



Ideal customer profile

Worksheet

First you listen, then you write the profile, then you use it.

With a single example from start to finish: a neighbourhood cake shop.

Fill it in directly in the PDF: type in the boxes and tick with a click.

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Why build the profile

Ad platforms let you choose your audience by dry data: age, area, gender, a few interests. With those you decide who SEES the ad. The words in it and the angle you take with the person are yours to choose, and they decide whether the person stops or scrolls on.

You may be selling exactly what the person is looking for. If you don't say it in their words, they won't even notice you!

Cake shop example: it sells exactly what the mother ordering her child's birthday cake wants, a cake that tastes good and isn't too sweet. The website, however, says "unique creations made with premium ingredients". The mother sees the photo, doesn't recognise herself in the text and moves on, to the cake shop that talks to her about taste.

The profile you build here works for your words: what you choose to say, how you say it and from which angle, so the right person feels straight away that it's about them.

How to use the worksheet

The worksheet takes you through three parts. **First, you listen** to what your customers say. **Then, you write the profile** from what you heard. **Finally, you use it**, in three concrete changes.

You may have seen "avatar" worksheets, where you invent a name, a photo and a life story for your customer. Here you invent nothing. You start from what real customers say, and next to each answer you tick where it came from: you **heard** it from them or you **assume** it. At the end you count the assumptions, so you know how much of the profile is still a hypothesis.

How long it takes: about an hour to prepare the conversations, a few days to have them (15-20 minutes each) and another hour to put everything on paper.

The example that goes with you. At every step you'll find an example, always from the same business: a small neighbourhood cake shop. That way you see how the answers connect, from the first conversation to the text on the website.

PART 1

You listen

Step 1. Choose who you start from

The ideal customer is the one who fits what you do best and whom you'd like to meet more often. You start from a real one, so you don't write from imagination, then look for what they have in common with others like them. That's why you don't write their name anywhere.

Cake shop example: the mother ordering her child's birthday cake. She found the cake shop by asking in the neighbourhood mums' group, came in to taste a slice before ordering and has come back for every birthday since.

If you're just starting out and have no customers yet, talk to people who buy from your competitors. Your profile will then have more "assumed" ticks, which you check after your first customers.

Which customer do you start from, and why do they stay in your mind?

Step 2. The five conversations

You talk to five customers, starting with the one you chose. You ask for just a few minutes, on the phone or over a coffee, because a small request gets a "yes" more easily; once it gets going, the conversation usually lasts 15-20 minutes. A form sent by email gets polite, short answers, while on the phone people tell stories.

The message you use to ask for their time, to adapt to your business:

"Hi! I'm [your name] from the cake shop on the corner, where you ordered your child's birthday cake. I want to change a few things and I'd like to start from what my customers tell me. Do you have 5 minutes this week, on the phone or over a coffee here, on the house? I promise I'll just listen."

The questions. They all take the person back to a moment they lived through, because that way people tell stories; asked what they would like, they usually answer vaguely. Next to each one is an answer from the example, so you can see the register you want them to answer in. For every interesting answer, ask once more: "Can you give me an example?". If you want to record, ask first.

1. What brought you to us, and what was going on at the time? (Cake shop: "My daughter's birthday was coming up and I didn't want a cake from the place I'd used last year.")
2. Before you came to us, what else did you try and what didn't you like? ("A cake from a big cake shop, pretty, but so sweet the children left it on their plates.")
3. What annoyed you most while you were looking? ("That there was no way of knowing how it tasted until the day of the party.")
4. What were you afraid would go wrong? ("Embarrassing myself in front of my guests.")

5. Which options were you torn between, and what made you choose us? ("I was thinking of making it myself or getting one from the supermarket. I chose you because I could taste it first.")
6. What almost made you give up or put it off? ("The price. My husband said the supermarket was half the price.")
7. If a friend asked you about us, what would you tell her? ("That it tastes good, anyone can make a cake look pretty.")

Write the words down exactly as the person says them, even if they sound clumsy to you. Don't write their name or any details that could identify them.

Conversation	What they said, in their own words
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

What came up again and again? Reread your notes and underline what comes up with at least two people. This is usually the most valuable part of the whole worksheet.

Cake shop example: three out of five mothers mentioned, without being asked, a pretty but far too sweet cake bought elsewhere; four out of five said the tasting convinced them.

What came up again, and with how many people

Step 3. Your reviews and your competitors'

Read the reviews on Google and Facebook, yours and those of 2-3 competitors, especially the 1-3 star ones. That's where people say plainly what hurts and what they wished for.

Cake shop example, at a big cake shop in town: "It looked amazing, but it was far too sweet, the children left it on their plates." and "Shame you can't taste anything beforehand, you pay for it sight unseen."

Where I read it	What they complain about or praise	Their exact words
My reviews		
Competitor 1		
Competitor 2		
Competitor 3		

What does everyone promise, and what do customers still complain about? That's the gap you can fill.

Cake shop example: everyone promises spectacular cakes, and customers complain they're too sweet and that they buy them without tasting.

Your answer

Step 4. The questions that keep coming up

Comments, messages and phone calls. What keeps repeating shows you what people don't understand about what you sell, and which objections to answer before people raise them.

Cake shop example: "Can I taste before I order?", "Do you make cakes that are less sweet?", "How many days in advance do I need to order?".

The question, as people ask it
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

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PART 2

You write the profile

Now you put down on paper what you found out, layer by layer. Only what you underlined in your notes, meaning what you heard from at least two people, gets the **heard** tick. Everything else is **assumed**, until you confirm it.

Step 5. What hurts them

This is the real reason they buy. Most decisions are influenced by emotions, and reason only comes afterwards, to justify them, which is why this layer counts the most.

What hurts them, but they don't say out loud? Cake shop: the fear of embarrassing herself in front of her guests with a cake that looks lovely and is hard to eat.

☐ heard
☐ assumed

What have they already tried that didn't work? Cake shop: the cake from a big cake shop, good-looking, but too sweet.

☐ heard
☐ assumed

Which promises do they no longer believe? Cake shop: "premium ingredients", written on every shop window.

☐ heard
☐ assumed

What would make them say "That's exactly what I was looking for!"? Cake shop: tasting a slice before she orders.

☐ heard
☐ assumed

What makes them trust you? And lose that trust? Cake shop: she trusts what the other mums in the group say; she loses trust if nobody answers the phone in the week of the party.

☐ heard
☐ assumed

Step 6. How they decide

How quickly do they decide? Cake shop: she orders about two weeks before the party.	☐ heard ☐ assumed
On what criteria do they choose, in order of importance? Cake shop: taste, what the other mums in the group say, and only then looks and price.	☐ heard ☐ assumed
What holds them back at the last moment? Cake shop: the fear that she has left it too late.	☐ heard ☐ assumed
Who else has a say? Cake shop: the child chooses the theme, the husband looks at the price.	☐ heard ☐ assumed
What alternative do they really compare you with? Cake shop: a homemade cake, a supermarket one and the big cake shops in town.	☐ heard ☐ assumed

If you sell to businesses, note separately who uses what you sell, who decides and who pays. There, they are often three different people.

Step 7. The moment

What is happening in their life just before they look for you? Think about what breaks, what changes, what is coming up in the calendar. These moments tell you when to be present and what to talk about then.

Cake shop example: the child's birthday, a christening, the nursery end-of-year party, a visit from the in-laws.

The situation in which they come to need you	Source
1.	heard assumed
2.	heard assumed
3.	heard assumed
4.	heard assumed
5.	heard assumed

How ready are they to listen when they reach you for the FIRST time? Tick where they usually are:

they don't know yet that they have a problem

they know they have a problem, but not what solutions exist

they know the solutions and compare them (cake shop: this is the mother, comparing a homemade cake, the supermarket and the cake shops)

they've heard of you, but hesitate

they know you and are just waiting for the right moment

Step 8. Where you find them

Which networks and groups do they spend time in? Cake shop: the neighbourhood mums' group, on Facebook and WhatsApp.	☐ heard ☐ assumed
Where do they look before buying? Cake shop: she asks in the group, then looks at the Instagram accounts of the recommended cake shops.	☐ heard ☐ assumed

At what time and on which device? Cake shop: in the evening after 9 pm, on her phone, once the child is asleep.	☐ heard ☐ assumed

Where do they go every day, in the real world? Cake shop: the nursery, the market, the park by the block of flats.	☐ heard ☐ assumed

Step 9. How they talk

Put their words next to yours. The words in your column that don't appear in theirs are the first ones you change.

Cake shop example: the mums say "it has to taste good, anyone can make it look pretty", "like homemade", "not too sweet"; the website currently says "unique creations made with premium ingredients" and "gastronomic experience".

How THEY say it	How YOU say it now (website, ads)
Words that draw them in	Words that put them off

Step 10. Only now, the packaging

Age, area and occupation come last, on purpose. They help you choose where to show up.

Cake shop example: 30-40, lives in the neighbourhood, has 1-2 young children, works regular hours.

Approximate age
Area where they live or work

Occupation and working hours

Family situation

Count the assumptions. How many answers in Part 2 have the “assumed” tick? Each one is a question for your next conversation. My recommendation: if more than a third of your answers are “assumed”, have two more conversations before you use the profile.

How many “assumed” I have and what I check first



PART 3

You use the profile

Step 11. Your message in one sentence

Write what you say to this person, in their words, starting from what hurts them and what held them back.

Cake shop example: "The cake your guests will praise for its taste too, ordered in good time, so you don't have to worry in the week of the party."

Your message in one sentence

Now the test:

If they were standing in front of me, would I say this sentence exactly like that?

Did I use words I heard from customers?

Does it also answer what holds them back?

Did I read it to a customer, and was the reaction "yes, exactly"?

If you ticked them all, you can use the profile. If not, write it again, simpler and closer to their words.

Step 12. Three things you change this week

Choose three places, rewrite them based on the profile and note one number you track, to see whether the change worked.

Cake shop example:

What I change	How it is now	What it becomes
The website headline	"Unique creations made with premium ingredients"	"Birthday cakes for your child that taste good and aren't too sweet. Taste before you order."
A post	a photo of the cake in the window	an invitation to the Saturday morning tasting, where you taste the slices you choose your cake from
Where and when it shows up	random posts at lunchtime	a post in the neighbourhood group, with the admin's permission, in the evening after 9 pm, and a poster at the nursery, with the nursery's permission, three weeks before the end-of-year parties

The number tracked: how many birthday cake orders come in per month, before the changes and in the month after.

Your turn:

What I change	How it is now	What it becomes

The number I track, before and after

A note on personal data

The worksheet describes a type of customer without pointing to any particular person. That's why you don't write names, phone numbers, email addresses or other details that could identify someone. In a small business, where you know your customers by name, even a story told in too much detail can give someone away, so you keep the person's words and remove the details that identify them. Don't write sensitive data about real people either, such as health, religion, ethnic origin, political opinions or sexual orientation. And if you ever want to upload a customer list to an advertising platform, that's a different conversation: there you need a legal basis for processing their data.

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The cake shop profile, on one page

This is what the completed worksheet looks like, summed up on a single page. Keep it to hand when you write a text, choose a photo or plan an ad. Next to each line you'll see where it came from.

Who we started from: the mother ordering her child's birthday cake. She found us in the neighbourhood mums' group, tasted before she ordered and comes back for every birthday.

What hurts her: the fear of embarrassing herself in front of her guests with a cake that looks lovely and is hard to eat. It happened to her at a big cake shop, where the cake was too sweet. She no longer believes in "premium ingredients". (heard, 3 out of 5 mothers)

How she decides: she orders about two weeks ahead, by taste and by what the other mums in the group say. What holds her back is the fear that she has left it too late. The alternatives: a homemade cake, the supermarket, the big cake shops. (heard, 4 out of 5) The child chooses the theme, the husband looks at the price. (assumed, to check)

The moment: children's birthdays, christenings, nursery end-of-year parties, visits from the in-laws. When she first reaches us, she is already comparing the options. (heard, 5 out of 5)

Where we find her: in the neighbourhood mums' group, at the nursery, on Instagram in the evening after 9 pm, on her phone. (heard, 4 out of 5)

How she talks: "it has to taste good, anyone can make it look pretty", "like homemade", "not too sweet". She is put off by "premium", "gastronomic experience", "unique creations". (heard, 3 out of 5)

The packaging: 30-40, from the neighbourhood, 1-2 young children, regular hours. (heard, 5 out of 5)

The message: "The cake your guests will praise for its taste too, ordered in good time, so you don't have to worry in the week of the party."

Remaining assumptions: just one, the husband's role in the decision. To be checked in the next conversation.

This worksheet goes with the article "Ideal customer profile: how to build it, with a worksheet" on georgianamanolache.ro. I wrote about the psychology behind the buying decision in my book, "Tell Them What They Want to Hear".

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