

Small But Mighty Agency Podcast

Episode 93: How are successful niche agencies thinking and doing differently in the current economy?

Speakers: Audrey Joy Kwan

Audrey Joy Kwan

What strategies are working for agencies that are leaders in their niche? You say nitch, I say neesh. We're talking about the same thing: an agency that specializes in an industry. You can be specialized and not maximize what sets a successful niched agency apart from its counterparts, especially in a time when niches are competitive, too. I keep my ears close to the ground, and my eyes focused on what is working for agency owners right now. In this episode, I share the Secrets Behind the Success of Top Niched Agencies in our current economy. Whether you are a niche agency or a generalized agency, you'll walk away with valuable insights, actionable strategies, and a newfound appreciation for mastering an agency niche.

Tune in.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Welcome to the Small But Mighty Agency Podcast. If you're a marketer or consultant, or a creative on a journey of growth from solopreneur to agency owner, follow along because I pull back the curtains on the realities of growing and running a scalable, service-based business and building lean team. I'm your host, Audrey Joy Kwan, I know what it takes to build an agency, whether it's from solo to three, five or twenty. I've done it, including supporting an agency owner to sell and exit. I've coached and consulted over 120 marketers, creatives, and consultants. And I've been behind the scenes of seven figure businesses. I also have a master's degree in communications specializing in organizational development. All this to say, I know what it takes to grow lead and operate a multiple six, and seven figure small but mighty agency. And here on this podcast is where we'll dive right in.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Hey Friends,

The riches are still in the niches.

Maybe you're wrestling with what sets your agency apart, or you might have that locked in, but you're looking for new ways to stand out.

Right now, differentiating by specializing is not just an advantage but a necessity. Small but mighty agencies that serve niches are not just surviving; they're thriving.

In my last episode, I shared [The Top Niches for Agency Success in Our Current Economy](#). If you haven't listened to that episode, the link is in the show notes.

Do listen to that episode to learn the key factors that make certain niches more lucrative than others.

Today, we're looking at what niched agencies who are outperforming their more generalized counterparts are doing differently.

For one thing – they're not scattering their efforts trying to be everything to everyone; niche agencies use laser focus to their advantage.

For example, my client, who owns an events agency, identified a granular niche in writing retreats for tenured university professors. Super niche, right?

Here's why her super niche agency is thriving: Tenured professors have to publish to get grants and prestigious accreditations, which in turn make the schools look good and give the school more credibility. So, the universities provide funding for professors to do this type of work; in other words, the budget for writing retreats doesn't get cut; it's seen as essential.

Her events agency is absolutely thriving. Why? Because they have mastered the art of niche marketing.

Her target audience—university administrators and tenured professors—is crystal clear. Her agency deeply understands the university's pain points.

As a result, her agency has a track record of nailing its marketing messaging and then solving the pain for universities in a repeatable way, and that has helped position her business as a go-to authority in its industry.

What truly sets their lead generation apart is their ability to swiftly connect with decision-makers in their industry. Every university has multiple different departments, so she can go deep into one university in addition to going wide, in other words, to other schools. That's how they leverage the extensive but focused network they've created to get specific referrals and connections, which shortens her sales cycles because she's rarely starting cold.

And let's not forget the power of reputation. Even though they are a small agency, their specialization opens doors because they are known for doing something specific well.

Let's illustrate the point with this comparison:

You can be an agency owner who has a gigantic key ring filled with different keys stacked side by side. It's impressive to look at because, on the outside, it appears you have all this experience serving many different audiences, but when it comes time to open doors, it actually takes you longer to open them. You fumble through a series of keys before you find the right fit.

On the other hand, you can be the agency owner with one master key to a select door. You don't fumble around when you're trying to open doors because your master key fits quickly every single time.

So, what are the agency owners with the master key to a niche doing right now to improve their lead generation results?

First , they get curious and stay curious

2024 is not 2023, obvious yet not obvious. What you know about your client in 2023 is already old news. Different niches are changing rapidly, whether it's the economic climate or culture.

It's safe to say that most agency owners who are niche leaders keep their ears to the ground by getting out there and having more conversations to see what pivots are happening. A powerful question to ask: What's changing for you this year?

All change brings opportunities and thriving means identifying new opportunities in your niche. If you're an OG (or originator) in your niche, now is not the time to think, "This is how the niche has always been," because, as this hockey saying goes It's time to skate to where the puck is going instead of where it is.

Agency owners who are leaders in a niche know that in times of uncertain change, it's time to listen instead of shout.

To sum up in one clear sentence, keep your ears open and listen more than you talk. Many businesses are trying to shout louder to compete with all the other shouting. Instead Stop adding to the noise; start listening closely to your niche.

Second is getting back to basics

The sharp increase in online marketing has been real for the past five years.

For example, there was a time when you could plug money in pay-per-click advertising and see such a great return on investment that it didn't make sense not to keep feeding the machine.

Times are changing. Digital marketing channels are not only more competitive, meaning your dollar doesn't stretch as far, but online privacy is tightening up, making it harder to find your audience.

Agency owners who are leaders in their niche and have effective lead generation *aren't* going back to the basics; they simply haven't forgotten the basics of lead generation outside of the digital world - and that is, network, partner and nurture.

Network, partner and nurture are playing the longer game. While everybody wants the short version, you get back to the basics when a market has longer sales cycles.

Niche agency owners have the advantage when it comes to getting back to the basics. They can save time because of their reputation in a focused industry.

Third, is focusing on lifetime value

New isn't always better.

Most agency owners know that acquiring new customers can be 5 to 25 times more expensive than retaining existing ones.

Agency owners who are leaders in their niche haven't brushed this aside. They continue to find opportunities to increase the lifetime value of their clients by investigating new cross-selling and up-selling opportunities.

A cross-sell is a complementary or related service that solves alternative pain points. For example, you could sell a marketing strategy and then cross-sell a sales team consultation.

An upsell is an upgraded or premium version of the service. For example, you sell a marketing plan and then add on quarterly marketing advisory services.

Increasing the lifetime value of your client is about adding value (not more of things they don't need), which links up well with getting curious and the benefits of listening to your niche instead of trying to shout into the void.

And number four is creating experiences

People want more experiences. Anyone can turn on YouTube now and get a talking head that shares expertise.

Sharing thought leadership in a niche still has tremendous value because it supports visibility, but when information becomes more accessible, the baseline for what is considered exceptional changes.

Agency owners who are niche leaders are creating more unconventional experiences for lead development.

Here is a very smart example from a friend and business owner. Michelle noticed a theme with her prospects: They were getting invited to be speakers at industry events, roundtables, and interviews, and they were nervous about the speaking opportunities.

Rather than dismissing this theme as unrelated to making the sale, she decided to be of service. She started a Toastmasters Club for her deal prospects and made it an invite-only club, extending the invitation to 50 prospects.

The result: By doing something different, she was able to capture the attention of the right prospects and create an opportunity to nurture the relationship while being of service and building authority.

To create an out-of-box experience that captures the interest of your ideal clients, the key is a deep understanding of the challenges and pain points, and before you dismiss a pain point as unrelated to what you want to sell them, ask what is possible to create a mutually beneficial win.

There you have it.

The riches are still in the niches but leading in a niche also requires distinct actions in our current economy.

If you want to lead in your niche in our current economy, you need to be curious and adaptable, get back to the basics with lead generation, focus on lifetime value, and create unconventional experiences.

This is about what is working now instead of what has worked before, and as you might see, I'm practicing what I preach by keeping my ears close to the ground, my fingers on the pulse, and my eyes to the future to share insights contextual to RIGHT now with you.

If you want to have an agency that is a niche leader, I'm here for it. If you want to grow your agency without burning out and with the right strategic systems and leadership, we have a track record of helping you make that happen. You know where to find me; click the link in the show notes.

I'll see you on the next one.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Hey, there. Thanks for hanging out with me at the Small But Mighty Agency Podcast. If you enjoyed this episode, it would mean the world to me if you hit the follow or subscribe button in your podcast app and share it with a friend and I'll see you in the next one.