

MODULE 03

FIND YOUR FIRST CUSTOMERS

Talk with prospective buyers and learn what their responses actually mean.

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FREE MODULE

Module 3 | Find and Approach Your First Customers

Inside an organization, people came to you because the work belonged there. An independent provider needs to locate buyers, understand the problem in their language, and earn a next conversation.

The result you will take away

Ten prospects or introducers, an honest invitation, a buyer-interview record and a next step supported by what people actually did.

1. Separate buyers from admirers

A buyer feels the problem and controls or influences spending. A practitioner sees the problem closely. An introducer can make a respectful connection. An admirer may genuinely respect you without having any need or budget. Do not confuse these roles.

NAME OR ORGANIZATION	ROLE	WHY RELEVANT?	FIRST STEP
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

2. Ask for a conversation, not an endorsement

To a warm contact: “I’m exploring a small independent service around [problem]. You’ve seen this kind of work. Could I ask how organizations handle it now, and where it costs the most? I’m trying to determine whether there’s real need before offering anything.”

To a new contact: “I’ve worked on [problem] for years. I’m investigating whether a short service could help [buyer type]. Would you be willing to describe how that problem shows up in your organization? This may become paid work, but I am researching the need first.”

To an introducer: “Do you know one person who deals with [problem] regularly and might be willing to tell me how it works? I’m asking for perspective, not an endorsement.”

My invitation, rewritten in my natural language

_____

3. Ask about the last real incident

Good discovery questions: When did this last happen? What actually broke? What did it cost? What workaround do you use now? Who would approve a paid fix? What would improve enough to justify outside help? What would prevent buying?

Do not mechanically run through a script. Listen and ask a follow-up when an example reveals a contradiction. If they say the problem is already handled well, record that too.

CONTACT / DATE	PROBLEM IN THEIR WORDS	CURRENT SOLUTION	BUYING ACTION / NEXT STEP
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

4. Measure evidence, not enthusiasm

Compliment: personal goodwill. Specific incident: evidence a problem occurs. Introduction: somebody uses social capital. Proposal request: a buying discussion. Agreed scope: purchasing intent. Collected payment and delivered result: one real transaction. The steps are different. None guarantees repeat business.

What did somebody do that exceeded polite encouragement?

_____

What contradicts my original service idea?

_____

5. Follow up as agreed, then stop

“Thank you for explaining [specific problem]. I heard that [consequence] matters most. You suggested [next step]. Would [date] be a reasonable time to revisit a narrowly scoped way to help? If not, I understand.”

Do not pursue people who decline. Respect confidential relationships, privacy rules, and applicable solicitation laws.

6. Decide whether there is enough to propose

People approached / actual conversations / buyer decision-makers

_____

A buyer who invited a scoped proposal, if any

_____

One new fact about timing or budget

_____



INDEPENDENT SECOND START

Household stop rule checked and next action dated

Fictional teaching example

Lena receives seven encouraging messages about offering leadership training. None involves a budget. She then speaks with three service-company owners. One says supervisors struggle with onboarding, another already handles it internally, and a third asks whether Lena can outline a paid onboarding review. The third conversation is meaningful buying evidence. It is still not a sale.

No guaranteed response rate. Use permission-based contacts. Do not use former employer or client lists without authorization.