

# Own Your Niche

## Action Steps to Owning Your Niche

Presented by:



WOMEN  
ONLINE

### Identify Your Purpose

What is the goal in increasing your presence online? What kind of person are you talking to? Think about your brand in the narrowest sense and identify your target audience. The web caters to niche players: from strong online communities of people who like something niche (knitting blogs, for example) to **eBay** or **Etsy.com**, where you can find any item imaginable, digital media allows experts to reach a very targeted audience.

### Learn the Landscape, then Set Yourself Apart

If you don't already know, do some research to identify the "big fish" in your field. Who is their target audience? What specific tactics are they using to promote their brand? Think outside of the box to ensure that you are reaching out to your audience in a creative and forward-thinking way. What are other players doing well? What could be done better? Use this research as a learning tool to enhance your strategies. The key to success here is to identify where your passions intersect with what's missing.

You can begin to learn the online landscape of your chosen field just by Googling some key terms that are relevant. If you're a speech therapist in Boston, for example, Google "speech therapist Boston" and see who pops up. Does anyone blog about speech therapy in Boston or nationwide? Who is writing content, Tweeting, or running LinkedIn Groups about speech therapy? Follow these people.

It is also important to interact and form relationships with your colleagues and leaders in your field. Starting these conversations can be as easy as retweeting an insightful tweet, commenting regularly on an active blog related to your work, or engaging others in an online group or forum. You can also invite friends in your field to write a guest post for your blog or invite a few colleagues to participate in a blog roundtable where they each share their perspective on a particular topic. Involved in media or politics? Organize a live tweet of an upcoming speech or event. Use a hashtag so others can participate too.

### Blogging and content creation

Updating your website or blog regularly will lead to more accurate search results by increasing your online presence. However, quality is more important than quantity. Updating your content simply for the sake of updating will bury your best and most important updates, which you want to showcase. Facebook and Twitter are the best places to post quick updates and interact on a personal level with your audience. Use your website or blog for posting the most important information you wish to expand upon.

### What Features Your Blog or Site Should Have

Plug-ins are like miniature programs you can easily install onto your website or blog. Plug-ins optimize the user experience, making it easier for users to share content, comment, and interact with you and other users. Popular plug-ins integrate social media into your site or blog, manage and encourage commenting, and analyze the ways in which visitors use your site.

Third party applications offer well-designed systems for comment management on your blog or website. Applications like **Disqus** and **IntenseDebate** not only create a space for your visitors to post comments, but integrate social media platforms like Twitter into commenting.

You can also allow users to enter an email address to subscribe to updates or a newsletter. Sending out a monthly or quarterly newsletter is a great way to update members of your audience who might not visit your website regularly, but still want to be kept in the loop.

There are several online services and templates you can use to create email newsletters. Your subscribers likely receive similar update emails from other organizations, so it's important your email contain relevant content that is easy to read quickly. Sites like **CampaignMonitor** allow you to choose from a variety of templates and then fill in text and content yourself.

It's also important to think about how people will keep current with your content. People don't so often visit websites anymore. Creating an RSS feed, email newsletter, or using your Twitter feed to "push" content to people is important.

### Create Content

Once you know the landscape, think about what's missing. How can your expertise and voice add to the conversation or fill any gaps? Set yourself apart from the crowd! You work hard to deliver the best results – now make sure people know it. Use social media like Facebook and Twitter to communicate directly with your target audience. Tell your story: What makes you different from others in your field? How does your unique approach set you above the rest?

Remember, though, to be a good host at the party. Don't just promote yourself and your opinions. Acknowledge others, respond, and foster relationships. It's good karma and good business.

### Start Small

If you aren't quite ready to jump in, you can test out the waters on a smaller scale. Maybe you don't want to commit to having your own blog or site just yet – and that's fine. Check out local online publications and volunteer to write a weekly or monthly column related to your work. You can also look for online publications related to your field and volunteer to write there. The options for marketing yourself online are nearly endless, and that can be daunting. The key is to find what parts work best for you, your goals, and your lifestyle.