

Appreciating Similarities And The Differences

by [Steve Brown](#)

Over the years the claim that no two snowflakes are alike has been the subject of extensive scientific debate. Several years ago, research found the old adage might not hold true for smaller snow crystals. Researchers even said there was at least a possibility of clones being out there, albeit nearly impossible to find. Flash forward 7Ys and the current consensus is that the likelihood of two snowflakes being identical is only slightly more probable than pigs flying.

Like snowflakes, small business customers share similarities and yet also have distinct characteristics. A recent report by Infusionsoft, a provider of sales and marketing software for small businesses, highlights just how different entrepreneurs can be. The analysis buckets small businesses into four broad categories: Passionate Creators, Freedom Seekers, Struggling Survivors and Legacy Builders.

Understanding how these broad categories of small business owners think can help you determine how best to work with your customers and what types of products and services different small business owners may find appealing. This insight can be invaluable in helping you make your marketing efforts as productive as possible.

Consider that Passionate Creators love their work. They started their business so they could serve their customers. They are the most time-stressed of the lot and most likely to use a wide range of business tools, from accounting software to CRM and automated marketing programs. They are also the most likely to tap into a wide range of resources to help them run their business. Also according to the study, they are hungry for information that will allow them to expand their business and better serve customers.

Freedom Seekers, meanwhile, are all about flexibility and control. A large number of them started their own business to be able to have a greater say in their work-related life. Like Passionate Creators, these entrepreneurs turn to a variety of software tools and automated support systems to run and promote their businesses. Within this group, 59% are women and 81% work from home.

Legacy Builders are more likely to have started their business with a family member. They see small business as a practical economic choice. They are more likely to turn to family, friends and coworkers for guidance, relying less on data to make their business decisions. Nearly 50% don't have a website and many profess difficulty sifting through the various software options to improve their business.

Finally, Struggling Survivors is the group most likely to grapple with time management, financial insecurity and misgivings about the value of owning a business. They are the most likely to be doing the vast majority of business activities on their own and they are the least optimistic about their prospects for future business success.

From this research, it's clear that small business owners come in all shapes and sizes. At a minimum, having a broad understanding of which categories your small business customers fall into is a good starting point. Once you have that, you can then dig deeper into the individual needs of these customers, so you don't miss opportunities to provide them services that could help them succeed (or inadvertently promote options that may not work based on a lack of understanding of their business).

At the end of the day, each small business customer is a unique entity with distinct needs, so no matter what you do, they will greatly appreciate the individualized attention.

BANK NEWS

Credit Analytics

Bankers may find it interesting that a software program developed by University of Maryland researchers predicted the failure of restaurants with about 70% accuracy. The software reportedly scans Yelp reviews and incorporates star ratings as part of its predictive processes.

Economic Forecast

A Wall Street Journal survey of 45 blue chip economists projects GDP will be 2.9% next year and the unemployment rate will fall to 5.3% by the end of the year.

Holiday Shopping

A poll by Deloitte finds people expect to spend about 40% of their holiday budget online this year. Meanwhile, another survey by PWC finds people expect to spend \$684 on average this year vs. \$735 in 2014.

Lifestyle Management

HR consulting firm Mercer reports 67% of large companies offer lifestyle management programs to help employees lose weight or quit smoking.

Housing

CoreLogic projects a 4.4% rise in the national median home price in 2015.

Customer Behavior

Banks may want to note that the Census Bureau finds 20% of adults have never been married vs. only 10% were never married in 1980.

Video Medical

HR consulting firm Towers Watson finds 37% of companies will offer employees consultations with a healthcare provider by telephone or video in 2015 and another 71% say they will offer it by 2017.

Coin Making

The US Mint reports it cost 1.7 cents in 2014 to produce a penny, 8 cents for a nickel, 3.9 cents for a dime and 9 cents for a quarter.

Student Lending

Bloomberg reports tuition expenses have jumped 538% since 1985 vs. a 121% increase in CPI and a 286% increase in medical costs over the same period. It's no wonder so many people carry student loan debt.

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