desire or goal and which of your offerings can satisfy that? What do they need, and how can you help? What are they missing, and how can you fill that gap? How do they wish to grow, and in what way can you support that growth?

Write down these client profiles with as much detail and specificity as you can, and save them in a physical or digital file for reference.

These profiles are for you, your organization or your business. We hope we have given you a crystalline idea of who you want to teach and how you would like them to be trained. When you get stuck or feel unmotivated, you will have your audience profiles to remind you of why you are still on this crazy ride—and for whom.

As you continue to design your ESD curricula and mold your organization or business, always keep in mind the people who will be on the receiving end.

## NEXT STEPS

As you enter into the complex world of brand-building, you may want to start paying more attention to brands out there that inspire you and that speak to a similar target audience. Keep a list. Note what they are doing that's effective—on their websites, across social media, and in their marketing campaigns. You don't have to start from scratch. Learn from the successes and failures of other brands.

We hope that answering the questions in this guide and building your client profile will bring you to a deeper understanding of your ideal client. Once you have done that, you will have a foundation on which you can build and move on to next steps, such as thinking about how you would like to address your target audience through your brand voice, messaging, logo, and design.

Stay tuned for more guides on branding, and let us know if you would like to see any specific how-tos. Reach out anytime at [hello@esdprofessionals.org](mailto:hello@esdprofessionals.org).

**ENJOY THE PROCESS!**

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