

# the solopreneur zone

*the resource place for solo-entrepreneurs*

## Niche, Specialty, Brand...Oh My!

If you've ever felt overwhelmed about niche-ing, specializing or branding your business, you aren't alone. It seems like there are so many gurus out there telling you *the* way to make your business stand out. One of the greatest sources of confusion is the difference between a niche and a specialty, and whether you need just one or both. And then, where does the brand fit in the picture?

### Do I Have to Have a Niche, Specialty or Brand?

The answer is -- you don't. Remember, this is your business. You can do whatever you want. If clients find you without any effort on your part, you probably don't need to do anything to make your marketing easier. But if you find that you spend a lot of time marketing, but aren't seeing the results you want, you may want to take the easier route and narrow down who your target market is and what you offer it.

### Terms Don't Matter

Many Solopreneurs get stuck trying to determine the difference between a niche and a specialty. In my opinion, the term you use is much less important than how clearly you define who you work with and what you work with them on. The key is to be so clear yourself about what you do, how you do it, and who you do it for that everything you do to market your business is in line with your clearly defined target market.

### Your Niche -- The Who

A niche is the *Who*. It's who you provide your service to. A niche can be as broad as "women" or as narrow as "women returning to the job market after having children to start a catering business". The key is to clearly state who you work with.

A niche is only helpful if you can reasonably find and communicate with your chosen group. That's why saying, "I work with anyone on anything" doesn't work -- how do you find anyone to work with them on anything? If your niche is aspiring female dog-trainers, you'll probably find an organization or trade magazine that your target market is affiliated with. This means you'll be able to reach your intended audience instead of putting an ad in the local paper and mentioning that you work with a specific target market.

### Your Specialty -- The What

A specialty, on the other hand, is the *What*. What exactly do you do for your target market? Do you offer bookkeeping services for home-based businesses, or do you specialize in websites or graphic design? If your niche is very broad, such as small businesses, you'll probably want a more narrow specialty. If your niche is very specific, you may not need a specialty at all. Again, the goal is to narrow down the number of prospects you need to get in front of to find your ideal clients.

### Your Brand -- Who You Are

Your brand is about who *you* are. A brand is simply a perception of you and your business in the eyes of your target market (and anyone who knows you). You have a brand even if you haven't put any effort into creating one. However, you have the ability to focus how you project your brand so that it resonates with your ideal clients.

Your brand is the part of your business that is unique to you. Even if you provide the same services as thousands of other Solopreneurs, no one else is uniquely like you. No one else provides their service in exactly the same way you do.

This is the part where you get to be who you really are and flaunt your quirks. People buy from people. Always have and always will. If you hide behind a persona that you think your clients will find impressive, rest assured, they'll see right through it. If you proudly share who you really are, you give your target market something to relate to.