Feed

How to Stand Out
(& Attract Clients)

Lets start with a picture quiz.

Which cup stands out
why?
it's green
and has a different pattern

Let me tell you a story about this poster. It sits behind me on the wall in my office

And it reminds me daily of 2 things:
1. what I love to do - help businesses stand out for the right reasons

2. my philosophy on the current state of business - too many organisations are doing the same thing, saying the same, looking the same.

And the annoying things is they are all different - they are as unique as me and you.

And why does that matter more now than ever?

Because AI has made it easier to produce content, copy, and marketing — but it hasn't made it easier to produce good marketing.

And in that world, the businesses that stand out aren't the ones producing more.

So in the next 30minutes I will show you what it means to become a green cup and how you can do it too. OK.

But first, cos I am a contrarian madam, let me tell you what we're not going to cover today.

This talk will not be talking about tactics,

It's not about upping your personal branding game, rebranding, start storytelling or start sharing your purpose, or your why.

Now, all of these are hugely important - and if you came to the last two Chamber workshops here, you'll know how using video in social media and how to construct a good story is hugely important.

But they are tactics, they are tools, they are platforms

Before you use any of these communication platforms, you need to figure out what you're going to say that people actually care about

how exactly are the right people going to notice you,
remember you
and most importantly why should they choose you?

But first a game!

In a min I am going to show you four home page headlines from a selection of financial services firms - all of them anonymised, none of them local, don't worry!

I want you to notice what ideas or phrases come up most frequently.

We help a broad range of clients plan for a successful financial future

We provide tailored, expert financial advice for every generation

We help individuals and families build and preserve their wealth

Tailored financial advice from a partner you can trust

Alright what do you see?
What are the common themes, phrases or words?

Yep - all of them
All saying the same thing

"bespoke financial advice so you can be wealthier'

Now, none of these are wrong per se, of course I want my financial advisors to provide expert, tailored, trusted advice.

But if you were coming into the market cold, and looking to select a financial advisor.

Which one would you pick?
Why would you pick one over the other.

And you might be thinking — well that's just words on a homepage, that's not the whole picture.

But I'd argue it is the whole picture. Your website is your digital shop window.

It's the first thing a potential client sees, and it's telling them exactly how you see yourself.

And here's the uncomfortable truth: I'd bet good money those same companies sound identical in their emails, their proposals, their LinkedIn posts.
The homepage is just where it's most visible.

That's what a blue cup business looks like. And they are everywhere.

Let's talk about the real cost of blending in.

Of not giving the right people a reason to choose you.

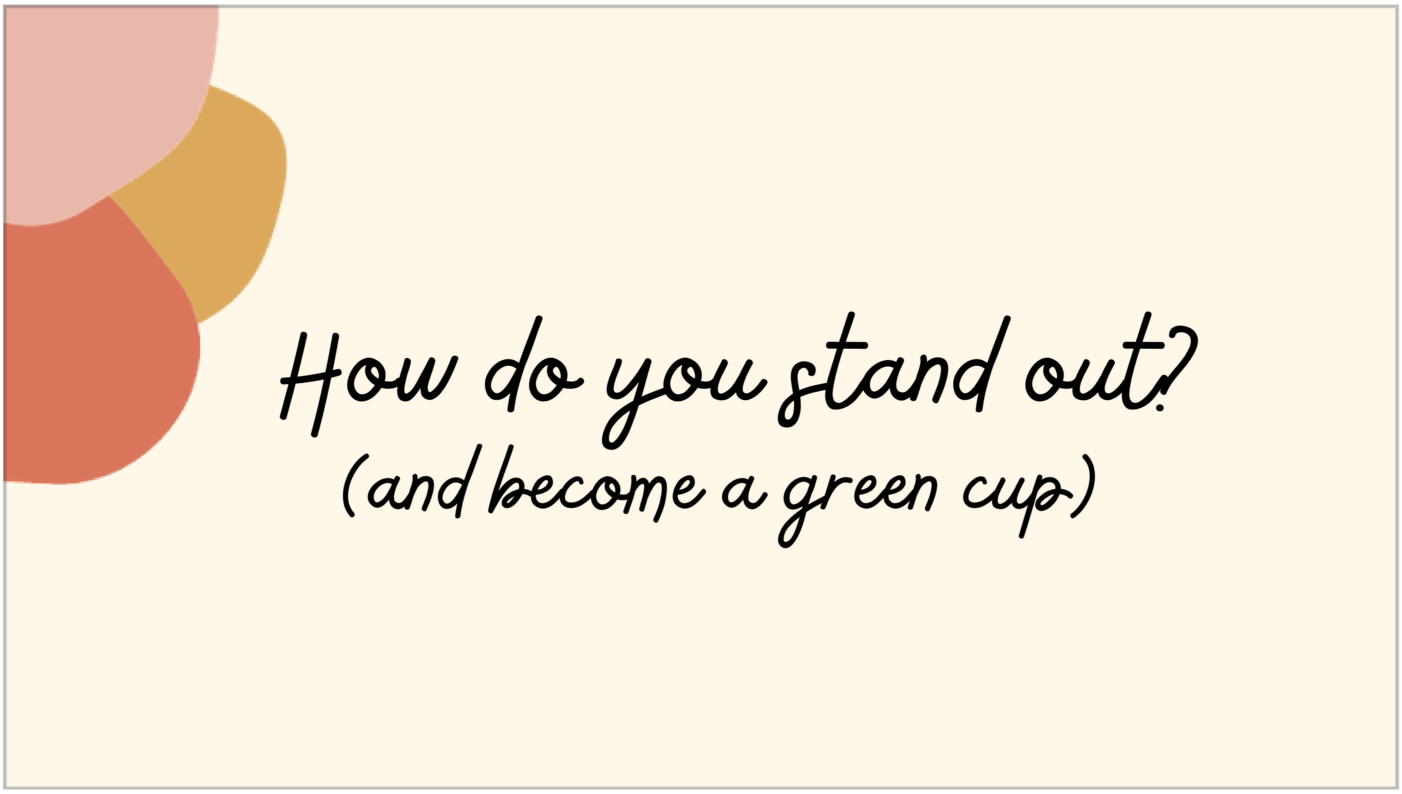
No 1 - you could be losing out to other people in your market, ones that have got their messaging dialled in

Relying on expensive, unsustainable marketing tactics and "growth hacks" spending money on meta advertising or print ads.

Blue cup businesses are more at risk with all the crazy shit in the world. When your customers are watching every pound, they spend with organisations they feel something about.

Not the ones that look like everyone else.

And the one I've highlighted is the most important.
when you're all blue cups. the only reason you get chosen is - you're the cheapest. And that's a really precarious place to be - as we know with AI, there always someone or something that can do it cheaper.



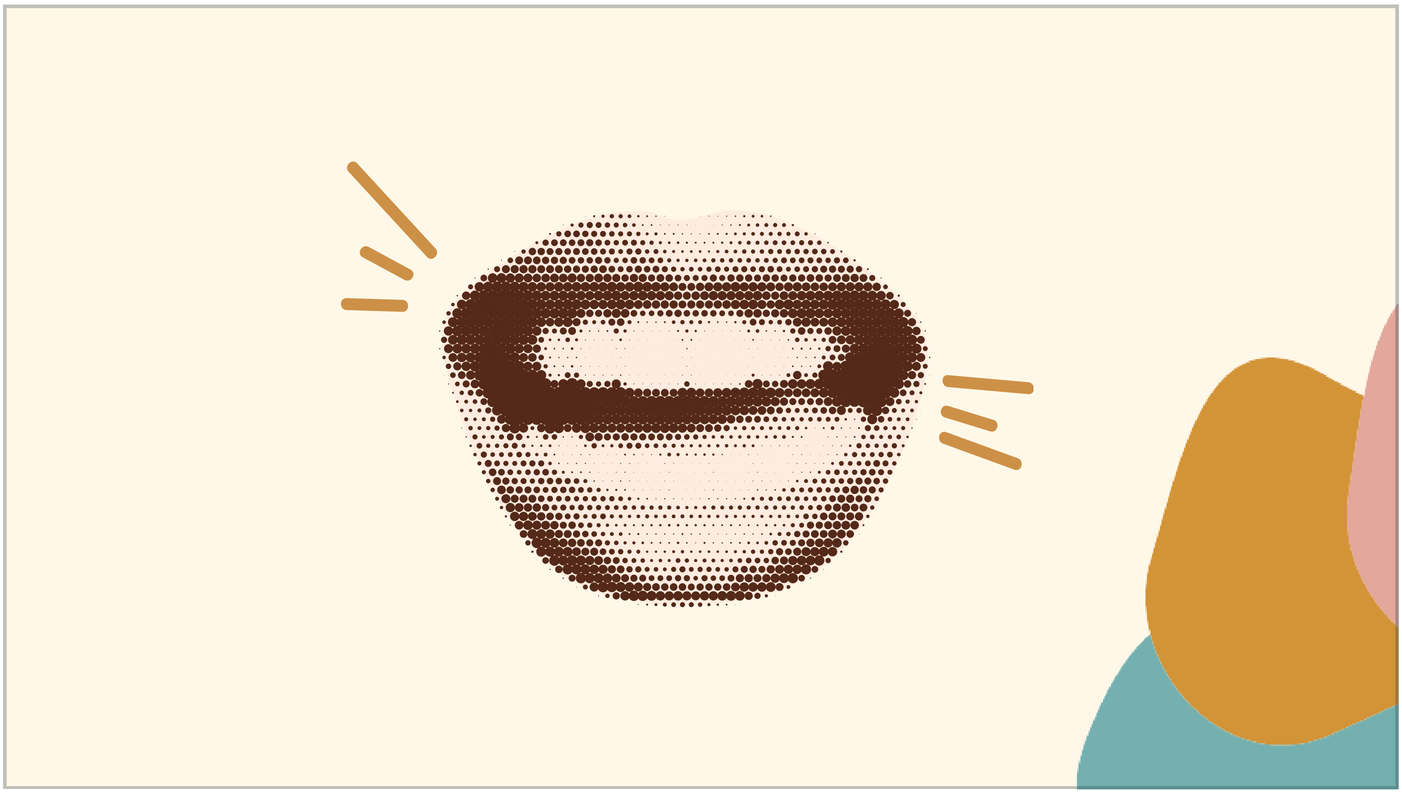
So that was a bit depressing wasn't it. But never fear, I have some ideas for you.

But, before I go on.
I'm not talking about being the loudest, shoutiest, sweariest, brand on the market

Being different for the sake of being different is just daft

The aim is to be meaningfully and intentionally resonant

And it's simple.



It's simple.

And it starts where all effective marketing starts — with an obsession about your customers.

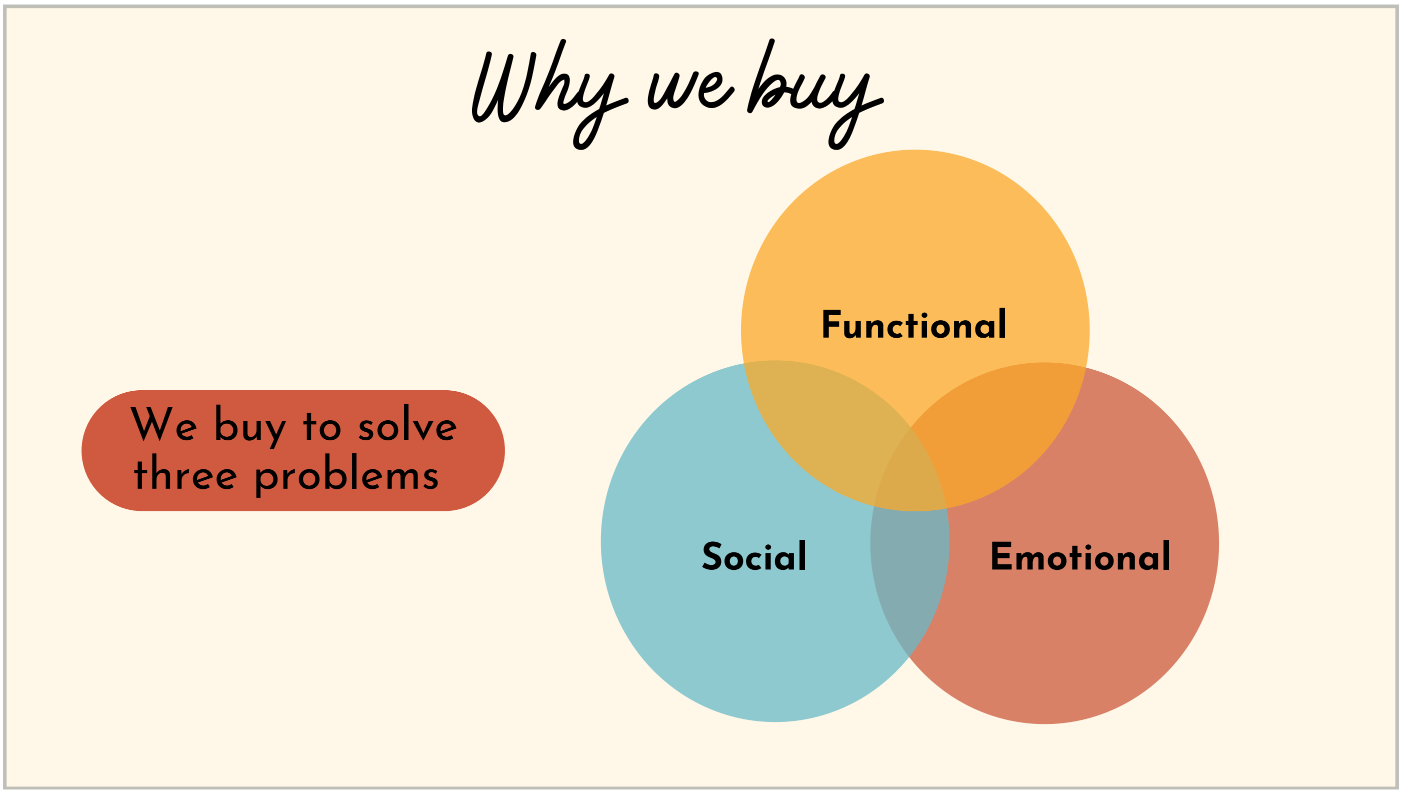
Forget the tactics. Forget the shiny objects and the marketing BS.

If you take one thing from today, make it this:
Everything you need to become a genuinely differentiated, stand-out brand is already out there.

It's inside the heads and on the lips of the people who've already bought from you.

Your customers are holding the answer. Most businesses just never think to ask.

Let me share something with you about your people....why they buy.



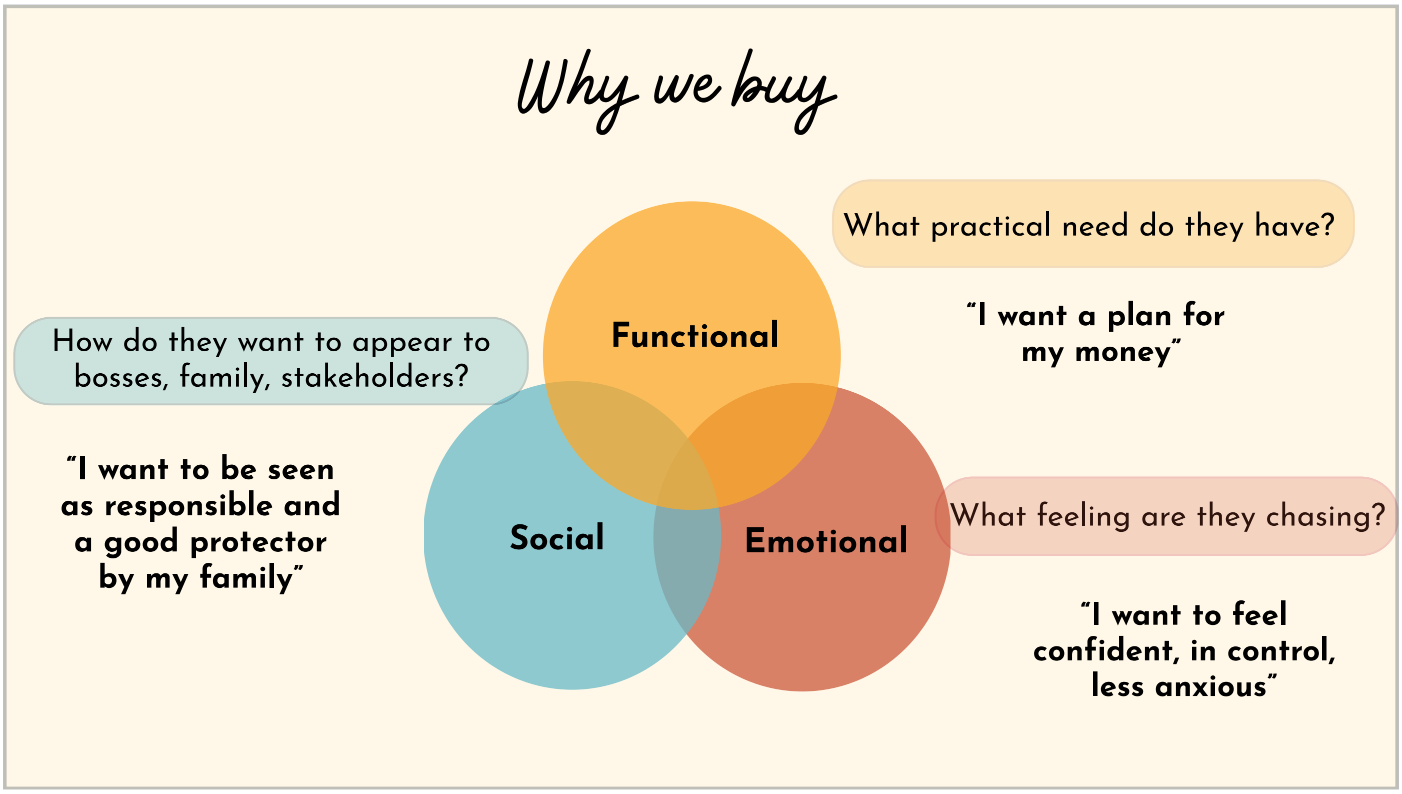
So let's go into the heads of our customers or donors
with a bit of buyer pscyhology.

You, me, everyone buy to solve three problems.

Functional - what do I actually need or what to do?
Emotional - how do I want to feel
Social - how do I want to be seen

Car example:
Functional - I want it to get me to places.
Emotional. I want to feel joy, freedom
Social - I want to be seen as cool, a little retro, fun

= mini



Think back to our financial advisors.

The ones with the identical homepages talking about tailored, expert, trusted advice. What are their customers actually buying?

Functionally — yes, a plan for their money.

But emotionally?

They want to feel confident. In control. Less anxious about the future. And socially? They want to be seen like a grown-up who's a good steward of money.

Now — not one of those homepages said any of that. They talked about what they do. Not what their clients feel.
That's the gap.

And that gap is where differentiation lives. The gap is where you start to become a green cup.

What clients actually say. . .

"I stopped feeling like this was something I should understand better but never quite got round to"

"It gave me confidence to enjoy life a bit more instead of constantly worrying"

"They made something overwhelming feel manageable"

"I feel like a more responsible grown-up, if I'm honest"

"It means I know we're doing the right thing, not just hoping for the best."

So how do I know this?

Because I did the research. I went and looked at reviews, testimonials, comments — the places where real clients talk about what working with a financial adviser actually meant to them.

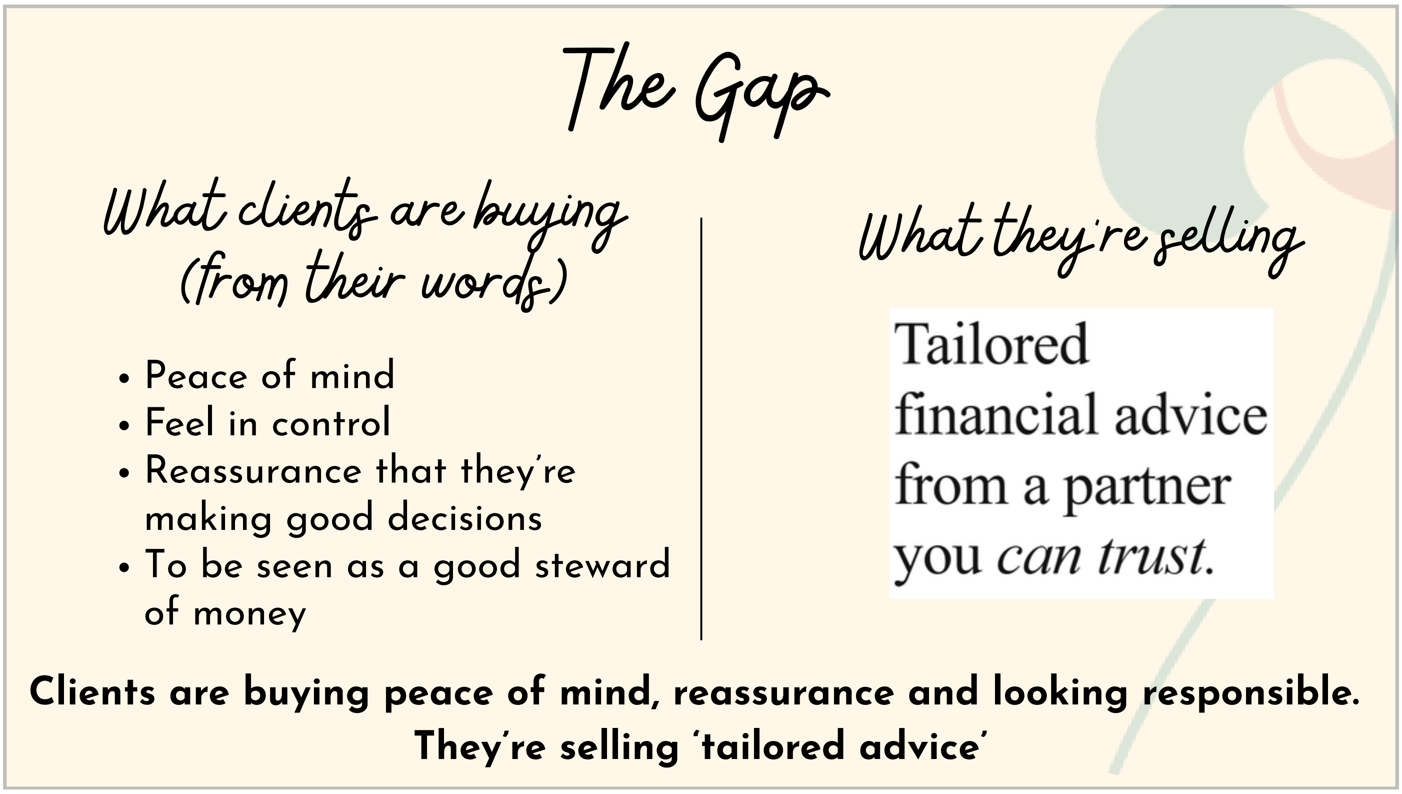
Nobody said "I chose them because of their tailored, expert advice."

That's because they assume those things already, to promote yourself as a financial adviser you have to be those things.

Becuase those things - we're expert, great customer service, customer-focused.

If you market yourself on these minumum standard, these table stakes - you will not stand out.
Clients already assume you're

which means they're not impressed or motivated by it.



So let's look at what we've just learned.

On the left — what clients are actually buying. In their own words.

Peace of mind.
Control.

Reassurance. Wanting to feel like a responsible adult.

On the right — what these businesses are selling.

"Tailored advice from a partner you can trust."

That's the gap.

And it's not a small gap. It's the space where price becomes the deciding factor, where you lose the enquiry to someone who just happened to feel more right.

And PS — a word about trust.

Please. For the love of all things communication.

Do not put "trust" on your homepage.

Not "trusted partner." Not "advisors you can trust." Not "built on trust." None of it.

Here's the thing about trust — you cannot argue your way into it.

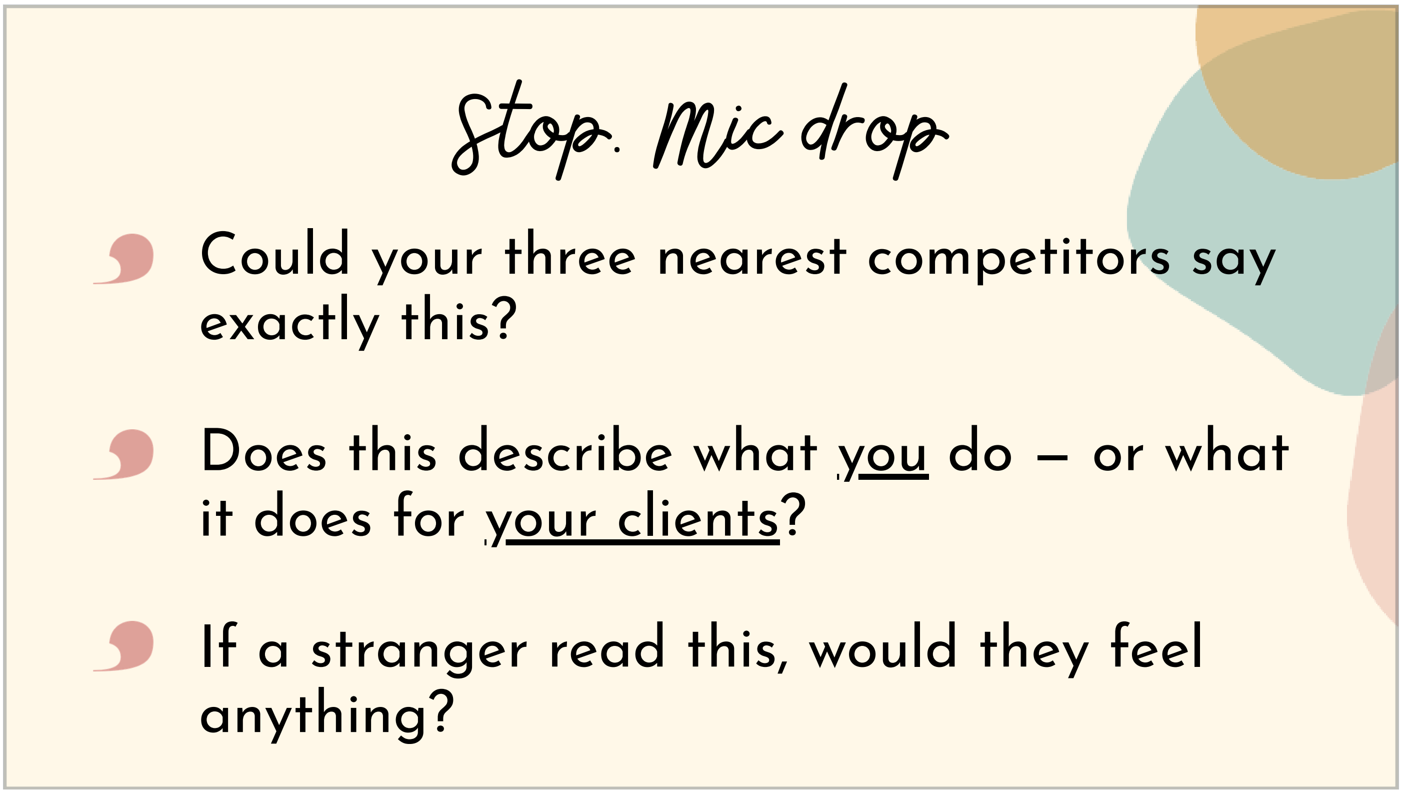
You cannot just announce it and have it be true. Trust it's not something you get to claim about yo urself.

It's earned. Slowly. Through evidence, through experience, through what other people say about you — not what you say about yourself.

So. Take a second.
Think about your own organisation. Not your competitors. Yours.

What are the real reasons people buy from you, hire you, donate to you, refer you?
(pause)

And is that on your homepage?



Right. Interaction time.

Get your phones out — yes, actually, I'm asking you to look at your phone. Go to your organisation's homepage. Not your LinkedIn, not your about page. Your homepage.

The thing a stranger sees first.
(pause while they do it)
Now I want you to ask yourself three questions.

Could your three nearest competitors say exactly this? Word for word?
Does it describe what you do — or what it does for your clients?
And the one that keeps me up at night on behalf of my clients — if a complete stranger read this, would they feel anything at all?
(pause)

Be honest. Nobody's checking your answers.

Whilst your mulling over this let me speak to the charities in the room.

Before I move on

— if you're from a charity, I see you.

And I suspect you're sitting there thinking: "Rach, we already do emotional communication.

That's literally what we do."

And you're right.
Some of you do.

But here's the thing. So does every other charity.

"Support us so we can eradicate this."
"Donate so we can help them."

The cause is emotional, yes. But the ask is still functional - it's still that top level

And when every charity in your space is leading with that - your blue cup.

The fundraising consultant Mark Phillips talks about something really interesting — donors don't just give because they care about a cause.

They give because giving does something for them.

Gratitude.

Relief.
A sense of control in a world that feels chaotic. That quiet reassurance that something good is still happening out there.

So the question for charities isn't "are we being emotional?" It's "are we being specifically, distinctively emotional in a way no other charity can claim?"

Hello charities

"...Over the first quarter of the twenty-first century branding will become a powerful force in charities. Major charities will capture our concern and interest and our money.

They will link us to individual cases and personalise it all.

This kind of commitment to charities will enable us to feel better about ourselves."

On Brand, Wally Olins

This is a quote from a book about fundraising and charity marketing - it was written in 2004 but I'd argue that the point is more relevant than ever.

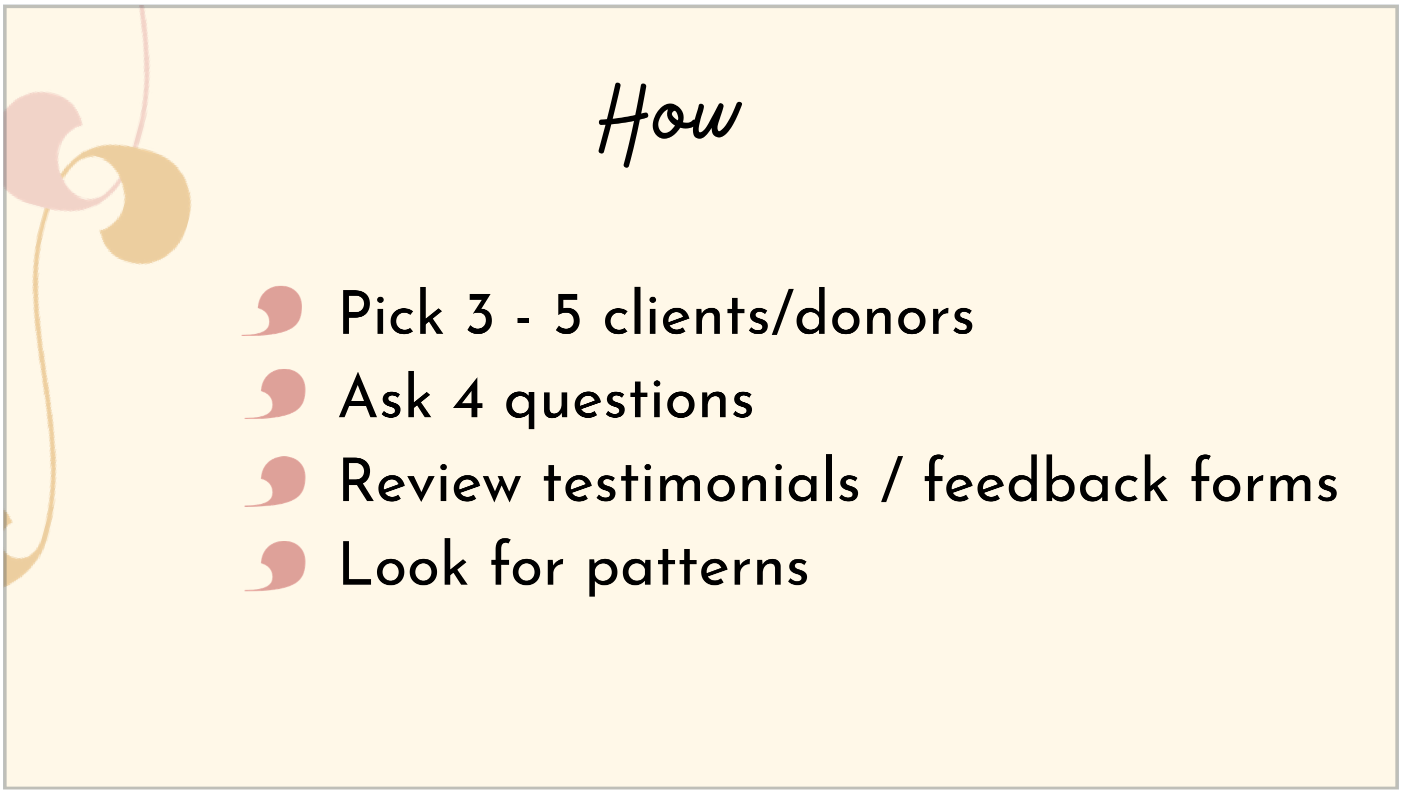
capture our interest, link us, personalise, make us feel better about ourselves.

And this is the point

we give money to feel something or say something,
we buy to feel or say something

So, how do you know what your donors or customers want to feel or become?

Simple. Talk to them



It's really flipping simple...

you don't need to send a 17-question survey.
Do not ask everyone.

Pick three to 5 great clients or donors have really good conversations, and listen properly.

Be a journalist
There's some much gold in testimonials/reviews

Look for themes - patterns.

But what are you going to ask them?

Ask. . .

- Why did you choose us?
- What nearly put you off?
- What changed for you after working with us / after giving?
- What do you tell other people about us?

These four questions are deceptively simple.

Why did you choose us?
This is your warm-up. You'll get some functional answers here — they found you online, someone recommended you, your price was right.

That's fine. But let them talk, they'll start to tell you about the issue they were trying to solve, or the need they have, and then, if you ask open-ended questions, like tell me more -

you'll get the impact of that concern - they'll get into the emotional stuff.

What nearly put you off?

This is the one nobody asks. This is where you find out what fears your marketing isn't addressing, what assumptions people bring before they even contact you, and what nearly cost you a client or donor before the relationship even started.

Example: when I asked this question the answer where:

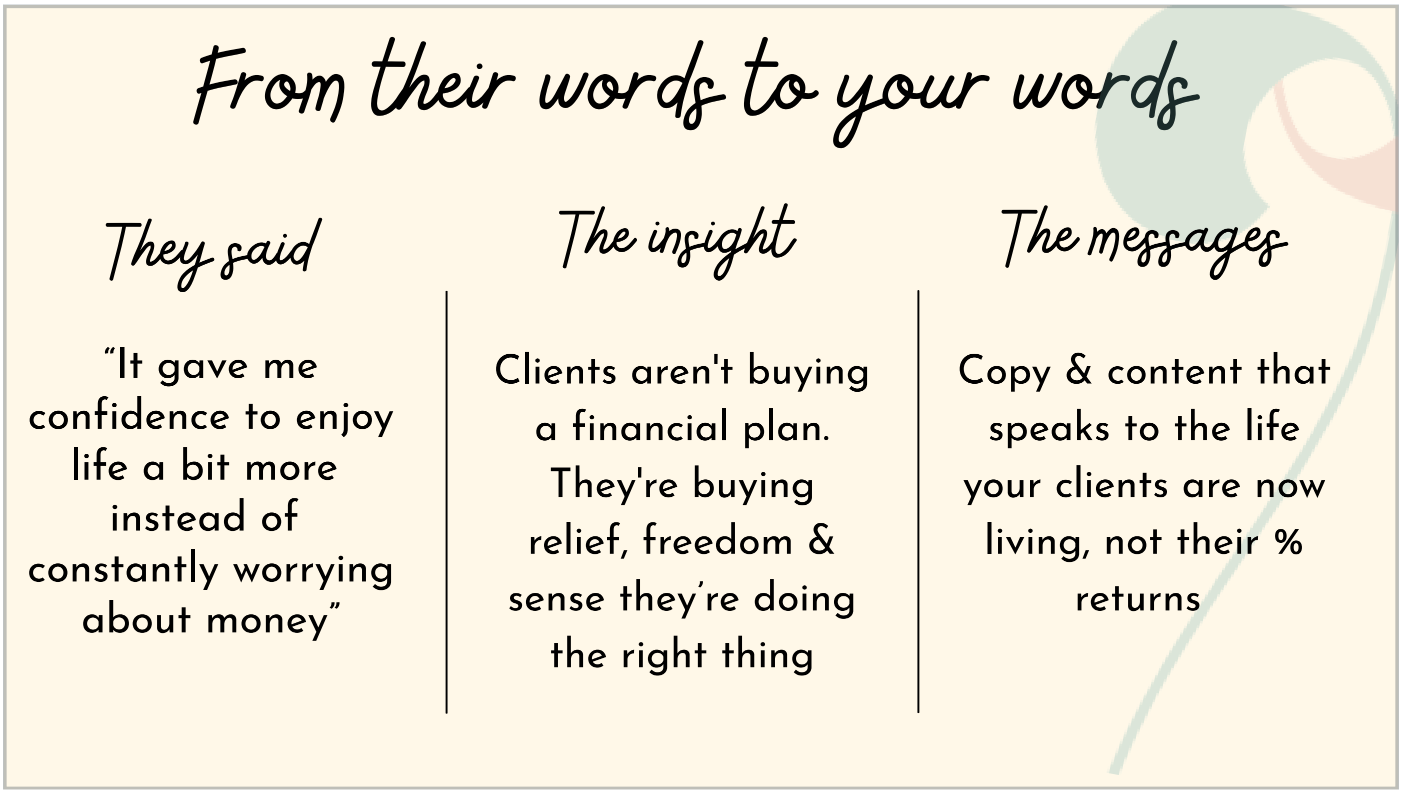
What changed for you after working with us?

This is where it gets emotional. You're not listening for "you were efficient" or "you hit the deadline."

You're listening for "I stopped worrying" or "I finally felt like someone got it" or "I could sleep at night." That's the real value.

What do you tell other people about us?

This is your referral language, handed to you. Don't write it yourself — borrow it from the people already saying it. It's specific, it's credible, and it will always be more powerful than anything you'd come up with in a brainstorm.



This is the best bit, this is the translation part of the process. you do the interviews, then look at the patterns -

or you do what I do and ask Claude to identify patterns and themes.

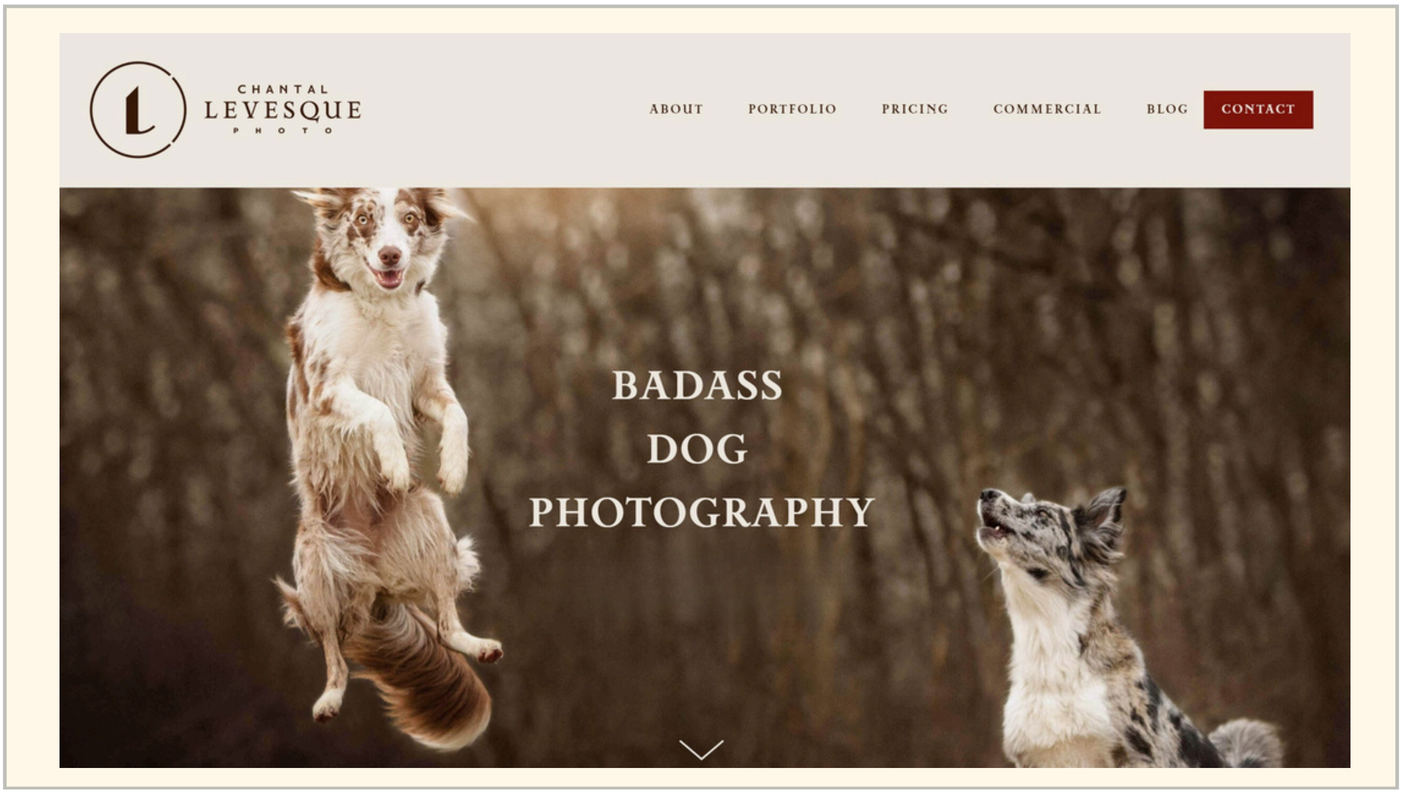
If this came to me, I'd be drafting case studies to show what those feelings are enabling - what relief, freedom and doing the right thing look like

that could be going part-time, retiring early, booked a dream holiday - yes we'll be talking about the

So how else do you use the insight gleaned.

Take another look at your homepage - does it reflect what you've heard in the interviews

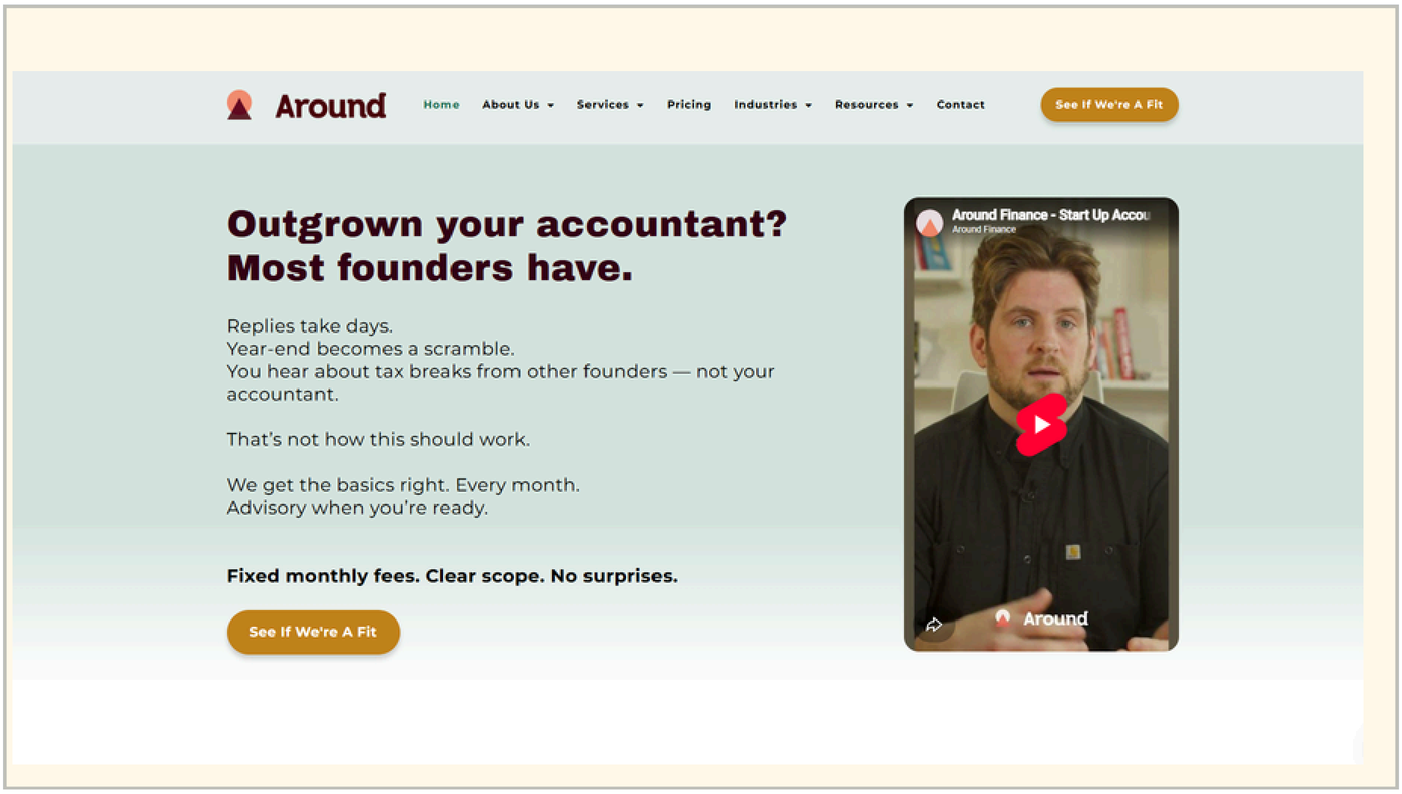
Let me give you some real life examples



This is Chantal
She was just another pet photographer in Canada -taking cutesy and nice pics of dogs,

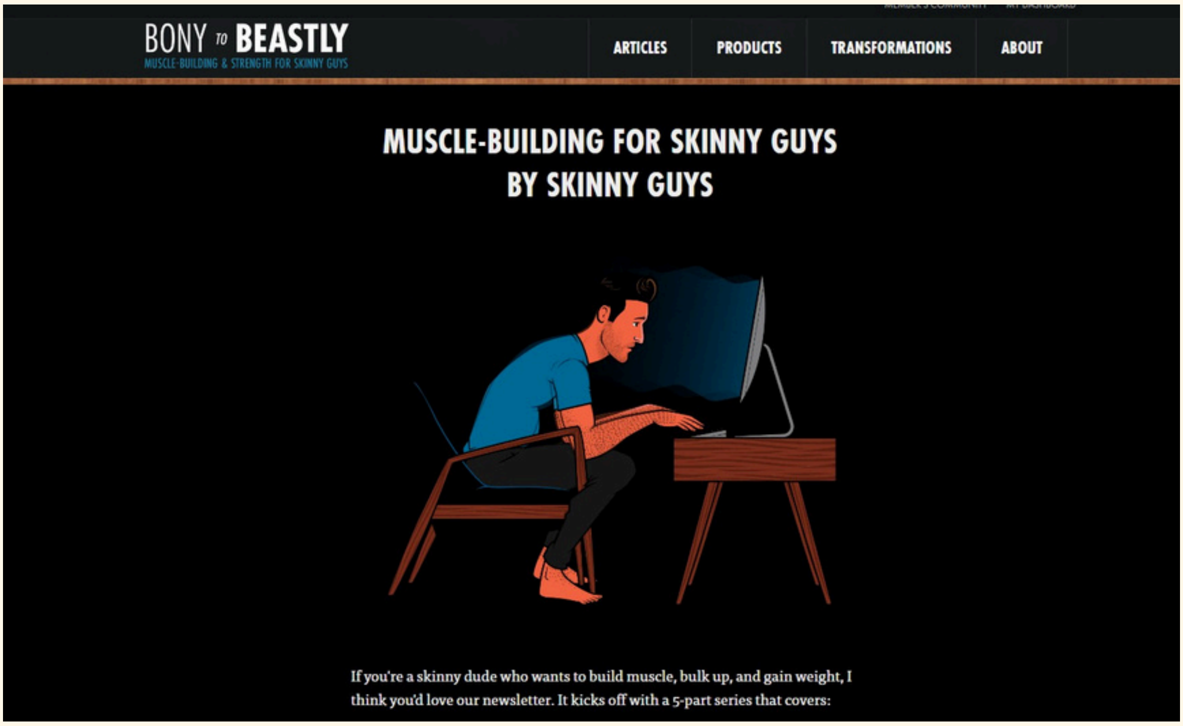
until she spoke to her best clients, the ones that referred her and they started talking about how you captured the spirit and energy of their

and as a owner of a bonkers dog,
they are a heck a lot of petpreneurs out there.



This is Around, an accountancy firm in northern ireland

Instead of being an accountant for small businesses, they have positioned themselves for accountant for ambitious founder/start-ups - who need a more hand-holding, regular



Bony to Beastly
Offer personal training or muscle-build products for guys with small-frames.

It's when the founder started working

What these thre have in common is that just by speaking to their clients, they have created a whole new category for themselves

Dog photography to dog photography for weird dogs

Not accountants for SMEs but accountants for fast growing start-ups who need regular check-ins

Staying attuned with what their market wanted or where already coming to them for - and doubling down on it.

No 2 - what else can you do?

Sharpen your intro or you social bio

I help business owners get to the heart of what makes them different — and turn that into marketing that
actually works.

What to mine from the interviews

Look for:

common worries
misconceptions
decision moments
obstacles
emotional triggers
questions clients asked before buying
what nearly stopped them

That is your content plan.

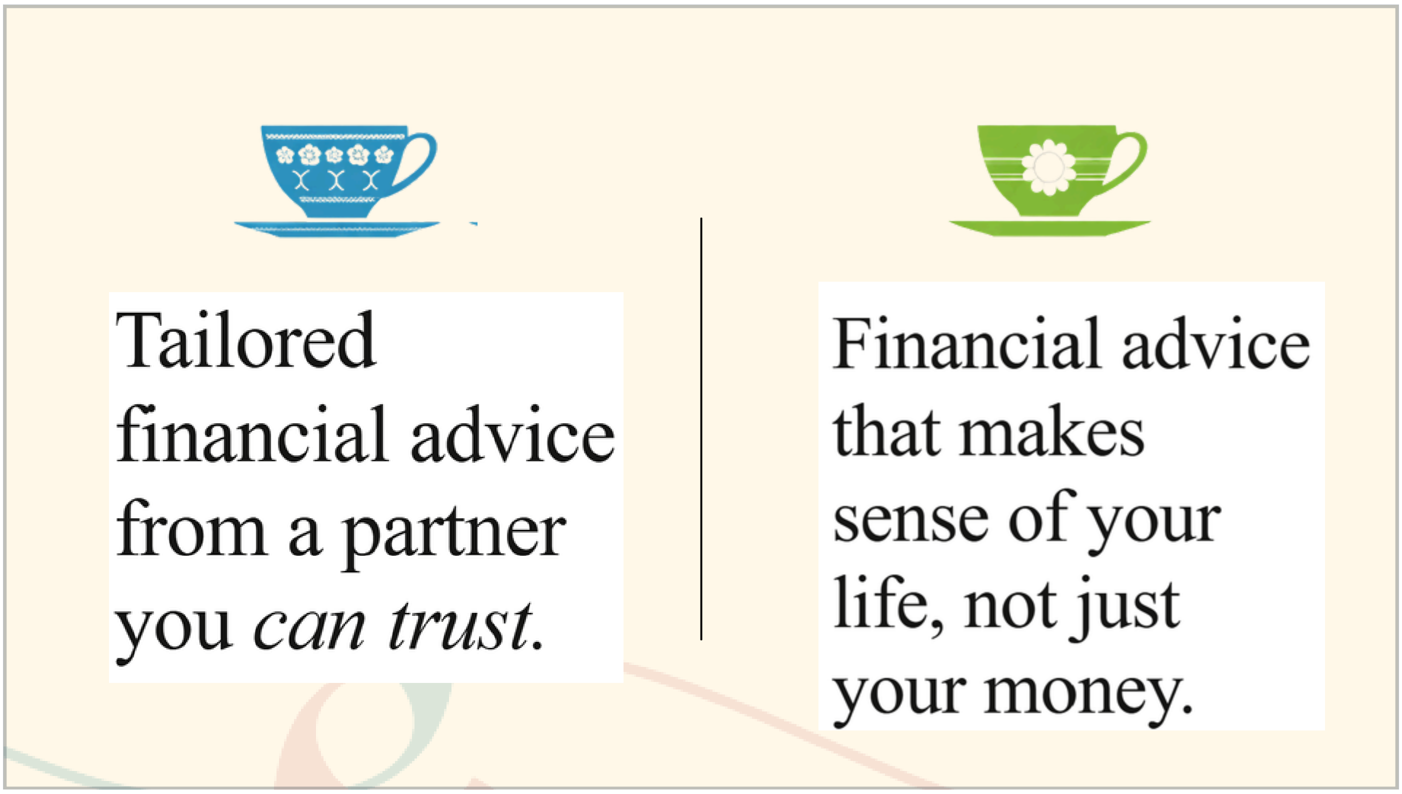
What are my clients worried about, wondering about, or trying to work out before they buy?

Your homework

- Book min. 3 coffee dates with your fave clients/donors
- Audit your marketing - website (homepage & about), content, social bios
- Play with your intro - instead of "I am……"

  You know how a lot of [audience] struggle to [problem]?
  It means they end up [cost or consequence].
  [I/we] help them [solve or achieve].
  So instead of [before state], they get [after state].

You know how a lot of people spend years worrying about money instead of enjoying the life they've worked hard for?
It means they end up making financial decisions based on anxiety, not clarity.



2nd one is implying trust, and a tailored appriach - if you're asking about their life, goals,

talk with ease

"Makes sense of your life, not just your money" is the one that earns it.

The word life is doing the heavy lifting — it signals that this firm sees you as a whole person, not a portfolio. The "not just your money" is the twist that makes it specific and slightly unexpected. That's what makes it green cup. It's the kind of line a competitor couldn't just copy and paste onto their site without it feeling wrong.
It also directly mirrors what the verbatims were telling you — clients weren't buying financial advice, they were buying a feeling of control over their life. That headline says exactly that without saying it.

The blue cup says: "Tailored financial advice from a partner you can trust."
The green cup says: "Financial advice that makes sense of your life, not just your money."
Same service. But one is describing what they do. The other is describing what changes for you.
One is written from the inside out. The other is written from the outside in.

Blue cups get chosen on price.
Green cups get chosen on fit, trust and feeling.

The difference? They know exactly who they are — and they're not afraid to show it.
Go be a green cup.