

# Niching Down: Finding Your Freelance Speciality — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a committed niche decision. Work through each section as you finish the matching module, and by the end you will have a shortlist of scored candidates, a sized market, a tested positioning statement, a log of real validation signals, and a dated 90-day transition plan. Use the templates to score candidates, draft your positioning, and track that your validation produces real signals before you commit.

## Why Niching Wins and What a Niche Really Is

Understand why specialists out-earn generalists, learn the three niche axes, and run your ideas through the profitable-fit-defensible lenses.

### Exercise: Name the Cost of Being a Generalist

Be honest about where staying broad is hurting you. Use these prompts to make the pain of the generalist trap concrete enough to motivate a real decision.

- When a prospect compares you to other freelancers, what is the only lever they currently have, and how often do you lose on price?

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- What is the last piece of work people kept asking you for, even though you did not advertise it?

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- If you became 'the person who does X for Y', who would suddenly refer you that nobody refers today?

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- What is the real reason you have avoided niching so far, and is it a money fear or a comfort fear?

### Worksheet: Classify Your Ideas by Niche Axis

For each early idea, decide whether it is a vertical (audience), horizontal (service), or hybrid niche, and note the trade-off you are accepting. Use the Niche Scorecard template tab to record these.

Idea phrased as audience plus service

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Axis (vertical / horizontal / hybrid)

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Why this axis fits my experience or goals

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Main trade-off (e.g. easy to target but small, or large but scattered)

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Unfair advantage I have here (industry past, network, insider language)

### Checklist: Three-Lens Readiness Checklist

- I can explain why specialists charge more and sell faster than generalists
- I understand the difference between vertical, horizontal, and hybrid niches
- Each candidate I am considering is phrased as a who plus a what
- I have judged each candidate against profitable, fit, and defensible

[ ] I accept that niching is a launchpad I can expand from, not a permanent cage

## Generating and Scoring Niche Candidates

Mine your history for candidates, score them objectively, and size the market so the niche you pick is both winnable and big enough to live on.

### Worksheet: Candidate Generation From Your Past

List at least 10 to 15 candidate niches, drawing first from your own history where you have leverage. Phrase each as audience plus service plus the painful problem. Do not judge them yet.

Industries and roles I know from the inside (including pre-freelance)

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Best past clients I enjoyed and that paid well, and the pattern among them

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Recurring requests people make even when I do not advertise the service

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Hobbies and communities where I already speak the language

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Candidate list (each as: [service] for [audience] who [painful, expensive problem])

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### Exercise: Score and Rank Your Candidates

Rate your top candidates 1 to 5 on demand, budget, fit, competition, defensibility, and access, then weight by what matters to your situation. Use the Niche Scorecard template to total and rank. Carry the top two or three forward.

- Which two criteria deserve the highest weight for you right now: income-fast (demand, access) or long-game (defensibility, fit)?

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- After weighting, which candidate scores highest, and did it surprise you versus your gut favourite?

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- On your top candidate, which single criterion scored lowest, and is it a dealbreaker or a fixable weakness?

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- Which comfortable candidate scored poorly enough that you should drop it?

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### Worksheet: Market-Size Reality Check

Work backward from your income goal to clients-needed, then estimate the niche population from public sources, and confirm you only need a tiny, reachable fraction.

Annual income target

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Average project value

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Projects needed per year (target divided by project value)

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Distinct new clients needed after repeat and referral work

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Estimated niche population (LinkedIn counts, association members, directory size)

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Fraction of the niche I need to reach annually

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Reachability note (list, community, publication, or search I can use to find them)

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### Checklist: Selection Checklist

- I generated at least 10 candidates phrased as who plus what plus problem
- I scored each candidate on all six criteria and weighted them
- I carried my top two or three forward, not just my comfort pick
- I sized the market and confirmed I need only a small, reachable fraction
- If a candidate was too thin, I widened the axis rather than abandoning it

## Positioning and Messaging Your Niche

Turn your chosen niche into a one-line positioning statement and carry it consistently across every place a prospect meets you, without cutting off income.

### Worksheet: Positioning Statement Builder

Draft at least three versions of your positioning statement using the formula: I help [audience] achieve [outcome] through [service], without [the fear or objection]. Sharpen the differentiator against the real alternative the buyer is comparing you to. Use the Positioning and Transition template.

Audience (specific group from your niche)

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Outcome (valuable result in their terms, not your deliverable)

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Service or method (named simply)

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Differentiator or objection you remove

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The real alternative buyers compare you to (generalist, DIY, in-house)

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Version 1 of the full statement

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Version 2 of the full statement

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Version 3 of the full statement

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### Checklist: Brand Alignment Checklist

- My LinkedIn headline and About lead with the positioning statement, not a job title
- My website hero names the audience and outcome in the first line
- My portfolio leads with niche-relevant work, each with a short results note
- My verbal and email introduction is the new one-liner
- Every profile (marketplaces, directories, social bios) repeats the same promise

### Exercise: Plan How to Niche Without Losing Income

Decide how you will market the niche publicly while still accepting good adjacent work privately during the transition, so the fear of turning away money does not block you.

- What is your split (for example 70-30) between niche effort and opportunistic paying work for the next quarter?

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- Which adjacent work will you still accept, and will you raise its price so it either pays well or self-selects away?
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- Where will legacy or off-niche work live so it does not dilute your public position?
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- If after six focused months the niche is clearly not working, which adjacent audience or service would you pivot to?
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## Validating and Committing to Your Niche

Prove the niche with cheap real-world experiments, execute a dated 90-day transition, and measure whether it is working before you expand.

### Worksheet: Validation Experiment Plan

Choose at least two cheap experiments to run on your top candidate, and record the signal each produces. Capture the exact language prospects use, not just yes or no. Use the Validation Tracker template to log results.

Outreach: number of personalized messages sent and replies received

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Interviews: people in the niche spoken to and their level of urgency and budget

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Job-board scan: how often the work is posted and at what budgets

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Community immersion: groups joined and the recurring complaints I heard

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Paid pilot: niche project(s) landed and whether buyers paid

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Exact phrases prospects used to describe their pain (for my messaging)

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Overall signal: how many green signals across different methods

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### Exercise: Map Your 90-Day Transition

Lay out the three phases over a real quarter with dates, keeping adjacent paying work flowing throughout.

The single most important deliverable is one strong niche-specific case study in phase two.

- Days 1 to 30 (Foundation): what are your dates to lock positioning, rewrite profiles, reorder the portfolio, and define one niche offer?

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- Days 31 to 60 (Proof): which one or two niche projects will you land, and how will you write each up with metrics and a testimonial?

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- Days 61 to 90 (Visibility): what weekly outreach and content habit will you run, and which two communities will you contribute in?

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- How will you keep adjacent paying work flowing so cashflow never depends on the niche being instantly profitable?

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### Checklist: Niche-Is-Working Signals Checklist

- ] Prospects mention my niche unprompted ('I heard you work with our kind of business')
- ] My close rate is rising and sales calls are getting shorter
- ] I can charge more for the same work with less price resistance
- ] Referrals arrive correctly routed to niche-relevant leads
- ] I work faster and feel more expert because the problems rhyme
- ] I have given the niche a full season before judging the trend

### Checklist: Avoid-the-Pitfalls Checklist

- ] I am not so narrow on both axes that the market is starving (widen an axis if so)
- ] My niche has real budget, not just enjoyment value
- ] I am not quitting before reputation and referrals have had time to compound
- ] I have one strong, niche-specific case study with real numbers
- ] When I expand, I will deepen the service for the same audience first, not scatter

## Your Action Plan

1. Generate at least 10 niche candidates from your own history, each phrased as who plus what plus problem
2. Score every candidate on demand, budget, fit, competition, defensibility, and access, then weight and rank
3. Size the market for your top candidate and confirm you need only a small, reachable fraction
4. Choose the type of niche (vertical, horizontal, or hybrid) that matches your goals and advantages
5. Write three versions of a positioning statement and pick the sharpest against the real alternative
6. Align your LinkedIn, website hero, portfolio, intro, and profiles to one consistent promise
7. Run at least two cheap validation experiments and log the signals plus the buyers' exact words
8. Land one or two niche projects and turn each into a case study with metrics and a testimonial
9. Map and start a dated 90-day transition across foundation, proof, and visibility while keeping cash flowing
10. Review the niche on evidence after a full season, fix pitfalls, and expand from strength rather than scatter









