

# **The Conscious Business Telesummit**

## **Marketing for Conscious Entrepreneurs**

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation**

**Michel Neray**

*Founder of The Essential Message®*

**and**

**Adela Rubio**

*Conscious Business Telesummit Host,  
Conscious Business Strategist and Mentor™*

May 17, 2010

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

Adela: Welcome everyone to The Conscious Business Telesummit. This is Adela Rubio, your host, and our guest today is one of my favorite people again, Michel Neray. I'm very, very excited to have him back in the program. We're going to be discussing the five layers of differentiation and Michel's expertise is Your Essential Message. He's masterful at this content, so I don't know that I'm going to be talking too much okay.

Thank you everyone for being here and for being up for a new way of doing business. I'm really excited. I'm just going to fully disclose right now, I am in Michel Neray's Essential Message Certification training. That is why I'm especially excited. The last time I had him on the program I was a big fan. I had been on his newsletter list and I had read his stuff, so I was aware of him and I knew he was great, but now I have an experience of Michel and his work is just really moving through me in ways that I could not have imagined. I'm very excited to have him with us here today.

He's an award winning copywriter, author, and speaker. He's the founder and Chief Differentiation Officer of The Essential Message. Since 2003 Michel has been helping thousands of independent professionals, entrepreneurs and growing corporations discover and communicate their true differentiation and their authentic competitive advantage.

That's how Michel helps his clients double, triple, and even quadruple results and why his clients say that The Essential Message is like a unique selling proposition on steroids.

Michel, welcome. It's wonderful to have you here.

Michel: Thank you, Adela. I have to tell you, when you were leading us through the check in process that you do, I was standing up, I said, "My God, she's right, I have been sitting all morning." So it felt great, thank you.

Adela: You're welcome. You know, this is one of those areas. The reason I'm taking your certification training is because through these Telesummits and through my own work with clients, I've realized that one of the biggest gaps, one of the biggest problems is this whole idea of what is my message? I got to the point of feeling, even with my own message, I felt like I could differentiate it further, but it got to the point where it's like

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

you're building sand castles in the air unless you really are building your business on your unique essence.

I know that today's conversation is going to be about this differentiation, but I wondered if you might start us off with why is differentiation important, especially nowadays.

Michel: Wow. That's a great place to start. I'm going to be careful. I don't want to repeat too much of what we talked about in the last Telesummit. For those people who were participating in that Telesummit, we had a really good grounding about why differentiation and what drives me and how we go about it in a little way, but here in this Telesummit, I think we can really get very deep, very fast, and help people understand what is it about themselves.

Your question about why now, why today, why is differentiation so important – I think it's important for two – give me more time, I'll come up with three – but right now, at least two really important reasons. The first one which connects so beautifully with your tribe and what you're doing, Adela, with the whole Conscious Business is that I think people are becoming much more aware that there is a way, and we've been talking about it for years, but really now it's becoming tangible.

There is a way for us to combine who we are as people with what we do in our profession. We've always talked about that and that concept has been around for 50 years at least; being able to meld and blend our contributions to the planet with how we earn a living. If it's been an ideal for a long time. We're now starting to get the awareness and the consciousness to actually be able to do it and bring those two things together.

In terms of why differentiation, why now, that's the first reason, that we now have an opportunity. You know this Adela, I'm not the first person to talk about the importance of say authenticity in business or I'm not the first person to talk about obviously being all of who you are, bringing all of who you are to what you do in your profession or your work or how you earn a living – you've seen this.

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

I do believe I am the first to actually bring the practical tools to help people accomplish exactly what we were talking about. The first thing is really being able to bring all of who we are, our deep essence, into the work that we do. We intuitively know, and it's been proven to ourselves when we've hit those moments when we've been able to do that.

Everything opens up. It's not just a question of having your business be more successful and making more money, and absolutely that happens. I've seen that time and time again. Even more importantly than that, we have people truly tapping into their passion and the things that really drive them at a very, very deep level.

Certainly the people that I work with, what they tell me is for the first time in their lives, they feel more motivated, not just motivated from an external point of view, but self motivated because, "Oh my God, I'm tapping into my real authentic power. This is who I am as a person. This is my gift to the universe. This is my strength."

It would be a shame for the world not to have this from me. It would be a shame for me. I would be doing all future generations a disservice for me not to give it to them, so why now? Because I think now the world has come to a place where these things are possible and available. That's the first reason.

The second reason is just purely from a business point of view because of the internet, because of increased population, because of our ability to communicate and sell our services and find clients and give people the benefit of our intellectual property, our thoughts, our beliefs, what we know and what we have seen to be true and how we can help other people.

Our ability to do that across borders, across the world, is just so incredibly easier today than it ever has been in the past, by a long shot. I don't think anybody would take issue with that comment. Just the internet, the cheapness of telephone calls. What we're doing today, and you know, Adela, in the certification training, we're doing the same thing that you're doing with a teleclass, except we're doing with video in a real...

It feels like we're in a live classroom altogether where we can all see each other and hear each other. We've never been able to do this before, and

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

as a result of all of these things, competition is just through the roof. Opportunity is also through the roof. People who want what we have are out there. That's true. They may not be in the next room, they may not be in our city, they may not be in our town, they may not be on our street, but they are out there somewhere in the world, and we have an opportunity to reach them somehow.

What is the message – again, I'm going to use the word authentic – what is the authentic message that we can craft that really taps into our power that attracts those people, and at the same time, I mentioned, so that's the opportunity part, on the other side, the competition part. On the surface, everybody's planning to do the same thing.

It's easier for us to find clients from different parts of the country, from different parts of the world in many cases, then it's easier for everybody else to do that as well, so from a sheer business necessity point of view, how do we differentiate ourselves from everybody else who at least on the surface is claiming to do the same thing that we are. Does that make sense?

Adela: That makes total sense to me, and of course something that I've recognized in my own experience in my business. I love that you just go beyond the surface, Michel. That's one of the extraordinary things about your training and the way that you work, and I think why you get the results that you get.

There's not this surface approach to differentiation. You've got five layers here of differentiation, and some really I think new thinking and new ideas that have come through this concept of the five layers of differentiation. Did you want to dive into the content now?

Michel: Whenever you're ready, absolutely. I have to say that I came up with this partly because for all of the reasons that I mentioned before, I came up with this because I realized that I am driven to achieve certain goals. I have a gift, I have a strength, and I started doing a lot of introspective work and my son said, "What is it that I'm driven to do and why?" We'll cover that when we get through the five layers.

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

The other reason is I'm getting really good results with the clients that I'm working with. How do I do that? It required me to look deeply at myself and kind of reverse engineer what I was doing naturally and intuitively. I said, "How do I do this and can I put this down on paper or in a format that is structured and I can teach other people how to do it?"

Adela: I do want to say something, maybe you can speak a little bit to this too, because it's a question that comes up in my mind. A lot of times in marketing we're told, "Don't sell the process." This is not that. This is not about selling the process. There's differentiation, what you're going to get into, is a process in and of itself, isn't it?

Michel: Absolutely. I'm glad you raised that one. One day, and maybe one day soon, I'll write the five myths or the seven myths that people have about marketing and you've just hit on one of the biggest ones. I think it's because people have been spouting off the same [pablum] about marketing for the last 100 years.

When we were in a world where there wasn't as much competition, where we couldn't sell across countries and borders. Those rules did make sense, but now we've got so much more opportunity and like I said, at the same time, so much more competition, everybody is saying the same thing.

The thing that you hit on was people don't care how you do it, they don't care why you do it, they just care what you do for them. They don't care about the process, they only care about the promise. That's one of those myths that was true maybe 20 years ago, as recently as 20 years ago, but it's one of those rules that people are walking around with because they've heard some marketing speaker say it who read it in a book that's 20 years old or something like that.

I have to tell you, categorically and absolutely, that is so not true. This is why I get upset. You can hear it. People are still walking around saying the same old crap. It doesn't work. We know it doesn't work, and yet there are very few people like me who are maybe, I don't know, courageous enough to say, "Hey listen. The rules that everybody thinks are true in marketing, they don't work," and no wonder people don't have this negative impression of sales and marketing.

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

If we follow all those old rules, we're not being true to ourselves and we know it doesn't feel right. Another myth, people think whenever I use the word The Essential Message or they heard the name of the company The Essential Message, right away they think, "Okay, I know what that is. That's like an elevator pitch." I'm thinking, "No! It's the antithesis of an elevator pitch."

In fact, this is an article that I'm working on now. People again, this is another myth. People think about the whole process of marketing and communications as being a persuasive process that you do to someone else. That's what we think about with sales and marketing. It's all about persuading somebody else.

This was a huge insight that I got just even a few months ago and I finally realized and said, "Oh my God! It's actually the biggest persuasion job that happens is on yourself." In other words the change in the mindset is really in you and if we can accomplish that, everything else gets easier. It's about becoming so connected and so confident with what you have to offer, regardless of what it is.

It may seem like a big thing, it may seem like a small thing. Let's take the shift and the focus away from what it actually is but whatever it is, let's figure it out what that is. If we could figure out what that is, and you become truly, truly connected with it, the mind shift happens in yourself. That's where you tap into your power.

Adela: Awesome. I love firing you up because... You're so tapped into it, Michel, because we do feel it. We do know it. There's something that feels like off about it. We're like, "I'm never going to get this marketing thing if this is what it is." So yay for you.

Michel: Adela, I have to tell you, it's such an honor for me to be working with you on this. It really is. There are some people who have an awareness and are almost there or on the edge of it and you're already doing it. You just don't have that structured approach to help you do it quicker, faster, more consciously.

Adela: That's why I'm training with you, Michel, because I know you've got something that I need. Really, it is. It's beautiful. I love it because there's

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

a lot of paradox in how this works in your system because we can't really come at it head on and I know you'll get into it in the content today, but I wanted us to dive into these five layers of differentiation because they're very juicy, there's a lot here.

Michel: Maybe I should first talk about why layers and how did I come up with that. For a long, long time, I thought of myself like a marketing archeologist and what I realized was that what I did with my clients is... Here's what happened. When I used to run my ad agency, the typical way that an ad agency relationship would work is my clients would give me a brief, and they would expect me to pass that on to my team and then do the work that we needed to do.

Whenever I would look at the brief, I would see, "I can't do this. If we just work with this brief, we're going to end up with the same kind of generic messages that everybody else comes out with." So I would then come back to the client's office and I would spend a half day or a day or two days, whatever it took.

Really I didn't know what I was doing at the time, but it was a conversation, very much like a coaching conversation, where I would dig deep into how they did things, why they did things, and I would be exploring all kinds of areas until I got to some core messages that they felt personally connected with.

It didn't matter whether it was a small business or even a large business or a not-for-profit. We'd really get to the core driving values and culture and motivations that are behind the organization. What I found was that once we discovered what those were, everybody who was working there kind of felt connected with it.

That's why they were attracted to that company or organization in the first place. It was an entrepreneur, solo entrepreneur, and like many of the people on this call, it would be... This is, "Oh my God, this is what was behind my mind when I started to do this work in the first place, but I wasn't conscious of it."

That's why they told me for the first time in our history, "I actually know who I am and why I do this." It was very, very powerful stuff. The way I



### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

do is by digging and digging and digging so for a long time I called myself an archaeologist because I had this sense of digging below the surface.

You know on my website, the logo that we have is an arrowhead and the arrowhead, I picked it very deliberately, even though I wasn't fully conscious about why at the time, but I picked it because an arrow... Every culture in the world has their own distinct arrowhead. Throughout history, travel to any part of the world and they craft their arrowheads in different ways.

North American aboriginals did one way, in Mexico they would do it another way. You can identify... It's unique, it's almost like literally a unique marker of that culture, an identifier of that culture, so that's one reason why I thought, "That's very much like The Essential Message."

Then it felt like, "Wait a minute. There's more to this story" because when you make an arrowhead, first of all, you have to choose the raw material. They must have gone through tons of trial and error before they found raw material that actually worked. Then you roughly shape it into the shape of an arrowhead, then you sharpen it and sharpen it and sharpen it.

At some point it becomes sharp enough for what? To use to earn your living. Literally for hunting, and it became part of your culture, it became part of your identity, and you used it for your own livelihood, so the analogy with the arrowhead was very strong with what I do. At the same time, when you find archaeological artifacts, you have to dig for them.

You have to dig through the dirt and debris and you have to brush away all the stuff that's literally useless and sometimes it's hard to tell what to keep and what to throw away, but as you dig through the layers, you learn more about your own civilization, your own history, your culture. Again, that's another analogy with what we do in The Essential Message.

I started thinking about that and then I realized that there's yet another analogy with the whole digging archaeology metaphor in the sense that what we do as just with the people that I work with and the companies that I work with, is we keep digging and digging and digging, and I realized that just like in real archaeology, there are actual layers.

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

I started thinking about the first layer. What's the first layer? The first layer really is what I call your "what layer." We're going to go through more or less who, what, where, why, and how. I'll show you why and how we can use each of those layers for ourselves. The first layer, which is really just at the service, is the "what" layer.

The "what" layer, the best way that I can describe it is it's literally the most obvious layer. If you were competing at the Olympics and you could swim faster than everybody else, then that would be your "what." I swim faster than anybody else, so that's my "what." That's what I do. I swim faster than anybody else.

Anybody on this call or listening to the audio, there is something that you do better than anyone else in your field. That would be your "what." That would be the first thing you'd look for. If you were working with a marketer, the first thing they'd say is, "What do you do and how well do you do it? Do you do it better than anybody else?"

Because if you could, then why wouldn't you promote it? Why wouldn't you if you've got six gold medals at the Olympics? Why wouldn't you promote it? That would be the obvious thing. The problem is that in business, especially in some of the esoteric fields like coaching and the energy workers that you work with, it's hard to do.

The results aren't as tangible as just being able to prove that you do it better than anybody else, and as a result of that, we've got to be looking for other ways to differentiate ourselves, but I don't want to discount that. If you can do it, if you can say, "I do this better than anybody else," why wouldn't you? It's a perfectly valid approach.

Again, this is where all marketers start. Unfortunately this is where they also get stymied, "Well, we can't find anything, so we have to make it up." No. We don't need to make it up, we need to look deeper, so in terms of the "what" at least the exercise of figuring out what would be your "what" differentiation if you could is a very valuable exercise.

I would encourage everyone listening to this, when you put down the phone, write down, "What are the results that I do promise my clients?" and be very, very specific. If you can narrow it down to one, two, or three,

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

great. We need to be very, very clear on what those are. The problem is that everyone in the same field would be making the same promise, so it doesn't really help with your differentiation at the superficial level, but at least it gives you a starting point of what to focus your differentiation from, so let's keep digging.

We know that's important but we know that everybody else in the same field can make the same promise, exactly the same thing that I started out with my advertising agency. I market you better than everybody else. Why would you do marketing? I increase your sales better than anybody else. I couldn't say that because it's a big wide world and there are a lot of people out there and I don't know if I really can do it better than anybody else.

Even if I could, everybody would be saying the same thing, so that wasn't really a valuable... It wasn't a differentiator for me. In the same way, everybody on this call, in whatever field you are in, the end result for your client, yes, they are interested in that, so we need to know what those are but it's not going to be very differentiating for you, so Let's dig deeper.

The next layer... It's funny, in archaeology, just below the surface is a layer called the [hard pan] layer and it consists of a relatively hard layer of soil just below the ground service. The way I use it in this process, when I am digging for differentiation, it consists of the who, where, and when. It's an important layer, but again, it's just below the surface.

Literally I haven't even broken a sweat getting here, but it is the next layer and I need to dig through it. I can't bypass it because I need to understand it. In marketing and sales, if we can't claim the absolute best of anybody in my field, maybe I can narrow my definition a little bit. I don't know if you read Seth Godin's book, an excellent book called *The Dip*.

In it he says, "Your job is to become the best in the universe." I think he said the world. "Your job is to become the best in the world." He also said...Here's the catch. You can define your world any way you want to. It's a big opportunity. You don't have to really be the best in the world in everything.

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

You can re-define your world in any way you want, in a way that makes sense, so the way that most people would look at this, and the way that most marketers would look at this, they'd say "I could narrow down my field by who I do it for or where I do it or when in the life process, or in the life stage, that somebody needs me."

I could say, "I am the best coach in this particular area. I am the best coach for these kind of people. I am the best..." whatever it is. "I am the best coach or energy worker when you are at this stage in your life." Does that make sense?

Adela: Yes.

Michel: It should make sense and it shouldn't be that difficult. Most of the problem, however, lies in the fact that many coaches and many energy workers, they believe in themselves and they really believe they can do anything for everybody. That becomes like doing nothing for nobody. It's just not credible. It's not credible and beyond being not credible, it's very hard to market yourself to everybody.

What magazine do you buy an ad in that will speak to everybody? You can't do it. Purely from a pragmatic point of view, we need to be able to narrow down the field a little bit and for example say, "I am the only lawyer in Pittsville" or "I am the only coach for lawyers" or "I am the only coach for women whose children have just left the home" or things like that.

Then we can start to narrow down our market, narrow down the definition of who we do it for or where we do it that we can feel particularly attached to. That's what I call the who, where, and when differentiation. Many people can do this. It's a very, very viable way of narrowing down your definition but it's very intellectual, it's very rational, and it doesn't...

Unless you dig deeper, it may be true, and it may be very powerful, but unless you dig deeper and get personally connected as to why that's so, then it's not going to feel personally very powerful. It's not going to tap into that authenticity that I was talking about earlier. For that, we need to go a few more layers deeper.

The next layer that I talk about is what I call the upper why differentiation. There's an upper why and a lower why. This is kind of like what I call the

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

transition layer. I hope as I'm explaining these layers that people listening can actually think about these questions for themselves. The first one was, "What are the promises that I make?" and this is what you said at the very beginning.

The mythology is that people don't care about how you do it, they only care about the promise that you make. What is the end result? I said that's a big myth, but I'm also saying it's important for you to know what that promise is, at least to be clear about that.

The next one is you narrow down the definition and the next layer, narrow the definition according to some mechanism that allows you to claim some kind of superior result and maybe it's according to the person you do it for, maybe it's the area that you do it in. Listen, if you were the only, for lack of a better example, if you're the only financial advisor in a small remote village, then that's as far as you need to go really.

Why not? Why wouldn't you say that? Hey, I'm the only one in this area and it's important to meet face to face in my particular business, so therefore, come to me. We're still in a very rational, very intellectual style of marketing.

The next layer is what I call the upper why differentiation. Now we're three layers down. This one answers the question... This is a question that all customers have. They always have this question at the back of their mind, whether they verbalize it or not. They are always thinking, "Why should I believe you have the capability to do what you say you can do?"

In other words, if we've gone through the layers, we've figured out what the promise is. The customer says, "Why should I believe that you actually have the ability to deliver on that promise?" There's the why differentiation. Again, a lot of marketers will dig to this, and it could be because you have certain certifications.

It could be because you've got years of experience. It could be because you've got years of experience. It could be because you have a proven history of results. It could be because you're new to the market. For example, I give the example of if one of the things you are promoting for yourself is a fresh way of thinking, then you can say, "You'll get that

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

because I'm only 23 and I've only been in this industry for three years or two years, so you are going to get a whole fresh way of approaching it."

Anything that you have that can support what it is that you're selling is in the upper why. It answers the question, "Why should I believe you?" Here's where we start to get interesting. Like I said, smart marketers dig at least to this layer of differentiation, but there are deeper and way more powerful layers to explore. This is really where it gets interesting.

You know, Adela, that in the certification or in the process that we use, we get to this in week number three and four, so we have to work through all that other stuff. It's almost like we've got to get that other stuff out of our heads and when we get to a point where we says, "I don't know what there is anymore. I don't know what to say anymore. I've said everything I think I could say. I've done, I've said all the promises that I can make. I've said all the certifications that I have. I've been through that. I don't know what else there is."

Ah. Now we're getting to the place where we're starting to connect about how you are as a person and why you do what you do. This is the "how" differentiation. It speaks exactly to that myth that you were talking about earlier, Adela, when you said people don't care about how you do it. They don't care about the process. They only care about the promise.

It's so patently untrue because your process is everything. Let me explain a little bit about what I mean by that. Each of us carries with us a certain way of looking at the world. Each of us carries with us a set of baggage, both good and bad, an MO, modus operandi, that we have, that we approach the world with.

We have painful life lessons that we have grown up with that have shaped us and when we look at a certain problem in the world, we are driven to look at it or try to fix it or overcome it in a unique way, so in fact, the process that we use, and I'm saying even if you learn a process from a textbook or even if you are trained in someone else's process, the way you apply it is going to be uniquely shaped by who you are.

So if we can slow down your process a little bit and figure out exactly the nuances that you bring to the party, we can see the little things that you do

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

differently and say... Okay, I'm going to backtrack a little bit. Here's another myth, that people are always looking for the big differentiators. They are looking for the big promises, the big things that set me apart.

What I have found is exactly the opposite. What really is unique to individuals and what has become the most powerful, the biggest differentiators, are actually the small nuances. It's the slight ways that we apply things differently than anybody else. It's the ways that we see the world differently than anybody else.

I think everybody on this call can see, "Yes, that's why two people or ten people could have fifteen different opinions on this same subject" because we all see things slightly differently. It's those slight differences in the way we see things that actually point the way to our differentiation.

Here is what I call the "how." Most people, especially coaches and energy workers, say, "How did you know this? How did you intuit that the person, the client, that you're working with, had this particular fundamental issue? How did you know that?" If you ask them, most of the time they'll say, "I don't really know how I know. I'm just intuitive."

It's especially even true in the whole energy worker field. We are intuitive people. I want everybody to hold on a minute and ask yourself, "What does intuition really mean? What is intuition?" Nobody's ever been able to define it, and I'll tell you the definition that I like. This is the one that I ascribe to.

A little self disclosure here. I'm a scientist at heart. I have an undergraduate degree in chemistry and I really do apply the scientific method. So that doesn't mean that I automatically dismiss all those things that we can't explain and the things that are in the realm of things that scientists would say don't exist.

No, but what I am saying is there is a lot more that can be explained if we just think about it a little bit further, so intuition is one of those things. I believe that intuition is your brain working so fast to come up with an answer you actually don't realize how you got it.

If you could imagine for a minute that is true, that somehow you are wired with a certain type of intelligence, with a certain insight for the way of

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

seeing something that nobody else has, that is allowing you to come to an answer or a solution very, very quickly.

Most of the time I speak to people, I say, “Within three minutes of speaking to a person, do you tap into what drives them or what their core issue is? How often do you tap into that? How often do you pick up on something that everybody else seems to have ignored or glossed over, but you picked up on something. Why is that?”

Because you have that intelligence. Your brain is wired for whatever reason which we’ll get into later, but for whatever reason for now, your brain is wired to see that. As a result of your ability to see that little missing step or that little key ingredient or that little thing, because of your ability to do that, you are able to solve the challenge that you’re facing. You’re able to deliver the promise that we talked about in layer one, which is the “what” layer.

So if we can figure out what that is, most people would say, “I don’t know how I do it. It’s intuitive.” What I have found is if you help people to slow down their process and you give them an objective, external frame of reference, usually that requires another person, because you do it so naturally, because you do it so effortlessly. Literally you do it unconsciously, so how can you possibly be aware of it?

We all need this. I needed it to and if you listen to the last Telesummit, I told the story of how I literally sat down with a friend of mine, Stuart, and I said, “I know I do something pretty special. If I could figure out what it was, I know what I want to do for the rest of my life. You’ve got to help me do it because I can’t figure that out. I can’t see it.” It’s like fish to water. You don’t know it’s there, but it’s all around you.

Intuition really is about your brain working so fast that you don’t even see the processes that are underlying it. That process is what sets you apart. Each of us has that unique process that we apply, that we use in maybe diagnosing a problem or that we use in helping someone else come to a point of enlightenment where they see the problem or the way out or the solution.



### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

Whatever that is, it's going to be different for everybody because we are all shaped differently. This is where I spend a lot of time. As you know, we've got exercises like, "What drives you crazy makes you great." We've got exercise like "What's your pea pod?" and we've got another exercise like "Dr. Credibility," all designed to help people figure out what their underlying process is. The reason why those work...

It took me a long time to understand this for myself. Again, you've heard me say this, you can't just go up and ask somebody what sets you apart. We only know what we know consciously. We can only speak what we know consciously. What we know consciously is what we've read in textbooks or what we've thought we knew or thought we understood is that rule book that we're walking around with.

"Oh yeah, I have to give the promise, I have to do this" or "What my clients tell me." All of that is marginally helpful. We have to find some way to ask the question, to get at the answer, without the mind knowing what we're doing, because if the mind understands what we're doing, it's going to jump to the answer.

You want to come up with the answer very quickly, so in the back of your mind you say, "Oh, oh!" like a little kid in grade one who's raising his hand. "Oh, oh, I know the answer! Pick me!" That's what your brain is saying. It wants to jump to it. If it jumps to it, it's only going to choose an answer from a box that is part of the conscious visible box that we've been walking around with, so we've got to find a way to go deeper.

That's why I don't want to tell too much about these exercises, but these exercises like "What drives you crazy makes you great" and "What's your pea pod?" and "Dr. Credibility", they almost trick the brain into coming up with responses before it really knows why. Then the clincher is kind of like at the end where it says, "Oh yeah, that's it" and "That's why I do things this way." The response I get most often, Adela, is people say to me, "I knew that. I knew that. Yes, I knew that but I had no idea it was this important."

Adela: Yes. It's like you can't quite... I'll tell you, one of the things that really surprised me was even my own resistance to the exercises. That really surprised me. Even the conscious process of digging, and I'm thinking,

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

“My gosh, if I were left to my own devices and I was doing this by myself, I would never go through this.”

Michel: You remind me of a conversation I had a couple of months ago with someone who said... This comes up a lot. Somebody says, “If I sit down with you for an hour, will you help me find my Essential Message?” I say, “Categorically not! Aside from the thing that it wouldn’t be fair for the other people who spend eight weeks digging for it, I might be able to flush it out within an hour and I might get pretty close, but I’m not the one that has to become aware of it. We’ve got to dig through your own layers of resistance so it really...”

That’s why I said earlier, the biggest shift in this marketing approach is not in the customer’s mind, it’s in your own mind. We know how hard it is to dig deeper than we’ve ever dug before. We know how hard it is to change our beliefs about who we think we are.

It’s always but, but but... No, this is how I am, but, but... Those things come up. Those things take time. It just takes time. I had somebody else say, “It takes you eight weeks to come up with a positioning statement for someone? I could do it in 45 minutes.” I said, “I bet you can, but unless you go through all the digging, you’re going to end up with the same kind of generic positioning statement that everybody else in the field has.”

Adela: Plus this is the key thing that I’m getting from working with you. If it’s just form the intellect, it’s not really going to move you powerfully. Really so it’s experiential. It’s like you’re connecting to your core message which really comes from these deeper layers. Then you’re building a business on something that’s solid bedrock because it’s being sourced from who you really are and what’s really the core of you.

It’s a totally different experience. I’ve actually made some changes in my business based on what has transpired in the Essential Message that I haven’t even shared with you.

Michel: When would be an appropriate time to share them?

Adela: It’s really interesting. I can share right now, actually.

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

Michel: I'd love to. You know my catchphrase. Specific and personal. You've heard those two words before.

Adela: Yes specific and personal. You know, I had a membership community that came as a result of one of my programs of doing something that's so easy for me to do, Michel, which is to do these guided imagery energy shifts that I call them. It's just so easy for me to do that stuff. It's like me, impromptu. Just do it, it's not like it's a no brainer for me.

I created a community around it based on what people wanted from me and as a result of working through the exercises and being on the calls and your content, I've really focused and so actually what I did was changed my membership to a six month membership, very focused, with specific goals, and that is so different than something that I would have done a while back.

Michel: I think what you're telling me then, which brings up another myth that absolutely drives me up a wall, is that traditional marketing is always, they give that age old advice which is just find out what your customers want and just give it to them.

That will lead you down the wrong path. Why will it lead you down the wrong path? Because if what they want isn't what is authentically one of your strengths, you're going to be giving them something that you're not as good as you would be if it were based on your strength. I would turn that around. Find out what your customer wants.

I think I just came up with something. Hang on a second, Adela. That was brilliant, by the way. Thank you for that. Yes, find out what your customers want and give it to them as long as the customer you speak to is yourself. You are your most difficult customer. You're the one you have to satisfy.

Adela: It was really powerful because everyone could have said no, so actually I extended an invitation for them to make a six month commitment and say, "Okay, we're going to do this and everyone is fully on board for this." It was astounding, the response. It was just so astounding. Theoretically, everyone could have said, "Forget about it Adela, we're not interested."

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

It came from really being, one of the things that came up during one of our sessions was this whole thing around authenticity which for me is like this key thing. I was thinking to myself, "Am I being fully authentic in this program?" and it really made me give it some really heavy duty thought and I just really dug into what I would do and that's what I did.

It was just extraordinarily powerful. I feel all energized about this program now like I have not felt from when they actually first asked me for it. It's just shifted everything and it's because it's based on a bedrock for me of something that is my strength.

Michel: Interesting, so you remind me very much of, this is a testimonial that I got recently from someone that both you and I know. I hear this time and time again. You said you haven't felt this passionate or this driven about a program in a long, long time. This person wrote me something very similar.

He said, "Thank you for helping me get to know me again. There is an extra bounce in my step in the joy of rediscovering my passions. The consoachant's process is confirming that what I have to offer is indeed quite valuable. Increased confidence is the natural by product." I'm just reading it off the testimonials page.

This is what happens and you got there by saying, "I don't want to give this or offer this service simply because this is what I think they are asking me to offer. I'm offering this service because I want to" and that begs the question of "Why do I want to offer this service?" The why question really leads us to the last layer and I believe the most powerful layer in the whole five layers of differentiation.

Why do I do what I do? What I have noticed is that in almost every case... In larger corporations, it's harder to see. Certainly with the sole entrepreneurs and the energy workers and the coaches that you and I have worked with, we've seen this to be true. Every single one of those cases why we do things is linked to an incredibly powerful life lesson that you have learned.

This forces people to put themselves in a very vulnerable position, to explore their vulnerability. Why am I driven to do this? Why do I see the

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

world? Remember, the fourth layer down was how. That was just identifying that you see the world in a slightly different way and that is causing you to have slightly different methodology or application of methodology than anybody else.

Now you ask yourself, “Why am I like that? Why do I see the world a certain way?” In every single case that I have seen, I’ve been able to trace it back to a valuable life lesson, in some cases a painful life lesson, which is where the vulnerability comes in. Here is where we go back to the very beginning.

This word “authenticity” is bandied about. I’ll tell you where I have seen... In my own life, the word “authenticity” is synonymous with power and vulnerability. When we explore those deeper areas – it’s not therapy although some people might think it’s therapy – and it doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s heavy stuff, but we are touching into some deep vulnerabilities that each one of us has.

It could have been something from when we were growing up. It could have been a painful life lesson. It could have been a recent major experience that had a profound effect on us and as a result of that we identify it has changed us. It is something that has changed us in a fundamental way.

It has caused the neurons to grow in a certain way in our brains. It has shaped us fundamentally and so usually when you as a coach for example or a consultant, it says why do you do what you do. The first response that I get when I ask this is, “I’m driven to help people” or “I want to benefit the world in a certain way.”

Okay, that’s a good starting point but everybody says something like that, so when we did remember, my two catchwords are personal and specific, why specifically are you driven to do this in this way? Why specifically are you able to see this missing step where everybody misses it or glosses over it? What we get to is something that’s intensely personal, intensely.

It could be something that they haven’t thought about in years and years or it could be something that’s incredibly quite fresh. It could be something that they’ve been aware of but they’ve been reluctant to talk

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

about, not realizing that bringing it to the surface is the most powerful thing that they could do in their marketing.

If you look on some of the people's websites, it's buried there on page 953 at the bottom as a paragraph in a footnote. Why is it down here? This is who you are. This is why you are driven to do what you do. This is why you have the insight that you do. This is why you solved this particular problem, this particular life challenge.

Why? Because you faced that challenge. We always get to that place. Always. It's amazingly liberating and powerful when we get there, so the why is the deepest layer that we get to. I know we don't have a lot of time left, Adela. When do we need to wrap up?

Adela: If you can go over a couple of minutes, that's cool with me if you wanted to wrap this up, if you wanted to complete...

Michel: People might be asking themselves, "Okay, Michel, why do you focus on differentiation?" I'd like to use myself as an example here. We went through the five layers, the top one being "what." In my case, I was running an ad agency, so what? My communications were more effective.

I went down the scale of the what and the who, where, and when, and then the how. The reason why my methodology in helping my clients develop effective communications lay in the missing step that I saw which was the authentic differentiation. I was doing this long before that was even a buzzword.

I've been doing this now for 20 years really, consciously for about 8 years. Twenty five years, that's what I did, and I didn't know that I was doing it. When I really sat back and looked at what I've done, I said, "The communications programs that we've put together are more effective because we go down to the core messaging. That was my "how."

Then I thought, "Why am I so driven to discover the core differentiating messaging for my clients? Why am I so driven to do that? It took me a long time and I realized, "Oh my God. My whole life has been about differentiation. My everything, from the moment I was born, I was born to a mother who was a Holocaust survivor. Father who fought in the French Foreign Legion of all places.

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

We moved to a community in Montreal. My native tongue is French, but I was raised in an English neighborhood in a French province. To the Anglo I was a French frog, or a French Pepsi they called it in Montreal. To the [French word 0:58:12.8], I wasn't really [same French word], I spoke French because my mother was from France. I spoke the wrong kind of French.

I didn't fit in anywhere. I went to a... In Montreal there are two school boards. There is a Protestant school and a Catholic school and the Catholic school was typically French and the Protestant school board is a public school board and is typically English. My parents sent me to the English school which was the Protestant school in a Jewish neighborhood where 99% of the kids who went to the class were Jewish. It's like it didn't matter...

There was always a difference somewhere. Even now I realize, "Why is it when I go to the US and I travel around the world, people say, 'Why don't you just call yourself Michael? Why Michel?'" Because it's who I am. Why do I hang on to these points of difference? I still get it. Here in Toronto some people come up to me...

A Mexican guy came up to me and said, "Why don't you just change your name to Michael?" I said, "Because that's what it says on my passport, Josie!" I realized this whole notion... I could have been the kind of person that would try to blend in, but for whatever reason I wasn't and we could go back further or go back previous generations to figure that one out. Why is it...

I could have been the kind of person to just blend in and call myself Michael and just move along and not... But I didn't. From the word go, what I did, based on my entire life experience, I wrapped myself up in the flag of differentiation and it became, wherever I was, I was the one that there was this difference.

Even in the Jewish neighborhood where I grew up, everybody had grandparents who spoke with heavy Eastern European accents. My father is Persian, a Jewish Persian who traces his family back to the Garden of Eden.

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

Really? There were Jews there? Yes! It didn't matter. Even within the little community I stood out. I wrapped myself up in the flag of differentiation and it became a part of who I was and I became keenly attuned, highly sensitive, to points of differentiation, what sets me apart, what sets other people apart.

How can we use that in a positive way? Not something to be ashamed of, but taking that point of differentiation that may have been a sign of weakness or may have been a sign of vulnerability. Whatever it was, but using that. This is who I am. I am not going to turn my back on this. I am this point of differentiation. This is who I am, and being proud of it and using it.

I think 30 years later, I'm especially adept at finding the points of differentiation for my business clients. Could it be true that there are no coincidences? This is the time when you hit your hand on your head and say, "Oh my God, of course. This is who I am. This is what I do." So now working backwards up the layers, we're down at the bottom layer and I finally understand.

There's more to this story which maybe we can get into a little later, but I'm standing at the bottom and I'm understanding why differentiation is such an important part of what I do. I'm looking up through the four layers above me to the surface, and I'm saying, you know what, I don't have to do the whole advertising agency thing.

I don't have to do all that business stuff that I thought I had to do before. There's the but, but, but that I've got going on in my own head. I could just do this. I can change. See, the problem is most people start at the top and they try to make all of the bottom layers fit the thing they find at the beginning.

I say, "Fine, work your way all the way down through the five layers, but when you get to the bottom, be prepared to change the things at the top to fit the things you found at the bottom. That's the connection to your authentic self." So I'm saying I don't have to do the whole advertising agency.



## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

I'm not a general purpose marketer. I am an expert in differentiation. It's interesting because 8 years ago when I started this, there wasn't anybody who claimed to be a specialist in this one area. I just read something the other day in a magazine where this other person is talking about core messaging.

I said, "I thought I made that term up myself!" People are beginning to talk about it. All kinds of things. You know, Adela, I'm also a motivational speaker. Why am I a motivational speaker? Why do I do that? Why am I not just this person who's happy to work with their clients in the back room? Why do I need to do that? Why do I need to put...

It's not just about wrapping myself up in a flag of differentiation. Why am I out there? Why do I have this need to help other people in this big visible way? I thought of myself, I thought again, I went back to my parents. At some point, and I do this exercise, which you haven't even done yet, Adela, but that's coming.

It's your professional DNA where you look at your past generations and how they have shaped you. In my case, I didn't have to go any further than my own parents. I already told you my mother is a Holocaust survivor. My father fought in the French Foreign Legion. My father studied linguistics in University, and when he came to Canada...

He had an incredible work ethic, my father, incredible work ethic. Sold stuff out of his trunk to make a living, to raise his family. He went back to school and continued his education in linguistics, became a translator, became the head of the translation department at [McGill] University. That was my father, so a real man of words.

I kind of always knew that I got my gift of words, of working with words, from my father. I'm chucking to myself, here I am a copywriter in an ad agency, and I'm a man of words too. I'm not doing something that's all that different from what my father did in this case, in this respect. Okay, I get that. I get where I get that gift from.

Now my mother. You can go... We're actually.. I can tell you, I'm right in the process of building a website for my mother to give her an opportunity to blog about her experiences in her life and she wrote a book. It's an

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

incredible book called *To Auschwitz and Back*. My mother spent a year not just in Auschwitz, but in a number of concentration camps.

She was one of the people that was sent on the famous now three day death march, which was at the end of the war, the Allies were closing in on the Germans. They knew they had to evacuate the camps. This was after she had been through eight or nine months of being in Auschwitz and they sent her through the mountains in the middle of winter.

In the middle of winter, she had one clog on her foot. She didn't have a jacket. In the mountains in the middle of the winter to send her to a three day death march. People died. It was called a death march because if you laid down the soldiers were ordered to shoot you. They were on orders to shoot anybody who laid down.

After two days of walking, my mother decided she'd had enough and she lay down. An old German soldier came up to her and said, "Please get up. I don't want to shoot you. You've got your life ahead of you. Please get up." Their eyes connected and she got up and she continued the march.

She was shipped to another concentration camp and they were running out of food in the other concentration camp and when the American soldiers found her when they liberated the camp, they found her on the ground and thought she was dead. She was too weak to move and she managed to say something and catch somebody's attention. They picked her up and nursed her back to health.

You can imagine an experience like that, what it would do to people. We've seen... It could either send someone one of two ways. It either leaves somebody with the incredible burden, the weights of the memory and the experience, for the rest of their lives, or coming out of a camp and coming out of an experience like that, they could become the kind of person that cherishes every single breath they take.

Thank God my mother is like the latter, and if you met my mother today, you would meet someone who is so full of life, so joyous, so loving of everybody, so forgiving of everybody. Wonderful human being. When I put the two together, I said, "Oh my God. This is my mother." Lover of

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

life. Joyful existence. Helper of people. My father, man of words. It was another one of those moments where I hit myself on the side of my head. Me, motivational speaker. I get it. I get it, so now I understand.

This is all in the “why” layer. This is now I understand who I am. Now I understand why I go on stage in front of 1000 people where everybody else says, “How can you do that?” and I say, “I have to.” Not just I want to, I have to. That’s the five layers. Those are the five layers.

Adela: Michel, you couldn’t have illustrated it more clearly by using your own personal example, and thank you very much for sharing part of your story with us. It’s beautiful and empowering and of course motivating.

There’s just so many things I love about you.

Michel: Thank you, Adela. You know, I love working with you, and at some point I hope you tell everybody how we’re... We have to do it, right? This is part of our own existence and our own livelihoods and helping other people and helping ourselves at the same time. I hope you tell people how you are going to be leading a group of people who want to become certified.

Adela: Absolutely. I most certainly will. I’m looking forward to partnering with you on that.

Michel: Absolutely.

Adela: This work is really deep. Michel, that’s why I really wanted you back here at The Conscious Business Telesummit because unless we’re coming from this deep place, from this place... Everything of who we are. Our families, who has created what we have become.

Unless we are living that through line, unless our business, our work, is sourced from that place from where we come, from who we are, it’s just not a compelling business, and it’s not the kind of business that you’re here to create and hear to gift the world. Who you gift the world is who you are and those are the kind of businesses.. That’s why I find your business compelling.

That’s why I knew I had to work with you, because you are your message. That’s what I want for all the folks at the Conscious Business Telesummit. It’s for you to really tap into who you really are, create a vibrant, delicious,

## **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

extraordinary business, and shape the world in new ways with your gifts and your abilities and who you are.

On the speaker page, and I'll give folks the link, there's an upcoming certification coming up on June 29. There was a question from Shawn in California. He wanted to know how long the program is and any prerequisites. For folks who do want to check out the program, you can visit <http://consciousbusinesstribe.com/EssentialCertification>. If you're on the speaker page you can just click on the link.

Can you address Shawn's question? I know it's a little different.

Michel: The question was?

Adela: How long the certification program is.

Michel: I suppose I could say something facetious and say it's a lifelong process, which it is, but the truth is, it's really... There's the formal part of the process and then there's the informal part of the process. The formal part of the training is 8 to 10 weeks. You know I say 8 to 10 weeks because we have a very limited number of people.

We're limiting this to 6 or 8 people, I can't remember, and we really do work with everybody individually. Some groups take longer, so I say 8 to 10 weeks and my commitment is to be there for the entire time, however long it takes. Once that formal part of the training is over, then we need practice.

We just need practice and so I asked for a minimum commitment of 12 months just to make sure that we know what we're doing, then after that you're part of the program, there's ongoing... People who are in the program get all the benefits of being in the membership program, plus, plus, plus.

You are certified as long as you are in the program and there's ongoing teleclasses, there's a discussion forum. There's the audio. We've got 5 years of audio classes that are there in the resources library, that are available to you. There's ongoing support to help you build your business in a way that works for you.

### **The 5 Layers Of Differentiation with Michel Neray**

Here's what's interesting. I really had to think about how to do this in a way that is genuine and honest because here I am, I've developed a methodology about differentiation, fully recognizing that everybody will end up applying that methodology in a different way. They have to, because we're all different.

The last thing I want is a bunch of clones doing this thing like a franchise. It's not a franchise. It's a way of thinking, it's a way of life, and it's a way of incorporating into your business in a way that works best for you, so that takes time to figure out how to apply. Does that answer your question?

Adela: I think it does. I can attest to the fact of the personal attention and the fact that you're very approachable and you're always available to your students. It's been a wonderful experience working with you, Michel.

Michel: Likewise Adela, thank you so much.

Adela: You're welcome. You folks know I'm ten thumbs up for Michel. If this approach is something, not only for yourself, but something you'd like to apply with your clients, I highly recommend his program. I'm in it now and it's changing the way that my business is unfolding, so thank you Michel for everything.

Michel: Thank you, Adela, and thank you to everyone on this call. It's an honor for me to be here.

Adela: Thank you. Thank you for being here at the Conscious Business Telesummit. Thank you everyone for being with us here today. Have a wonderful rest of the day. If you want to come back at 4:00 we've got one more call today and we'll see you all soon. Thanks, Michel.

Michel: Bye everyone.

Adela: Bye.