

**Marketing and Sales for NOVA Web Development**

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Our *Principles of Marketing* textbook begins its first chapter by quoting a definition of marketing from the American Marketing Association as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (The University of Minnesota, 2010, p. 2). In the first chapter of our *eMarketing* textbook, by contrast, we read that "Ultimately, the aim of any type of marketing is to keep customers and stimulate sales in the future" (Stokes, 2013, p. 5). I found this second quote, and our assigned readings for this week in general, to be demoralizing, since they forcefully take the viewpoint of sales and marketing as an "ethical free zone" where the only thing that matters is winning "the game" by maximizing profit. I quoted British legal scholar and blogger Paul Bernal in a paper last week (Elkner, 2020), but it bears repeating here. "Focusing on the price makes it easy to miss the real value – and can turn what should be complex decisions based on combinations of ethics, morals, culture, empathy, philosophy and understanding of society into much simpler *games* based on numbers and calculations" (2014). I was struck, in some of our readings about how to determine price in a market strategy, how the writing sounded a lot like what sports columnists write when they analyze sporting events. The market is not a sporting event, however, and the things that transpire there are not value neutral games, but rather the determinants of the material quality of people's lives.

All that said, if NOVA Web Development aims to be a viable business under the current social reproductive relationships, which are the "rules of the game" for the present at least, it will have to find a way to enter the currently existing market and engage in exchange of value through the currently legally sanctioned procedures. While I found last week's readings generally

unhelpful in this regard, one of the papers I evaluated mentioned a framework for thinking about market resource allocation that I found very helpful indeed. It mentioned dividing up marketing strategies into one of four categories: leader, challenger, follower, or niche. I found this idea intriguing, but the citation for it was to a textbook to which I could not get ready access. Curious to know more, I did a web search and found an article by a blogger named Krikor titled "Leader, Challenger, Follower, Nicher". In this short yet delightful presentation of the concept, complete with a graphic organizer, Krikor points out that a correct understanding of product positioning is a crucial ingredient to success in the market which should never be left to chance. He divides the market for segments along two axes related to managerial resources, quality and quantity. At the high end of both is the market leader, and low end on both is the follower. The nicher, appealing to a small market segment missed by the other categories, has a high quality but low quantity, by virtue of limited resources, managerial position (2011).

I immediately recognized that becoming a successful nicher is exactly what NOVA Web Development wants to do in the marketplace. Our operating agreement states that "we want to make a living, not a killing", and that "we want to help build the world we want to live in" (Limited Liability Company Operating Agreement of NOVA Web Development, LLC, 2019). What we seek is sustainable access to a particular niche of the market consistent with our goals and aspirations. Our marketing campaign, if we agree to call it that, should focus on targeted outreach to the specific niche of the market we hope to search, educational institutions, labor unions, and progressive non-profit and community organizations. We want to have healthy, happy relationships with our business partners based on shared vision, mutual caring and trust.

Such relationships come from being legitimate actors toward realizing the shared vision, and treating people with caring and honesty.

At present we have extremely limited relationships with business partners, but the few we do have are characterized by the trust, caring, and mutual respect we seek. The challenge is to expand those relationships until we have enough useful work to do to provide for our sustainable livelihoods. In expanding our network it is shared vision that provides the best path forward, and toward that end we have been developing a web platform, LibreOrganize, designed to be a membership management and communication resource of use to the communities we hope to service (LibreOrganize, n.d.). As for our marketing and sales budget, we will need a paid member to take on this role in order to become a viable business. Until now, it has been done largely by the unpaid labor of our founder. That will have to be changed by the end of August, 2020, after which our unpaid laborer will be unavailable, if we hope to stay afloat. What we need is a single cooperator whose task is to manage both our sales and marketing, keeping our books, responding to communications from prospective partners, and following up with billing.

I will end by noting that I am familiar with two other tech cooperatives similar to what we hope to become, C4Tech & Design (2020) and Palante Technology Cooperative (n.d.), both of which have been around for awhile, Palante since 2010 and C4Tech since 2002. Cooperators share a vision for a more just world, and seek to work together, not an easy thing to do under the present regime of cutthroat, dog-eat-dog, neo-liberal economic relations. C4Tech is located in New Orleans, and Palante seems centered mainly around New York City. It appears that there is space within our niche in the D.C. metro area where NOVA Web Development plans to focus for

a social justice oriented, democratically owned and operated cooperative building custom web applications. That is our plan and our hope in any case.

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