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AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

Mastering the Art of _____
**Marketing
Professional
Services**

A Step-by-Step Best Practices Guide

Allan S. Boress, CPA, CFE
Michael G. Cummings

Issued by the PCPS Management of an Accounting Practice Committee

Mastering the Art of Marketing Professional Services
Allan S. Boress and Michael G. Cummings

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory of Jordon Rubens and Sanford Rubens, two men who loved public accounting so much that it made me proud to be a CPA.

—*Allan S. Boress, CPA, CFE*

I dedicate this book to my parents, Ray and Anne Cummings.

—*Mike Cummings*

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PREFACE



BY ALLAN S. BORESS, CPA, CFE

The purpose of *Mastering the Art of Marketing Professional Services: A Step-by-Step Best Practices Guide* is quite simple:

New business is the lifeblood of every CPA and consulting firm.

Some CPA firms today are going out of business, being forced into mergers, surrendering superb talent, losing valued clients, being bought out, or slowly disintegrating before everyone's eyes because not enough new clients and profitable new work are coming in to sustain the firm and pay off the partners who want to retire.

Mastering the Art of Marketing Professional Services was written to share with you what I have learned over the last 25 years as a CPA and the last 20-plus years as the top business development consultant to our business. My goal is to provide you with a proven, methodical way to build your practice and make it more profitable and enjoyable for you.

I am indeed fortunate to have Mike Cummings as my co-author. I don't believe anyone knows more about the marketing of professional services than Mike does.

Mike will laugh and tell you that he came to me in the 1980s to learn how to sell professional services, but he's the one who taught me so much of what marketing is all about. Although Mike is not an accountant, he thoroughly understands our profession and was a founding member of Arthur Andersen's headquarters marketing group in 1980. He was instrumental there in managing the marketing function for 6½ years. Since 1986, Mike has worked with many professional firms, large and small, to improve their business development results.

Today, as the founders and rainmakers of numerous firms retire (or hope to), many see that their fellow partners and staff simply aren't interested in, or capable of, growing the business. In one Top 20 firm that was recently sold to a publicly held company, only a veritable handful of the partners brought in the majority of the work, and they were all in their 50s or early 60s. No wonder they gladly found someone to buy their practice.

Most firms are started and grown by entrepreneurs who did marketing and sold work in order to eat. Other rainmakers are proficient at self-promotion and selling their services because they innately know how to do it well and, therefore, enjoy it. These entrepreneurial types did such a good job of bringing in work that they had to hire others to help them with the workload. Customarily, those hired were not entrepreneurs by nature, but technicians—they became accountants because they liked accounting, not because they wanted to spend their careers and free time marketing and selling professional services.

Unfortunately, most business generators can't tell you systematically how they've marketed themselves or how they sell work. This book contains a systematic, step-by-step approach to effectively market your services and your practice. It is an approach that may be the opposite of what you may perceive marketing to be. It's designed to be time and energy effective, and it's adjustable to your personal style.

This is not a traditional marketing book. Some of the ideas may be not what you expect and may be new to you. Our goal is not to have you use all your free time pumping flesh, spend a lot of money on ineffective marketing, or hang out at social functions. We only want to help you become highly effective at marketing your services systematically and painlessly that will lead to many more clients and opportunities for business.

Therefore, I request you approach the ideas discussed here with an open mind.

Nobody has ever done more research into what makes marketing work in our profession and then simplified and prioritized for you. Please look to see where you can apply at least some of the ideas; not all the ideas will be appropriate for you, however, because this book was written for a wide audience.

We're the experts; let go of your already existing beliefs about marketing. Let us guide you by the hand to successful marketing. Be aware that Mike and I have helped thousands of CPAs and consultants and hundreds of firms become much more successful at marketing over the last 20-plus years. Let us coach you, too.

Read, enjoy, and become a rainmaker!



BY MICHAEL G. CUMMINGS

My career has paralleled the explosive growth of marketing in the accounting profession. And it illustrates how marketing is now ingrained into the business. I believe that business development is now central to being a successful, entrepreneurial CPA firm.

For the sake of perspective, I had the distinction of being the second person hired into the fledgling marketing group at Arthur Andersen's headquarters back in 1980. My only training in marketing came from my MBA instruction.

However, this lack of experience was a blessing in disguise because marketing for CPA firms was a brand new field. At the time, there were no established methods for the marketing of professional services. So, we were essentially pioneers facing an uncharted frontier.

Back in 1980, marketing was almost a "dirty" word. It implied that unscrupulous hucksters, hustlers, and promoters were somehow going to take over the profession. The first wave of advertising in the early 1980s seemed to confirm this perception.

However, in reality, marketing has always been part of the profession. Getting and keeping clients has been a regular part of the profession forever.

But, over the years, marketing has become increasingly critical to the achievements of successful accounting firms. Throughout the 1980s, firms had to invent productive approaches as they went along—borrowing some techniques from the marketing of other services (such as banking or financial services), modifying other business-to-business marketing techniques, and analyzing the winning methods that their most successful partners employed to build the practice. Seeing our service through the eyes of our clients and prospects through market research and interviewing was also critical.

Simply put, marketing is here to stay. You can no longer rely on the economy to boost your business. Marketing is no longer an optional skill. Without question, effective marketing is now central to your success as a professional.

In the past, you could almost hang out a shingle and business would come in across the transom. If you were a competent technician and diligent worker, you were likely to be a success. Those days are over. Being technically excellent is not enough. Without business-generation skills, new clients simply won't be able to find you. Your prospective clients are being consistently and aggressively courted by a number of firms.

So, marketing is now a requisite professional skill—you can't afford to ignore it. And it will become even more important in the future.

Think about how the profession has changed over the past decade or so. It's been radically transformed. Here are a seven of the permanent, pervasive shifts that we've seen and many of you have experienced. These are the seven reasons why marketing is here to stay.

Reason 1. Intense Competition

In many cities across the nation, clients of CPA firms are being bombarded by “cold” sales calls, e-mails, letters, speeches, articles, advertisements, and other marketing activities. Every bit of business is precious—for example, the “Big Firms” are targeting the entrepreneur and small business clients of smaller firms. Larger firms want smaller clients; sort of like setting up a farm system for future large clients. Meanwhile, the consulting arms of the top firms are marketing a wide array of special services. High-asset, wealthy individuals are being courted by financial planners, bankers, and attorneys. So, it's tougher than ever to grab the attention and interest of these targets. What's the end result? Some major firms are no longer in business. And lots of smaller practitioners are on the fringe.

Reason 2. Shrinking Markets

Throughout the 1980s, many industries and companies consolidated in the United States. In addition, the 1986 tax act eliminated the need for much of the complex tax planning that took place before it. Improvements in simplified, easy-to-use accounting and tax software have minimized some write-up work and tax work. Lots of clients are looking to perform as much as possible inhouse. All these factors combine to limit the potential for the traditional CPA services that many firms offer.

Reason 3. Consulting Orientation

Increasingly, accounting firms are more consulting-driven, and we're not just referring to the big firms, either. By its very nature, consulting requires a consistent, effective marketing and sales effort—due to the nonrepetitive, project-oriented nature of the work. Skillful selling is often needed to persuade a client to undertake a consulting project. Also, in many consulting disciplines you end up competing with non-CPA firms with both a full-time marketing department and sales force.

Reason 4. Technical Parity

These days, there are plenty of qualified CPAs who possess the technical skills needed to serve clients. Through continuing professional education requirements and other support programs offered by the AICPA and the state societies, technical competency is available to all practitioners. So, it's difficult to distinguish yourself as a technician—especially in the eyes of clients who lack technical sophistication.

Reason 5. Tighter Margins

There is a clearly downward pressure on fees. It's no secret that many firms "low-ball" their bids to get some client assignments. Beyond fee pressure, investments in training, salaries, reference materials, and marketing are putting pressure on your bottom line. So, how do you fight back? How can you make sure that clients see and appreciate the value that you deliver? Through top-notch service and client marketing.

Reason 6. Less Client Loyalty

Clients are switching firms more than ever. And even more clients are considering the possibility of switching. Why is this happening? First, aggressive marketing and selling are having an impact. Second, many clients may not see a tangible value in the services provided—so if you can have the same work done for a cheaper price, why not switch? Again, top-notch service, quality control, and effective relationship marketing are the tools you employ to foster and strengthen client loyalty.

Reason 7. Increased Emphasis on Marketing and Sales

Because of all these business pressures, marketing and sales activity seems to intensify each year. As more marketing-oriented practitioners mature in the profession, marketing campaigns proliferate. Sales people and sales managers are now fixtures at many of the most successful firms. Business development performance is now evaluated at firms to determine partner and promotion potential. Simply put, marketing is *now* central to success in the CPA profession and the associated consulting and financial service operations.

So, the bad news is that marketing is here to stay. But, the good news is that marketing is a skill—one that you can systematically build and apply.

By investing in *Mastering the Art of Marketing Professional Services*, you're already ahead of the game. You're looking forward to the future—taking the time to strengthen the entrepreneurial skills that you need to succeed. Others are still clinging to the past—ignoring the obvious impact that marketing has made on the profession.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

In our consulting and training work, we've had the good fortune to work with some of the top business producers in the CPA and consulting professions over the past 20 years.

With this close association and continuing working relationship with those who excel at business development, we've enjoyed a unique opportunity to share ideas, confirm success strategies, test marketing methods, and understand *how* they excel.

Right now, we want to share the step-by-step approach that allows the best business generators to surpass the results that others achieve. Why?

Because you want to produce the same results.

That's your goal. That's what marketing and business development are all about. Too often, professionals think the answer to effective marketing comes down merely to better marketing tools—like public relations, seminars, advertising, brochures, logos, Web sites, and direct mail.

That kind of marketing is *meaningless* without the proper foundation. Look at what distinguishes the best individual business generators from the others. They don't aim to have the best marketing. Simply put, the critical difference comes down to their entrepreneurial behavior and the quality of their personal marketing effort. Study the best business generators that you know and you'll find that their *success isn't accidental*. There are specific skills, attitudes, behavior, daily habits, and patterns of action that lead to results.

Our goal is to make it easy for you to grasp these principles and then quickly apply them to your practice. To this end, we've simplified and systematized the lessons and proven practices of the best business generators, so, in effect, you can use this system as a blueprint for building your own practice.

Part I—How to Become a Top Business Producer

Think about people you know who excel at business development. Consider their personal style. What personal skills are strongest? How do they relate to their clients? How do they spend their time? *What do they do that others at your firm don't do?*

Keep your conclusions in mind as we go on. Compare your impressions to the attributes that we'll be covering here.

The purpose of Part I is to coach you toward building your personal success strategy and action plan—by “modeling” or emulating the behavior of the best business generators. Here’s another way to look at it. *In Part I, you’ll be mentored by the top producers in the profession.* You’ll benefit by seeing what it takes to produce the top-notch results you desire—from the professionals who are already generating a substantial base of business.

As you’ll see in this section, we’ve isolated two basic sets of key factors that drive the business development success of the top producers. Let’s introduce these two aspects now and cover them in more detail later Chapters 1 through 6. Specifically, rainmakers excel due to their *attitudes* and *aptitudes*.

Attitude means that the best business generators share a common mind-set: they think about business development in a way that amplifies the intensity, vitality, and quality of their practice building effort. They work harder and smarter at it. They see business development possibilities in all aspects of their workday. And they enjoy the entrepreneurial challenge of building their personal base of business.

Working through Chapter 1, you’ll see how you can build and reinforce these same attitudes. Because, your *attitude* is under your *personal control*, you can shift the way you think about your day. By setting the proper goals and reinforcing them on a disciplined, daily basis, you’ll begin to think like the top producers do. You’ll see how this attitude translates into greater, more productive activity and, ultimately, more new business.

Even though the top business generators have different personalities and operating styles, they do share similar aptitudes in business development habits, plans of attack, and personal marketing systems. Once you understand *why* these aptitudes lead to success, you can concentrate on using them to develop a step-by-step, systematic approach to build your own practice. Simply put, if you *start doing the same things, you’ll start to produce similar results*.

This personal marketing system defines the specific, custom-tailored, and step-by-step consistent actions that you’ll take to achieve superior results. In a sense, this will become your daily personal marketing “to do” list. It will build the hustle, consistency, and disciplined effort required for mastering business development. Over time, you’ll see improvements and successes that will drive you to increased daily marketing action.

Here’s how you’ll build your personal marketing plan through this book.

Chapter 1	Establish the right attitude
Chapter 2	Focus on your best opportunities
Chapter 3	Market to your existing clients
Chapter 4	Obtain quality referrals
Chapter 5	Build powerful alliances
Chapter 6	Develop an effective network

Our goal is to give you a blueprint for building your practice. Again, using the best business generators as a “model of success,” you’ll build a highly patterned, systematic, and disciplined plan of attack.

As you'll see, the best business generators put the most important and productive actions first. Here's another critical point, the bulk of the marketing system—items two through five—all involve relationship marketing. That's the secret of the best business generator's success: leverage. By building exceptional relationships, they magnify and amplify their personal marketing effort, and turn others into a sales force for them.

Also, notice that it is an “inside out” approach. Clients are always your first priority. Then, you build your network. As a final step, you go directly to the outside market.

Part II—How to Create High-Impact Marketing at Your Firm

In Part II, “How to Create High-Impact Marketing at Your Firm,” we will show you step by step how to create a effective game plan to grow your practice. The first chapter in Part II is Chapter 7, which covers a bottom-up approach to building a marketing plan for your firm. Chapter 8 covers the development and management of a formalized marketing function. Chapters 9 through 20 cover all marketing tools your firm might consider using:

- Brochures
- Newsletters
- Press releases
- Advertising
- Direct mail
- Public speaking
- Publishing
- Seminars
- Trade shows
- Telemarketing
- Branding
- Web

Each chapter contains step-by-step instructions for using these tools to their full potential. Marketing is a series of choices. First, you can choose to do it, or not to do it. Presumably, you're at least considering the benefits of marketing (we'll assume that's why you're reading this manual). You've probably realized by now that—like life in general—marketing offers a lot of opportunities, stirs up a lot of questions, and provides no concrete answers. The one thing we can guarantee about marketing is that, if you dedicate yourself to doing it (in some way, shape, or form), *and* keep plugging away, *you will get results*.

If you promote yourself and your services using any of the methods we discuss, you will eventually see the effects of your actions. Choose the methods you feel most comfortable with, design a plan of attack, and keep at it. The key to the whole battle is persistence. In marketing, as in life, the moment you stop trying, you are all that you will ever be.

Now, read on and see how you can build your practice.

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INTRODUCTION

After twenty years of studying, learning, applying, analyzing, adapting, and consulting on the subject, here's our definition of *marketing professional services*:

Marketing is anything that puts you in front of someone you want to do business with.

This definition frees you up to be creative and acknowledges that any contact you have with clients, prospective clients and referral sources is marketing. The key word in that last sentence is contact.

Marketing Truth. Marketing is a contact sport.

Marketing should be considered any kind of interaction that you or your firm has between clients, prospective clients, nonclients, referral sources, prospective referral sources, and recruits. In short, *everybody* (including salespeople, the Paychex salesperson, the postal service person) and *anybody* who steps into or calls your office or comes into contact with you or your people should be viewed as a marketing opportunity.

Every person your firm comes in contact with knows about 250 people—their own personal network. When you think of powerful marketing, remember you're broadcasting not to individuals, but potentially to that number of individuals times 250.

(As an aside, we've determined that 250 is a good number from interviewing funeral home directors and caterers. On the average, 250 people or so show up for someone's funeral. Also, caterers say that if the average bride and groom could afford it, they would invite about 250 people each.)



WHAT YOU ARE REALLY MARKETING

The marketing of professional services adds and emphasizes something completely different from the consequences of the provided service itself. In promoting accounting and consulting services, all we have to market and sell as CPAs is us!

No matter what firm you work for, people buy other people; they buy into the individuals they interact with. This explains why you may at times lose business to less-qualified firms. Your prospective buyer often has no point of reference or expertise in the area of service you are promoting.

Real Life Marketing Example. One of our first consulting projects in training CPAs and consultants how to sell and market their services came from the managing partner of an international firm after it had just lost the largest client in the entire country to a large local firm based in a major city.

Interestingly, the firm that lost the client is known in the industry as a very good technical firm. The local firm that won the client is not.

Here's what happened: The managing partner of the local firm had met the CEO of the client eight years earlier and began cultivating a relationship with the

client. (Business is relationships.) He met with the CEO on a regular basis to see how things were going, took him out to lunch, joined the same clubs, sent him articles, took him to ball games—you get the picture. (Please remember that this is the biggest client of an international firm, a jewel of a prize that would be worth the effort).

Six years later, the partner in charge of the client (from the old firm) retired. He had enjoyed an excellent relationship with the CEO (which is a good reason why the CEO didn't switch in those years despite being "romanced" by the other CPA). This partner was replaced by a junior partner who had little or no contact, nor relationship with the client. An obvious mistake, you say? Happens all of the time. Even small firms regularly replace key people without regard to the lack of existing relationship with the client and then ignore ways to build that relationship. Why? Because most professionals see the most important part of the client relationship as being the technical work done, for example, the project, tax return, or audit, rather than the relationship between client and professional service provider.

Two years later, in the eighth year of pursuit, the managing partner of the local firm reeled in the biggest fish of his career: the largest client of an international firm.

This theory of how people buy intangible professional services versus tangible items also accounts for why you do not have people ordering consulting engagements, tax returns, and compilations over the phone with their credit cards. Do you get a lot of walk-in traffic, right off of the street, where people come in with their information and leave with a consulting project or tax return? That's just not the way the great majority of people purchase intangible professional services.

Because our services are "invisible" and sometimes considered generic, many firms go out of their way to distinguish themselves from the competition. The concept of "branding" is a hot topic today. Still, the decision to purchase is made based on interaction with the service provider (or who they think will be the service provider) and the buyers.



PERCEPTION IS REALITY

Every contact must be considered marketing: telephone conversations, financial statements, how your tax returns look, work done at the client's office, how your people look and act, and so on.

You are always marketing yourself, whether you think so or not. The people who work for you are always marketing the firm and themselves whether they know it (or care) or not. Marketing is broadcasting; its very essence is communication.

You and your firm are always sending messages out into the world, as well as throughout your own office, that affect whether your firm is perceived the way you want it to be and that may determine whether you get enough of the kinds of opportunities you want.

Everything about you and your firm broadcasts a message. What does your office look like? Carpets dirty or old? Walls banged up? Are your stationary, business cards, and Web site affecting the kind of image you want to project to attract the kind of client and referral source and business that you want? How do your staff members treat the clients and everyone else who comes in contact with your firm? How is your phone answered? How do your staff members handle e-mails? Do clients feel like long-lost relatives with money when they call, or do they feel like strangers or taken for granted? Can they even understand the name of the firm when the phone is answered?

Recently we had a client relate to us that she had visited a CPA's office to get him involved with the local community center. She, not an accountant, was not impressed. Why? His office had nothing on the walls, no pictures, no citations, no diplomas, no books, nothing (no, he had not just moved in). Her reaction, that of a possible prospective client in the future, and a potent referral source, was that he wasn't a competent accountant! The visual effect of his office (or lack thereof) had that negative outcome on her judgment and her influence on the 250 people she knows.

Marketing Truth. Every single interaction you have must be considered marketing.
You are always broadcasting a message, so be careful about what communication you are sending and its intended effect.

Therefore, is billing marketing? Yes. Some firms send out bills that read "January services—\$5,000." Other firms, which we have determined have less fee resistance (by interviewing their clients), send out completely detailed billings describing the work performed for the client. One of our CPA firm clients details every single schedule it produces for its clients on a 1040 or 1120 return on its bills. Outrageous? Yes. Time-consuming? Yes. Adds value in the client's eyes? Absolutely. The client now sees what he or she is getting. And the firm's fees are at least 25 percent higher than its competitors for the same kind of work, and it is certainly no more competent or expert at taxation than its rivals are.

You and your firm are always sending messages into the world that affect whether your firm is perceived the way you want it to be and may determine whether you get enough of the kinds of opportunities you want.

Your personal image, the way you look to others, should be congruent with the types of clients you want to attract.

We're not spending a whole lot of time on this subject, because the concept of business casual seems to have taken over almost every firm. It appears people can dress pretty much anyway they please these days.

However, we don't know who your target clients are, and they may be different than your current clients. So you really should consider taking a look at your wardrobe, hair style, and overall look, to decide if it's appropriate to the type of client and referral source you want to attract.

If you have doubts about how to dress or need help in making wardrobe decisions, we suggest an image consultant. Often these professionals will consider more than the clothes you wear, but also how you come across in personal situations. It is a good investment, one we're glad we made, and has contributed to our success in attracting those clients in our target market.



MARKETING VERSUS SELLING

It is important to create a distinction between marketing professional services and selling professional services because they are very different in purpose. We don't want to expect results from marketing that can be accomplished only through active selling.

Most professionals confuse marketing with selling. The truth is that business schools concentrate mostly on the technical skills necessary to be a good service provider. Very few schools, if any, teach you how to run the professional practice, how to build it, how to communicate better with your clients, how to keep your clients happy (besides the technical aspects), how to win friends and influence people, how to manage your employees (and fellow partners—now there's a challenge!). You get the idea.

In order to be better at marketing, and get excellent results, you must know exactly what the differences are between marketing and selling.

Marketing gets you there. Selling is what you do once you get there to convert the prospect into a client.



PUTTING MARKETING IN PERSPECTIVE

The art of marketing and selling professional CPA services is relatively new. It is only since 1978 that CPA and consulting firms have been allowed to actively promote their services via the media and through active solicitation of prospective clients. Some states, like Florida, prohibited "cold calling" regarding certain service lines until 1993. Today, procuring clients is an open field limited only by one's imagination, skill level, time constraints, drive, and budget. Before you begin your marketing efforts, you should review the AICPA Code of Professional Conduct and your state regulations to make sure you understand your professional requirements and boundaries.

We will guide you away from making lot of common mistakes in marketing professional services. Many firms and CPAs and consultants still market and sell their services as if they were tangible goods, like computers or cars or blue jeans. Unfortunately, it's not that easy. In selling and marketing professional services, there is nothing to see, feel, taste, or smell. Some of the concepts behind marketing tangible items and marketing intangible professional services are the same, *but the manner in which they are marketed and the end result to be expected must be different.*

The concepts of frequency of contact, market penetration, market share, quality of marketing materials, and projecting the right image for your service are the same for marketing professional services or tangible items. It's just that the way your services would be marketed and the end result, what you can expect to have happen from excellent marketing, is totally different.

Marketing Truth. All that excellent marketing of professional services can be expected to do is provide more opportunities, not complete the actual sale of the item.

Think about marketing this way: Marketing tools are simply equipment—like a golf club is to a golfer. Getting the best clubs money can buy will not make you shoot par. Lowering your score or becoming a pro depends primarily on your skill as a golfer. And that comes from dedicated, continuous application of what works.

Also, remember that most marketing that you're familiar with isn't appropriate for professional services. Many CPAs and consultants make expensive mistakes by trying out marketing approaches that work for copying machines, peanut butter, and soap. This kind of product-oriented marketing simply is a waste of time.

So, what's the answer? Believe this: If you want to get better results, you must find ways to become more like the best business generators. Adopt their proven approaches to building your practice. Skillfully emulate their behavior and consistently practice their tactics on a daily basis.

What can you expect if you follow this advice? You'll find that getting better at business development is fully under your personal control (and can even be enjoyable, as you put into action only those strategies that have been proven successful). That's right. All professional services marketing success boils down to you as an individual. But don't take our word for it. See how the best business generators operate. The top producers know that what prospects and clients buy is you—your expertise, ability to communicate and capability to solve their problems. Realize that you are the product—and you are also your own product manager and sales force. Take control now of your personal marketing strategy.

Here's a final point to keep in mind before we proceed. *The best business generators know that business development is a skill—just as auditing, tax preparation, or consulting are also skills.* Moreover, as a professional, you already possess a great deal of the personal skills you need to bring in a lot of work. Using the best business generators as a model, all you need to do is to apply your existing strengths—and build a few more skills on a focused, disciplined basis. You don't need to be a natural-born salesperson or self-promoter to excel. You just have to shift your thinking a bit—and practice a consistent, step-by-step system on a daily basis.



THE 12 BIGGEST MISTAKES IN MARKETING

Since 1980, we've observed the mistakes of many CPAs and consultants in marketing themselves and their practices. This section outlines the 12 most common and critical

errors these people make when they invest their priceless time, effort, energy, and resources in marketing. If you can avoid these errors, your marketing effectiveness will improve dramatically:

Mistake 1. Being Passive

It's a fact: the great majority of CPAs and consultants ignore marketing altogether.

They're too busy getting the work out to invest time, thought, or (heaven forbid) money into marketing. Many of them use excuses, such as "Our work speaks for itself." Or, "We build our practice the way we always have, through technical excellence." Or, "Marketing is demeaning to our profession."

In preparation for writing *Mastering the Art of Marketing Professional Services: A Step-by-Step Best Practices Guide*, we interviewed more than 200 managing partners of CPA firms all over the country. Firms ranged in size from sole practitioners to the largest offices of major firms. We wanted to know what these firms were doing differently in order to deal with increased competition and a changing profession. Here are the results:

Less than 15 percent of the firms we interviewed were doing anything different regarding their marketing programs, being proactive in their personal marketing efforts, or even changing the way they did business with their clients from the year before. The consensus from our interviews was that CPAs in the profession, as a whole, felt they were too busy to worry about generating new business or changing the way they went to market. Some had hired marketing people and assumed the issues we discuss in this book were taken care of.

That's great news for you! That's why we say, "There is very little competition." However, if your firm and your partners and staff aren't marketing your firm actively, you're not competition to anyone else, either.

Those firms that are marketing-passive are sitting ducks to their more aggressive competitors. If you haven't done much marketing in the past, now is a good opportunity, starting with this publication, to get with the program.

Mistake 2. Having the Wrong Expectations of Marketing

Take a moment and think about this question before you answer it: What's the purpose of marketing a *tangible* item like a personal computer or an automobile?

To create a desire? To get the name out? To get product information into the hands of the buyer? To build a reputation?

NO!

The only purpose of marketing a tangible item is to sell it immediately! Right now! They want you to march into that dealership and buy their new Fuzzmobile this very minute! At the highest possible price! Whether you need it or not!

And, you will buy the tangible item because of the *item*, itself.

How many of us have had to live through that humbling experience known as purchasing an automobile? If the dealer has the car you want, at the right price, are you going to buy it even if they aren't necessarily nice, or professional, with you? You either like the tie you're looking at in the store, or you don't. The personal interaction with the seller has less to do with the purchase than the item itself.

Marketing Truth. People do not buy professional, intangible services the same way they purchase tangible items.

With an intangible professional service, there's nothing to see, hear, feel, and smell! What you market, sell, and deliver is air.

We need to take a solid look at what people are really buying when they purchase professional services: They're buying you. No matter what firm you work for, big name or no name, the ultimate decision to purchase is based on interaction with real human beings.

Yes, if you spend an absolute fortune on advertising and entertaining and getting the word out, about five years from now, the community will more readily recognize the name of your firm. Name recognition doesn't come overnight, and inexpensively. But, all that will do, possibly, is open the door a little wider. You still will get hired, or not hired, after they meet you! There are a lot of easier and less costly ways to get your foot in the door, and we'll show them to you.

Marketing Truth. People buy other people, not firms.

Branding is a good idea, as it makes you and your firm more readily recognizable and memorable. It will probably get you more opportunities. But it is not the major determining factor in getting the client.

No matter if you work for the best-known firm in town, or the oldest firm in town, or any firm, the ultimate decision to use a service provider is based on human interaction.

Perhaps in the past you, or one of your colleagues, have come back after losing a sales opportunity and explained it away saying that the prospective client wanted to go with a bigger-name firm, or something like that. Be careful. The reason given for not doing business is often not the real reason. People don't like hurting other people's feelings. That's the way we're brought up. So, the buyer makes up an excuse, such as "Your fees are too high" or "We need to go with a bigger firm," to placate you. They probably won't tell you the real reason because they don't want confrontation.

Our experience as marketing consultants to the CPA profession overwhelmingly indicates that business is relationships.

That's good news: You don't have to invest a fortune on marketing to be effective at it. You will, however, have to get involved in the marketing effort and be willing to carry out the actions learned in this course.

And, many firms think that if they conduct one seminar or run an ad, they're going to get business from it. Sorry—that's not how it works (although you could get lucky, conceivably).

Marketing Truth. Marketing is a process, not an event.

Marketing is a cumulative process, like a hurricane. Each marketing effort builds on what you've done in the past. One-shot marketing events rarely produce business—save your money and your time.

Mistake 3. Investing in Useless Marketing Tools

In this book we'll cue you in to what tools work.

Mistake 4. Engaging in Me-Too Marketing

Does your marketing look like everyone else's? Do you do the same kinds of marketing that your competitors do?

Marketing is one very important way you can separate yourself from the competition. Me-too marketing dilutes your message and could send prospective clients to your rivals.

Me-too marketing also tends to be quite boring. Avoid uninteresting marketing—CPAs and consultants need to garner as much attention, in a professional manner of course, as possible because the very nature of our business can be construed by the public as not necessarily fascinating nor even that important.

Mistake 5. Not Marketing to Your Own Clients

A good percentage of your new, incremental business must come from your existing clients and their referrals. Yet, most firms ignore their own clients when it comes to offering them new or additional services and treat their clients like “annuities” that won't disappear because they are good accountants or service providers.

Most firms ignore their own backyard, and outside resources wind up selling services to the firm's existing clients that could be provided by the firm. After interviewing over 600 large and small clients of CPA firms for this publication, we discovered that most don't even know what other services their CPAs can perform for them.

Worse, it's those outside resources that your clients use, instead of you, that infect the client relationship. Once you have an outside resource doing work for your client, the relationship is at risk because sharp service providers try to bring their buddies into your client relationship. It secures their position and pays back referrals received (from other CPA and consulting firms).

It's also important to continue to market to your clients to let them know how valuable you are—why using you is such a good idea. One reason auto companies advertise so heavily is because they want additional purchases from their existing customers and referrals. They constantly send home the value of their product because they know it's much more difficult to attract business from someone who has never done business with them before than to keep and get more business from someone they already have in their stable as a customer.

Much of the growth and profitability of firms that are extremely successful is due to the additional (generally, nonattest) services sold to existing clients, often on a value-billing basis.

Mistake 6. Ignoring Internal Marketing

All of the marketing in the world, no matter how great it is, won't be nearly as effective if everyone isn't on the bandwagon back at the ranch. Successful firms involve everyone in marketing the firm's services.

Did you know that everyone in your firm is conveying a message all of the time to everybody about your firm? That's the essence of marketing. How is your phone answered? What do your financial statements look like? What does your office look like? What do your people look like? Are they dressing business casual or too casual? How do they treat your clients? What message are you trying to convey, but aren't?

If your firm and your people aren't in alignment with the kind of client you're trying to attract, marketing can't work.

Everyone in the firm needs his or her own personal marketing plan. Even the receptionist. Everyone needs to know what's expected of him or her as his or her part of the marketing effort.

Mistake 7. Searching for Too Many Referral Sources

A significant portion of your new business, about 25 percent, needs to come from referral sources, outside of clients. What if your percentages differ from ours? You may be doing something very right (for example, getting a lot of new work from clients) but ignoring your referral relationships.

Most CPAs and consultants don't understand what it takes to have a true referral relationship. We'll discuss that later. Most professionals also look at referral relationships as a numbers game: "The more attorneys I know, the more people who will send me business!" Not necessarily. The best business generators in the accounting and legal professions most often have fewer referral sources than their less productive rivals.

Mistake 8. Marketing to Too Many Different Markets

We often start consulting engagements with discussions about exactly what kind of new business the firm would want. Most CPA and consulting firms use the "Chinese menu" approach to marketing: You want it? We got it! If that diluted approach works for you and your firm, keep using it. We find repeatedly, though, that many firms invest a lot of money and effort into marketing technical expertise that nobody cares about. We see many firms pursue markets they shouldn't, thus diluting the overall marketing effectiveness.

Now, we don't want to downplay the importance of technical expertise as the foundation for all good marketing. But you have to know what kind of technical expertise the market wants before you market it.

Also, promoting to markets where you don't already have a presence can be a long and difficult road. Later we'll discuss the concept of "cloning" your best clients.

Mistake 9. Lack of Day-to-Day Consistency and Persistence

On what day does Toyota not advertise? Christmas? New Year's? Nope—Toyota advertises every single day.

As we said earlier, marketing is a process, not an event. Marketing needs to be conducted even during your busy season, to be most effective. Otherwise, you have to get all geared up all over again and almost start from scratch on May 1 or whenever it's over.

Marketing Truth. There is time in everyone's day to go to market: It's called lunch (or breakfast, or dinner). Most people eat lunch, even during busy season. However, we usually eat lunch by ourselves or at our desks or with our friends at the firm.

We suggest not less than two lunches or breakfasts or after-work meetings a week with clients, referral sources, prospective clients, and others, even during busy season. The CPAs and consultants who are committed to successful marketing don't leave the marketplace during busy season; many increase their exposure because they know that busy season is simply the best time of the year to do marketing.

Mistake 10. Being Cheap

How much do your most successful clients spend promoting their businesses? What would happen if they stopped?

The most successful firms we know set aside a percentage of gross revenues and treat it as a fixed cost, like rent, to do marketing. Perhaps the most successful firm in the country that we know invests 4 percent of gross revenues in marketing. In the beginning, that percentage was higher for them. The most successful engineering firm we know of invests 10 percent of gross revenues in marketing. Few CPA and consulting firms invest more than 1 or 2 percent, and usually that includes nonmarketing items buried there by the partners.

Similarly, most firms and individuals don't take the skills of personal marketing and selling seriously enough, nor are they willing to invest in their people, to properly prepare the partners and staff to succeed at bringing in more business. Less than 10 percent of the major firms in the U.S. provide material training to their people in this area and then they wonder why they lose golden opportunities, get beat up on fees, or simply don't generate enough golden opportunities in the first place.

Folks, marketing and selling are the greatest skills in the world, and they can be learned.

To amplify the productivity of your firm's marketing efforts, involve your people, you included, in as much marketing and selling skill development as you possibly can.

Marketing Truth. Marketing is an investment, not a cost!

Mistake 11. Relying on Marketing People to Do It All

Some firms have hired marketing directors in recent times to handle the marketing chores. These are the most frustrated people we know.

Almost every single CPA and consulting firm we've ever talked to that has allocated someone to the marketing function (sometimes a clerical person with no real knowledge or background in marketing) has expected that someone to be the one to bring in the business.

No, no—that's not how it works! If marketing and generating new business worked that way, every firm would be on that bandwagon.

Everyone must be involved in the marketing effort! The partners cannot pass it on to the staff and to the marketing person.

Marketing Truth. All marketing does is provide the opportunity.

Good marketing puts you in the position to get that opportunity more often than the competition. Somebody still has to show up and get the work (that's called selling)!

The biggest complaint I hear from marketing directors is: "I can't get our people to do anything."

Mistake 12. Not Following Through on Leads


Good leads are hard to come by for most of us. People that don't follow through on marketing leads should be ashamed of themselves. We've found that it's the same people who complain about not enough new business but who don't jump on referrals and hot leads immediately before they cool off.

The longer one waits to follow through on that referral or interest shown by a prospective or existing client, the colder that lead gets and the harder to convert into business.

Yes, you do have time to follow through on leads—it's called lunch.

**HOW TO BECOME
A TOP BUSINESS
PRODUCER**

part I



**ATTITUDE IS THE
FOUNDATION OF
YOUR SUCCESS**

chapter 1

There is one clear lesson that we've learned over the years:

Marketing Truth. We feel that building the right attitude is about 80 percent of your personal marketing success.

Let's make this clear. Frankly, without a shift in your thinking, no amount of marketing know-now will matter.

Why? Because, we've proven time and time again that achieving breakthroughs in personal marketing, client development, and selling means that you first must change how you think about your business day, your job, and your personal strengths. Otherwise, you won't make the changes in your day-to-day action that lead to success.



THE IMPORTANCE OF “RIGHT” THINKING

In Exhibit 1-1, “The I-Hate-Marketing Learning Model” we can see how the “right” thinking will drive your success. Here's what this means for you:

Marketing Truth. Basically, the way you think about business development determines the way you act.

For example, if you see yourself as a technician, you'll act like a technician. That denotes that you'll focus more on getting the work out and dedicate yourself to the high technical quality of your work product. There is nothing wrong with that way of thinking.

But, if you want to get better at business development, you've got to build a strong business development *attitude* (thinking process). That may require a simple shift in the way you think about your daily priorities. The best business generators see the business development aspects in everything they do. For example, they see the delivery of a work product to a client as a relationship-building opportunity. Therefore, instead of simply mailing out a tax return, they take the tax return out to the client, explain the results, discuss the implications, and find other ways to be of service. Without the right attitude, the best business generators wouldn't have taken the kind of action that turns into new business.

The second important point is this. The right thinking makes you set the right daily priorities, so you consistently take the right kind of actions. Linking the right attitudes with the right aptitudes means you'll aim toward taking the *actions that are most productive in building your practice*. And you'll do it consistently.

Therefore, if you think about business development in the right way and take the best actions consistently and systematically, you'll feel better about business development. You'll feel in control, as you'll discover that you can get direct results through added effort.

Also, you'll feel more comfortable and confident in your business development capability. And, ultimately, you'll feel more enthusiastic about business development—and you'll be eager to do more.

Eventually, you'll experience the tangible *results* that you're after. The right thinking means that you take consistent actions. Then, your practice will grow with new clients, vital networks, additional business with existing clients, and more referrals. And these results will vitalize you even further.

Accordingly, this is the right place to start—thinking about business development in the right way. The best business generators have learned to think in a specific way over time, and so can you.



A THREE-STEP PROCESS TO LAY THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR SUCCESS

We've identified three key attitudes that distinguish the best business generators from everyone else and developed them into the following three steps.

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- Step 1.* Hustle Smarter
 - Step 2.* Bleed Business Development
 - Step 3.* Act Like an Entrepreneur
-

Step 1. Hustle Smarter

The first attitude of the best business generators in the accounting profession is to hustle smarter, which means they get into more business development action on a daily basis. Their success is not based on being lucky or well-connected. Nor is it based on a grand marketing strategy. Instead, they do the basic practice building steps each and every day, no matter what else interferes.

We've found this attitude in each top producer that we've worked with over the years.

Real Life Marketing Example. Perhaps the best example is one of the top producers Mike met while working at Arthur Andersen & Co. This man had single-handedly transformed a medium-sized office from a meek market presence to the dominant accounting firm in his town over a five year time frame. And this growth was largely due to his personal efforts. In fact, his reputation for being aggressive at business development was so renown, he was nicknamed the Great White Shark, and he was proud of it. Eager to learn his secrets of practice development, Mike asked him about it one day. Here's a direct quote.

All I do is write down five business development action steps each day on my to-do list. And, no matter what, I make sure that I follow through on these five things. Some days I do more and other opportunities arise without me having to generate them—but I always do those five things.

Now, take five action steps a day. Multiply it by five days a week and you get twenty-five actions a week. OK, multiply twenty-five action steps a week by fifty weeks a year, and you get 1,250 actions steps taken in a year, at a minimum. I

know that my average competitors aren't approaching this amount of activity. So, even if I was a complete moron, I'd get some business out of what I'm doing.

I found that the harder I worked at business development, the luckier I get. And, over time, I've gotten smarter. Now, I know which marketing activities pay off—and which are useless.

It's sounds almost too simple. But, it's true. To get results from business development you have to find a way to do more of it on a daily basis. That's what we call hustling smarter. Here are some examples.

- Hustle is the difference between thinking about all the people that you could be contacting and actually contacting two each day.
- Hustle is the difference between going to lunch by yourself or with a colleague at your firm and taking clients out to lunch to discuss their business, listen to their problems, and look for more ways to serve them.
- Hustle is the difference between simply attending a conference—and passively listening to the speakers—and actively “working the conference” and systematically making good contacts.

Therefore, hustle means doing more business development each and every day by setting minimum acceptable standards for activity and then following through on a disciplined, daily basis.

Right now, we imagine that a lot of you are resisting. We know—you're already busy. You've got to manage your projects, answer client phone calls, review the work of others, and get your own work done. You're swamped. That's the bad news about hustling smarter.

But the good news is that it's not that difficult to out-hustle the vast majority of your competitors. Because they use the fact that they are busy to put off doing anything at all.

What we found is that hustle is really a mindset. And it's a conscious decision that you have to make each and every day. That's right. It's not necessarily working longer hours. It's just doing a few things each and every day. You build marketing actions into your schedule and squeeze the most you can out of them.

So, what are some ways that you can hustle smarter? Here is what you can do when putting these ideas into action.

Start Small

Aim to do just one or two more business development actions each day for the next month. It doesn't have to be anything major. Keep it simple. For example, clip an article and mail it to a client, prospect, or referral source with a personal note attached. Or make a phone call and invite a client to lunch next week. What you do is less important right now than the fact that you make it a daily habit. And, over time, to build in more and more action as you see fit.

Even by itself, this approach can have a big payoff for you.

Real Life Marketing Example. Recently, after attending one of our training programs, a young staff person realized he had to do more business development to progress in his career. He decided his single business development action would be to ask his favorite client for a referral. Realize that this took a bit of courage, since he had never done it before.

So, he scheduled the lunch and asked for the referral. Guess what happened? He got one! More so, it turned into a sizeable client for his firm.

Now, think about this example. Hustling smarter really boiled down to a making a simple decision, and taking control by scheduling a lunch with that particular client.

Use Lunches and Breakfasts to Market and Sell

Let's face it: You have to eat anyway—even during busy season. So, use this time more effectively to make contact with people who can help you. It can be a client, lawyer, banker, or somebody else who can bring you work.

Don't, however, just go to lunch and talk about anything. You must have a predefined business development purpose in mind. You want to be in control. For example, let's say that you're having lunch with a banker. What's your goal? You want to explore what mutual opportunities exist and how you can promote together. Find out if she has any customers who are dissatisfied with their existing CPA or consultant and secure an introduction.

In other words, we suggest that you have an agenda for lunch. Go to meetings with a purpose. Find specific ways to do more business.

Make lunches and breakfasts your "sacred" marketing time. Schedule them out in advance. You'll find yourself hustling smarter, more quickly and quite painlessly by using this tactic.

Set Give-Up Goals

If you're going to add more business development actions into your daily routine, you have to free up time by eliminating other activities. Otherwise, you won't get to follow through on the new business development priorities.

In other words, if you are going to do more business development—you'll have to do less of something else.

Real Life Marketing Example. We had a client who found that she was going to a lot of technical conferences, where there was little or no business development possibility.

After thinking about it, she decided to cancel her registration at a technical conference, even though she enjoyed it. Instead, she went to a conference organized by an industry association that was recommended by one of her clients. When she arrived, she found that there were lots of prospective clients that she could mingle with. As a result, she met a prospect who became a very important client.

So, she gave up a time-consuming activity with no business development possibility, in return for an activity with a solid business development purpose.

Stop here for just a second. Think about how your day is set up. Take a look at your calendar for today. Could you have substituted a business development action for something on your to-do list? Look for the items that you can eliminate or delegate to someone else, and replace them with business development action.

Also, consider a business development action that you could get others to do on your behalf. Could your secretary or staff get some letters out for you? What else could they do that would free up your time?

Fill Down Time With Business Development Activity

Even if you're a good time manager, you still face some down time. Consider how can you fill it up with business development action.

For example, if you take a train to work, don't read the newspaper on the way. Write personal notes to clients and prospects instead. Review your schedule to brainstorm on what you can do to bring in business that day.

Or, you're in a reception area, waiting to meet with your client. Don't just sit around. Make a few phone calls instead, while you have the chance. Or jot down the referrals or introductions that you want to request from the client you're meeting. Perhaps, grab the industry journal sitting on the end table. Make note of an article that applies to one of your service areas, and make it a point to mention it to your client.

Or, when you're in your car, don't just listen to your car radio—listen to a tape on business development instead. Get audiotapes of important industry conferences so that you are up to speed. Use the car phone to keep in touch.

Now, take a look at these four ideas. We recognize that you're busy—you're not a salesperson who is supposed to be selling all of the time. But, consider the best business generators. Don't you think that they're busy too? In fact, many of them are in leadership positions at their firm. And this puts even more demands on their time. But, despite these scheduling burdens, they make the time to hustle.

So, all we ask you to do is to try the same approach. Consciously squeeze more business development into your day. Fill in the gaps in your schedule with solid business development. That's what we're talking about when we suggest that you hustle smarter.

Getting Started

To help you get started, we've put together a personal brainstorming exercise, Exhibit 1-2 "Hustle Smarter: A Personal Brainstorming Exercise." Take some time out right now to complete it. Remember, the key to hustling smarter is to consistently make business development a top priority in your daily schedule.

The purpose of the last step of the exercise, "Step 4. Go the Extra Mile," is to get you even more closely tuned into the best business generators' frame of mind. After all, the best business generators sell and market as if their professional livelihood depended on it!

If you're a sole practitioner or managing partner, you may already have this orientation. But, others of you will have to strengthen your resolve—and set more aggressive daily activity goals. In other words, sell and market as if your professional success depends on your ability to bring in business. Act as if you were on full commission, instead of salary. Then, bring this frame of mind to your daily setting of priorities. You'll find that the harder and smarter you work at business development, the luckier you'll get.

Step 2. Bleed Business Development

The best business generators see business development possibilities in every aspect of their day. Whether they are meeting with clients, calling a client's attorney or banker, attending a chamber of commerce lunch, or planning their social calendar, somehow and somehow they'll find a business development tie-in. They think more about business development than they do about other aspects of their job. Moreover, they see business development possibilities in everything they do, whether work related or social activities.

Rainmakers see business development possibilities in even the most routine and mundane activities. Take billing for example. Many top producers don't simply send an impersonal bill out to their clients. They may send along a brief memo that summarizes the value of the work to the client, instead of simply the cost associated. Some break out all the individual parts of what they do on the billing, for instance, all of the schedules of the 1040, and the individual steps of the consulting engagement so the client can see the real value, other than a cold number of dollars due.

For important clients or those they haven't seen for a while, they may talk it over in person. And, they sell the client on the value they're producing.

Their "antennae" for new business is always up. They look at every situation—a lunch, a golf outing, or even a wedding as an opportunity. They are in the habit of thinking about generating business; it's in their consciousness.

Real Life Marketing Example. This is a true story of one of our clients. The daughter of the managing partner was getting married. At the wedding reception, the managing partner was standing in the receiving line and saw somebody he'd never met before. He introduced himself and quickly discovered that this person owned his own manufacturing business. The managing partner made a mental note to seek out this person later. After dinner, as he circulated around the room, he found this guest and engaged him in a very short conversation discussion about him and his business. Wouldn't you know it? The guest wasn't pleased with his current firm. The managing partner told us he said the following words to his guest: "I'm the managing partner of the XYZ CPA and accounting firm. Should we be talking about your business?" That was his "close."

The result? By listening—by keeping his business development antenna up—he caught a prospective client in the "buying cycle" and created the appointment that turned into a new client, right at his daughter's wedding.

The best business generators simply think about business development more often because they see it as the most important part of their job and their career. So, when they plan out their day, they are constantly thinking about how business development can be factored in; it's always their top priority.

So, now let's look at how you can begin to bleed business development.

Identify the Things You Like to Do That Can Result in More Business

The best of all worlds is if you enjoy something *and* it brings you lots of business. It's also easier to do more of activities that you like.

Start finding ways to do more of those activities right now. Get the most business development payback possible. For example, if you enjoy networking, make sure that you are in the right organizations. Find the associations with the highest concentration of clients and prospects.

Or, if you like writing articles, contact the editor of a newsletter or magazine that caters to the type of clients that you want to attract. Pinpoint an area of interest or a common problem that their readers face. After you write the article, make sure that you use it to create business by mailing copies to all of your targets and clients.

Perhaps you like to speak at seminars. Find an opportunity to speak where clients and prospects gather. Load your presentation up with references to your client experiences. Be sure to get a list of attendees and follow up with a personal note.

Don't stop here. What social and community actions do you enjoy? Are you into golf? Find clients, prospects, and referral sources with a similar passion. Join the golf and country clubs where you can find prospective clients. Become visible in activities that showcase your business expertise. It doesn't have to be golf. Are you active in your church? Do you enjoy charitable work? Little League? Boy or Girl Scouts?

***Marketing Truth.** Wherever you go, you'll find business.* It almost doesn't matter which activity you choose initially, but find a way to factor in business development.

Work With the Top Producers at Your Firm

Find a way to learn from the top producers at your firm. See if they'd be willing to coach you a bit—or mentor you. Why shouldn't they? It's in their best interest to have you bring in more business; it's going to fall into their pocket.

How should you work together? Initially, meet with them. Find out what their plans are to build their practice over the next year. Find out what problems and obstacles have kept them from selling more business. See how you might help to solve some of these problems. For instance, they may need help in following through on the large number of leads that they already have. Or, they may see opportunities that they don't have time to pursue.

Real Life Marketing Example. A partner at one of our clients wanted help from one of the big producers at his firm—who resided in Washington. So, he had to figure out a way for this rainmaker to come to New York to help him build his local practice. But, he was stumped. What could he offer this person who was the best business generator in the entire firm? Well, he figured that he had nothing to lose. So, he called the partner in Washington and asked him how they could help each other out. To his surprise, he found that the Washington partner lacked the resources and time needed to complete a pet project. So, they made a deal. The New York partner would contribute some staff resources and supervise the project to completion. In return, the rainmaker would guide and counsel him. And, more importantly, he'd introduce the partner from New York to his existing Washington-based clients who had strong New York connections.

In our experience, this story is not uncommon. How can you leverage off the success of a top producer at your firm? How can you work together in a way that's mutually beneficial?

Work With the Top Producers at Allied Firms

Now, go beyond the top producers at your firm. Think about the attorneys, bankers, insurance agents, and others that you work with closely. Which ones excel at business development? Do you have good personal chemistry with them? Do you feel comfortable?

Take the next step. Set up a lunch meeting. Tap into their brain. How did they build their practices? What seems to work best for them? Do they see mutual advantage in marketing together with you?

If nothing else, schedule lunch meetings periodically, just to share ideas. You'll find that the top producers have turned business development into a game, like golf, and similarly love to share new ideas about how to get better at this game, just as they would for other pursuits. Better yet, find a way to work together more closely.

Real Life Marketing Example. One CPA we know came up with a novel approach. He specialized in estate and business planning for family-owned companies. In this work, he had teamed up with a respected insurance agent. And, on occasion, he worked with an attorney and a consulting psychologist that specialized in family business issues. Most of them were pretty good business generators in their own right, but the insurance agent was an excellent marketer. He agreed to mentor the others.

They decided to organize monthly business development meetings. They'd review each other's promotional materials and discuss enhancements. Over time, they identified opportunities for joint marketing. They began to invite guest speakers to brainstorm on additional ways to bring in business.

Needless to say, they ended up trading some pretty heavy business back and forth. But, more importantly, they became a "support group." They helped each other foster a consistent business development effort. And they all benefited.

Enhance Your Business Development Skills

The fourth way to bleed business development is to become more skillful and adept at it. Let's face it: If you think you're inadequate at something, you won't like it. And you certainly won't seek out opportunities to do more of it.

However, if something is truly important to you, you'll look for any technique, approach, or tool that might help you to perform better.

In our business, we often conduct in-house personal marketing and professional sales training workshops for CPA and consulting firms. Guess who sits in the front row paying full attention? Who do you think takes the most copious notes? Which ones participate most in the training and attempt to apply the techniques when they leave?

You guessed it. It's the best business generators—the people who already excel at business development. They are the most enthusiastic students.

Real Life Marketing Example. We were conducting a training session for a firm in St. Louis. In the morning session, we covered listening and interviewing techniques that make you more productive in face-to-face selling. About 20 minutes before the lunch break, the managing partner excused himself. He explained that he had a long-standing lunch appointment with a prospective client. Before the training, he had planned to make a presentation. After hearing what we had to say in the morning, however, he decided to leave his presentation at the office. Instead, he would simply listen and interview the prospect—using the techniques he had just learned.

After lunch, he returned to the class. It turns out that he made the sale. But, more importantly, he sold the prospect a *different service* than the one he would have presented to him. In other words, he would have tried to sell the prospect something that the prospect didn't want to buy.

He made a sale he might have missed if he hadn't been open to hearing new ideas or learning new skills.

Take a cue from the best business generators. Work on your business development skills. What skills do you need to get better at?

Here are a few to consider:

- Public speaking
- Persuasive writing
- Personal marketing
- Professional selling skills
- Relationship management
- Designing presentations
- Networking skills
- Working industry conferences

- Special services (for example, litigation support)
- Various certification courses (for example, becoming a CFP, BVA, CFE, or Series 6)

Before you go on, ask yourself a question. What skills are going to be most important for your success? Isn't business development at the top of the list? Now, pick a course. Get signed up today.

Believe us. Business development is a learnable skill—it's not solely a natural talent. Anybody can improve and excel over time. But, you have to want it and work at it just like you've worked hard to build your technical skills. And, remember, the more skillful you become, the more you'll like business development. Consequently, you'll be spurred on to do even more.

Let's move on now to the final way to bleed business development.

Recognize That You Are Marketing and Selling All the Time

We briefly talked about this earlier. You're already marketing and selling all the time, even if you don't realize it. When you do work for your clients, you are always sending a marketing message. Every interaction with a client indicates how much you care about them and how well you understand their business. Based on your marketing, they may perceive you as a valued adviser. Or, instead, they could view you as simply a technician. Your success in marketing your quality of work and service determines whether your clients continue to hire you—and whether to ask you for more help.

When you go to lunch with a prospective client or a referral source, you are making some kind of marketing impression. If you handle the event properly, they'll see you as a valued contact, one who impresses them enough to refer clients to for service. However, if you don't market right, the referrals will never come.

You are also selling ideas all the time. Whether you trying to persuade a client to write off its inventory or to get its financial records to you on a timely basis, it's all selling.

***Marketing Truth.** Remember you are the marketing message.* So, what do you do? Treat all important interactions as a marketing opportunity. That's what the best business generators do.

When you go to lunch with a client, don't think about what you want to eat. Instead, think about your interviewing strategy to find out what your client's aches, hurts, needs, wants, concerns, and desires are. What are the key problems they're facing? What can you do to enhance the quality of your client relationship? What ideas do you have to improve this client's business?

Likewise, if you are networking at an association meeting, you are sending out a personal marketing message with everyone you meet. How do you introduce yourself? What questions do you ask? Do you try to meet people?

Always go to a marketing event with an agenda. Go with a specific business development purpose.

Getting Started

We've now covered five specific ways that you can begin to bleed business development. The predominant reason that the top producers sell a lot of work is that they see business development in all aspects of their job. They enjoy it. They think about it constantly. And they are always seeking out the opportunity to help their clients and prospects to solve their business problems. Take some time out right now to review the exercise in Exhibit 1-3, "Bleed Business Development: A Personal Brainstorming Exercise." Work through the following brainstorming exercises to tailor these ideas for your practice.

Now, ask yourself this: how do *hustling smarter* and *bleeding business development* compliment each other?

Time out! Think back. Can you see how the first two attitudes of the best business generators play off one another? If you bleed business development, that is, if you think about it more often and you learn to like it, naturally, you're going to want to do more business development on a daily basis—consequently you'll hustle smarter.

All that really is required is a decision: to make a simple shift in your thinking. See that business development enters all aspects of your day. Although you may not look at it this way currently, you are marketing and selling all of the time.

Let's move on to the final attitude.

Step 3. Act Like an Entrepreneur

The best business generators see themselves as entrepreneurs rather than solely as CPAs. This means that they believe their primary purpose is building their practice. Because of this, marketing, selling, client relationship management, quality service, and cross marketing are always top of mind.

Even early in their careers, they understood that in order to move ahead, they had to take responsibility for building their own book of business; they couldn't wait around for someone to hand feed them work for the rest of their careers and still expect to progress.

Marketing Truth. The best business generators know that they are in business for themselves.

This doesn't mean that they don't value their technical qualifications. It simply means that they rely on others to supplement and play this role.

In our market research work with professional service firms, what clients continually tell us is that they wish that their service provider would get off of the technical details. Instead, they want to hear the business implications. What are the critical problems you

see? What solutions do you suggest? What action should your client take? That's why the best business generators excel. They are able to persuade the prospect to engage them because they speak directly to the needs, values, and concerns of the client and prospect. Put another way, they speak their client's language—using their words and vocabulary.

Numerous studies have been conducted with CEOs to ascertain how they selected the winning accounting firm. Universally, the conclusions are the same. Exhibit 1-4, "Most Important Reasons for Selecting an Accounting Firm," shows the results from a study we conducted with CEOs at 100 companies of varying sizes across North America, asking them what the most important reasons were when they selected their accounting firm.

Do you see what your clients and prospects are telling you?

Let's sum up. The best business generators see themselves as entrepreneurs. And this entrepreneurial viewpoint allows them to tune into the wavelength of their clients. In turn, this enhances their position as a business adviser and strengthens the rapport they have with business owners.

So, how can you act more like an entrepreneur? A few suggestions follow.

Listen to Clients and Identify Their Concerns

How much do you know about your top client's business? Are you up on the concerns that are driving their industry? What's most important to your clients?

The best way to position yourself as an entrepreneur in the eyes of your clients is to ask them questions and listen.

Learn their priorities, as that is what's important to them. And that's why they need you. Ask them questions that go beyond their accounting and tax perspectives. Find out what challenges they face in operations, service, and management systems.

Real Life Marketing Example. We were working with a firm in the Southwest. A new managing partner was recently appointed and he wanted to make sure that the relationships with their top clients were strong and vital.

We worked out the following approach:

- A client service training session was conducted for all partners and managers.
- For the top 45 clients, the managing partner and his division heads met with the clients' CEOs and CFOs. They conducted a structured interview intended to test the current satisfaction and identify any enhancements required. Each interview was followed up with a personal note to let them know what corrective follow-up action was being taken.
- For the rest of the clients, a brief 15-question survey was sent to the CFOs to get a handle on any service related issues. Any clients with a problem got a phone call from the managing partner to set up a personal visit. All clients did get a personal letter from the managing partner to thank them for their participation.

One result was recognition of the top quality service that this firm provides because few service problems required any corrective action. However, the managing partner found that clients generally didn't see their partner as a valued business adviser outside of accounting issues. So, he is currently defining ways to address that problem through training and other methods.

This sounds simple, but it works. And too few CPAs and consultants engage their clients (and prospective clients) in conversations like these.

Immerse Yourself in an Industry

Increasingly, our clients are specializing in a handful of industries. Let's face it. You can't be all things to all people. So, make the tough choice to become immersed in two or three industries. Even if you specialize in several industries, we suggest that you pick one or two as your "super" specialties. Then, blitz these areas and deepen your understanding of this industry.

What's the best way to do this? Enlist the aid of your top clients who are in this industry. What are the best associations? Which one would be best for meeting top executives at prospect companies? What newsletters and magazines do these clients read to stay on top of the industry? What is the best way to market yourself and network in this industry?

Here's another idea. Walk trade shows with these clients. This is a good way to get introduced to companies just like your clients and their suppliers, as well. If there are educational sessions going on at the show, sit next to your client at the presentations and see how the topic impacts your client's business.

Meet with the leaders of the local industry association. Talk to the president, membership chairmen, and head of the program committee. Get their perspective on the top business concerns that their members face. Which of the members is particularly knowledgeable? Can you get an introduction to this person?

Also, interview the editors of the top newsletters and magazines that serve this industry. What's their editorial focus? Why? What are their reader's concerns?

Make it a project to learn all you can about this industry. Get some help from your staff or administrative people. Start an industry information file. Get them to read selected industry periodicals and highlight the relevant articles. Or, have them go to a library. Xerox the table of contents from back issues of the industry periodicals. Then, get copies of the articles that look best.

Some partners tell us they couldn't get their staff to pursue industry knowledge, especially on their own time. Why shouldn't they? Where does it say that they don't have to help you build your practice? How can they expect continual increases in pay and opportunities for advancement, unless they do their fair share of increasing their productivity and value to the client and prospective clients?

Consider conducting a special research study, perhaps in concert with an association or industry periodical. Do a research study that identifies the critical business concerns facing the industry. Or convene a special focus group where clients and prospects share their business concerns, current priorities, and future plans.

Or, collect financial and operating benchmarking information. Calculate key industry ratios. Compare these ratios to some of your client results.

Here's another idea. Hire an industry guru to speak to a small group of your clients and get them to invite some colleagues along. Alternatively, rent a videotape by the expert or link into a teleconference and take the same approach.

Now, once you immerse yourself in an industry, gear the bulk of your marketing to this industry. Being an entrepreneur means that you can see the world through the eyes of your clients. You see their needs and find a way to help them. You should strive to know what your clients care about. And your marketing results will multiply.

If you look back on these ideas, you may be already doing some of them. These principles are tried and true methods.

The point here is *intensity*. What we suggest is an all-out blitz on an industry—a full court press. Put almost all your energy into an industry. The following example illustrates how one firm used an industry focus to expand an existing marketing program.

Getting Started

As entrepreneurs, the top producers tend to have a broader business perspective instead of a strict accounting or tax perspective. Said differently, they tend to see business issues as a business owner might view them. Consequently, the best business generators are more like their clients. As a result, clients relate much better to them—not as technicians, but as fellow businesspersons.

To act like an entrepreneur, you must get in tune with your client's point of view. You must understand their industry issues, business concerns and personal goals. Take some time now to review and consider the suggestions in Exhibit 1-5, "Act Like An Entrepreneur: A Personal Brainstorming Exercise."



CONCLUSION

Lets' take a look at what you accomplished so far. You now know the three critical attitudes that the top business generators possess.

Stop for a second. Take a look at these attitudes once again. Now, start with the first attitude. How might this differ from an average producer? In fact, what would be the "polar opposite" attitude that one might display?

Repeat this process for the next two attitudes. Again, what would be typical attitude? And, what would be the opposite extreme thinking?

Now, take a look at Exhibit 1-6, “Building a Business Development Attitude.” See how your answers compare to what we typically find. In the left column, labeled “Stop,” we’ve identified those attitudes that will inhibit your growth as a business developer. Unfortunately, these attitudes are ingrained in many of the average producers in the profession. Sadly, this attitude will limit their ability to grow their practice.

So, to improve your business development results, you need to ask yourself a basic question: How can I build these same business development attitudes? You want to shift over to the attitudes depicted in the “Start” column. This will take a conscious effort and daily reinforcement, but it can be done.

All it takes is a decision. Decide to think about business development like the best business generators do. That’s a decision that you can make today.

EXHIBIT 1-1: THE I-HATE-MARKETING LEARNING MODEL

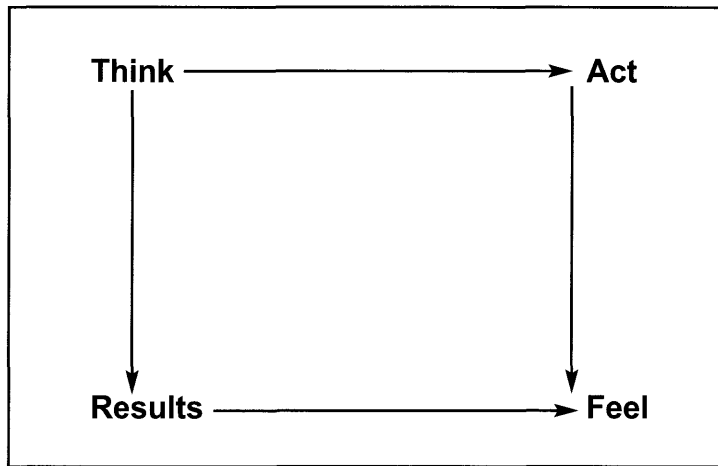


EXHIBIT 1-2: HUSTLE SMARTER: A PERSONAL BRAINSTORMING EXERCISE

Get out your daily calendar, as well as a notepad to jot down some ideas. Look at your schedule for the next week or two.

Step 1. Add one more business development action each day.

Get a goal to add at least 10 to 12 business development actions for the upcoming two weeks. Consider all your possibilities.

- Clip an article and send it to a few clients.
- Call a referral source to get reacquainted.
- Join a new association.
- Meet with a colleague.

If you're having trouble coming up with ideas, go ask a top producer in your firm for some advice. Also, are there any business development actions you've been procrastinating on? Commit to getting to them this week.

Step 2. Use your breakfasts and lunches to market and sell.

Take a look at your schedule for breakfasts and lunches. How many of these have business development possibilities? What do you have to do to turn this into a marketing or selling opportunity?

Do you have slots open? Make it a point to fill them up with business development. Invite a client, referral source, partner, or colleague to join you.

Step 3. Set give-up goals.

Look at your schedule and review your to-do lists. What actions can you delegate to others to free up business development time? Can you eliminate any activities outright? Are there any additional business development activities that you can leverage off to a junior professional or an administrative person?

Step 4. Go the extra mile.

Look at what you've accomplished thus far. This is how the best business generators manage their calendar and set priorities. How much additional action did you come up with?

Now look at your to-do list from a different perspective. Imagine that you didn't draw a salary at all. Instead, let's say that your full income was derived from the additional work that you sold to clients, as well as from the fees generated from new clients that you brought in. With this fresh mind set, review your calendar once again. How much more business development could you fit in? Would you add a few more business development breakfasts and lunches? Could you find other activities to delegate?

EXHIBIT 1-3: BLEED BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: A PERSONAL BRAINSTORMING EXERCISE

Take out a fresh piece of paper. Set aside a few minutes of quiet time to brainstorm.

Step 1. Identify the things you like to do that can result in more business.

Remember that the best way to enjoy business development is to concentrate on those activities that you enjoy—the ones that interest you and where you feel comfortable and confident.

Think about your personal interests—whether it's community activities, business associations, or sports. Consider ways that you can turn these activities into a fertile business development purpose. For example, if you enjoy tennis, ask a client to join you for a set or two. If you are in a business association, consider how you can get into a visible role in order to meet prospective clients.

Next, consider those business development activities that you enjoy. Do you like spending time with the top executives at your clients? Do you enjoy networking or do you prefer writing articles? Do you prefer writing personal notes or calling people on the phone? Do you enjoy public speaking or putting on seminars?

Step 2. Work with the top producers at your firm.

Which partners bring in a lot of business at your firm? Which of these people do you have the best rapport and personal chemistry with? Would they be willing to mentor you? Set up a meeting and ask this person to advise you on the best immediate ways to build your personal practice.

Step 3. Work with the top producers at allied firms.

Do you know any attorneys, bankers, or other contacts who excel at building their practice? Consider perhaps people who may act as advisers to your clients. Again, do you have solid personal chemistry with any of these contacts? Make a point to take them to lunch. Ask them how they've built their practice, what their plans are for perpetuating this growth, and what advice they have for you.

Step 4. Enhance your business development skills.

Consider how you can enhance your personal marketing and selling skills. What skills are going to be most important in your success? Would you like to be a better public speaker? Do you need to strengthen a special expertise through additional training? Would you like to improve your skills in face-to-face selling?

Find out what training courses that others recommend. Commit to taking a training course in marketing or selling over the next three weeks.

Step 5. Recognize that you're already marketing and selling all of the time.

Do you have a meeting coming up with a client? How can you structure the agenda so that you can turn this into a marketing opportunity? How can you help this client further? What can you do to improve your relationship with this individual?

EXHIBIT 1-4: MOST IMPORTANT REASONS FOR SELECTING AN ACCOUNTING FIRM

MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR DECISION	RANKING ON SCALE (1 TO 10)
Concern for helping the company make more money	9.4
Rapport—close interpersonal working relationship between the contact partner and the company’s key executives	9.1
Ability and willingness to listen and help identify, understand, and resolve the company’s business problems	8.7
Exhibiting a proactive attitude—anticipating problems and, especially, opportunities	8.1
Timeliness of performing services	8.0
Responsiveness to client service request	7.8
Periodic, regular nonengagement contact	6.7

(For the sake of comparison, technical expertise is rated 5.3 and fees are 5.6.)

EXHIBIT 1-5: ACT LIKE AN ENTREPRENEUR: A PERSONAL BRAINSTORMING EXERCISE

Get out your daily calendar, as well as a note pad to jot down some ideas. Look at your schedule for the next week or two.

Step 1. Set appointments with three of your most entrepreneurial clients for lunch or breakfast.

Your job will be to interview these successful people and find out:

1. To what do they attribute their success?
2. Why did they start their own business?
3. What would they do differently if they could?

These interviews are designed to give you some specific insight into the entrepreneurial mindset and activities. You should find several thought processes and success attributes in common.

Step 2. Take out subscriptions to new publications and read them diligently.


In order to speak the same language, think about what your clients do, and relate better to their concerns, you need to read the same publications, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Investor's Business Daily*, and the predominant industry publication the client abides by.

Step 3. Set your goals with a new mindset.

In setting your goals for the year, month, and week, ask yourself if all you are doing is looking to get work done, or doing strategic, long-term items that will help you reach career and business goals.

EXHIBIT 1-6: BUILDING A BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ATTITUDE

STOP	START
■ Marketing only when you have “spare time”	■ Hustling smarter to generate new business each and every day
■ Concentrating on simply getting the work out	■ Seeing business development in every aspect of your work
■ Making business development consistently a low priority	■ Thinking more about business development than any aspect of your work
■ Seeing yourself as a technician	■ Seeing yourself as an entrepreneur



**APTITUDE FOR
FOCUSING ON BEST
OPPORTUNITIES**

chapter 2

In this chapter we'll guide you to begin creating your own custom-designed personal marketing plan. You'll define the value of your services and find out which clients need your services the most. You'll find out where you can be most successful marketing your services and discover the best ways to promote yourself.



THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF FOCUS

There are pragmatic reasons to have a strict focus for your marketing effort.

Reason 1. You Can't Be All Things to All People

First, you can't be all things to all people. In fact, the more generic or commonplace you look, the less valuable you seem. Conversely, the more distinctive and unique you appear, the more value you project.

Reason 2. Strengthens Marketing Efforts

Second, if your marketing effort is scattered and diffused, your impact will be weak. Without a strong focus, many CPAs and consultants end up running in circles, chasing any opportunity that looks like a possibility. With focus, you get a strong, sustained, and consistent exertion on a clear, precise target.

Reason 3. Competition Is Becoming More Specialized

Third, your competition is becoming more specialized and focused. Niche marketing is now the standard of success in the profession. It's no secret that the national firms invest millions of dollars in their industry programs and service line teams. These firms want to be fully up to speed on their clients' specific business challenges. Also, they invest in marketing programs geared specifically toward these industry/service priorities.

What the big firms do doesn't apply to you. Even mid-sized and smaller practices are becoming highly specialized. Increasingly, you see partners who concentrate their full time and effort on a single industry or service line. One New York firm (not a national firm) boasts of fourteen partners devoted only to Internet and high-tech start-up companies. Just like medicine and law, our profession is quickly becoming much more specialized and focused. It's your choice: You can get with the program now, be a leader, and grab a bigger piece of the market share while your competition is still sleeping, or you can wait until they grab your market share.

Reason 4. Marketing Resources Are Limited

Fourth, you don't have the time to promote to a wide variety of market segments. What's the most precious resource for any professional? It's your time. After all, you make money

by billing your time. So, you can't waste time and energy by chasing opportunities that aren't likely to go anywhere.

Another way of looking at *focus* is as a process of disciplined priority setting. Even if you have the experience and expertise to serve a wide variety of industries or types of businesses, you simply don't have the time. Therefore, you have to look at your strengths and your best opportunities. Then, keep concentrated on your top two or three market priorities.

In this way, you always keep striving for those opportunities that mean the most to you, instead of furiously chasing clients or prospects that are less valuable.

Reason 5. Easier to Get Referrals

Focus makes it more likely to receive referrals because it is simpler for someone to access a specific "file" in their mind rather than an entire "database."

Perhaps you asked someone to refer you to someone who might need a CPA. There's a problem: That person must now access every person (every file in their database of people they know) in their entire mind to see if they know anyone for you. That's too much work!

However, with the power of focus, you can be much more specific with the referrals you request. You've limited the number of people or companies to a smaller group but have increased the odds they will comply with your request.

Marketing Truth. It's easier for someone to refer a client to you if they know exactly what you are looking for because it limits the number of files in their memory to a specific category.

Reason 6. Adds Value in the Client's Eyes

Sixth, and last, focus makes you more distinctive and valuable in the eyes of your clients and prospects.

In our programs and consulting, we run into objections to marketing focus quite often. We have only one answer: You really may not have a choice. Why? Because clients and prospects care about your focus. Although they differ in degree of interest, they value relevant knowledge and specific expertise in their business.

Experience proves, and market research confirms, that clients value focused CPAs and consultants. Clients look for professionals with an in-depth understanding of their business or personal financial challenges. They want an expert who can quickly solve the trauma that they might be facing. Also, they see an expert as being more efficient in serving their needs. They believe that a specialist can get up to speed on the situation rapidly without spinning his or her wheels struggling to learn their business.

Also, it's been proven that the quality of rapport and personal chemistry is central to success in winning a client's business. Consequently, the more you understand about a client's business, the more likely you will be able to empathize and relate to the client.

Moreover, you can ask more insightful and reasoned questions that will lead to a more thorough diagnosis and sale.

All of these factors combine to make focus critical to your ability to build the kind of personal chemistry that your clients and ideal prospects will value.

Consider the following example.

Real Life Marketing Example. A firm that had some success with an succession planning direct marketing plan for wholesale distributors wanted to expand its efforts beyond the mailing program.

Here's what the partners did. They contacted the local chapter of the association for wholesale distributors and set up a meeting with the executive director and the editor of the association newsletter.

They wanted to set up two informal discussion groups of eight to ten wholesale distributors. First, they wanted to discuss succession planning challenges with the senior family member who was running the business. Then, they wanted to have the same discussions with the next generation of family members to get their perspective.

The wholesale distributor association took responsibility for organizing the groups. But the firm's lead niche partner made sure that three or four of his top clients were included—and two of these were brand new clients.

The CPA firm partner's role was to simply facilitate the discussion, while the owners discussed their succession planning frustrations. At the session, the editor took notes and wrote a lead article on the findings—with a special commentary by the accounting partner.

After the article was published, two of the participants called the partner for a meeting, and one became a client. In addition, when the article was published, he received ten more calls—which resulted in another new client.

There's an old adage in the goal-setting business: It's better to be a meaningful specific instead of a wandering generality. The same is true for your marketing strategy.



WHERE DOES BUSINESS COME FROM?

We've got to cover one more key to marketing success.

Let's analyze the best business generators once again. Remember, everything we cover in *Mastering the Art of Marketing Professional Services* is modeled on how the best business generators, in small and large firms, succeed. Now, we'll look at how the best build their practice, as illustrated in Exhibit 2-1, "Where Should Your New Business Come From?"

As the chart shows, 50 percent of your new business should come strictly from existing clients, in the form of additional services and referrals from them. If approximately 50 per-

cent of your new business should come from clients and their referrals, where should you invest 50 percent of your marketing attention and effort? That's right—with your current clients, because they are your most important business building asset.

Second, what kinds of prospective clients are your best existing clients likely to refer you to? That's right: people just like them—either in the same business, at the same income or social level, or facing the same personal challenges. Again, that's where focus pays off.

If you excel at this and stay close to your client's business, they will see you almost as an extension of their company resources. Consequently, they'll repeatedly hire you for additional work, special engagements, and consultative advice as the need arises. Also, they'll actively refer and recommend you, leading to even more business.

Next in importance are allies. As with their top clients, the best business generators reap a lot of business from close, committed relationships with attorneys, bankers, insurance brokers, securities people, bonding companies, and others. In effect, your close allies must act like your external sales force, securing for you a steady stream of referrals that contribute to your growth.

The final component is direct prospecting and marketing to prospective clients, or strangers. This encompasses seminars, public speaking, mailings, association involvement, advertising, and your Web site. Immediate personal contact and disciplined follow-through is essential after direct marketing and means little without it.

When most accountants think about marketing, they focus the great majority (75 percent or more) of their effort and marketing dollars on marketing contacts intended to generate new contacts with strangers! This is wrong. We recommend that you invest 75 percent of your marketing effort on building strong personal relationships with allies and clients. Then, you can build off this success with concerted, focused marketing campaigns.

Of course, there are some exceptions. If you don't have any current clients, you have to hustle harder with referral sources and direct marketing to prospects. Also, if you sell primarily independent consulting engagements, you'll also have to emphasize more direct marketing, because that's a transaction-oriented business. But, for the conventional CPA with an established practice, the above standards apply.

What does this mean for you? Who should you be targeting for marketing efforts?

- Focus on your best clients.
- Focus on prospective clients who are clones of your best clients.
- Focus on allies who can get you more business from clients and referrals into clones of your best clients.
- Focus on direct marketing to those places where you can reach cloned clients and referrals of those kinds of people.

Doesn't this appear logical? We've found that this is the best way to focus yourself. Why? Because you were able to attract and keep your best clients for a reason: mainly due to your

service expertise, knowledge of their business, ability to help these clients succeed, and your personal relationship with them. Said another way, your personal strengths are the reason that you've retained and prospered with these top clients.

Question: Where can your strengths be best directed for optimal results? Answer: To prospects who are similar to your top clients.

By playing to your strengths, you increase your chances for success. Why stray away from your best market niches? Unless the market is so thoroughly saturated or you can't serve these target clients at a profit, let your competitors waste their time and diffuse their marketing impact. Stay focused, and concentrate your full energy and marketing investment on a smaller number of high-priority market niches.



THE PERSONAL MARKETING STRATEGY SYSTEM

You'll start creating your personal marketing plan by getting focused on your golden opportunities or best marketing opportunities. What's a golden opportunity? Simply put, a golden opportunity is finding those market needs and wants that are both most attractive to you, as well as where your chances for success are greatest.

Focus helps you to keep your eye on the prize. Focus makes your life easier and more productive, because you will make a frank appraisal of your strengths. Then, you will gear your full efforts on your best clients, along with a precisely defined group of realistic, achievable, and profitable prospective clients.

Here's another way to look at it. See yourself as a product that you are bringing to market. There are four questions, illustrated in Exhibit 2-2, "The Personal Marketing Strategy Process," that you need to answer before you can properly market any product or service. Let's review each of these questions in detail.

Question 1. Why Do People Need Your Services?

First, you need to define the value of your services.

- What need, hurt, ache, problem, wants, or desires do you satisfy in your clients?
- Why are they willing to part with their hard-earned dollars for your services?
- Why is your blend of expertise, experience, past client engagements, or industry know-how of particular value?
- Do you have some special service savvy that either eliminates a client's hurt, ache, trauma, or problem or makes their life easier?
- How is your value distinctive and different from others' services that can satisfy this need?

By answering these questions, you are putting yourself in the buyer's shoes, which is the first step in any marketing process.

Consider the automobile industry and the product variety that they offer. Mini-vans, pick-up trucks, compact cars, luxury cars, and sports cars all serve different customer needs, wants and desires. Each product has a variety of attributes that solves a different problem set for its customer.

This first step in your marketing process results in a self-examination of your core strengths: technical, client service, industry understanding, and functional service know-how.

- How are your clients better off through your service?
- What benefits do they garner from your services?
- How would they describe these benefits in their own words?

Question 2. Which Clients and Prospective Clients Need Your Services the Most?

Second, you must define your market segmentation or the groups of clients and prospects that have the greatest need for what you have to offer.

- How can you define this group?
- Do they vary by industry? By business structure? Size? Geography? Tax complexities? Degree of computerization? Sophistication of internal staff?

Marketing Definition. The process of answering these questions is called *market segmentation*.

The purpose of market segmentation is to precisely define those groups and subgroups of companies or individuals with the best potential for you. Precisely defining these market segments leads to more efficient, targeted, and successful marketing efforts.

Take the automobile analogy once again. For example, lower cost “sporty” models, such as the Mercury Cougar, appeal to younger people starting out on their first job. Therefore, everything about these cars and the corresponding marketing campaigns are geared to appeal to this market segment: flashier colors, sporty styling, first-time buyer programs, and lower prices. Youth-oriented advertising is emphasized on television and radio programs that have the right youth-oriented demographics—usually with an upbeat message backed by popular rock music.

Contrast this with the marketing of mini-vans. The target market segment for those vehicles are growing families. Therefore, auto companies promote those product qualities that will appeal to the decision-makers in these families (often the wife and mother in the family, the person who will be using the vehicle the most). Roominess, reliability, the safety of young passengers, low maintenance, and ease of driving are their concerns. Also, the advertising is geared toward television programs that they tend to watch and magazines they

most likely read; this advertising is applied with a more sedate and sensible promotional message than that geared to young and single people.

What do you think would happen to the sales of mini-vans and sporty models if they were marketed generically to everybody?

This same segmentation process applies to your practice. As you review the clients you already serve, we're certain that you'll see several market segments. This means there are a few groups of businesses or individuals with common attributes, facing the same types of problems.

There is a reason that these clients selected you and stayed your clients. You are serving a need, want, desire, trauma, ache, or hurt they have in a way that they value and trust.

By understanding this segmentation, you can define and target the market niche that needs your service most and best respects your track record and service capabilities. Again, the more precise and narrow your definition of these pockets of opportunities, just like in the automobile business, the more effective and efficient you'll be in converting business.

Question 3. Where Can You Be Most Successful in Marketing Your Services?

Third, you need to know where you should be marketing or when you can exploit your market share advantage.

Each firm or practitioner will have both assets and liabilities in pursuing a market opportunity. The goal is to go where your strengths are greatest and exploit this opportunity to the maximum.

Marketing Definition. In marketing terminology, this is referred to as exploiting market share advantages to grow.

In plain English, this means building on your past success for incremental business growth, or using your strengths and advantages to attract more clients like your best existing clients.

This also makes sense from a client's or prospect's point of view. Pretend that you are the CFO of a hospital looking for a new CPA or consulting firm: Which firms would you ask to propose? Wouldn't you want a firm that understood the special problems that your hospital was up against? How could you tell if a firm specialized in your type of hospital?

Exploiting market share advantages will give you more opportunities to sell your services.

If you were the CFO, it's clear that you'd look for a firm that served a number of hospitals that you considered to be just like yours. You would first think about any CPAs or consultants who you know personally and then you'd ask your colleagues at other hospitals who they have as their CPAs and consultants. You'd find out which partners served these hospitals and ask for further references or client lists. In this way, you'd be seeking evidence that you were getting qualified candidates to propose, so that you would receive the best service, superior advice, and efficient work, and you would reduce your risk of a poor decision.

Doesn't this selection process make sense? How difficult would it be to get this engagement if you served only one other hospital, or none at all (little or no market share advantage)?

Recognize that this same buying dynamic applies to your practice as well. It's easier to grow in those areas where you are already successful and strong (assuming there is still room for growth). This is also where your referral base and service reputation is most potent.

Thus, in our personal market planning work with you, we will help you to build this disciplined focus into your personal success strategy.

Question 4. What's the Best Way to Promote to Your Best Prospects and Targets?

Lastly, in bringing your services to market, you need to know the best ways to promote them.

The selection of your target market niches will guide and define the rest of your marketing action plan. Each marketing action that you consider must be screened against the following standard: Will this marketing action attract the highest priority client or prospect that I desire?

If it doesn't produce this result, why would you want to invest any time or money in this marketing effort?

Please realize that the selection of your priority clients and target prospects will guide the rest of your plan. Your target niche will determine what kind of marketing makes the most sense. After all, you wouldn't market to a lawyer in the same way that you'd market to a contractor.

Marketing Definition. In marketing terminology, there are different marketing "channels." This means that there are distinct vehicles for promoting yourself that are different for each market segment. They belong to different associations, read industry specific periodicals, and attend different conferences.

Also, different market segments respond to a different mix of marketing tools. It's difficult to get attorneys to respond to a direct mailing campaign because they are drowning in paper. But, they do respond to direct referrals by other attorneys who they respect. Or, it's possible to generate work by speaking at bar association meetings or via continuing legal education.

So, we need to define this proper mix of tools for you, based on your priorities.



A SEVEN-STEP PROCESS TO FOCUS ON BEST OPPORTUNITIES

Now, let's custom-tailor these ideas for your practice.

We'll do this in the form of a brainstorming exercise. There are no concrete right or wrong answers for this exercise. Instead, the point is to be creative, introspective, and coldly analytical. You may want to try this exercise several times over a period of a week or so, and

you might care to get some further input from trusted professional colleagues, allies that you respect, or even clients who know you well. The steps in the exercise are:

-
- Step 1.* List your clients in descending order by fees.
 - Step 2.* Scan down the rest of the list.
 - Step 3.* Conduct a cluster analysis.
 - Step 4.* Group similar clients into a cluster.
 - Step 5.* Rank the clusters in terms of your top priority.
 - Step 6.* Test your cluster analysis.
 - Step 7.* Step back and take account of your feedback.
-

Step 1. List Your Clients in Descending Order by Fees

To perform this exercise you'll need a list of your clients. Ideally, use a list that ranks your clients from highest to lowest in terms of professional fees over the past 12 months or last fiscal year.

To do this exercise correctly, we recommend that you use a spreadsheet that lists the client's name in the first column. This leaves a lot of room for brainstorming.

You're going to concentrate on the top end of the list, those clients who generate the majority of your fees. While there are no hard-and-fast rules, we suggest you view your clients with the classic 80/20 rule in mind. Focus on the top 20 percent of your clients that generate 80 percent (or the majority) of your revenues. Highlight this segment of your client base by drawing a line that separates them from the rest.

Step 2. Scan Down the Rest of the List

Look for any clients who meet one or more of the following conditions:

- Their future fee potential will put them into your top 20 percent within the next year or two.
- They are superb referral sources.
- You are providing them with a special advisory service that you want to emphasize within your top 20 percent.

Place an "X" next to those that apply.

Step 3. Conduct a Cluster Analysis

In this step, you'll be using a brainstorming technique called cluster analysis. Come up with the categories into which you can group, or cluster, your clients. Start working your way down the list, beginning with your largest client.

Write a brief description of each client's business next to its name. Try to make your description as specific as possible. Essentially, answer the following question: What is unique about this client's business?

Remember two rules as you do this analysis: be brief and be creative. Combine as many attributes as you need to be as precise as possible.

Here are some descriptive guidelines for business clients. Itemize or write:

- A micro-specific definition of their industry.
- A description of their customer base.
- Products or services they sell.
- Their size in terms of revenue or fee growth.
- Their location, geographic diversion, or concentration.
- Stage of growth or maturity of the business.
- Ownership structure (for example, they are family owned, closely held, or second generation).
- Significant transactions they face (such as selling off the company, transferring the business to the next generation, or getting ready for an initial public offering).
- Age of the owners and major executives.
- Top two or three business challenges that the company is facing.
- Recovery on fees and speed of payment.

Here are some descriptive guidelines for individual clients. Identify:

- Level of income.
- Key personal financial planning challenges (for example, estate planning, education funding, pension plans, potential for financial services).
- Stage of life.
- Key tax and estate considerations.
- Source of income.
- Nature of their profession.
- Where they are located.
- Recovery on fees and speed of payment.

Here's a rule of thumb as you complete this brainstorming exercise: Do it at a brisk pace. Jot down the principal phrases that do the best job of describing the client. Then quickly move on to the next. Combine as many factors as you need to precisely define the client.

Work your way down the list until you have covered all the top clients.

Step 4. Group Similar Clients Into a Cluster

Your objective in this step is to group similar clients into a cluster, or a market niche. The purpose of this step is to link together clients into as distinctive and homogeneous clusters as possible.

Here are some guidelines for clustering:

- *Begin with industry-oriented or lines of business groupings.* Continue from there to redescribe or improve your description of each cluster (make it more clear, more concise—see the example in step 3). If clustering by industry doesn't work out, use ownership structure (for example, family held).
- *You can put a particular business client into more than one cluster.* For example, you could put a client into an industry cluster. Then, you might also put them into one of your service line groupings, such as succession planning. Be as creative as you need to be to place clients into as many clusters as they qualify for, in your estimation.
- *If you are lumping far too many clients into one cluster, take a closer look at the cluster.* Work hard to find differences and distinctions within the cluster to see what subgroupings appear logical. Look for additional descriptions that can create meaningful segments within the cluster.
- *Alternatively, if you have too many clusters (say, 10 to 12), you have two choices.* You may leave them as is, because you may have that kind of diversity within your base. Or, you can look for ways to combine clusters.

Step 5. Rank the Clusters in Terms of Your Top Priority

To maximize your marketing effectiveness and profitability, you are going to want to focus on your top priority clusters. Look at the clusters and evaluate how much service potential exists within the client segment inside the cluster grouping. In determining your rankings of priority, ask yourself the following questions:

- What are my current fees at these clients?
- Has this grown or shrunk over the past two years?
- Do they actively seek my advice and counsel?
- Do we provide a good deal of consultative service to this cluster?
- Are any of these clients good referral sources?
- Do I have some strong allies at this client (for example, their bankers or attorneys)? Have they given me referrals to prospective clients?
- Do I understand these businesses well? Do I also have good rapport with these clients?
- Are their businesses growing or shrinking? Is the marketplace for their goods or services growing or shrinking?

Realize this isn't intended to be a hard-and-fast quantitative analysis. Instead, use your instinct and judgment. Then, force yourself to assign a rank. Don't settle for a tie. Make a clear decision.

Step 6. Test Your Cluster Analysis

This cluster analysis is essential to your personal marketing strategy. So, it's vital that you test it. Review your cluster analysis with a professional colleague you trust. Try to select someone with a solid understanding of business development. Explain your top segments and get their reaction.

Then tap into the expertise of your clients. Meet and interview a few of them over lunch, perhaps. Ask them which industry or business associations they frequent. Do they read specialty magazines or newsletters? Where do they go to get the latest information? What conventions do they attend? If you feel comfortable, review your description of their cluster. How would the client modify or enhance your description?

Step 7. Step Back and Take Account of Your Feedback

Review this cluster analysis at a future date and refine your descriptions as needed.

For comparison, take a look at the cluster analysis in Exhibit 2-3, "Sample Priority Market Niches Worksheet," an analysis performed by one of our clients. Notice how specific and distinctive the descriptions are in this example. How do your descriptions compare to the exhibit? Now you can perceive the value of focus. Notice how easily an ally will understand who your target clients are so he or she could make an introduction for you.



DEVELOP YOUR 30-SECOND COMMERCIAL

Let's imagine that you are attending an important networking event. You have the chance to meet face-to-face with an ideal prospective client, one who is in your highest priority market niche. What impression do you want to make? How do you want to be remembered?

The notion of a personal commercial was first drummed home to us when Rita, an attorney, became our client many years ago.

Real Life Marketing Example. Rita had been a practicing attorney for over 16 years at that point and was still struggling with her practice. During those previous years she had been active in a number of organizations in the city where she lived, all of which were in some way related to her specialty, advertising law.

Rita was particularly perturbed about never receiving a single referral, introduction, or case from her many contacts amongst the hundreds of members of the Advertising Club (a major organization) she belonged to. She had even been president.

Fortunately, we had some other clients who were also members and active in the organization. We asked them if they knew Rita, and they all did. Not one of them knew that Rita was an expert at advertising law!

Why? Because she had never told them. Whenever she introduced herself, she would say that she was an attorney. How do you introduce yourself?

We've learned from the Best Business Generators in the professions that you always have to take the occasion to tell people what you do whenever presented with the opportunity because you never know which person you meet will turn into a client or a referral source. Personal marketing is a sort of grand treasure hunt. You can't know, or prejudge, who can or will help you until they know what you do. So you have to keep broadcasting your message when given the opportunity everywhere you go, just in case. Referrals and business come from the strangest places.

Within one year of personalizing a commercial for Rita, she had 16 new cases and three solid referral sources in that one organization.

Also, your commercial gives the other person an opportunity to ask you questions, above and beyond what could be expected if you say, "I'm a CPA."

In this segment we will walk you through the process of creating your own commercial. Yes, you can have more than one commercial, depending on the situation. If one of your market niches is estate planning and you are speaking at a retirement village to a group of senior citizens, your commercial will be different from the one you'd use if you want to promote your computer consulting market niche to a group of business people at an association meeting. For our purposes right now, choose your highest priority market niche.

Here are the elements you need for a good 30-second commercial:

- Give a description of your target niche.
- Be brief but descriptive.
- Don't start your commercial with "I'm a CPA." It's too generic. Think about the last person who introduced himself or herself to you as an "insurance agent" or "personal financial planner." What was your reaction?

Remember that the purpose of focus is to make you as distinctive and unique as possible in the eyes of prospects and referral sources.

Now take out a piece of paper and complete the following items in order, as illustrated in the steps described as follows:

-
- Step 1.** Complete the following sentence: "I specialize in working with _____."
 - Step 2.** Select two types of services.
 - Step 3.** Test it out.
-

Step 1. Complete the Following Sentence: “I specialize in working with _____”

Review what you wrote. Is it brief? Specific? Accurate? Interesting?

Step 2. Select Two Types of Services

Select two types of services you offer to your highest priority market segment, which you described in step 1.

Think about the most pressing problems that you help them solve. Don't describe what you do for them. For example, you don't want to say you do tax planning, compliance, or auditing.

Instead, describe the *problems they face*, for example, minimizing their taxes to preserve their cash flow. Or setting up pension plans leading to a secure retirement. Or, ensuring a dependable line of credit with the bank so the client can count on it when it's needed. Or working with companies to maximize the effectiveness of their organizations. Remember, the client or prospect doesn't care about the process (features), he or she cares only about the selfish results (the advantage, or consequence of what you do—avoiding or alleviating nagging problems or improving previous circumstances).

Now, it's your turn. Describe what problems you solve. How does your service make your clients better off?

- I help these clients to _____. Review what you wrote.
- Describe Problem 1/client advantage. Review what you wrote.
- Describe Problem 2/client advantage. Review what you wrote.

Step 3. Test It Out

Run this 30-second commercial by your clients and colleagues. Ask them how clear it is. Does it sound right? How could it be enhanced?

See Exhibit 2-4, “Samples of 30-Second Commercials,” for some examples of commercials that work and others that fail to deliver.

At first glance, those commercials look a bit cumbersome, don't they? The point is that they work. In every example in Exhibit 2-4, our clients can point to business created and referrals received because they struck a cord from the get-go in a conversation. Each short commercial broadcasts a distinct, targeted message, which can be changed depending on the audience.

Sometimes, people will use your commercial as a jumping off point for other services. “Stacy Lacy” (see Exhibit 2-4) related the situation of a new client she met at a local business card exchange meeting using her commercial above. When she said “...accounting software...,” her future client remarked: “Don't you do any taxes? We've got a prob-

lem with the IRS.” At which point, she responded that she indeed had a great deal of successful experience with the IRS. Stacy set the appointment right there and secured a new client.



CONCLUSION

Let’s look back at what you’ve accomplished in this chapter.

In essence, you’ve built the foundation of your personal marketing strategy and action plan through focus.

Now, you recognize that clients and prospective buyers value a focused professional, one with an in-depth understanding of their business and their personal challenges. Since client and prospects rule the marketing game, you need to focus in a way that they can perceive and appreciate.

Next, you also realized that you must play to your strengths. So, you took an *inside-out* look at the power of your advantages. Starting with your best clients, you discovered, or confirmed, the different pockets of strengths you possess based on the type of clients that you already serve.

By defining your market niche, you’ve seen how you can extend your success by targeting clones of your best clients. These targets will most likely see and appreciate the value of your experience.

You then made some decisions and set priorities. Through a disciplined self-assessment of your strengths and opportunities, you’ve selected those niches where you have the best chance for success.

In other words, you are now focused. Realize, though, that building your personal marketing strategy is a “living” process—you’ll find different, clearer, and more precise ways to focus as you get further information and feedback from your marketing efforts.

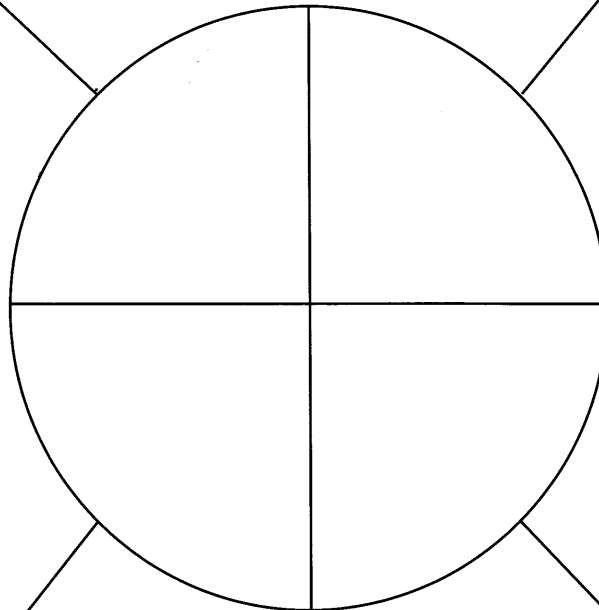
That’s okay, because you now know why focus is critical. And the more focused you become over time, the better your chances of success.

Finally, you created a short commercial for yourself; it’s a way to introduce yourself to someone so that they know exactly what you do and what you are looking for—you never know where you will bump into a prospective client or referral source.

EXHIBIT 2-1: WHERE SHOULD YOUR NEW BUSINESS COME FROM?

**25% from existing clients
buying additional services**

25% from your clients' referrals



**25% from your referral
sources' referrals**

25% from "strangers"

EXHIBIT 2-2: THE PERSONAL MARKETING STRATEGY PROCESS

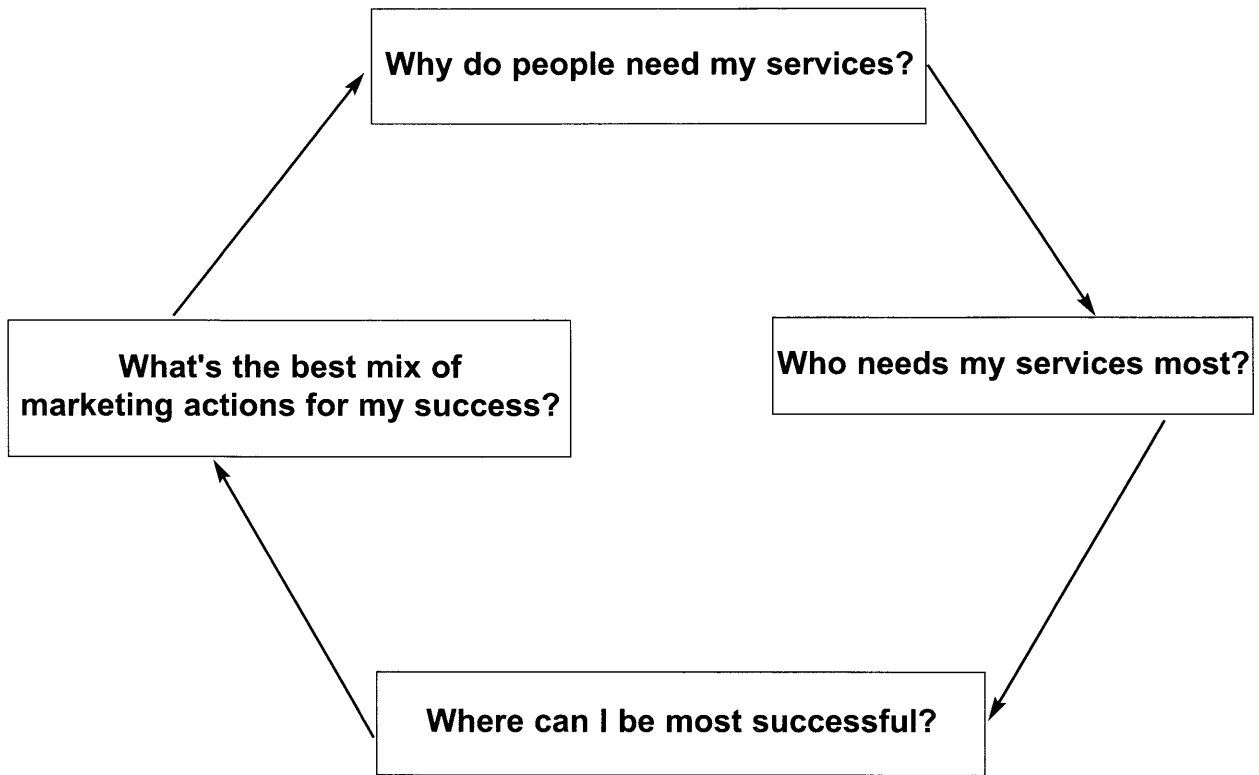


EXHIBIT 2-3: SAMPLE PRIORITY MARKET NICHE WORKSHEET

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Real estate | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Large, established home builders2. New, small, growing builders in Kane County3. Older owners who need age-based pension plan |
| Divorce cases | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Kane County divorce attorneys representing spouses of high-income individuals2. Clients pay timely3. Charge premium rates4. Get spouse's tax work later |
-

EXHIBIT 2-4: SAMPLES OF 30-SECOND COMMERCIALS

Poor examples (too limiting and boring):

I'm a CPA.

I do tax work.

I do individual tax preparation.

I'm an auditor.

I do consulting work.

More poor examples (too generic):

I work with small business in the areas of accounting, tax preparation, computer consulting, write-up, ...

I work with manufacturers, wholesale distributors, nonprofit organizations, contractors, developers, banks, hospitals, municipal governments ...

Good examples that are proven winners:

I'm Jill Swill and I'm a partner with the CPA firm of Joe Smith and Associates. I'm in the business of helping senior citizens to organize their estates and achieve a secure retirement.

I'm Maggie Baggie and I'm a manager with the CPA firm of Marin and Marin and I specialize in working with construction companies to install financial reporting methods that help ensure an adequate cash flow for their business.

I'm Archie Becker. I have my own CPA practice and we work with women facing a divorce to ensure a fair and equitable settlement from a financial standpoint.


I'm Chris Bliss and I'm a consultant with the firm of Church and Lurch. I work with nonprofit organizations to help them effectively manage their financial practices and accounting systems.

I'm Molly Jolly. I have my own consulting practice and I specialize in developing pension-funding strategies that minimize tax exposure and maximize the benefits to the owners.

I'm Stacy Lacy. Our CPA and consulting firm works with entrepreneurs to make sure that they have the right accounting software and hardware resources to best run their business.

I'm Penny Henny and I work in the financial services function of Super Duper and Company. We work with family held businesses to ensure that they don't send one dime more than necessary of their hard-earned money to the federal or state government—in this lifetime or the next.

I'm Maureen Steen and I work in the business consulting function of Schmaltz and Herring. We out-source the accounting and audit function of publicly held companies so they don't have to expend valued resources trying to recruit, manage, motivate, and retain these kinds of people which allows them to concentrate on higher priority issues in their firm.



**APTITUDE FOR
MARKETING TO
EXISTING CLIENTS**

chapter 3

Most CPAs and consultants miss the proverbial boat when it comes to marketing additional services to their existing clients. Why? We find that some professionals are afraid to discuss additional services for a variety of reasons—some have tried and failed, some don't have the time, and most simply don't know how.

The top producers in our profession know that there is “gold” in their own files.

Instead of investing the majority of their precious marketing monies and efforts into doing business with strangers, they market to their existing clients. That means they keep their eyes open and constantly explore new ways of helping their clients be more successful and protected.

If a client purchases a service from an outside vendor (an intruder) instead of from you, not only have you lost business you should have sold, you have infected the relationship with someone who may be intent on having their alliance partner replace you as the client's CPA or consultant. Therefore, it behooves you to take all of the ideas presented in this book on how best market your services, and yourself, and apply them first to your existing clients.

This chapter will show you how to use packaging to make your intangible services more tangible to your clients. It will also discuss the timing of marketing to clients and how to keep your clients happy.



USE PACKAGING TO MARKET SERVICES

The purpose of marketing a tangible item, such as a car, is to sell it immediately. The purpose of marketing an intangible service is to provide the *opportunity*.

Pontiac builds excitement! (We thought they built cars.) People pay far more for Ralph Lauren's Polo shirt because of the cache' that surrounds the brand. (Cache' is an intangible.) AT&T wants you to see its generic long-distance service (electric impulses travelling over fiber optic lines) as different and better than MCI's and Sprint's identical service (electric impulses travelling over fiber optic lines) by coming “home to AT&T.” Michelin doesn't spend forever telling you how great their tires are, where they're made, and what they're made of. They put babies crawling on tires to drive the message home.

But that's when you're marketing a tangible item.

Marketing Truth. A success secret to marketing an intangible service is to make it as tangible as possible.

Marketing an intangible service, even to a client, is more difficult than marketing a tangible product by the very nature of the item—it's invisible! It's a service; there's nothing to feel, touch, see, or smell. And, there can be a fear of endless fees—a money pit situation—where the service never ends because the job's not finished yet.

So, it's vital to package your services to successfully market them—make them easier to buy, make it simpler for the buyer to “put their arms around” the service, to be able to see it and get a distinct picture of what it will do for them. This packaging removes much of the fear of buying the service.

Let's take a look at a couple of examples of successful packaging of intangible services. Fidelity Funds changed the profession of “investment advice” forever by the way they market and sell their mutual funds.

Thirty years ago, if you wanted to invest you would sit down with a security broker and he or she would analyze your situation and come back with recommendations. Fidelity revolutionized that professional service by packaging their advice (buy this fund) into many separate, easily identifiable “products.” If you are interested in “growth,” you can buy their “growth fund.” If you desire to diversify some of your assets overseas, you can purchase one of their international funds.

Fidelity has done such a great job “product-izing” their professional services, that people today give their precious money to total strangers 24 hours a day to invest for them with other total strangers.

The beauty of packaging is that the easier you make it for someone to grasp what you do, the more likely they are to buy it and see the value inherent in it. And we must change the way the service provider sees what they do in order to market it more effectively. We must *stop* seeing what we do as billable hours and *start* seeing our work as *product* that has definable value, which we can, by the way, charge more for as a package, rather than just hours as the client is accustomed to buying other tangible, and intangible items, in this way.

You can package *any* service to make it more tangible. Our clients have effectively packaged cash flow management, internal controls, activity-based costing, estate planning, financial service, computer consulting, and even audits and tax work using our process, thus selling much more than before when they were selling pure “air.”

The client will always perceive more value if the service is productized as we instruct you to do and packaged services are the best way to educate everyone in the firm as to the various services that are offered.



A THREE-STEP PROCESS TO MARKET TO EXISTING CLIENTS

The only difference between marketing services to new clients and marketing new services to existing, satisfied clients is that marketing to satisfied clients should be much easier. Existing satisfied clients have already made a decision to do business with you, which is the hardest hurdle to overcome in any sale. And rainmakers know that the more business they sell to their existing clients, the more secure the relationship is. The steps to do this are:

-
- Step 1.** Package intangible services.
Step 2. Prescribe now—operate later.
Step 3. Keep the client happy.
-

Step 1. Package Intangible Services

Productizing helps remove the fear of buying professional services for the buyer who may have experienced, or fears, a money pit situation, wherein seemingly endless amounts (often undiscussed) of time and money are sunk into a project over and above expectations.

Here is an exercise to help you begin packaging your consulting, accounting, tax, audit, financial, and non-attest services.

Imagine a Package of Services

Start by describing a complete package of services, including what problems it solves, its purpose, its features, its value, and its cost. In order to help you (and your client) visualize the packaged service, we'll be using the term *product* to describe it. Exhibit 3-1, "Sample Form for Describing a Package of Services," is a form to help you with this step.

Examine Your Existing Services

Now that you've had the experience of productizing an intangible service, you take a look at all or most of the services your firm offers as a step toward making them more tangible.

In this exercise, you will list the products your firm offers. Exhibit 3-2, "Sample Form for Listing Firm Products," is a form to help compile this list.

Identify Client Purchases and Potential Purchases

The purpose of this exercise is to have you begin targeting clients to whom you can market additional products. In this exercise, select a client with whom you have a good working relationship—someone who likes you.

Exhibit 3-3, "Sample Form for Listing Current and Potential Sales," helps you list the products your client now buys from the firm and the products they should be buying.

List Actions Needed to Sell Potential Purchases

Consider and list what you must do to sell more. Exhibit 3-4, "Sample Form for Listing Actions Needed to Sell Additional Products," is a form for listing the marketing actions needed.

Okay—what did you learn from the exercises in steps 1 to 4?

When tested, most of our clients and students find:

- They didn't realize all the services that the firm offers or that they, themselves, were capable of offering.

- They didn't recognize that they had clients who should be buying many more services from their firm.

Hopefully, you now feel an urgency to sit down, away from the client's office and distractions (over lunch is best) and discuss with the client the possibility of having you fill these service needs, wants, and desires.

Step 2. Prescribe Now—Operate Later

Hopefully, you have more than your hands full between January and May first. You probably don't want any additional work to do right then. Well, how about picking up some work for that time of year? That's what many of the Best Business Generators do: They market and sell during busy season and schedule the additional work to be performed afterwards.

Why Busy Season Is the Best Time to Market

There are six good reasons why busy season is the best time to market. They are:

Reason 1—You Have Much More Contact With Clients. Busy season is akin to Christmastime in the retail industry. There is never more opportunity to market your wares.

But what would happen to your retail clients if the salespeople hid in the back room during Christmas season? Or the merchandise wasn't put out for the customer to buy?

That's exactly what happens to CPAs during busy season: They sell much less than they should. CPAs go into a veritable seclusion from potential business during busy season because they are so preoccupied with getting the work out. (Don't draw the wrong conclusion, however; you have to get good, quality, timely work out during busy season too.)

The point is that the great majority of our peers turn their minds off to new business during busy season when they should have the exact opposite attitude.

We all know that you and your staff will come into contact with more clients (and prospective clients, if you do it right) during that time of year than any other. Great!

Remember our marketing definition: *Marketing is anything that puts you in front of someone you want to do business with.*

For instance, how often do we get to sit down with our individual tax clients, except for busy season? Perhaps some of you meet with your higher-income clients before year-end to do some last-minute tax strategizing.

What about your audit clients? Again, you see them much more often during busy season. And your compilation and review clients?

Every single client you have in your firm is a potential buyer for some other service. Every single client you have is a potential referral source, too. Don't ever forget that, or overlook this built-in marketing season we practitioners have.

Reason 2—Clients Are in the Trauma of Tax and Busy Season. As if it wasn't soon enough, right after the holidays, Uncle Sam sends out the 1040s and 1120s, reminding everyone it's almost time to pay the piper for all that money made during the year.

There's a certain dread, or trauma, about the time of year people file their tax returns.

Marketing Truth. This tax trauma is wonderful for marketing purposes because the more people hurt or ache about something, the more likely they are to take action.

If your tooth hurts, you're going to take action, right? If your car has problems, you're going to get it fixed immediately, correct? If their taxes hurt, people are more likely to take action, too. After all, who likes paying taxes?

Perhaps in the past you've tried to have conversations with some of your clients about tax planning, estate planning, financial planning, or setting up wills and trusts. Usually, if accountants attempt to discuss these topics with clients at all, they do it during a slower time of the year, after the trauma of tax season has gone away, thereby lessening the likelihood of people taking action or being interested in the topic.

Same analogy applies to dentistry. If your toothache goes away, do you want to talk to your dentist about having a root canal?

Therefore, begin discussion with your clients on these tax- and money-related issues while you have their attention during tax season. Discuss how tax planning, trusts, and financial planning would help ease the tax burden after the fact if some work were done before the fact.

Set an appointment, right then and there, to meet after tax season to move forward.

The Best Business Generators have a saying: Prescribe now—operate later. That's how they create additional business after busy season. They strike while the iron is hot.

A similarity exists while the client is going through the trauma of year-end closings and getting its financial statements audited, compiled, corporate tax return prepared, and other activities. They're finally going to get a good, hard look at the bottom line. They'll say, Is that all that there is? Couldn't it be more? Isn't it impossible to improve? We worked so hard this year!

If you wait until after busy season is over to discuss with your client how you might help them to improve their internal control, improve their cash flow and receivables collection, get a handle on their inventory, install a new computer system to provide faster and better information for superior decisions, or review their health care benefits—*it might be too late.*

The ache or hurt of the recent past dissipates into the challenge of the future by the time May, June, and September have rolled around.

Follow the lead of the Best Business Generators. Take advantage of the marketing opportunities that busy season provides and have these discussions with your clients then, while they have an interest, and set an appointment to get started on the work after busy season!

Reason 3—Referral Sources Have Trauma, Too. Your referral sources are often inundated by complaints from their clients and customers during busy season because of the lousy service they're receiving from their CPAs (hopefully not you!).

You need to have more contact with them, too, at this time of year for more referrals than ever before. You need to be in front of your referral sources more during busy season (lunches, breakfasts) to get all of the referrals you deserve from them. "Out of sight, out of mind" applies here, too.

Reason 4—There's Lots of Publicity About Taxes and Year-End Results. If you listen to the radio, read the paper, surf the Internet, or watch television during busy season, you know that taxes are a hot topic of conversation. There are many more articles written and read, postings on Web forums, guests on radio shows, and appearances by tax experts on television. Tax information and more importantly, misinformation can be found everywhere.

During busy season, news usually comes out about how poorly the XYZ Company did, for example, with lower earnings than forecast.

Please realize that during busy season the media is doing public relations work for you for free! Jump on it!

This media hype surrounding our profession dissipates immediately after April 15.

Reason 5—CPAs Are "Heroes" During Tax and Busy Season. Those of you who go to social functions during busy season know exactly what we mean. During the rest of the year, if out socializing, people will often respond with a "ho-hum" when you tell them you're a CPA.

But during tax season, you're a hero! People want to talk to you! This is very good for marketing and building a practice. Take advantage of it. Yes, go to more parties during busy season. As long as you speak English, instead of technical jargon, you'll be a popular person and have an opportunity to show yourself off to a lot of people who are in the trauma of taxes and year-end results (that's called marketing). We know, you're too tired to socialize during busy season. Catch up on your sleep in July. We're talking about boosting your practice, here!

Reason 6—Nobody Else Is Even Thinking About It. Maybe the best reason to market, make contacts, and go places during busy season is that your competition isn't even remotely thinking about it. That's right, there's a 3½ month window of opportunity to do personal marketing in a virtual vacuum.

Take advantage of this marketing "monopoly" before the window closes.

We've had clients increase their practices 20 percent and more (and these aren't small practices, either) during the rest of the year by following the suggestions in this chapter and marketing during the best time of the year.

When Do You Have Time to Do Marketing?

The Best Business Generators in the profession are always marketing and always thinking about business, even while they're grinding out the work.

They use those times during the day that are available to them to make more contact.

Most professionals still eat lunch during busy season, some even breakfast. Where do they eat? Usually at their desk, in the office, or with fellow co-workers.

Set aside two to three lunches a week, especially during busy season, to make more contact with referral sources and people you should be doing more business with. Meet for breakfast or do whatever is most convenient for you.

We know, we know—you don't have time. So take a look at exactly what you're doing. Maybe you can delegate a bit of it, to free yourself up to take advantage of this best marketing time of the year.

What Will People Say?

What will people say if you call them or meet them for lunch during busy season? "Aren't you guys busy this time of year?"

To which you should reply, "Yes! Thank goodness, business is very good. But I've found that this time of year is the best time to meet with people, as taxes and business are more on their mind. This is a good time of year for me to pick up additional work for later on and get new clients right now."

That's verbatim what one of the Best Business Generators in the accounting profession says to her contacts and clients. She maintains that it sets up their meetings to be even more productive than they might otherwise be. And she knows she has no personal marketing competition during busy season.

A managing partner of one of America's most successful marketing firms said, "We consider one hour of personal marketing as valuable to the firm as five hours of chargeable work."

What About Advertising and Direct Mail During Busy Season?

Our experience is that you will have a better response from advertising and direct mail before and during busy season for the reasons stated above. Refer to our chapter on advertising for specific suggestions on how to make your advertising efforts more effective.

Step 3. Keep the Client Happy

The Best Business Generators realize that marketing and selling are a lot like courtship. And the relationship with your clients is a lot like marriage. Like the Best Business Generators, you should never let the romance die in your client relationships. How can you get closer to your clients? How can you stay on top of their critical personal and business concerns?

Moreover, the Best Business Generators recognize that it takes a lot of time and effort to fortify their relationships with clients. And, they have to guard against complacency because any laziness on their part may, ultimately, cost them their clients. We find that more clients are lost due to poor communication and inattention than for any other reason.

Marketing Truth. Your best client is your competitor's best prospective client.

Keep this marketing truth in mind. Believe us—your clients are being actively courted. And losing one of your top clients is really painful and it will be difficult, expensive, and time-consuming to replace.

Here are a few ways for you to guarantee a stable of delighted clients.

Act Like a Business Doctor

The Best Business Generators are always examining the business operations of their top clients to find ways to help. They keep a close eye on what's disturbing their clients and seeing where it hurts. Is their pension plan out of whack? Are they facing special financing requirements? Are they expanding their plant?

The Best Business Generators want their clients to see them as a valued business adviser. That's why they are the most enthusiastic cross-marketers of services. For they find that the more services they provide, the more their clients see them as an adviser, and not solely as a limited technician.

Because of cross-marketing, these clients are less likely to go outside of the firm to others for services.

Give Your Clients Referrals

Do you keep your eyes and ears open to send business your client's way? Many of us think we do, but what do our clients think? How much business have you actually referred your clients' way this past year? Do you make a habit of sending your top clients some business or making introductions?

How do you do this? When you go to industry conferences, keep your eyes and ears open for new opportunities for your clients. Know the type of business that your clients are seeking. Be like the Best Business Generators; they enjoy finding business for their clients almost as much as they enjoy selling their own services.

Conduct Quarterly Meetings With Your Top Clients

To serve your clients as an adviser, you have to find out what's on their agenda. How do they plan to grow? What are their strategies? What problems are frustrating them most? Which areas require the most time and attention? What business problems are keeping them awake at night? In other words, stay on top of what's happening in their business. Use these quarterly meetings as a method to "routine-ize" the process of staying close to your clients.

We know a CPA who includes this type of meeting in *all* of her proposals, and she has dramatically increased her winning percentage accordingly. Because, in many cases, companies are switching from service providers who failed to communicate and stay in close regular contact with them.

Prospective clients don't want to engage a firm that would fail to listen to them. And, this CPA finds that the quarterly meetings provide tangible evidence of her distinctive commitment to listen and counsel.

Here's an example of how being in tune with your clients can lead to new opportunities.

Real Life Marketing Example. A CPA noticed a trend in the industry he served—a trauma needing attention. He did the necessary research to familiarize himself with the applicable issues, then produced an executive briefing to reach out to clients, help solve the trauma, and further promote his firm for new opportunities.

The executive briefing is a short (half hour) presentation of a leading-edge issue—or a source of severe trauma. It is not intended as a seminar or a deeply educational event. Instead, it's an executive summary that positions you as an expert and allows you to “sell” subtly.

Its best use is for cross-marketing a specialty service to a client. Or it can also be presented to an allied referral source for the same purpose. Use it with prospective clients too. It is a nonthreatening way to move prospects off of neutral and marching toward becoming your client.

Here's an example of its use.

One of our clients served a number of mid-sized manufacturing companies. Many of these companies were either exporters or suppliers to big exporters. Consequently, many of them were feeling pressure to qualify for ISO 9000 certification to preserve their customer base.

Seeing this buyer trauma, the partner attended a series of intensive seminars on ISO 9000. Then, he contacted a local training firm in his city and purchased a fully scripted executive-level presentation titled “All About ISO 9000.”

Next, he contacted his top 10 clients and made arrangements to conduct the executive briefing for them.

He fortified his relationships with his top clients and sustained his position as a business adviser in their eyes. Beyond client goodwill, he also was retained by six of these clients to help them assess their ability to meet the financial and accounting requirements of ISO 9000.



CONCLUSION

Marketing to existing clients is always the first priority for the best business generators. The Best Business Generators know that they are going to get about 50 percent of their

new business from their clients and their referrals—whether it be new services sold to these clients, repeat business, or referrals to new clients.

The Best Business Generators generate many more opportunities to sell by packaging your services into products, identifying which clients are in need of what, and then meeting with them to discuss their purchase of these products. Also, there are many marketing advantages to be exploited during busy season, which is why it is the best time of the year to market services.

EXHIBIT 3-1: SAMPLE FORM FOR DESCRIBING A PACKAGE OF SERVICES

Product description:

Aches, hurts, problems, or desires this product solves:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Product's purpose:

Product's features:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

(continued)

EXHIBIT 3-1: SAMPLE FORM FOR DESCRIBING A PACKAGE OF SERVICES (CONT'D)

Purchase's value to the client:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Cost (range or fixed): \$ _____

“Eye-catching” name of product (for example, the Protect Your Assets Program or the Estate Protection Plan):

EXHIBIT 3-2: SAMPLE FORM FOR LISTING FIRM PRODUCTS

Product item:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____
- 11. _____
- 12. _____
- 13. _____
- 14. _____

EXHIBIT 3-3: SAMPLE FORM FOR LISTING CURRENT AND POTENTIAL SALES

Missing Products Checklist

Client name: _____

Date: _____

List of products client is now buying:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

List of products client should be buying:

Product 1: _____

Why should they buy? List three “hurts” you know of that this product will solve:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Contact person: _____

Cost (range): \$ _____

Product 2: _____

Why should they buy? List three “hurts” you know of that this product will solve:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Contact person: _____

Cost (range): \$ _____

Product 3: _____

Why should they buy? List three “hurts” you know of that this product will solve:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Contact person: _____

Cost (range): \$ _____

**EXHIBIT 3-4: SAMPLE FORM FOR LISTING ACTIONS NEEDED TO SELL
ADDITIONAL PRODUCTS**

Action steps to sell the additional products:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



**APTITUDE FOR
OBTAINING
QUALITY REFERRALS**

chapter 4

As we've mentioned earlier, the Best Business Generators in the CPA profession rely greatly on referrals from clients and allies to produce the majority of their new business.

Sadly, CPAs just don't seem to get their share of referrals that would help their practices grow dramatically and profitably with the targeted clients they want. And if they do receive a referral, many simply don't follow through on it, and it goes to waste!

By drawing on this vast resource of receiving referrals, you can, as the top producers do, turn your clients and referral sources into your sales force! In this chapter we'll show you how to use a systematic approach that guarantees referrals because it has been proven by hundreds of our clients and students over the past 20 years.



WHY DON'T YOU GET MORE REFERRALS?

In 2001, we conducted a study of 200 clients of CPA firms, large and small, spread out over the United States and Canada. We wanted to know if these clients gave their CPAs referrals, how often, and if not, why not.

The results were quite interesting and not exactly as we expected:

- A full 50 percent of those interviewed said they had, indeed, given their service provider referrals.
- Of the other 50 percent (those who did not give referrals), 80 percent said they did not primarily because they had never been requested to give a referral and didn't know their CPAs wanted any.
- In addition, 87 percent of those who didn't give referrals didn't because their service provider was too busy and, because they were overloaded with work, they didn't think they wanted any.
- Of those responding to not giving referrals, 37 percent, regardless of order of importance, did so simply because they didn't like their service provider enough.
- Only 4 percent didn't offer referrals because they didn't think their service provider was good enough technically.
- Of those who had admitted giving three or more referrals in the past year, 91 percent said they had done so because they had specifically been requested to.

The Best Business Generators in our profession know that they have to request referrals on an ongoing basis because if they wait for referrals to come in, they may not get enough to keep growing profitably.



HOW SERVICE PROVIDERS ARE SELECTED

Following is the course of action that the absolute great majority of all people employ when hiring a service provider. It has been proven time and again in similar, live exercises and interviews with fellow professionals, other service providers, and “civilians.” Please be open-minded about this process; in this profession we have a tough time believing that people actually use this approach in selecting a service provider. Perhaps, you wouldn’t. Our experience, however, in conducting hundreds of these kinds of interviews with your peers is that if we had the opportunity to interview you personally, it most likely would play out in the following fashion:

Question 1. Who Do I Know?

The first step in hiring a service provider is always asking oneself at some conscious level, Gee, who do I know that’s an estate attorney? or Who do I know who can help me (or my client)?

If you couldn’t think of someone off-hand, you would proceed naturally to the next step.

Question 2. Who Do I Know Who Knows?

If you can’t think of someone or can think of only one, perhaps, you then begin to search your data banks for someone who might refer you to an estate attorney.

Question 3. Who Do I Like and Trust?

Okay, you have the names of three local estate attorneys who can represent you (or your client). You knew one and were referred by your partners to two others. What’s the next step? Well, for many people, it’s to interview the attorney to see if they feel comfortable with that person and like and trust them.

How else could you possibly determine who to hire? By fees? Really? Do you (or your client) want to hire the cheapest estate attorney in town to make sure this situation is handled in the most proper, time-effective, and least problematic way? Not likely.

Question 4. Who Wants the Business and Will Appreciate It?

The hiring process could have easily stopped at the previous step because you met someone you really liked and trusted him or her to do his or her best on your behalf.

Or, you’ve interviewed all three attorneys, and like them all pretty much the same. Now, how do you make the decision?

Well, if you can’t distinguish one from the other, and you like and trust them all fairly the same, you might indeed select that person who had the lowest fees. If you can’t tell the difference, why not?

However, this is most likely the way it will happen: Had you interviewed all three and liked them all pretty much the same, you would base your final decision on who you think really wants the case and who will appreciate it (and therefore do the best job).

That's the same process people go through for hiring a service provider.

Some CPA have said in the past that they wouldn't hire an estate attorney without reviewing his or her records, files, and other items. Really? Remember, you've been referred in. What professional service provider do you know who will let you in their files? Would you? Of course not. The problem is that when hiring another service provider, outside of one's own realm of expertise, the decision to hire has to be made on trust, amicability, and knowledge of the service provider in the first place because there is nothing to see, hear, touch, and smell, as there is with a tangible item.

This somewhat illogical process is based not on technical expertise, but on someone's third-party direction of another party, which is why referrals are so highly valuable to every professional.

Marketing Truth. Whatever you say about yourself is your opinion (and pretty darn worthless—it's your feeling!). What others say about you is fact (they're not getting paid to say it and their credibility and their relationship with the referee are on the line).

People who are referred to you are presold. This is another reason referrals are so powerful and they're the easiest and quickest way to build your practice.

You really have to fail miserably to lose the referred client. If you can't convert a referred lead to becoming your client 90 percent of the time or more:

- You're doing something terribly wrong in the sales process.
- You've let the referred lead get too cold because you were too busy to follow through on it and they hired someone else.
- Their hurt, ache, need, want, or desire went away.



SOME TRUISMS ABOUT REFERRALS

Here are some steadfast principles regarding securing referrals. Following are the foundations of effectively garnering referrals.

People Like Helping Other People

In fact, people often go out of their way to aid and assist others. If, on your way out of an office building, you see an elderly person with a walker trying to exit the building, it's likely that you'll run, not walk, to open the door for him or her.

How much money has been raised through the years from television telethons? People from every walk of life part with their hard-earned cash to organize and donate to help others. Don't you buy Girl Scout cookies?

Okay, the last two examples are for charities. Maybe you'll think they're not relevant. How about when a friend calls and asks you to help him move a piece of furniture?

People enjoy helping other people because it makes them feel good.

Use those feelings in building your practice. Yes, you can help others feel good about themselves by asking for their assistance and allowing them to help you—it is better to give than receive?

Your success in garnering referrals will depend on how you feel when asked for one. Do you feel put out? Embarrassed? Angry? Or do you feel like most of the people we've interviewed for this course: honored, happy to help, and often eager to assist.

Why, therefore, shouldn't people help you? Introductions are simply the easiest way to build your practice now.

It's Not Unprofessional to Ask for Referrals; It's Expected

How have your clients built their businesses?

Your clients' business has been built through repeat business. But how have they secured a great portion of that repeat business? By requesting, and receiving, referrals.

Your clients understand the power of referrals. They know that referrals are tantamount to the success of every business.

Yes, there was a time, perhaps 100 years ago, when no rightful CPA would dream of asking for referrals. Then it was proper to wait for word to get out about the quality of your work. Unfortunately, do to the ever-increasing competitive and expensive nature of our business, you may not be able to afford that luxury anymore. The Best Business Generators in our profession have always looked at referrals as their primary way to get good business.

Also, those who are best at securing powerful referrals know when, how, and where to do so.



YOU DON'T WANT REFERRALS, ANYWAY!

That's right—you don't want referrals! What are referrals, anyway? Do they sound like this?

Client: You'd like a referral? Sure—why don't you give Damon Ramone a call; maybe he could use you.

That's not a referral—that's a cold call with a name hung on it!

Worse, if you make that call, how will your prospective client receiving it most likely feel? How would you feel? Do other service providers, or salespeople, regularly make calls like

that? Perhaps you've received a few in your time. How do you like it? Maybe you've taken a telephone call like this:

You: Hello, Joe Smith speaking.

Them: Hello, Mr. Smith. My name is Dalton Walton and I work for Walt Life Insurance. Bill Thrill said I should give you call about your insurance!

Great. How does that make you feel? You've been interrupted from what you were doing, and someone (who you thought was a friend) forced an insurance salesman on you. Chances are that you're upset with Dalton for bothering you and somewhat peeved at Bill for giving your name out without your approval.

You don't want referrals; you want personal introductions. There is a big difference between receptivity and chance for closure. We'll show you how to do it.

Let's now review our systematic approach to securing your share of introductions from your clients and referrals sources.



A SEVEN-STEP PROCESS TO OBTAIN QUALITY REFERRALS FROM CLIENTS

The following system to garnering introductions was based on an approach used by one of our clients who is known as the King of Referrals in his sizable firm (which he grew from scratch). We've modified it and simplified it for you. We're going to show you who to ask, how to do it, where to do it, and what to ask for:

- *Ask the right people.* Concentrate only on clients and referral sources where you have the best relationships. Asking people you don't enjoy very good personal relationships with lowers your chances of success and increases your odds of offending them.
- *Be specific in your referrals.* Based on who your target clients and industries are, ask for specific referrals, not generic ones. Saying something like "Do you know anyone who might be looking for a business consultant?" is much too generic and requires the referrer to access every data file in his or her brain, which is simply too much work. This unparticular request often leads to, "Gosh, I'll have to think about it." Instead, be specific about who and what you want to be referred to. It's much easier for your clients to think of fellow business owners in the high-tech business located in their particular town, than "anybody."
- *Ask in the right places.* The greatest skill in the world may very well be the art of persuasion. People who are excellent at this skill know that the environment must be properly set to ask someone to do something

important. Would you recommend someone propose marriage over a candlelit dinner in a quiet restaurant or over tacos at Uncle Joe's fast food joint? The very same ideas apply to requesting referrals. Make sure the environment is correct; you want to put them in a mood to help you. That's pretty tough to do in someone's office, where the phone is ringing and the secretary is constantly coming in and interrupting.

We've discovered, and proven, that the absolutely best place to ask a client or referral source is over lunch at a restaurant, away from the distractions of their business, where it's most likely that they will open up and relax—and where you have their attention.

- *Ask at the best time.* Ask for referrals and introductions only when you believe someone is feeling positive about you at the time.
- *Know exactly how to request.* In requesting referrals, we suggest the following system.

-
- Step 1.* Get them to lunch.
 - Step 2.* Thank them for their business.
 - Step 3.* Use the “Plus/Minus” method.
 - Step 4.* Be specific about what you want.
 - Step 5.* Send a thank you note.
 - Step 6.* Follow through on the introduction.
 - Step 7.* Let the client know what happened.
-

Step 1. Get Them to Lunch

Okay. You've called one of your closest clients and invited her for lunch. You know that she likes you and appreciates the work you do for her. You've helped her grow and control her business, but she really hasn't sent you much of any kind of new business. Here's how you set the appointment for lunch:

- You:* Anna? Hi, it's Ralph. How are you?
Her: Fine! How are you?
You: Great. How about lunch next week?
Her: Okay.

Wow—that was tough. She's your client; why wouldn't she go to lunch? If she asks what it's about, just say that she's your client and that you'd like to take her out to lunch and discuss something with her. If she persists, merely say that you'd like to discuss it in person.

Our experience tells us that you won't get the third degree, or resistance, in asking a client, or a referral source out to lunch—if there is a good relationship. If there's too much resistance, perhaps the relationship isn't as good as you thought it was.

Next, you're now at lunch. Move to the following step.

Step 2. Thank Them for Their Business

In having people do things for us, like giving us referrals, they must feel positive about us. Reflect upon your own experience. Do you wait until your spouse, child, friend, father, or boss is in a good mood to ask them for a favor? Or are you one of those daring types who plows straight ahead, no matter how the other person is feeling? We suggest strongly that you get people into a good mood before you ask them to do something for you.

You've already started that process by taking your client out to lunch. You may now be concerned that taking all of these clients out to lunch is going to cost a lot of money (directly off the old bottom line, right?). Well, you might be correct. Taking clients and referral sources out to lunch, dinner, or breakfast, may truly cost you funds that you haven't expended in the past. However, this is where you should be investing your marketing money: in those places where you're most likely to get a very positive return, instead of wasting it on marketing to strangers.

A person can only be in one of three emotional states at any one time: positive, negative, or neutral. This entire referral requesting process is designed to move your referrer to the positive side.

When's the last time you were thanked for your business? By your attorney? By your insurance agent? By your stockbroker, perhaps? Maybe your doctor has thanked you recently! Hardly. This art of appreciation, which is so vitally important to maintaining and improving relationships, is virtually ignored in today's society.

Yes, there was a time where the clerk at the cash register actually thanked you for doing business with them. Have you noticed that's changed? Have you noticed that you often thank them for taking your money?

People love to be thanked for their patronage. Nobody does it often enough. Now's the time to thank your client for her business—we promise she'll like it.

You: Anna, one reason I wanted to take you to lunch was to just thank you for your business these past six years. Often we just don't stop and take the time to say thanks. You're an important client to us, and we've enjoyed working with you and watching your business prosper.

Her: Why, Ralph, you're very welcome.

She's now in a positive mood. Go on to the next step.

Step 3. Use the “Plus/Minus” Method

Because we don't want anything to get in the way of getting at least one super introduction, we're going to allow the client the opportunity to get off her mind anything that might be bothering her. After all, what's the likelihood of getting that introduction if she's not happy about something? But couldn't that upset the whole situation?

Well, if there is something bothering her, and you give her the opportunity to express her displeasure without interrupting her and getting defensive, she will go negative for a time and then return to the positive attitude.

You: I'd like to take this opportunity to discuss with you how we are doing as your service providers. How is our new staff person interacting with your IT manager? Is there something that is bothering you about us, any complaints that we should address? I've decided to have conversations like this with my clients regularly so that there are no misunderstandings, so we can keep our relationships right.

Her: Well, now that you mention it, there are a couple of things we should be discussing. Your new person seems to be getting along well with Clark, but you really should talk to him. We don't have much interaction ourselves.

I would also like to talk with you about your fees. Based on what I'm hearing from other people, there appears to be quite a bit of fee competition out there these days. Your fees have increased 120 percent in the last six years. Why are we paying so much money? How much can you knock off of that?

You: (You sure didn't want to open up the can of worms about fees, did you?) Our fees have increased in total as your business has grown. Certainly, your business isn't the same as it was when you were first starting out six years ago. Our fees have gone up as the amount of work has gone up, which would explain part of the increase.

Also, I hope that you have seen some benefit from being our client. We helped you arrange financing at the Twenty-Third National Bank and we installed a system of accounts receivable control that has sped up your collections considerably, saving you interest expense and giving you better cash flow to invest elsewhere.

Just as you have increased your prices due to increasing costs, we've had to increase our fees, as well. There are ever increasing pressures on us to maintain the best staff we can, and we spend a small fortune training our people on all of the new changes that are constantly happening in our business.

I hope you can see the value in having us as your professionals, even if we are more expensive. Is there anything that we're doing well?

Her: Well of course you're right, Ralph. You and your firm have been a big help in our business; it's just that we're constantly pestered by other firms to let them do our work for much less.

I've always appreciated the way you've treated us. You've always been so responsive, and you look to save me taxes before the fact, rather than when it's too late, as have the other accountants I've dealt with over the years. That's why I came to you in the first place.

Good. She's back to positive. How successful do you think you'd be in receiving a referral unless you discussed what was bothering her first? Move now on the next step.

Step 4. Be Specific About What You Want

You: One of the reasons I wanted to get together with you, besides saying thanks, was to see if you might be able to help us with our business.

Getting new clients is harder than ever for us, what with all the cutthroat competition that's out there. And, we're set up for some additional quality business without hurting our existing clients one bit.

The way we've always grown our business has been through referrals from clients like you, people who are happy with us and might know others who would like the same level of service.

Can you think of another business owner like yourself who could use the same kind of direction we've given you all these years in her business? Perhaps someone from your networking groups?"

Note: There are only three answers to this question—no, maybe, and yes. All three are just fine.

Here's "no" scenario:

Her: No.

That's just fine. She's sorted herself out as someone who cannot help you build your practice at least at this very time. You have, no mistake about it, planted the seed for future referrals.

Here's "maybe" scenario:

Her: Off the top of my head, I just can't think of any.

You: Okay. Can I get back to you after you've had a chance to think about it?

Her: Sure.

And why wouldn't she think more about it? You're her valued service provider.

You: When should I get back to you?

Her: How about next Thursday. One of our groups is meeting next Wednesday and it will give me a chance to check around.

Will she? Drop her a thank you note, send an e-mail, or leave a voice mail message as a reminder that you will indeed call her Thursday as you agreed. Remember, people like helping other people. You'll call her on Thursday to follow up.

The "yes" scenario is:

Her: Why, yes, come to think of it. Delores Morris is just starting out in her first business after successfully building the hydrolux division of a Fortune 500 company. She has some important backers and great contacts, but I am not sure whether she is set for her CPA firm or consulting. I know she could use help like yours.

Bingo. You have the referral. Now go for the introduction.

You: Great! That's very exciting. I'd love to talk to Delores, but she doesn't know me. I'd feel very uncomfortable calling her right out of the blue. Would you introduce her to me by calling her and asking if she'd like to talk to me?

This just makes too much sense for people to say no. Our experience is that about 80 percent of those people who have offered us referrals over the years have been willing to go the next step, and smart people who know how the game is played will always offer the introduction even without your asking. And that's how you should also give introductions: offer to make the contact for the person being referred in.

You can decide what to do with referrals that won't be introduced to you. You might send a letter suggesting that you get together or call based on a conversation you had with your client.

Getting back to our conversation:

Her: I'd be happy to.

You: Good. When should I get back to you to find out how your conversation went?

Her: Give me a call Thursday. I'll be seeing her at the group meeting on Wednesday and I'll see if she wants to talk to you.

You: Wonderful. I'll call you then.

Step 5. Send a Thank You Note

Keep your client positive after the lunch by sending off a personalized thank you note immediately. Exhibit 4-1, "Sample Follow-Up Thank You Note" is a sample thank you note we use in our practice. Please note all of the positive elements. Change or modify it as you see fit.

Step 6. Follow Through on the Introduction

Come Thursday, Ralph makes sure to call Anna about Delores.

You: Anna? Hi, it's Ralph. How are you?

Her: Ralph—good to hear from you.

You: I just wanted to follow up on our conversation to see how your talk with Delores went.

Only two things can happen here: she talked to Delores or forgot to. Both are fine.

Her: Oh, I forgot all about it—my cat had kittens.

That's fine—now she feels guilty about letting you down. Guilt is a powerful motivator! She'll give you even a better referral.

Her: Why don't you get back to me tomorrow? I'll give Delores a call right now.

Or she might have talked to Delores, after all.

You: Anna? Hi, it's Ralph. How are you?

Her: Ralph—good to hear from you.

You: I just wanted to follow up on our conversation to see how your talk with Delores went.

Her: Good. I had a chance to talk to her and she's not interested.

That's fine, as well. You haven't been rejected, she has! And you have planted the seed in her subconscious mind of future referrals.

You: Well, thanks so much for trying.

Or the best thing happens:

You: I just wanted to follow up on our conversation to see how your talk with Delores went.

Her: Good. She's waiting for your call!

Great. Drop what you are doing. You've got a red-hot lead. Someone wants to talk to you. Set the appointment with Delores immediately.

Step 7. Let the Client Know What Happened

If you want a continuous source of introductions, always let the client know what happened to the referral you received. If you didn't get the client, explain why, and thank

them again. If you did get the business, they'll be excited and feel good, too, thus leading to more referrals.



ADAPTING THE PROCESS FOR REFERRAL SOURCES

This step-by-step approach works just as well with your referral sources as it will with your clients. See Exhibit 4-2, "Sample Process to Ask Referral Sources for Referrals," for an example.



ADAPTING THE PROCESS FOR COLLEAGUES

It's amazing, but true: People outside of the profession (especially successful salespeople) never understand why CPA don't refer business to their colleagues right in the same firm often enough.

But you know it's true.

From the largest firms in the world to the smallest, partners and managers are often afraid to refer business to others in the same firm for fear of harming the relationship. Maybe that fear is well founded. After all, who would want to knowingly refer business to someone they knew who wasn't going to do the job properly for their valued client? Our clients have told us that this is sometimes not based on reality; it's frequently due to the lack of comfort with the fellow partner or manager.

Those fears can be placated in some situations by getting to know the other person better over lunch or socially. See Exhibit 4-3, "Sample Process to Ask Colleagues for Referrals," for an example of how a colleague's referral can be sought.



WHAT IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANYBODY TO ASK?

Perhaps you are just starting out. You don't have many (or any) clients to ask for referrals, and haven't met any referral sources that are ripe for referrals. Now what?

Ask everybody you know. Because funds are precious, consider doing it over coffee, instead of over lunch. If they don't know someone the first time you ask, ask them again—a name may have come to them after you planted the seed.

If you can't think of asking anyone through normal channels, perhaps you should consider building your own network with a group of like-minded business associates. Consider the following example.

Real Life Marketing Example. A group of professionals and other top executives in a suburb of Philadelphia saw a need to expand their network of contacts. Two younger ambitious partners—one from a CPA firm and another an attorney—decided to form a networking organization. They wanted it to be the equivalent

of the Young Presidents organization. In other words, they wanted only young professionals, business owners, and executives who were as ambitious as they were. Also, they wanted to limit the number of people in several categories, such as like brokers, insurance agents, attorneys, and CPAs.

To get the group rolling, they formed a core of 10 founding members, many of whom were their clients and top allies.

As they talked, they decided that the only way that this would work would be if it were perceived as an “elite” group, so, they decided to limit membership in the group to 20. Then they developed a program and agenda for meetings throughout the year. Each month they had a speaker and a feature member who would talk about their business.

Two results occurred. First, the CPA partner’s word-of-mouth advertising increased dramatically—since he had regular access to 15 new contacts per month. And over the first three months of involvement, he got three new substantial clients. Over the next three years, he generated over a quarter of a million dollars in new business from the group.

If you really are desperate for business right this very minute, it doesn’t matter where you do it, just do it before you run out of money!

Sometimes desperation is a great motivator. It was for us. We started marketing to CPA and consulting firms by asking everyone we knew—and received four introductions. Two of those led to major breakthroughs that set us on the path we are on today. We parlayed those precious few introductions into more introductions, and more. We were determined not to make a single cold call.

Yes, we’ve used all of the tactics in *Mastering the Art of Marketing Professional Services* to be highly successful in our business. None have been more important than requesting and receiving introductions.



CONCLUSION

In this chapter we’ve shown you why referrals are so powerful and so important to the profitable growth of your practice. We’ve shown you a system that’s been proven to work, time and again. It’s up to you to apply it, experiment with it, and reap its rewards.

A powerful marketing program always incorporates gaining leverage through others and enhances all the other ideas put forth in this book.

EXHIBIT 4-1: SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP THANK YOU NOTE

Dear Mary:

Thank you so much for the honor of working with your client, 007 Security; we greatly appreciate your referral. We have wanted to work with them for years and you were the one who finally was able to open the door for us.

Because we have worked so hard to build our practice, every client is like a precious flower—one to be appreciated, acknowledged, and nurtured. Please be assured that we will take our very best care of this client, as we do with all of our client family.

And we will continue to send our clients to you, as we have heard so much positive feedback over the years about your work.

Thanks again.

Respectfully,

Moe and Joe, CPAs

EXHIBIT 4-2: SAMPLE PROCESS TO ASK REFERRAL SOURCES FOR REFERRALS

STEPS TAKEN	VARIABLE/REASONING*
Step 1. Get them to lunch.	Same strategy applies.
Step 2. Thank them for their business.	Same psychology applies. (Thank them for taking such great care of your clients over the years.)
Step 3. Use the “Plus/Minus” method.	Same psychology applies. (Find out what kind of feedback, good or bad, they have received about you and your firm.)
Step 4. Be specific about what you want and get the introduction.	Same strategy applies.
Step 5. Send a thank you note.	Same strategy applies.
Step 6. Follow through on the introduction.	Same strategy applies.
Step 7. Let the client know what happened.	Same psychology applies.

*As compared with the process to ask clients for referrals.

EXHIBIT 4-3: SAMPLE PROCESS TO ASK COLLEAGUES FOR REFERRALS

STEPS TAKEN	VARIABLE/REASONING*
Step 1. Get them to lunch.	Same strategy applies.
Step 2. Thank them for their business.	Same psychology applies. (Thank them for something they have done for you or the firm.)
Step 3. Use the “Plus/Minus” method.	Same psychology applies. (Find out what kind of feedback, good or bad, they have received about you and your work from clients.)
Step 4. Be specific about what you want and get the introduction.	Same strategy applies.
Step 5. Send a thank you note.	Same psychology applies, even in the same firm. People have emotions and enjoy being recognized for a job well done.
Step 6. Follow through on the introduction.	Same strategy applies.
Step 7. Let the client know what happened.	Same psychology applies.

*As compared with the process to ask clients for referrals.



**APTITUDE FOR
BUILDING
POWERFUL ALLIANCES**

chapter 5

Gaining the cooperation and committed help of closely allied referral sources is critical to building your practice. Creating allies creates an external sales force for your practice—finding and introducing you to a steady stream of prospective clients. As you’ve learned in our coverage of the Best Business Generators, the top business producers in the accounting profession excel at building close, vital relationships with a few potent allies. In this chapter we’ll cover the strategies and tactics that will help you to accomplish this same objective.

First, you’ll learn the advantages to alliances and the key attributes to a success alliance. Then, we will guide you through a step-by-step process that will help you to maximize the quality of your referral relationships into alliances.



THE POWER OF ALLIANCES

Except for marketing to your existing clients, building potent alliances is the most critical aspect of your personal marketing action plan. Why? Well, growing your practice is a little bit like going to battle—especially in the increasingly intensive competitive environment that we are all facing. So, like nations entering into conflict, you need allies on your side who are willing to commit to helping you win the battle of practice development.

More to the point, the CPA profession is truly a relationship business. Your success is first and foremost dependent on the quality of your relationships—with clients *and* allies. Therefore, your skill in managing your ally relationships can ultimately make or break your practice.

Let’s look at the four advantages that allies bring to your business building program.

Advantage 1. Leverage

The first factor or advantage is *leverage*, getting maximum impact and contribution from the effort, contacts, and abilities of others. Let’s face it: Given the time constraints, competing pressures, shifting critical priorities, and various demands that you face, there is only so much that you can do yourself.

So, what can you do? Model what Best Business Generators do: Delegate some of your practice development to your allies. In effect, they become an outside sales force for you—finding a steady stream of prospects and contacts that would be valuable to you.

Advantage 2. Word-of-Mouth Advertising

The second advantage for you is word-of-mouth advertising: Recommendations from a respected attorney or banker carries a lot of weight. Frankly, prospective clients don’t want to spend a lot of time researching CPA firms or making cold inquiries. So, they look to other advisers to get their recommendations for a service provider.

Remember, solid allies will always be looking to bring your name up in the course of their significant business conversations. They know you, trust you, and like you, and they expect that you'll be reciprocating in their behalf, looking for opportunities to bring business their way as well.

Advantage 3. Complementary Strength

The third advantage is *complementary strength and collective impact*. This means that the mutual advantages that you and your ally bring together are of greater value than what you have individually.

For example, your clients benefit from your close working relationship with an ally as you each bring expertise and a working style that speeds communication and streamlines the process. Similarly, in marketing, each of you carries different advantages in terms of client bases, specialization, and manpower.

Additionally, you'll be able to invest more time, money, and support resources together than either of you could invest separately. Done correctly, this will translate into better, higher-impact marketing programs.

Advantage 4. The Mastermind Effect

The final ingredient is the *mastermind effect*. At times, business development can be a grueling, frustrating process. Also, on occasion you need to bounce ideas off of another entrepreneur who knows how you think, and who can appreciate and understand your point of view, as well as the hurdles that you may be facing.

Over time, allies become a support group. They can become your informal business development advisers. Since they know you and understand your practice, their advice will be reasoned and pointed. In effect, they become your mastermind group—providing the insight and support that we all need at times to succeed.



THE ALLIANCES THAT THE BEST BUSINESS GENERATORS ENJOY

In our study of the Best Business Generators, the power of their alliances was a clear-cut component in their success. Without exception, they all confirmed that alliances were instrumental to their prosperity.

However, one fact did surprise us. We thought that these business generators would enjoy a wide network of referral sources. Wouldn't it make sense that they would have dozens of referral sources who passed them a lead or two based on their experience, reputation, and personal charisma?

That wasn't the case. Instead, while they did gain referrals from their network, the most important source of high-quality leads and new business originated from a few, strong,

and enduring alliances. In fact, the bulk of business generators' new business came from a predictable stream of referrals from their best allies. And, on average, the quality of these referrals was exceptional—each lead had a high probability of immediate closure for new business.

Here are a few Real Life Marketing Examples that are typical of the power of allies from our training and consulting clients:

Real Life Marketing Example. The top business generator at a firm in Ohio is a highly personable senior partner. To give you an idea of his impact, this one person brings in 40 percent of the new clients to his firm with a partnership group of 20 partners. His passion is golf. Consequently, he's worked mostly with allies that share his interests, including golf.

By virtue of being “sporting types,” as he put it, one year they decided to have a referral contest and keep score. Their goal was to go all out and find as many referrals for each other as possible over the following six months. From this group of four allies (a foursome is required for golf), each ally added new clients that amounted to 10 percent to 20 percent of his individual practice.

Real Life Marketing Example. The bulk of work in this leading independent firm in the Midwest comes from the real estate and construction business. The managing partner traditionally generates over 40 percent of its business (more than \$10 million in fees).

The majority of this work is generated from a tight-knit group of people who have known each other from their fraternity days at college. All became successful and remained friends. So, our client finds ways to remain close to this group. In fact, he keeps a chart with their names in a prominent area in his office. Each day, he looks at that chart to determine if there is anything he can do for those important allies. He finds any way to stay close, whether it's jogging with one or helping out another's important charitable cause.

Real Life Marketing Example. Another managing partner we work with closely built his top suburban Chicago firm from scratch to a \$12 million practice. As his firm grew, he recognized that the vast majority of his new business came from his banking allies. But, as his firm expanded and diversified, he found that his marketing program strayed away from his most important allies. Rather than mutually marketing with allies, he was stressing direct marketing to new clients, without outstanding success.

So, he reoriented his firm's marketing effort. Recognizing the legacy of his firm and the importance of his confederates, he invested over 50 percent of his marketing effort into his allies and lavished attention on them. He joined in on their chamber of commerce leadership programs. Custom-tailored continuing professional education courses on cash-flow and understanding financial statements were offered to the commercial loan officers, free of charge. All referrals were directed to the allies who brought in referrals. What was the effect? Despite an economic downturn at the time, this firm experienced double-digit growth in fees.

The way we look at the power of ally relationships is this: An ally is basically a partner in building your business. You can't, however, deal with them as you would a partner; you must treat them like your most important client. Think about the relationship in these terms: Initially, you sold this person on being your ally. This sale has led to a number of new sales (or repeat business). Isn't this similar to the relationship you have with your clients, to a degree?

Exhibit 5-1, "Critical Differences Between Alliances and Referral Networking," illustrates critical differences between alliances and referrals. Please recognize that there is an important distinction between managing your alliances and building your referral network. Here are the key attributes of an ally.

Generates a Significant Number of High-Quality Leads

An ally is somebody who finds you a lot of leads—somebody who is absolutely instrumental in building your practice. By contrast, a referral source may generate a lead or two once in a while.

Will Act as Your Salesperson

Allies are adept at preselling your services. They know you and your practice well enough to qualify prospects on their need, want, or desire for your service.

Demonstrates Strong Commitment

An ally is somebody who has a personal stake in your success. In most cases, it's a long-standing relationship. In fact, you may be the CPA that he or she sends all of his or her clients and contacts to see. You may be the only person who jointly markets services with her firm. There is a much higher closure ratio for leads generated by allies than by referral sources who are often weakly submitting your name along with others.

Benefits From the Relationship

No enduring ally relationship can be wholly one-sided. Therefore, vital alliances are highly balanced. For example, you trade business back and forth. You counsel one another on business development or technical issues. You trust your ally to serve your clients, friends, and contacts, and vice versa. Perhaps you share mutual marketing investments. And you may invest a lot of time communicating to stay on top of your business together.

Referral relationships are often unbalanced and one-sided. Ever formally keep track of referrals received and owed? Allies make sure you get taken care of; referral sources tend to forget.

Has Personal Rapport and Chemistry

An alliance is typically sparked by a good personal working relationship and often develops into friendship. This is essential to its success as each of you probably have other options for refer-

rals and alliances. So, there needs to be a reason for a continuing relationship, and this strong personal connection provides the foundation upon which the business relationship thrives.

Is Entrepreneurial

We've found that both parties must have similar business-building ambitions for the alliance to work effectively. An entrepreneur is always on the hunt for ways to grow; therefore, he or she respects and seeks allies who share this goal.

Unfortunately, many people often waste their precious referrals by giving them to professionals who have little or no interest or competence in building their own practices.



A FOUR-STEP PROCESS TO BUILD POWERFUL ALLIANCES

Now you can see why there's no question that alliances are critical to growing your business and you understand the qualities that lead to a productive alliance.

Let's look at how you can create or enhance an ally relationship. For the rest of this chapter, we'll show you proven methods and techniques for managing and improving these relationships, and engage in a brainstorming exercise to illustrate how to put them into practice.

Here's our four-step approach to building your alliances, which we will be discussing in detail.

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- Step 1.* Audit your referral sources.
 - Step 2.* Focus on a top few.
 - Step 3.* Agree on an up-front contract.
 - Step 4.* Develop an allied marketing plan.
-

Step 1. Audit Your Referral Sources

Appraise the quantity of leads and new business that you trade back and forth. Then, evaluate the quality of the relationship in terms of personal chemistry, compatibility, entrepreneurial ability, and other important intangibles. Let's take a closer look at your referral sources. Use the form in Exhibit 5-2, "Sample Chart for Auditing the Quality of Your Referral Relationships," to complete these exercises.

Rank Order Your Key Referral Sources

Begin with your best key referral sources: the banker, lawyer, or colleague who is the most important asset in growing your practice. Then, list the second best source, and so on. Continue until you run out of sources worth mentioning.

Review the Last Year

Think about how many leads this person provided to you. Then identify the amount of fees that were generated by the new clients from these leads. It's okay to estimate; you don't have to get the numbers exactly. Just make sure that they are reasonably accurate.

Look at the Relationship Through the Eyes of Your Referral Sources

You're now going to redo the same analysis, but through their eyes. How many leads did you provide to them? What estimated fee revenue did they generate from you?

Note Your Reactions to This List

What initial responses come to mind? Are there any surprises? Do the relationships seem balanced? Don't worry about any hard-and-fast conclusions right now. You'll confront those later as the auditing process continues.

Step 2. Focus on the Top Three

A major tenet of building alliances is to limit yourself to the number of relationships you can manage and invest in. So, for the purposes of this exercise, let's work with your top three referral sources. Now, we'll quickly audit these relationships a bit further. Consider the following two issues.

- Can they bring you clients in your target market niches—your ideal clients? This may seem like an odd step. But, sometimes, your traditional referral sources may not be the best source for the type of clients you want to attract today and in the future. For example, you may want to emphasize a new service for business clients instead of taking on a ton of individual 1040 clients. But, this does not mean that you forsake this ally. It simply means that other referral sources could move up higher in rank order if they are better positioned to bring you ideal clients.
- Take a look at the intangibles. How is your personal chemistry with the referral sources? Will they look forward to an even closer, more proactive working relationship? Are they entrepreneurially oriented? Would they be willing to aggressively market on a cooperative basis?

Now, think about your answers. Does this referral source look like it will still be a top source of new business for you? Is there any significant reason to think that this relationship will decline or "dry up" this year?

If you think that your top three relationships will continue to thrive, proceed to the next step. If you see one of these relationships to be at risk, then pick another referral source relationship to take through this process.

Don't eliminate a top-three referral source relationship until you go through the next step. Because this is a valuable referral source, you want to make sure that you fully understand

how you can make this relationship work best. Armed with the information you'll gather in Step 3, you can make an informed judgment on how to revitalize this relationship, or you can decide to invest the bulk of your attention to three other relationships.

Step 3. Agree on an Up-Front Contract

Formalize the goals for your alliance. Define your mutual conditions of relationship satisfaction. Consider the objectives of your potential ally. Balance your viewpoints and define the precise, shared goals for your alliance.

Define Your Conditions of Relationship Satisfaction

Specifically define what you need to yield from this working relationship to be delighted. What are your objectives? How many leads and referrals would be satisfactory? What type of cooperation is required? How are communication and follow-through currently working? What has worked well in this relationship that you want to sustain? Where is there room for improvement? What specific measures and guidelines should be set to gauge how well this relationship is moving? What type of joint marketing efforts do you want to attack? What kind of introductions do you want from this ally?

Think through all these factors. Then write down a set of specific goals. Make sure that these objectives are reasonable and achievable. To the extent possible, make these goals precise and quantifiable.

Review now what you have really accomplished with this portion of Step 3. You've laid the groundwork necessary to manage this relationship. The problem with alliances is that they are rarely formalized, contractual agreements. Because of the loose nature of these alliances, they tend not to be carefully managed. Using our approach, you take the initiative. Also, you've carefully defined your expectations, so that your ally can understand them and aim for your goals.

Define Your Ally's Conditions of Relationship Satisfaction

You are only partially finished with this step. Remember the balance rule. For an alliance to work, there has to be strong mutual benefit. So, look at this working relationship through the eyes of your potential ally. Reconsider some of the same questions in the first portion of Step 3, but answer them as your potential ally might. Specifically, how does your working relationship benefit this potential ally? How much business did you generate for him or her? What's working from his or her point of view? What would he or she change in your working relationship? What marketing programs would be beneficial to him or her? What introductions could you make for him or her?

Formalize Your Up-Front Contract With Your Ally

Now, it's time to agree on a treaty with your potential ally. We call this an *up-front contract*.

Set up a meeting with your potential ally, preferably a relaxed lunch away from the distractions of the office—where the sole purpose is to discuss how you can best work together for the upcoming year.

Start by stating your purpose for the meeting. Then, review your conditions of relationship satisfaction—giving your potential ally a precise understanding of your goals for the working relationship. Tell him or her the quantified objectives that you aspire to—in terms of number of leads and introductions, cooperative marketing as well as any enhancements you seek in the alliance.

Then get their reaction. Are your goals reasonable? Are they attainable? Are these priorities that they can commit to? What doesn't make sense from their standpoint?

Now, ask your potential ally for their conditions of relationship satisfaction. Do they dovetail with your goals and objectives? What can you specifically agree to in terms of mutual goals for referrals and introductions? What will be your plan of attack for working together? What corrective improvements do they desire in your working relationships? How often will you meet to keep things on track?

Come to a meeting of the minds. Document what you agreed to in the meeting.

Here's what you have accomplished: You now have clear, shared goals. Also, you have formalized your working relationship with your ally—you defined the precise ways that you can help each other best. Beyond these advantages, you also have brainstormed on the kind of cooperative marketing actions that can benefit both of you.

Consider having your treaty typed. Send your ally a copy so that he or she can refer to it and you can review it together from time to time.

Step 4: Develop an Allied Marketing Plan

In this step you will develop a precise plan for mutual marketing. This is your “working agreement.” While you may have some initial ideas or you may have some programs that have worked well historically, take a look at the ideas we summarize in this section—11 proven winners for allied marketing programs.

But, before we get started, we have to review our cardinal rule of marketing. If you get just one thing out of this book, remember the critical Marketing Truth discussed in the Introduction: “Marketing is a contact sport.” This means that the best form of marketing is one that puts you in direct (preferably face-to-face) contact with your best clients and ideal, qualified prospects.

All of your other marketing can only complement your direct marketing efforts, but, contact-making marketing should always be your highest priority.

Review the contact making, allied marketing programs that have proven to be winners for our clients and students. Then, look if you can select the best fit for your practice, and, incorporate them into your plan of attack.

Program 1. Shared Client Meetings

If you both serve the same clients, this is the place to start.

If a banker or attorney ally serves a client of yours, coordinate your approach to service. Use a quarterly or semi-annual “How’s Business?” program.

Get your ally and the lead executives of your client together in a relaxed atmosphere over lunch or in a conference room, preferably away from the distractions of their office.

Then ask the client’s owner, CEO, or CFO to bring you up-to-date on the significant developments in their business. Your role is to simply listen and advise—you’re not there to sell. Get them to review their significant goals and objectives for the upcoming quarter or six months. Offer up questions, issues, and concerns.

What do you accomplish with this? First, you both reinforce your position as trusted business advisers. Second, you provide a higher level of service because you are both fully up to speed on your client’s critical business concerns. And you speed communication and streamline coordination with your ally in serving this client.

Simultaneously, you and your ally strengthen the relationship with your client. And, guess what? Somehow, you will generate additional business. You will likely find direct aches, hurts, problems, needs, wants, or desires that you can remedy. Or you’ll walk out with mutual or individual referrals, based on this close contact that amazingly few other professionals even think of offering.

Whether you charge for meetings like this with your best clients is up to you. We believe that meetings like this are, indeed, marketing in its truest, and most valuable, sense. Some of our clients charge for these meetings; most don’t. Invest your marketing time and dollars where there is the highest potential for payoff: with your best clients, best potential clients, and allies.

These meetings are an added value that will help you secure many more best clients than the typical CPA who certainly doesn’t offer this kind of client service.

Program 2. Direct Introductions to Clients and Prospects

This is the obvious next priority.

Often, we hear from professionals who haven’t received many new referrals lately from their referral sources. The referral sources explain it away saying that they haven’t brought in many new clients or customers recently. Sound familiar?

Then, now is the time that each of you should take a fresh look at your clients and prospects.

Something may have changed or developed within your client base that might be an opportunity for your ally. If you both take the time to diagnose each client carefully and individually, you have to find some high closure possibilities that you and your ally can capitalize on immediately.

Real Life Marketing Example. Jake, a client of ours, recently audited his own client base with an eye on possibilities for his close ally, Jeff, an attorney in general practice. He discovered that over 30 of his clients needed fresh wills, trusts, and estate work; six wanted to form new corporations; and three had been sitting on lawsuits waiting to meet an attorney they could trust to file for them. This was just for starters. He started feeding this work to Jeff incrementally.

Jeff, faced with an avalanche of new business, immediately contacted 20 of his best clients to see if they were displeased with their current CPA and made personal introductions to Jake to 16 of them, 14 of whom hired Jake immediately for corporate or individual work.

Note: Jake, being the effective service provider that he is, has been keeping close track of the number of new clients Jeff owes him.

Program 3. Bring a Client to Lunch Club

Contact your allies and begin a Bring a Client to Lunch Club. Each month trade off the responsibility of bringing one client to a mutual, low-key luncheon with your ally. To stay in control, you keep score.

Under what pretense? None. It just makes good business sense to introduce your clients to attorneys, insurance people, and others they might have use for in the future. Having done so, this is another person-to-person contact with your clients and shows you care about their welfare. In inviting your clients, merely state that you'd like them to meet someone you think highly of. Why wouldn't they come? If they're not interested, go on to another client.

Real Life Marketing Example. One of our clients in an area of the country where business is slow took our suggestion on this one. Within only two months, he had generated over \$100,000 in new billings because of these direct introductions, resulting in new clients and referrals.

Program 4. Exchange Marketing Materials

Earlier, we discussed how your allies are basically an external sales force for your practice. So, go the extra mile. Make sure that you have materials from your ally that can make it easier to sell him or her to a prospect or client, and vice versa. Give your ally some of your key materials as well.

At a minimum, maintain an accessible inventory of each other's business cards. Better yet, keep some of their basic brochures and contact information available. Best of all, ensure that you know the service specialties and industry niches where your ally and you excel. Then, secure access to each other's specialized marketing materials.

Why is this important? We've found that this simple step strengthens the impact of your cross-selling activities because it streamlines the follow-through process. Think about it. If your ally meets a prospect for you and passes along your card or a brochure, the prospect is ready for your call. Moreover, the strength of the recommendation to the prospect is

even greater than normal because your ally went the extra mile and followed up aggressively. They gave the prospect everything necessary to either call you or be ready and informed when you call.

Program 5. Executive Briefings

Let's say that both you and your ally have targeted specific, related service specialties. Then consider executive briefings as your next mutual marketing project.

An executive briefing is a personalized presentation on an important topic. It is not a sales call. Its purpose is informative in nature, and low key.

In doing an executive briefing you could focus on a specific industry's key issues, such as wholesale distributors and the hot issues that are facing the industry at this particular time. Or you could go cross-industries and concentrate on a crucial business hurt, ache, or trauma, such as estate planning or business-succession issues that can affect everyone.

Then what's the best way to promote your service offering? Put on a seminar? Do an advertisement?

No. Start where you should always start in marketing: with your mutual base of existing clients.

Simply develop a brief (30 minutes, maximum) mutual presentation on the pain and pitfalls that business owners or individuals face in the particular situation you have selected to discuss. Then, highlight the clients with the highest need for this service offering. Schedule a series of individual meetings with these clients at your place of business or theirs (in a conference room).

Here's what to do at these meetings: Start by setting the ground rules. Your goal is to get as much interaction with the client's executives as possible. You want to ask the clients questions and react to how these circumstances are impacting their business so that you can qualify them for your services. Then, you make your presentation. Afterward, have a discussion on how your client is struggling with these related issues.

Needless to say, if your client sees an urgent need to address this service, follow through appropriately.

Next, go beyond your existing clients. Do you have any target clients who would benefit from this presentation? If so, go for it. Can you get a referral into an ideal prospective client? Then, use this as an entree—an excuse to get together.

Keep working this approach. It's a great weapon to have in your arsenal.

Program 6. Joint Speaking Engagements

You now have a presentation that's been tested with your existing clients. Moreover, you've heard and seen their reactions.



You have a wealth of information on how these problems and challenges impact their business or personal success. In other words, you have something valuable to offer. What do you do next? Find more ideal prospects and make this same presentation. Target associations or organizations where your ideal prospects gather. Then find out if you have a client or contact who can refer you into this organization as a speaker, or get them to introduce you to the president or program chairman and sell your presentation ideas to this group.

Follow the methods we cover in our chapter on public speaking to turn speaking engagements into hot leads.

Program 7. Breakfast Roundtables

Once again, let's say that you have a mutually important, targeted service area. Hopefully, it can be the same area that you targeted in programs 5 and 6. Instead of doing a presentation, try a breakfast roundtable of six to eight participants. In these roundtables, you act as moderator or facilitator. Your goal is to spur a group discussion on trends or critical aches or hurts that this group is facing. It also allows you to showcase your in-depth experience to serve a particular industry. Furthermore, it's a good way to give some of your managers and staff people an exposure to public speaking and selling.

These roundtables should be with a peer group. That means that the attendees have to see each other as similar. For example, CFOs at banks or vice presidents of information systems departments at hospitals. Senior citizens with over \$500,000 in pension assets that they are managing. Lending officers specializing in real estate and construction financing. You invite the ideal prospects that fit the service profile.

Once you've identified your target service and priority peer group, how do you get people to attend? First, invite your clients who fit the profile. Why? Because they may need the service. Also, they will act as your salesperson in the roundtable, testifying to the quality of your service and value that you add to their business.

Then, both you and your ally should ask the clients who are attending to invite one other person who fits the profile. In this way, your client acts as your sponsor, and it's easy for them to access and persuade a peer to attend because there is no selfish reason for them personally to invite a prospective client. Therefore, prospects are more likely to attend. Also, it makes the session more appealing to a prospect, and it appears more valuable, if a trusted peer makes the invitation—instead of a stranger like you.

What if you need more people to attend? Or what if you want to run multiple sessions? You've got two options. First, find other contacts who can bring in prospects that fit the profile. Perhaps target the head of an association or some other contacts who are highly networked. Or get others in your firm to invite a prospect or one of their clients or referral sources.

Here's your second option. Believe it or not, our clients have had luck in sending out "cold" invitations to prospects for roundtable discussions. There are, however, a few secrets to making this work correctly.

First, use personal stationery or invitation stock (like what's used for wedding invitations). Everybody tends to pay much more attention to invitations, so it's more likely to reach your target. Second, mention other individuals who will be attending so they see that their peers will be there. Finally, mail them out in groups of 25 or so, then make a follow-up call to see if you can get them to attend. There's an example invitation in Exhibit 5-3, "Sample Invitation for a Roundtable Discussion."

How do you prepare and conduct the roundtable? Simply prepare an outline. Also, allow everybody to introduce himself or herself and trade business cards. After introductions, ask directed questions and get the participants talking. Make it an informal discussion and encourage interaction. Make sure that you draw in all the attendees so they feel comfortable, even if you have to call on some who are more reserved.

After a few minutes, you'll find that the conversation takes off on its own! You just have to keep it flowing. Keep it on schedule and adjourn on time.

Two last points on these breakfast roundtables. First, make sure you take notes on the problems and aches that surfaced during the discussion. You can then make use of these ideas as a way to follow through with the participants to see if they want to set an appointment, and as a next step, in a direct mail piece.

Second, make sure that you send a hand-written thank you note on your personal stationery. This adds the critical personal touch that makes an impact. Also, enter all the names, addresses, and phone numbers into your marketing data base. Over time, periodically mail articles and other materials to sustain the contact.

The most immediate results that you produce are a widely expanded network of contacts in a short amount of time. It's not uncommon to immediately generate referrals and a new client or two after conducting about three sessions.

Program 8. Joint Case Studies and Mailings

How can you make use of the feedback and information that you generated through the executive briefings or the breakfast roundtables?

Simply write a brief article (one page, front and back). Keep it on an executive summary level. Include as many quotes and feedback from participants as possible.

Who would this article go to? Besides those who attended, anyone who might be a prospect, client, referral source or for possible publicity. Don't be afraid that someone sees such an article and wonders why they weren't invited. If you didn't know they had an interest, how could you invite them?

In some towns, a short article on a meeting like this would qualify for publicity in the local newspaper's business section.

What would the article look like? There's an example in Exhibit 5-4, "Sample Roundtable Executive Briefing."

Program 9. Joint Seminars

Based on the last few steps, you and your ally have a winning presentation. Moreover, you received some solid feedback and client experiences that add flavor and potency to your presentation.

Now you have the choice to put on a seminar, but make sure that there is a broad enough audience to warrant a seminar.

Who is the target attendee? Is there a target association that would see this as a valuable seminar to sponsor? Can you get the right people to attend?

We'll cover the secrets of successful seminars in a future chapter, but there is a rule of thumb regarding conducting seminars we want to cover here: Always get an organization to sponsor your seminar. Put it on by yourself only as a last resort.

Why is this smart? First, organizations are in the seminar business; they do it all the time, while this is a sideline business for you. Second, the associations are in tune with their members' key concerns and educational requirements. They can handle all the little details that can make a seminar successful (and be very time-consuming). Finally, being sponsored lends credibility to you and the topic that you just can't replace in getting people to attend.

Marketing Truth. Putting on seminars by yourself is difficult unless it's predominantly aimed at clients. Even then, it's tough to get good attendance.

The reason we caution you is that self-sponsored seminars can be an awful waste of time, money, and effort. They're tough to pull off properly. The self-sponsored seminar in your town may be over-saturated. That's why we devoted a chapter on seminars later on—to increase your odds of success.

We suggest you initially explore the earlier steps of joint marketing, specifically executive briefings, breakfast roundtables, and speaking engagements. Then, you'll know how compelling a seminar might be.

Otherwise, unless you handle it right, the cost and risk of putting on a seminar can be substantial, and the payback, tenuous.

Program 10. Jointly Sponsored Special Events

Special event marketing is one of the fastest growing fields in the art of promotion.

It is also a tool that any practitioner can employ. If you're with a sizeable firm, you could consider a major event, like sponsoring a tent at a sporting event or endorsing a major charitable event. Next time you see an important golfing tournament, for example, look at all the corporate sponsors who bring their top customers to the course.

But, even if you're a smaller firm or sole practitioner, you can do the same thing on a smaller scale. Whether it's a local township fair, school or fraternity alumni event, a college concert, or a church event, there's often a chance for sponsorship. Also, special meetings, guest speakers, or hospitality suites for major association meetings are a natural for any size firm.

Special event marketing is within the reach of most firms. Why is special event marketing so hot? It can be highly productive and allows for lots of face-to-face contact.

Marketing Truth. Special event marketing gives you the perfect excuse to personally greet every guest and participant at the event, because you are the host.

You might not get too many warm, personal one-on-one contacts like this too often. It's a marvelous opportunity.

Also, today there's a lot of marketing "clutter" competing for the attention of your clients and prospects. Events stick out amongst the clutter as in many cases; it is an event in every sense of the word. Done correctly, it is a special attraction and something unusual.

It also allows you to make special invitations. Your clients and prospects will be flattered that you thought of them, even if they can't make it.

So, put your head together with your ally to see where you have some mutual interests, along with organizations that might have some sponsorship possibilities. As you think through some options, here are some guidelines:

- Make sure that the event is a "lure" to the type of people you want to attract.
- Do some homework before committing. Make sure the event lives up to your professional standards.
- Avoid anything that could offend or upset your clients. Therefore, be careful about mixing in volatile areas, such as politics or religion.
- Make sure it fits into your cooperative marketing budget with this particular ally in terms of both money and time. If, for example, your ally can't find enough time to properly "work" the event, consider someone else to go in with.
- Don't sponsor too many events. Pick one or two at most a year. Then, concentrate your time and money on these, so there is a higher impact.

Once you pick the event, you and your ally should put your full effort into getting your clients and mutually ideal prospects to attend. Print up the invitations with an RSVP return card. Send them out, and follow up with a call to inspire them to attend.

Prepare to market and sell at the event. We'll cover some of the principles of networking and the related skills of working trade shows in Chapter 17, "How to Use Trade Shows to Reach a Target Market."

Here are a few additional ideas:

- Have a ready supply of sales collateral and promotional material at the event. Keep this material in an area where people will see it and pick it up.
- Get your allies and colleagues to the event. This boosts the attendance. You also will want them to proactively work the room.
- Go to the event with a plan. After all, you're there to either sell or to build relationships. Keep this in mind.

- Bring your calendar so you can book appointments with any interested parties.
- After the event, follow up. Send personal notes and make calls as warranted.

Special-event marketing can be a potent weapon. It works best when you team up with an ally. Consequently, keep an eye open for opportunities that make sense for both of you.

Program 11. Double-Team Associations and Social Organizations

Here's our final suggestion for allied, cooperative marketing. Again, its main purpose is to coordinate your promotional strategy and agree on a plan of attack. In this way, you amplify your success. We suggest that you and your ally double-team the associations that your best clients and most attractive prospects frequent. Come up with a clear scheme to position both of you visibly within the organization.

Target different leadership positions with your ally. One could aim for being president, while the other should go after the program chairmanship.

Get your clients involved in leadership positions, too, so you can have inside salespeople infecting the organization on your behalf. Then influence others in your firm to be active in terms of both attending and taking leadership positions. This will multiply your word-of-mouth marketing within the group and gain greater market share for the firm within the organization.

Seek ways to showcase your expertise in the operations of the organization. Develop a business plan for the organization. Review the accounting and financial procedures. How could you improve the productivity of the operations? Take a look at the accounting systems and software. Make a tangible show of your expertise.

Maintain a visible position in the programs of the organization. Make sure that either you, your ally, or your clients are frequent speakers, or ensure that you are in the position to introduce speakers at events.

Seek feedback from members on their satisfaction with the organization's membership. Sponsor informal breakfasts or lunch brainstorming sessions to find ways to make the organization as valuable as possible. Or, sponsor a member satisfaction survey.

Why does this make sense? It shows your commitment to client service and satisfaction. Isn't that a great way for your firm to be perceived?

These ideas are just a start. Think through every way you can promote yourself cooperatively with your ally. After all, you'll be investing a lot of time and energy in this organization. So, find ways to make the most of your involvement.



INSIDE ALLIANCES

Getting allies in building your practice is critical to leveraging your individual efforts. We have shown you how to build a small number of highly committed and vigorous allies who scout out opportunities for you. But, the ally doesn't always have to be an outside ally. In

fact, the best source of new business and referrals may be the partner, manager, or staff person right down the hall.

But wait. We find that cross-marketing rarely happens easily, because, many partners may guard their client relationships against potential damage. So, you have to sell others within your firm to send you referrals. Because, just as with client referrals, you can't simply assume that referrals are going to come your way.

As we wrote earlier, the best business generators recognize that cross-marketing is essential to building their practice. They want to guarantee that all business from a client stays in-house—and is never taken outside to another firm. Outsiders pose a hazard to the relationship. Therefore, they take control of the inside game. Here are a few strategies they use.

Decide Who Your Best Inside Allies Are

Find somebody who can be an asset to you. Then consider if you have good personal chemistry with this person. Cross-marketing can be risky, so trust is important. Work with someone with common interests and similar goals for building his or her practice.

Make It Easy for Others to Sell Your Services

Summarize danger signals for your colleagues to keep an eye out for while at their clients. Teach them how to qualify their clients' need for your service. Trade short questionnaires that illustrate how to interview clients to determine their need for your service specialty.

Nurture the Business Building Possibilities

Coach your work team on their role in spotting additional service needs. In many cases, the work team may be closer to some client executives than you are. Have them keep an eye out for the challenges and problems that your client is facing. Work on questions that they should be asking their client counterparts that would signal a service need.

In other words, turn your own people into your sales force as well. Always remember that staff shouldn't simply get the work out. Instead, they must be your eyes and ears at the client when you're not there. Use a part of your regular client service team meetings to discuss clients' service needs along with your other project issues.



CASE STUDY—BUILDING POWERFUL ALLIANCES

One of our clients is the managing partner of a CPA firm on the west coast. He believed that his firm's business generation was flat. At our request he conducted an "audit" of his firm's top alliances, using the same process we've just reviewed. One fact jumped out at him.

The top bank in his suburban area was traditionally a superb source of highly qualified referrals. But, for the past year, his firm had received no referrals from this previously solid

referral source. Upon further investigation, it turned out that his partners collectively sent at least 10 clients to this bank during the same period.

However, each individual partner sent one or two referrals to a variety of individual loan officers, and no one knew what the others were doing. Thus, the total benefit of these leads to the bank was not obvious. In addition, the managing partner realized that he hadn't stayed in close contact with the bank president.

Initially, the managing partner called together a few of his partners to brainstorm on how they could market cooperatively with this bank. Then, they set to paper their conditions of relationship satisfaction, as well as their plan of attack to pursue the marketing programs they targeted. Next, the managing partner called up the bank president to set up a working lunch to explore ways that they help each other's business to grow. They met in a conference room at the accounting firm—just the managing partner and the bank president. Our client thanked the president for getting together. He said that he regretted that their working relationship was not as strong as it used to be. This caught the bank president by surprise. And, he was further startled by the fact that his bank had not referred any clients to this accounting firm, as he always personally valued the referral relationship that they had built.

Then, they brainstormed on exploring ways to market together. They drew up their conditions of relationship satisfaction on a flip chart.

Here's the agreement they reached:

- *Goals.* They agreed to trade at least 10 business leads back and forth for the upcoming year.
- *Networking.* The bank president had just been named to be the president of the local chamber of commerce, and he asked the managing partner to be on the board.
- *Cooperative marketing.* They agreed to put together a joint presentation on estate and retirement planning, and they resolved to put on a series of joint seminars to both the bank's customers as well as the firm's clients. In addition, the bank's public relations department would aim to book joint speaking engagements at top associations.
- *Training.* The CPA firm would put on some breakfast training sessions for the construction and real estate loan officers at the bank. These sessions were geared to help the bankers understand the intricacies and complexities of construction and homebuilder's financial and cash flow statements. In addition, this allowed the younger professionals (managers, staff, and younger loan officers) to meet and build rapport.
- *Sales materials.* The bank often encounters entrepreneurial customers who are starting up their own businesses. And many of these customers lack financial and accounting know-how. So, the CPA and consulting firm provided

them with a business “start up” kit with reference materials on the accounting, financial, and tax issues that impact new businesses. All of this material was placed in a folder with the firm’s name and contact information prominently displayed along with a business card of the managing partner.

- *Social mixing.* The bank sponsored a “mixer” with the professional staff of the bank and the CPA and consulting firm. At the beginning of the get-together, the bank president reviewed the bank’s service capabilities and priorities for growing the bank. The managing partner did likewise. After the presentations, a guest speaker trained the total group on key networking skills. Then, the firm’s professionals and bankers practiced their skills and networked with each other.
- *Quarterly relationship review meetings.* The bank president and managing partner agreed to meet on a quarterly basis. They vowed to keep in touch to make sure that the working relationship stayed vital. Their personal secretaries were delegated the task of scheduling these meetings for them.
- *Referral ledger started.* At the managing partner’s request, the bank president and managing partner each began keeping a referral ledger at their businesses to account for referrals given and received to make sure the previous situation didn’t reoccur. They designated their personal secretaries as the keeper of these books.

What was the net effect of all of these efforts? Not only did the CPA and consulting firm realize its goal of 10 new business clients—they doubled it. And they built a foundation of commitment and consistency that will make this relationship vital and enduring.



CONCLUSION

You now appreciate the practice building power of alliances and see how alliances augment and multiply the impact of your marketing efforts. Don’t settle for shallow relationships with your best allies. Instead, manage your ally relationships. Make it a consistent, daily, high priority.

Once you have built critical advantages into your practice building programs, you will have leverage, word-of-mouth advertising, complimentary and synergistic strength, and a mastermind group to support your marketing program.

Don’t go it alone. Together with your allies, you’ll amplify your success—and be a step ahead of your competitors who rely on less.

EXHIBIT 5-1: CRITICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ALLIANCES AND REFERRAL NETWORKING

ALLIANCES	REFERRALS
■ An ally is one of your top three sources of referrals.	■ A referral gives you a few leads over time.
■ An ally presells you to others.	■ A referral submits your name.
■ An ally has a personal stake in your success and shows strong commitment.	■ The relationship is not as close a working relationship—the referral offers you and others.
■ The relationship is mutually beneficial.	■ The relationship may not be balanced.
■ There is a strong personal chemistry.	■ There is cordiality.
■ An ally is highly entrepreneurial and marketing oriented.	■ The relationship does not contain an intensive cooperative marketing effort.

EXHIBIT 5-2: SAMPLE CHART FOR AUDITING THE QUALITY OF YOUR REFERRAL RELATIONSHIPS

Brainstorming Worksheet

<i>Name of Referral Source</i>	<i>What I Received Last Year</i>		<i>What I Gave Out Last Year</i>	
	<i># of Leads</i>	<i>\$ in Fees</i>	<i># of Leads</i>	<i>\$ in Fees</i>
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

EXHIBIT 5-3: SAMPLE INVITATION FOR A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Don't miss our upcoming Roundtable Discussion!

You and a guest are invited to attend our upcoming Roundtable Event
on November 4, 20XX

Special Speaker: Jane Brain, CPA

Discussion to Follow

Special Topic: "FINALLY! Making Sense of Cash Flow Reports:
What You Need to Know Explained in Common English"

Bradenton Country Club
November 4, 20XX—7:30 a.m.

RSVP to Jim Bob Knob: JBKnob@mocandjoecpas.com
or call (941) 555-7777

EXHIBIT 5-4: SAMPLE ROUNDTABLE EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

Executive Briefing: Cash Flow in the Construction Industry

On November 4, 20XX, Moe and Joe, CPAs, sponsored a Breakfast Roundtable discussion at the Bradenton Country Club for attorneys with clients in the construction field. Jane Brain, CPA, was the featured speaker on the topic of “FINALLY! Making Sense of Cash Flow Reports: What You Need to Know Explained in Common English.”

“Ms. Brain did a super job,” said Mark Hammer, of the Nailem and Flailem law firm.

Topics discussed were:

- How the economic slowdown has affected the construction industry
- How we can help our clients at times like this
- Exactly what to look for in studying cash flow
- How to get your point across to bankers and financiers as it relates to this topic
- What to do in your own practice and for your clients when you leave

The next Roundtable Discussion to be held will be at the Bradenton Country Club on December 5, 20XX. The topic will be “Immediate Tax Strategies to Implement for Personal Tax Savings.” Our speaker will be Dee Duction, CPA. Contact Jim Bob Knob if you have an interest in attending: e-mail him at JBKnob@moeandjoecpas.com or call (941) 555-7777.



**APTITUDE FOR
DEVELOPING AN
EFFECTIVE NETWORK**

chapter 6

Most people have the wrong impression of what networking actually is and, therefore, don't want to have anything to do with it. Here's what productive networking is *not*:

- Being pushy
- Taking advantage of your clients, relatives, and friends
- Always meeting strangers and going to social events

Here's what productive networking *is*:

- Finding people who are qualified to help you build your practice
- Creating mutually rewarding business and personal relationships
- A "sorting out" process

To find people who can help you and then create relationships with them, you are going to have to sift through a lot of people. That's what the Best Business Generators in the profession did in starting and growing their own networks.

Just because you meet someone, that doesn't mean you're going to develop a meaningful relationship with him or her. It's sort of like courtship in that respect.

The purpose of this chapter is to help you get into the directed action of greatly increasing your number of important contacts in the business community and elsewhere. Increased contacts mean increased future business and referrals as you carry out the productive action learned right here.



BUSINESS IS RELATIONSHIPS

That's the bad news. Chances are they didn't teach you much or anything at all about building lifetime referral or business relationships in school.

Quite the opposite, actually. The emphasis was on becoming technically excellent in your chosen field. The message was, and still is, directly or implied: Technical excellence will carry you far as a successful professional.

Today, in the 21st century, that message no longer applies to the extent that it may once have done. Perhaps there was a time when people sought out service providers simply by their reputations for being superior technicians, reputations that took a long time to build.

Don't get us wrong. We don't want to imply that technical expertise isn't important in being successful in your chosen field; it's just not enough to build the practice you want in today's more competitive world.

The truth is that most of the truly successful CPA firms we've seen over the last 20 years were built by someone, or a handful of dedicated people, who went out and made lots of personal contact with other professionals and set up powerful referral networks that produced business.

Most firm builders or rainmakers learned how to do this network building by trial and error, were naturals at it, or were fortunate enough to be mentored (very few). As they became more successful, they hired technicians to do the work.

Here's the good news. We're going to teach you how to do this, step-by-step, in this chapter. This systematic practice-building activity through productive networking is not taught anywhere else that we know of. It is a methodical approach to building a lifetime referral network that produces a continuous stream of quality referrals. This is not something you will do once and then leave it. As with anything regarding relationships, it is a living thing and must be nourished and nurtured over the long term.

You will be building word-of-mouth advertising and networking effectively as the Best Business Generators in the professions do.



A SIX-STEP PROCESS TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE NETWORK

We are now at the system we've devised that delineates how the rainmakers in the accounting profession have built their productive referral networks.

Why it works:

- *It's based only upon "models of success."* There's no theory here, only what has been proven to produce results.
- *It's an inside-out process.* This starts with you and your immediate contacts and puts you in control.
- *It improves and maximizes the strength of your current contact base.* It leverages off your existing base. Where does it make sense to start this process of building business relationships? With total strangers? Or by using the existing assets you already have? Sadly, most professionals in our business ignore their already existing advantages (who they know and how those people can help them), and pursue relationships with total strangers first. We believe you should work "smart" rather than "hard."
- *Last, it will focus your efforts outside your existing client base.*

Here's the step-by-step process that we have systematized for you based only on how those who are best at building productive referral networks have done it. We will discuss each step in the process in detail as we proceed.

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- Step 1.** Take inventory of existing contacts.
 - Step 2.** Analyze existing contacts for further contact.
 - Step 3.** Activate existing contacts.
 - Step 4.** Follow through.

Step 5. Join select organizations.

Step 6. Make networking a daily activity.

Step 1. Take Inventory of Existing Contacts

The key to effective networking is to get the most out of the contacts you have and parlay your strengths into business. The listing you are about to conduct will give you an opportunity to take inventory of all the additional contacts (and sources of contacts) that you could tap into, to expand your business relationships.

As a way to facilitate your inventorying process, we have categorized several different types of networking contacts. Since a large list expands your options for follow-up, brainstorming will be useful to prompt even more additions to your inventory.

Style your list on Exhibit 6-1, “Sample Form for Personal Contacts Inventory.” As you think through the categories and come up with additional contacts, write down the names in column A. You should concentrate on expanding the list right now; the evaluation of these contacts comes later, in Step 3.

Keep in mind the kinds of target clients you determined in the “Seven-Step Process to Focus Your Personal Marketing Strategy” exercise in Chapter 2 and those who can help you make further contacts. To help you brainstorm, use the following five categories of contacts and consider the questions listed below:

Category 1. People You Know Within Your Client Companies

- Who are your direct contacts in your best clients?
- Who else within the client company have you reported results to, worked on a project with, or spent extensive meeting time with?
- Have you considered all those to whom you’ve sold add-on services?

Category 2. Professionals Inside Your Firm

- What kind of contacts do you have in your office who work within your industry or specialization?
- Have you considered professionals with whom you’ve worked in the other functions in your firm?
- What partners have you dined with, had extensive business conversations with, or done marketing with in the past year?

Category 3. Professionals Outside Your Firm

- Have you included the lawyers, bankers, stockbrokers, insurance agents, and other advisers to your best clients?

- What other lawyers, bankers, and others have worked with you, either personally or in a client engagement?
- Do you know any politicians or government leaders well?
- Have you thought about other types of professionals, such as financial planners, executive recruiters, and public relations executives? Many of them are “concentrations of power,” those precious few people who know and influence many others. They are truly centers of influence who also love to help other people. All you need are a handful of these in your stable of referral sources and you will have a substantial and regular influx of new business.
- How about people you worked with at a previous firm? Might they have referral opportunities for you in noncompetitive situations? Or for business they can’t handle or want?

Category 4. People You Know Socially

- Have you considered the people in your neighborhood who are in business or are professionals?
- What about people in business with whom you’ve had dinner with the past year or had extensive business discussions?
- What people have you met more than once over the last year in a social or religious group?
- What school alumni have you been in touch with in the last few years (or should be in contact with in the future)?
- What about those you know from the health club, softball league, or tennis lessons?

Category 5. People You Know From Business Associations

- What people have you had extensive business discussions with over the last year?
- How about those you’ve met more than once over the last year at an association or meeting?
- Have you considered leaders, board members, or association chairs you’ve been in touch with over the last year?

Now that we’ve reviewed these different categories of people, take out your address book and complete the first column of Exhibit 6-1. Feel free to expand on Exhibit 6-1; you really should have many more than 19 names to post if you go through your address book and consider all your clients and referral sources, personal and social contacts, and people you’ve met at business associations. You could even look at your holiday card list.

Consider everyone as a possible contact before you exclude him or her. The elimination process is designed to sort out only those who have helped you in the past or could help you in the future.

Real Life Marketing Example. One of our former students, a manager at a large firm, attended a state society program had never considered her college roommate (who had become the vice president of a local bank) as a potential referral contact. It wasn't her fault—nobody had ever introduced her to this process, and her roommate hadn't thought of her, either.

Within three months of learning about our program, she wrote to tell us that her roommate had introduced her to 11 prospective clients and she had secured six of those as clients for her firm.

Step 2. Analyze Existing Contacts for Further Contact

A long list expands options for making a productive contact base. But the most effective way to take action is to focus initially where you have the best potential for making more contacts and where you already have strong relationships.

To do this, review the contact list you've just created and evaluate them on the three criteria that follow.

Criterion 1. Historical Dimension of Your Relationship

Will these contacts help you? Rate the quality of your present personal relationship.

In the Historical Rating column, rate your contacts on how effectively they have provided you clients or referrals in the past. Use a 1 to 4, and O, rating scale:

- 1 = Contact referred you to opportunities and other contacts that resulted in business.
- 2 = Contact referred you to opportunities and other contacts, but no business was developed.
- 3 = A strong business relationship exists, which led to at least two hours of discussion of mutual opportunities over the past year.
- 4 = Not much of anything productive on your side has occurred.
- O = Other

Rate them historically now in Column B.

Criterion 2. How They Can Help You in the Future

How can these contacts help you? To help rate them consider the following questions.

- What is their contact making potential?
- How closely does their contact base fit your target criteria?
- How extensive is their contact base?

- Can they help you make contact with concentrations of power they know?
- Might they help you make contact with other buyers within their company? With other referral sources in their office?
- Will they help you make contact with prospective buyers or influencers outside their company?
- Could they help you make contact with good referral sources?
- Might they introduce you into the right organizations and associations that you would want to join to become visible and active in?

Using an A, B, or C rating scale, post to Column C:

- A = There is high potential for access to the right opportunities.
- B = There is very good potential for access to the right opportunities.
- C = Contact needs to be qualified further to verify if there is strong potential.

Post your potential ratings to Column C now.

Criterion 3. Why You Think They Will Help You

People do things for their reasons, not yours. Now is the time to consider what your contacts' aches, hurts, or other emotional reasons would be for helping you:

- What problems do they have that you can help them address?
- Are they strongly interested in growing their practice or business, too?
- What can you offer them?
- Will they help you because you are close friends?
- Might they help you because you have helped them in the past?
- Do they like you and respect you?

In Column D, list the reasons you think, at this time, that these people might or might not help you. It's possible that at this point you may not know the answer to that question and will have to find out. Please post your answers now to Column D.

Note: Because they can be so vital to your ability to network, indicate with an asterisk any of your contacts that you consider to be "concentrations of power."

Congratulations! Stop right here—you have probably done an exercise that less than 5 percent (if that many) of your competitors have ever completed.

Now, do you have any thoughts, feelings, or observations after you have inventoried and quantified your existing contacts for how they have helped you in the past and their potential for the future?

Approximately 80 percent of those completing this exercise have told us they had been investing time, effort, and energy in the wrong relationships!

Our next step is to use the information you have constructed and analyzed.

Step 3. Activate Existing Contacts

It's time to activate your existing contacts. In this step you will move from analysis to action and begin developing word-of-mouth advertising and commence personally marketing your practice in a directed and thorough way based on models of success.

You already may be doing what you consider networking now—that's great. We suggest you make adjustments where necessary if you see a need to improve your bottom line results from the effort you're investing. This is an inside-out process; we'll get to building a contact base outside your foundation of relationships in Step 5.

Where to start? Here are some suggestions:

- Begin meeting first with people who have helped you the most in the past (according to your information in Exhibit 6-1, 1As). Unless you are already having ongoing, regular, and continuous dialog, perhaps there is more you should be doing together
- Then move on to 2As, and others.

It's important to concentrate on the A, projected future-rated people because they are most in a position to impact your network. Although you might feel more comfortable with 3C's, you could be mispending valuable time and energy.

It may take you more than one or two meetings to have a 4A assist you, and, it may never happen because of lack of chemistry, lack of interest, or other factors. But you want to invest where the relationships are already the best and there is possibility for more and move your way down in priority order.

Most people approach meetings with business contacts, referral sources, and others who can help them without thinking about what they want to achieve and how. Usually, little is accomplished. The Best Business Generators in our business prepare in order to succeed. Before you embark on any contact-building meeting, sit down for at least five to 10 minutes and write down the answers to these questions:

- How can I help this other person be more successful and effective?
- How can we advance our mutual interest by working together?
- What is this person's likely aches, hurts, needs, wants, desires, and problems about their business, professional practice or personally?
- Do we have mutual friends, business interests, or hobbies?
- What do I want to learn about their business?
- When's the last time we worked together on a client or project?
- Do I have a specific piece of business I should be discussing with them?
- Do I owe them referrals, or vice versa?
- What commitments do I want to secure from this meeting?
- What next steps should I aim for?

You need to figure out in your conversations specifically how people can help you (and you help them).

Also, consider the type of individual you are approaching. The three types of individuals you should be meeting with are clients, referral sources, and others. A discussion with recommendation on how to approach each type follows.

Agenda for Meetings With Clients

Specifically, meet with clients who can help you by introducing you to people who can hire you, by acquainting you with new referral sources and by leading you into the right organizations.

In Chapter 4, we reviewed a systematic seven-step process to requesting referrals. That process can be translated into an agenda for effective networking. The difference is that this time you may be looking for referrals, but you also may be looking for additional referral sources, clubs, and organizations you can be introduced into and any other ways you feel the client may help you build your referral network.

Here's a recap of the seven-step process (from Chapter 4), which you can modify to create a networking agenda:

- Step 1. Get them to lunch.
- Step 2. Thank them for their business.
- Step 3. Use the Plus/Minus Method.
- Step 4. Be specific about what you want and get the introduction.
- Step 5. Send a thank you note.
- Step 6. Follow through on the introduction.
- Step 7. Let the client know what happened.

In Step 4, you may ask for the referral, or you may look for introductions to “concentrations of power”—attorneys, bankers, and the like—or a personal introduction to those select organizations where your target clients may hang out.

Real Life Marketing Example. One client who participated in this program was the partner in charge of the tax practice for his office. A brilliant but introverted and shy person, he had climbed the ranks based on his technical greatness, but he could no longer rely on that alone to move ahead, or even to stay where he was. He had no referral network to speak of.

Here's why the inventory and prioritization is so important: One of his 1040 tax clients was the managing partner of the most important and successful law firm in town. This person was truly a “concentration of power” who was politically well connected and who had built a huge firm.

Our client had done this man's personal return for years, and they had a warm relationship. He was rated 4A by our client and had never received a referral or introduction from him.

After participating in our program, our client decided to pursue just the type of conversation we've suggested with you. He followed the agenda presented in this chapter to the letter.

In Step 3, he made his request very specific: Would his client help him build his referral network? Would he be willing to mentor him and teach him what he had learned in building his own network?

The attorney was flattered. Of course he would help! (People like helping other people, remember?) And many successful people love teaching and mentoring; It's a way for them to be immortal, to pass along their great thoughts and success stories. Interestingly, within his own law firm, with a reputation as the consummate rainmaker, not a single partner or associate had ever asked this man to mentor them.

Since then our client has been taken under the rainmaker's wing and personally introduced to all of his important business contacts.

Agenda for Meetings With Referral Sources

Referral sources are other professionals looking to develop the right referrals into allies. Perhaps you've met and exchanged referrals with some of these people before, over a long period of time, or it could be a first meeting.

Next is an agenda for conducting meetings with referral sources about networking and contact building opportunities. It is somewhat different:

1. Get them to lunch.
2. Start your meeting with an upfront contract:
 - Ask them if they have anything they'd like to discuss at the meeting.
 - Describe what you'd like to accomplish.
3. Focus on the other person first.
 - Spend most of your time listening.
 - Listen hard for their personal goals, motives, ambitions, problems, needs, wants, and desires.
4. Qualify them on how they can help you:
 - Do they see ways you can work together?
 - What are their goals for building their practice?
 - Who are they feeding off referrals to now? How is that relationship going? Are they delighted with the feedback they've received from their clients?
5. Ask for their help—be specific:
 - What advice do they have for you?
 - How can you go to market jointly?
 - What specific introductions would you like?

6. Test their reaction and seek commitment by asking how they want to proceed.
7. Define mutual goals for the relationship:
 - How will they see this as a productive relationship?
 - What objectives do you have?
8. Agree on the commitments you make and the next steps you both will take:
 - When's the next time you should meet?
 - Should you both review your address files to locate referral sources you should be introducing to each other?
 - Exactly how do you proceed from here?

Keep in mind that networking is a sorting out process.

There are going to be instances with referral sources where there is no place to go. In that case, you have succeeded at effective networking: you have sorted someone out of your potential network of referral sources at this time to invest your effort, energy, and referrals in.

Agenda for Meetings With Others

Next is an agenda for conducting meetings with others who do not fall into the categories of clients or referral sources, such as friends, relatives, or social contacts. We do recommend sitdown meetings with them to discuss this particular subject, rather than doing it in passing or over the phone. This topic is an important one—you could tap into resources you didn't know you had, so make it a separate meeting from anything else.

This next agenda has worked for many of our clients:

1. Get them to lunch.
2. Find out what's going on with them. Ask about family, friends, work, children, or other topics.
3. Thank them for meeting with you and tell them why you requested the luncheon.
 - Inform them that you are building your network.
 - Ask them to think of ways that you could help each other.
4. Describe exactly what you do and what you are looking for—contacts, introductions, or referrals into the right organizations
5. Find out how you might help them.
6. Test their reaction and seek commitment by asking how they want to proceed.
7. Find out how to move forward.

Guidelines for Asking for an Introduction

If you'll remember, an introduction is a much more powerful marketing tool than a referral. A vital key to your effective networking is to have the contactor introduce you. It will

be necessary to get over your fear of asking people to make these introductions for you. One way to do that is to reflect now upon your inventory of contacts. Take a look at the column *Why They Will Help*.

Also, in your meetings with these people, consider that you may go to your grave without knowing whether they would introduce you unless you *ask*. Do you want to do that?

Let's quickly review what a conversation about an introduction might sound like:

You: One of the reasons I wanted to get together with you, Bob, besides just seeing how you and Carol and Ted and Alice are, was to let you in on what's going on with me. It's hard to believe that Teddy is going to be attending college already!

You know, I've often admired the way you built your insurance business and the number of people you know. Until recently, I've never given much thought to building the same kind of network as you have because there always was enough business to go around for good CPAs and consultants.

I think we've seen a dramatic shift in the way business is being done; the professions, especially, have become much more competitive. Getting new clients for us is harder than ever, what with all the cutthroat competition that's out there. And, we're set up for some additional quality business without hurting our existing clients one bit.

I feel awkward asking this, but I was wondering if you'd be willing to introduce me to some of your referral sources and business contacts. I don't want to infringe on any of your relationships, but I sure would like to change the way I've been marketing my practice. Also, I know you've been heavily involved in certain clubs and organizations over the years. Has it helped?

Bob: Sure, it's helped. Everyplace I've gone I've generated business. I often wondered how you did it because I never see you anywhere. I'd be happy to help.

You: Can you recommend any particular club where I should start?

Bob: I've always generated the most business from the local Pessimists Club. They're very selective about their membership—one has to be referred in.

You: Would that be possible?

Bob: Sure—you'd fit right in.

You: I really must get to know more bankers and attorneys. What do you think?

Bob: Oh, they're vital to growing your business. You'd like Sally O'Malley—she's located right near your office.

You: Great. I'd love to talk to Sally. But she doesn't know me—I'd feel terribly uncomfortable calling on her, imposing myself right out of the blue. Would you introduce her to me by calling her up-front and asking her if she'd like to meet with me?

You get the idea. You would then ask for the personal introduction to the Pessimists Club, perhaps accompanying Bob to the next meeting.

Step 4: Follow Through

Follow through is often one area people fall down in building an effective network. To keep the attention of your contacts, make sure to follow through immediately after meeting with them.

Plan on some form of communication at least monthly, whether it is in the form of a personal meeting, phone call, or sending an article. "Out of sight, out of mind" is an old and valid marketing rule. Do more than merely send them your newsletter. Invite your contacts to seminars, social events, and other events. Make sure to maintain personal contact with them.

Be sure to end your meetings with commitments to action. We run into so many professionals who have met with referral sources and others who could help them in the past, but had neglected to complete their meetings with decisions on how to proceed with the other person.

You always need to know, and they do as well, exactly what happens next. Will there be an introduction? Are you going back to your offices to search client databases for people to introduce to each other? Are you going to refer your attorney referral source to this banker? How? When? Don't leave things hanging in the air at the end of meetings, as tying together loose ends later on is much more time-consuming and difficult.

Open-ended meetings, unless of course contacts are unwilling to help or move forward, result in ambiguity. And because the other person doesn't know what he or she is supposed to do next, he or she forgets about you and your meeting immediately. Complete meetings by placing your next contact dates on your calendars.

Set the following commitments to action at the end of meetings:

- The next time you will make contact
- When, specifically, introductions will be made
- How to proceed on joint marketing efforts

You are going to need to maintain a detailed database to fully capture the value and control the assets in your personal inventory.

Yes, this is an additional time and paperwork burden; the Best Business Generators in the accounting profession make it a practice to apply their accounting skills to their

networking as well. You may learn later on that you have few more important assets than this.

Exhibit 6-2, “Sample Information in a Contract Recordkeeping System,” contains the various kinds of information you need as an example for a simplified but effective networking contact recordkeeping system. Contact management programs, such as Act or Microsoft Outlook, work great for this purpose.

Being adept technically at building your network is invaluable to effectiveness and results.

Step 5. Join Select Organizations

This step is different from the first three steps because you’ll be concentrating outside your circle of existing relationships that you will parlay into more relationships. In this step you will meet with strangers by targeting and working the right organizations.

Apply the following five tests before you join an organization or decide whether you are going to continue with the ones you’re already in.

1. Are important prospects and referral sources active in the organization?
2. Are your current contacts active in it?
3. Do your interests match the organization?
4. Are there opportunities to showcase your abilities?
5. Is it not overrun by your competitors?

Here are some specific ways to target the right organizations:

- Ask clients which organizations they like, and why. Request introductions to the executive director.
- Ask referral sources what they recommend. Request introductions into the group.
- Screen publications to see which organizations are covered and most active.

Marketing Truth. Your personal reputation in your community or niche will be built by those people you interact with in civic, business, or social organizations and situations.

Since the most important form of marketing is personal, it is how you perform in front of and interact with other people that determine their impression of you and your abilities as a professional. Remember, they probably have no other point of reference.

In order to maximize your effectiveness in working organizations, you will need to develop some tactics for success. Below are some proven tactics that we suggest you follow.

Go to the Gold

Be involved with those organizations where your best contacts and potential clients and referral sources are. Use existing contacts to help you make more introductions at events and gatherings.

Don't Join Everything

Be heavily involved in only one or two organizations that best match your interests and goals. Many professionals shy away from the proper level of involvement, or involvement at all in organizations, because they think they have to try to be involved in everything. Not so. By limiting yourself to one or two of the best organizations or clubs for your purposes, you are freed up to enjoy the organizations more and perform much better personal marketing.

Maximize Your Visibility

Try not to be trapped in hidden, traditional CPA-type roles unless they offer great visibility and connection to those people and situations that will best demonstrate your talents. Most of the time, however, traditional CPA roles in organizations are quite passive by nature. You can get stuck doing accounting or bookkeeping work that no one really appreciates because you take care of it and they don't know what's involved.

Instead, consider moving into high visibility committees, such as the program committee, membership, and fund raising. Each offers you contact with many people and an opportunity to perform where it will be noticed.

Look to become the president of the organization, as that offers prominence and high visibility for your skills as a contributor and leader.

Seek opportunities to fill gaps and go for those jobs that others don't want—and do your best to solve the problems no one's been able to do in the past. Find out from the executive director how you can best serve him or her and the organization. It makes sense to be frank in a situation where you are going to undertake a situation that requires a lot of work. Executive directors understand that professionals do organizational work out of their sense of obligation to the community, but also to promote themselves. Set up-front contracts, therefore, when undertaking challenging assignments for her publicity regarding your work.

Undertake Only Projects You Can Complete Successfully

Perhaps this is obvious to you, but we have seen where many professionals don't give the same commitment to their organizational work as they do their client work. We've observed and heard of situations where some projects are late, they don't keep to their commitments, and their work is sloppy or even incorrect. You must treat your organizational work as you would that of your best clients or prospective clients.

Although you're not getting paid in dollars, you will be paid in referrals and new clients if you absolutely put your best foot forward in everything you do. You are always marketing yourself. Those who know you, observe you, and interact with you build your reputation.

Real Life Marketing Example. One service provider we know undertook a survey project for one of his organizations about member satisfaction. A good idea—this

project could put you in front of every important person in the organization for his or her input and feedback. That's not the way he saw it, however, or performed it. Instead of using the precious personal contact provided by such a project, he assigned clerical people to do the project with little supervision and guidance.

When the project was complete it was distributed to the other members on cheap Xerox paper, without a cover. There were typos in it and obvious mistakes. How did he look in the eyes of those he was trying to influence?

Real Life Marketing Example. In another city one of our clients decided to do the same thing, except she looked at it as one of her most important marketing projects of the year. She told us that she treated it as if she were being paid \$50,000 for the project, because that was the goal she set for new business to come out of it.

Smartly, she conducted the selected interviews herself by phone, and the ones that she wanted to make contact with target clients and referral sources, in person.

She did the project incrementally during a slower time of the year and produced a survey to the delight of everyone in the group. It had graphics and charts, showed trends, and was generated on her firm's finest paper and covers.

Her personal contacts, the product itself, the article it spawned in the society's publications and the positive personal publicity she generated, resulted in 12 new clients to the tune of \$43,000 in new business and seven referrals to contacts and clients outside the organization.

Real Life Marketing Example. One student shared what she had done after she adopted our training to her particular circumstances. She was stuck in the hidden role of church treasurer. She had joined this particular church years earlier for obvious spiritual reasons, but also because its members contained some of the most influential people in the community.

For the last two years she had been on the board of directors with some of these important people and had received no business or referrals. Then she decided to be unique and present the financial results as they had never been conferred before: Instead of the usual bi-annual review of the financial statements, she decided to do it up as if the church was her best client.

Her new live presentation, which she had publicized in the church news, was a big hit. Her hard copies became slides, her handouts became analyses of the church's results compared with other religious organizations in the community and elsewhere, and her financials showed trends weighed against history and anticipated results.

The comments were so positive about her presentation that the board applauded when she was finished. Afterward, five of the "movers and shakers" of the church asked to meet with her for lunch. Within three months of her first "unique" presentation, she had obtained three sizable new clients and 11 referrals.

Plan Your Contacts Proactively

Before you attend meetings or events, decide ahead of time who you want to talk to or meet at the function. Have a plan of action to speak with a specific someone, to introduce yourself, make an appointment for lunch, or simply get to know better.

Set Goals for Your Organizations

Set a time frame to which you will give your best shot to an organization. For instance, if after two years you haven't generated a certain number of new clients, or a specific number of referrals, consider moving on to more fertile territory.

Avoid Drinking in a Networking Situation

Remember, you're networking to market yourself—this is business! Some people don't know their tolerance; we've all met people at networking events who have had a few too many to be sociable and to loosen up. We assume you don't drink at work, so be sharp and don't take the chance of making the wrong impression.

Carry Your Appointment Book

Be sure to have your appointment book handy to set an appointment for lunch with someone that you find can benefit mutually from your association. Afraid to set appointments? Try this: "Can we get together to discuss this further?"

Look to Give Rather Than Receive

Stop looking to merely get as many business contacts as you possibly can, and start helping others with their marketing needs! You'll stand out from everyone else.

Most people look at networking only as a way to help themselves—they are "takers." The best network builders are always looking to help others—they are "givers." It is this giving quality that attracts others to them.

Givers attend networking activities as a vehicle for them to help their referral sources and clients. They know that what they give away will come back over and over again. They use this "giving" excuse as a motivation to attend, because the best networkers aren't necessarily party people by nature. Many network because they see it is something they need to do in order to maintain, grow, and improve their practice and their business relationships.

Help your contacts be successful and they'll help you be successful.

Always Follow Up

Always send a personal follow-up to those that you interact with. Social psychologists report that written communication is one of the best ways to enhance a relationship. People like to receive personal notes, especially since so few people take the time to write them.

Timing is important, as with all forms of communication for positive reinforcement. The sooner your note is received, the greater its impact. Some of our clients keep note cards at home so they can write notes immediately after an event, so it will arrive the next morning in the mail or, at the latest, the day after that.

Separate yourself from the competition: Chances are, they don't take the time or effort to write personal notes.

Ask for Introductions

Don't stand there wishing to meet that important person over there; ask someone (like the executive director—it's their job) to introduce you.

Take Notes

Take notes about the other person on the back of their business card.

Build Personal Interests Into a Contact Making Strategy

Contacts made by people enjoying what they do, meeting others who are also having a good time (and possibly, because they were having a good time, more receptive to meeting and spending time with new people who shared the same interest). Maybe it's partially for this reason that so many clients have been met, and referral relationships nourished, on the proverbial golf links.

We're terrible golfers, however. In our own experience, we found that the best way to promote our businesses was through writing articles and speaking engagements, two activities that we loved and enjoyed and that were well received.

So, create a list of those activities that give you energy and make you enthusiastic, and that you will want to pursue now for business reasons as well as personal gratification.

Real Life Marketing Example. We remember one woman who participated in our networking training at a firm in the Northwest. She was one of the shyest, most quiet people we had ever met and was a self-described loner. However, she saw that it was imperative that she somehow build a referral network in order to stay with her firm and build up job security. We suggested she come up with a list of activities that she enjoyed in order to guide her in this process.

She loved to play bridge and for the last eight years had played at every opportunity she could with the same three friends. Had she ever considered joining a bridge club as a way of getting to meet people? Her homework was to identify bridge clubs in the downtown area of her city as well as near where she lived.

Two weeks later she called us. She had conducted a very thorough search and couldn't find a single one! We suggested that there might be others, like her, who would care to play bridge on a regular basis beyond the same old group of players in their intimate circle. Why not start a bridge club as her way of getting to know people?

She was pumped. This was right up her alley! She loved bridge and was tired of playing with the same players. She took out an ad in the downtown office newspaper weekly, in her suburban newspaper, and in her university alumni newsletter. She posted signs in the office buildings in the area. Within three weeks, she had started two bridge clubs, one downtown that met at lunch once a week and one out where she lived.

Now, who do you think plays bridge? Bridge is a sophisticated game that attracts a certain kind of “cultured” person. All of a sudden this shy person had showed herself to be a leader and was regularly socializing with attorneys, bankers—prospective clients and referral sources.

Sit by Strangers, Not Associates

At any event, make it your habit to sit with some people you don’t know. You’d be amazed at how many opportunities to make new contacts are lost because people sit with their cohorts or with the same “safe” buddies every time. If you want to have lunch or dinner with an important contact at the meeting, just make sure you are seated together at the table with the strangers.

Search Out the Lonely Person

Ever see people standing by themselves at organizational events? How do you think they feel? Perhaps they are too afraid to walk up to someone they don’t know; maybe they’re new to the group. There’s a good chance they won’t come back if someone doesn’t initiate contact with them—and, they could be a potential client.

The next time you see someone alone, walk up to him or her, introduce yourself, and welcome them. Find out about them and their business. They’ll be so grateful that you did.

Wear a Nametag Correctly

Most people wear nametags on the wrong lapel. People read from left to right; same with a nametag. Place your nametag on your RIGHT lapel. Write in bold, easy to read letters: your name, your professional designation, your firm name, and your organizational title.

Regularly Check the Business Section of Local Newspaper

Keep an eye open for your contacts when they receive a promotion or some publicity about something they have accomplished or done in the community. Send a congratulatory note immediately—you’d be surprised how few people do.

Start a Networking Group

Some professionals have found great success by starting their own select business alliances organization. The idea is to have only one profession and business represented in the group. Meet for breakfast or lunch once a month and trade ideas on how to grow your businesses and trade referrals and introductions within members of your group.

By starting your own organization, you can be selective about who you want to include in the group, perhaps referral sources you've not had too much contact with in the past.

Real Life Marketing Example. One client did this at a very early stage in his career. As a new manager in his late 20s, he formed a group with an attorney, banker, and insurance fellow. Four years later, the group had expanded into 14 professionals and he had generated a quarter million dollars in new business from scratch in his career.

Step 6. Make Networking a Daily Activity

Make networking a habit so you don't have to decide continually if you're going to do it. The following points will help you build contacts on a daily basis.

- Schedule contacts proactively, days and weeks in advance, so when you look at your calendar, you already have a commitment for making contact.
- Set minimum daily or weekly requirements.
- Use breakfasts and lunches, those times of day you will usually not be working anyway.
- Start with people you find interesting and want to meet with the most. It'll make the process that much easier to start with.
- Set goals to give certain things up. Replace unproductive activities with ones that will help you build your network.

Real Life Marketing Example. One of our clients had been involved with the local society for years, serving on many committees and making a name for himself as an expert on estate taxes.

He had been networking with other CPAs, who unfortunately didn't refer a stick of business to him in the 12 years of his activity. All of those plaudits and displays of his knowledge and brilliance had not resulted in a dime's worth of new work because the other CPAs would rather do the tax work themselves or give it to an attorney referral source.

So, he gave up 80 percent of his involvement with the society, and invested that same amount of time being introduced to other networks, referral sources, and people who could hire or refer him. By redirecting his activities appropriately, the net result was an expansion of his business by 18 percent in his first year.

We're not saying you should give up your professional society work! Just make sure it is in alignment with what you want to accomplish, practice development-wise.

- Keep score. Set goals for the number of new people you will meet this month, the frequency of contact meetings with existing and prospective referral sources, and how many new organizations to check out. Reward yourself when you reach these goals.

- Maintain a referral ledger. Keep track of referrals received and given to individuals in a binder so you know at all times where you stand with your contacts and referral sources.
- Reach out to new people in committee meetings, client meetings—anyplace.
- Talk to individuals at group presentations.
- Ask clients and referral sources to include people you would like to meet in your meetings
- Get to know new people during engagements.
- Leave your business card with tips; insert it with your paid bills.

Real Life Marketing Example. One of our students took this idea and really ran with it. He started leaving his business card with every tip he gave. Many of the same people received his card over and over again. He sent his card with bills that he paid. He built this form of networking into his daily activities.

There is a real problem in marketing professional services successfully: People need to know who you are, what you do, and that you are looking for business before they can give it to you!

By passing out his card, our student was accomplishing all three. And, as in advertising, one needs to keep broadcasting repeatedly, as people forget. Consider this example if it applies to you: How many years of having the AICPA send you letters about liability insurance did it take for you to finally buy it? How often did Peter Norton hit you with direct mail before you bought Norton Utilities?

In the first year of including his card with everything, our student picked up 26 new clients, some of those good-sized business accounts.

Real Life Marketing Example. Another client of ours taught us this one. He takes an additional 15 minutes at lunch, every day—habitually—and passes out his business card in a concentric circle to where he is. He'll stop in a store, ask for the owner, and hand her his card, saying, "If ever I can help...." Sure, he sees the same people over and over again—he also catches them at different times of the buying cycle.

Marketing is a personal contact sport, and he knows it! Within two years of starting this practice, he had grown from being a sole practitioner to having six people working for him, just to handle the work.

- Carry a "hit list." Draw up a list of people you'd like to know and proactively ask your clients and referral sources to be introduced to them. Carry this "hit list" with you in your calendar. In time you will find someone who knows one of your targets and will introduce you accordingly.



BUILD PERSONAL CHEMISTRY

Marketing Truth. People help other people who they know, like, and trust, and who want the business.

You can be the most technically superior person in your state, but if people don't like you and feel comfortable around you and feel good about helping you, they won't. This is sad but true for many of us who have placed our chips on the technical cards we hold in our hand.

Unfortunately, holding two technical "aces" probably won't win the game of business development poker if your other three cards are deuces or treys. So we'll invest some time in guiding you to improve your personal chemistry building skills. These skills include employing active and empathetic listening and identifying aches, hurts, needs, wants, or desires.

Employ Active and Empathetic Listening

Perhaps the single best way to building better chemistry, to develop more enjoyable and productive relationships, and to have people genuinely like you is to be a better listener. We know—you already know how to listen! Perhaps so, but do you listen enough? Do you possess most of the skills to be the best listener you can be?

Listening is another skill generally not taught in schools. We have had so much success in teaching our clients and students how to be more effective listeners, that we often receive letters and phone calls about how they have applied this particular skill with immediate results.

We use the term listening in this context to embrace a certain connotation. Listening means to interact with someone in such a way that they get the feeling that you truly care about them and what they are saying is important.

People care much more about what they have to say than what you have to say. Unfortunately, they rarely find themselves in front of someone willing to listen without interruption. This need for being listened to is so vital that some people use the services of psychiatrists (and pay a small fortune doing so) just to have someone attend to their concerns. Does your best friend listen to you? Of course; otherwise, they wouldn't be your best friend! If you can tune up your listening skills, you will sell more work, get many more introductions, have better relationships with your clients and everyone else and totally separate yourself from the competition.

From a control standpoint, listening is critical as well. Many people think that the talker controls the conversation. Not true: The talker dominates. The listener, or interviewer, directs the meeting. Watch "60 Minutes" some Sunday evening and you'll see what we mean.

The eleven keys to active and empathetic listening. Here's how to become much better at the skill of listening.

Key 1. Take Written Notes

What does it say about someone who takes written notes during a meeting? Doesn't it say that they are concerned, effective, and organized? Won't the other person get the feeling that what they are saying is important (and that they, too, are important)?

Taking notes at a lunch meeting isn't easy. The food gets in the way, and it can feel awkward. We're not suggesting that you take volumes of notes; just make sure to write down the commitments, introductions, follow-through and other pertinent information on how you can help this person and vice versa. Written notes also provide the evidence, details and history you need to refer to over the life of a productive relationship.

Written notes also say so much about you as a professional: that you are detail oriented, thorough, that you are going to follow up—those are all positive traits for someone in our profession.

Key 2. Never Interrupt the Other Person

People love to talk, and talk ... Unfortunately, most people are in too much of a hurry to listen. Chances are, however, that no one else in the other person's life listens.

Never interrupt anyone in a meeting except in case of fire. If the other person strays off of the subject, you can always direct him or her back with a question you sneak in when they take a breath.

How do you feel when you're interrupted?

Rainmakers often receive more introductions and sell more business than their competitors by simply listening more, and interrupting less, than the competition.

Key 3. Give Verbal and Visual Signals

Too basic, you say? We've been to dozens of meetings observing CPAs and consultants where they sit blank-faced. You must let the contact know that they are being listened to, or they will stop talking. Nod your head and say things like, I see, or Uh-huh to let the other person know you are in line with their spoken thoughts.

Key 4. Pretend Whatever the Contact Is Saying Is Important

Sometimes you have to pretend what other people are saying is important because you may have heard similar stories or the same concerns expressed before. However, these are special issues to the contact and they will be disappointed unless you hear them out.

Key 5. Don't Think!

Write down thoughts and questions that come to you. If you spend time thinking, you are not listening, and the other person knows it.

It is inevitable that thoughts and more questions come to you while listening. Great! That will be a good way to keep your the conversation going. Merely note these thoughts and questions on the paper where you are taking notes.

Key 6. Deal With Imprecise Words

Some referral sources make such statements as they “usually refer” Mary Contrary as their accountant or consultant to clients or that they are “fairly pleased” with her work or that they are “considering” other resources. What do these words and statements mean?

In order to be a better listener (and a better business generator) find out immediately. Don’t let inexact words or statements pass you by, or you won’t find out what the contact’s true motives are or diagnose the situation correctly.

Don’t be a mind reader! Say something like, When you said that you were fairly pleased with how Mary takes care of your clients, what does that mean? Or, When you said that you “usually” refer her in, does that mean that you would refer others in as well? Or, Can you expand or give me an example of a client not getting the kind of service they wanted? Or, When you said “considering,” does that mean you’re ready to try someone new who will take better care of your clients?

Afraid to pursue vague statements or words? The contact often doesn’t realize what he or she has said. And, we were all trained from childhood to redefine our assertions by our teachers in class.

In 20 years of asking people to expand upon what they have said, no one has ever refused to do so with us. If they ever did, it would be a good test of the lack of personal chemistry.

Key 7. Be Curious

Remember the time before you started kindergarten? Well, how about before your children started school? Preschool age children are so curious about everything: “Oh Daddy, look at the truck!” As we get older we tend to stop noticing things.

However, contacts, clients, referrals sources—just about everybody—loves it when they find someone who has a genuine curiosity about them and their jobs, interests, and lives. Too few others show much of an interest.

Be like that little child when you meet with the contact: Let your curiosity take over. People will be much more apt to like you, be open and honest with you, and comfortable.

Key 8. Leave Brochures in the Office

Some people expect the brochure to do the personal marketing and contact making for them. Yes, we’ve written material on how to write brochures (see Chapter 9), but there’s a time and a place for them.

Brochures provide an excellent accompaniment to a personal thank you note sent immediately after the meeting, which provides one more exposure for you. They provide a written description of your services and information about your firm that people might

want to refer to. However, people don't refer accounting and consulting services from brochures. People refer people. Don't detract in any way from your meetings.

Key 9. Hold Yourself Back

Many professionals think they are supposed to be a fountain of ideas and business solutions. We are reputed to be business experts and often feel the need to come up with answers to everything on the spot. Many offer solutions immediately when they hear concerns by referral sources about how their clients have been treated or whom they've worked with in the past. This is not how many of the best business generators in the profession create personal chemistry.

There is a time and place to offer solutions. It is not when you hear a "hot button"; it is later in the meeting after all of their needs, wants, and desires are on the table. If you start answering concerns as you hear them, you will be doing far too much talking and interrupting the good flow that the contact is feeling.

Ever have conversations like this?

The referral source: My clients aren't receiving their financial statements on time from the guy we're referring in now and they're calling us to complain about it.

The CPA: No problem! We'll get you the financials when you want them!

The referral source: That's what our last CPA said.

Remember, what you say about yourself is your opinion and carries little weight. Wait until the appropriate time in the meeting to determine how and what concerns you will answer. Many people don't care about what you have to say much at all—it's the listening that builds your chemistry and credibility.

Key 10. Be Yourself

Some professionals adopt another persona when they meet in business settings. They start acting like they think they're "supposed to."

Let the contact meet the real you. Be open and vulnerable; be yourself. If they refer you and never meet the real you until afterwards, and don't like you, they'll refer someone else in next time anyway. It's only by being open yourself that you can build true personal chemistry and friendship.

Key 11. Don't Answer Unasked Questions

People don't buy firms, they buy individuals. Don't answer a lot of unasked questions about your firm. We've seen so many professionals who don't know how to sell go into long dissertations about when their firm was founded, how many professionals they have,

and other topics. Contacts could not care less. They care about getting their needs met. If you have to say something about your firm and your experience, make it short and sweet. By keeping in mind an 80/20 ratio of listening to talking, you will stand out from your competition and develop much stronger, more personal, relationships with people who can help you reach your business development goals.

Identify Aches, Hurts, Needs, Wants, or Desires

People could be the greatest contacts, referral sources, and introducers in the world, but unless there is a reason for helping you, they won't. And if they won't help, you can't waste your time investing in the wrong relationship. You need to sort those out, so an important part of the network building process is finding those people who will help you because they have a reason to.

Aches, hurts, needs, wants, or desires are all solid reasons for motivating people to work with you to build your practice. You need the skills to find these out, or you'll be wasting your time when you meet with contacts.

Here's how to find these reasons out:

Ask Informational Questions

By asking "who, what, where, when, how, and why" type questions, people will tell you many things you might not think possible. In fact, people, in the right environmental setting, away from the distractions of work and the office, will talk and talk until you cut them off.

Listen and Feel for Emotions

There's a real difference between having contacts relay information and wants, needs, desires, and problems. It is for these emotional reasons that people will help you.

"We refer business to three CPA firms" is factual and doesn't tell you much of anything. But "We're catching a lot of flack because these firms are ignoring our clients' needs and they're badgering us about it," is emotional, and you definitely have somewhere to go with this person.

Elicit Their Goals

Finding out what a referral source wants to have happen with his or her practice is vital to finding out if he or she is going to be willing to help you (and vice versa). If the goals are to build a more profitable practice, ensure his or her clients are extremely well taken care of, and build a closer relationship with other selected professionals, you may have real possibility in this relationship. If her goals are to pull back, slow down, not rock the boat, not change anything, you may not have any place to go.

Be aware of emotional reasons for having someone help you in all of your conversations.



CONCLUSION

Networking effectively is one of the primary ways that the Best Business Generators have built their practices. Use your limited time effectively by following the system in this chapter to grow your business.

EXHIBIT 6-1: SAMPLE FORM FOR PERSONAL CONTACTS INVENTORY

COLUMN A CONTACT NAME	COLUMN B HISTORICAL RATING	COLUMN C PROJECTED FUTURE RATING	COLUMN D WHY THEY WILL HELP
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			
16.			
17.			
18.			
19.			

EXHIBIT 6-2: SAMPLE INFORMATION IN A CONTACT RECORDKEEPING SYSTEM

Name of contact
Title
Company name
Address
Telephone number(s)
Fax number(s)
E-mail address(es)
Web site address
Source of contact originally
Notes on company
Notes on contact: (history, networks, personal interests)
Record of meetings or contacts with this individual
Introductions received from this person
Introductions given to this contact
When and how you thanked this individual



HOW TO CREATE
HIGH-IMPACT
MARKETING AT
YOUR FIRM

part **II**



HOW TO CREATE AN
ENTREPRENEURIAL
MARKETING PLAN

chapter 7

Most marketing plans that professional firms produce simply gather dust on a shelf. They lie untouched because they don't have any impact on the day-to-day success of the line partners and managers.

Think about it for a second. What's your game plan to grow your practice? What are the critical marketing activities for this month? What are others doing this month to grow your practice? The process covered in this chapter will help you to answer these questions precisely.



REASONS WHY MOST MARKETING PLANS FAIL

Most firms develop their marketing plan as if they were IBM or AT&T. Once a year, they analyze their market and develop grand strategies that are carefully written down—and promptly forgotten.

Another problem is that this process is not action oriented. In many cases, you don't know if the written strategy is working until next year's planning meeting.

In other words, it's a work of fiction. There are some good ideas and worthy goals—but it's not real life.

There are three key reasons why most formal, written marketing plans fail:

Reason 1. They're Irrelevant

Most plans are overly analytical, nice-sounding documents. But because they are written as an annual plan, they aren't relevant to succeeding in the day-to-day marketplace. Conditions change swiftly, and success comes mainly from effort, hustle, and "real time" opportunistic thinking. In other words, tactics count, not strategy and analysis.

Reason 2. No One Has Ownership

One person writes the plan, others read it, stick it into a binder, and forget it. The line partners and managers realize that this is simply a yearly ritual, so they can get a budget approved. Consequently there is no commitment among the people who must implement the plan.

Reason 3. They Lack Accountability

The firm marketing strategy says, We will grow by X percent—some magic number. But there is no explicit link to a set of actions—and personal responsibilities—to accomplish this goal. Also, the partners and managers don't have a personal stake in that goal. So, it has no real bearing on their day-to-day lives.



BENEFITS OF AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING PLAN

Over the years, we've developed and refined a process to help professional firms come up with their marketing game plan. Because it is intended to build your business, we call it the "entrepreneurial market planning process." Its goal is to produce marketing game plans that are action oriented, flexible, and real time.

As a result of the process you get a game plan that achieves a number of benefits, summarized in this section.

Benefit 1. Assigns Responsibility

The emphasis of this process is tactics, not strategy; action, not analysis. A specific action plan with responsibilities, task assignments, and deadlines is the foundation of the planning effort. This emphasis on action and accountability means that your people are following through on their top priorities consistently.

Benefit 2. Prioritizes the Effort

Instead of a laundry list of good ideas that never get accomplished, this process focuses attention on the important tactics that will either make or break your success. Let's face it, you're already busy, so don't sweat the small stuff.

Benefit 3. Builds Ownership

This process includes everyone who is responsible for implementation. The ongoing, participatory style builds ownership and gives your people a personal stake in the success of the team. As you'll see, the participatory, face-to-face planning process we use on a regular basis is more successful in building commitment to action than any infrequent, paper-intensive process.

Benefit 4. Provides Accountability

The result of this process is a set of "contracts" among the key players. In other words, you agree to follow through on your assignments and responsibilities because you know that this is an ongoing process. You'll also face the peer pressure of others on the team if you don't live up to your commitments. Also, the process sets specific goals and milestones for the group, so you can monitor your progress.

Benefit 5. Plays to Your Strengths

The strategic analysis involved in the process is simple. How can you amplify and extend your success in areas where you are strong? Can you add a service capability? How can you

market more aggressively? Once identified, you'll be playing to your strengths and concentrating on your best opportunities.

Benefit 6. Involves All Players

Ninety percent of the planning process takes place at the practice group and personal level. This only makes sense. Clients buy people, not firms. People and specialty teams build referrals and reputations. And, the key to successfully competing in one practice is different from another one. For example, growing your real estate practice requires different skills and tactics than growing your manufacturing service line.

Benefit 7. It's Almost Paperless

One reason that this process works well is that it doesn't create paperwork—except for the ones who list action commitments: who will do what by when.

Benefit 8. "Living" Process

Your game plan has to mean something in order to be useful. Therefore, it has to be an ongoing process that accommodates the changes and shifting priorities that we all face in a professional firm. The process is like Weight Watchers—you'll always be watching your progress.



A FOUR-STEP PROCESS TO CREATE AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING PLAN

Now, we want you to see how the process can work for you.

Here's what we'll do. First we will show you the key steps involved in coming up with your game plan. Then, we'll review a case study that illustrates how the process worked for one of our clients.

-
- Step 1.* Identify best marketing opportunities.
 - Step 2.* Select key marketing tactics.
 - Step 3.* Define marketing action requirements.
 - Step 4.* Monitor the implementation of the action plan.
-

Step 1. Identify Best Marketing Opportunities

The purpose of this session is to look at the current success and strengths of the firm to see how to best capitalize on your position across all the areas.

Also, you want to build their understanding of your market planning process and establish a consensus of what your goals and objectives should be as a firm.

Participants

The process begins with the leadership of the firm. This should include the managing partner, the division heads, and the leaders of your top specialty areas.

Structure

You should budget a half day for this session, preferably off-site. You'll need a flip chart to record group responses. Also, ask everybody to bring a pad of paper.

The managing partner should run the meeting, perhaps in concert with a skilled outside facilitator. Basically, you'll be asking the group a structured series of questions. Then, as a group, you'll brainstorm on the implications of the questions. Following is the agenda:

Explain the Goal of the Meeting. You're there to explore your best opportunities for success, and to take advantage of the collective wisdom of the group.

Review a Few Facts. Prepare a short analysis by area of practice of your fees, hours, and profits. Where do you see your profit and growth coming from? How about new clients? Which service lines show the most promise? What doesn't seem to be working?

Examine the Success of Each Practice Area. Go around the table and quickly review the triumphs of each group represented. Go in sequence from the largest practice group or specialty to the smallest represented. Ask the leader of the group to comment on these questions:

- Which are our strongest service niches? What are the top two or three niches where we can get more clients? List these on the flip chart.
- What do our recent client additions and losses tell us about the practice?
- What additional service needs do you see among the clients? Which one or two should we push the hardest this year? List these on the flip chart.
- What services and niches aren't performing up to par?
- What are your two or three most important marketing ideas for the upcoming year?

Prioritize Your Best Opportunities. After you've gone around the room, list all the opportunities mentioned: the market niches with additional client potential, as well as the additional services. Assign a letter to each one, "A" for the first on the list and so on. Then, ask each participant to rank *all* these opportunities in importance to the firm's growth, even those outside his or her area of practice. Then collect the sheets, record the votes and calculate the average. Discuss any anomalies.

Decide Which Opportunities Are Deserving of a Full Market Planning Effort. Look at the top of the list. Who should lead a market planning effort? Who else should be involved and why? Assign these responsibilities and conclude the meeting.

Step 2. Select Key Marketing Tactics

The next step is organizing a planning workshop for the high-priority practice group. Essentially, you want all these players to recognize the vital role their specialty will play in both their success and the firm's success.

The goal of this step is simple: to agree on the key marketing tactics you need to succeed and to define a clear set of action steps that will build your business.

Participants

Participants should include anybody who is either crucial to the quality of the strategy or essential to its implementation. For example, you may want to include the managing partner and the division heads. Also, participants should be any specialists in an area with potential. Include staff people, as well as your marketing director or coordinator. Don't, however, include anybody who either won't contribute or won't follow through on his or her commitments. Find a substitute.

Structure

You should budget a half to full day for this session, preferably off-site. You'll need a flip chart. Also, ask everybody to bring a pad of paper. Following is the agenda.

Review the Goal of the Meeting. Explain that each of them is an important part of the success of this practice area, and that's why they were asked to participate. Explain what's expected of them: full participation, commitment to following through on the action steps, and attendance at the meeting.

Review the Findings From Your Step 1 Meeting. Ask for their input and see if they agree with conclusions.

Conduct a Structured Brainstorming Session. Use the following questions. Again, appoint one person to be the facilitator. For each of the areas below, capture all the best ideas on a flip chart:

■ Clients

- What are we doing to keep our best clients? What else should we be doing?
- What "trauma" are they facing and what services should we be emphasizing?
- How can we sell these additional services? What's keeping us from selling them now? What do we need to do?
- Are we getting enough referrals? How? Which clients should we target and ask?

■ Referral sources

- Who are our important existing allies? How many clients have they referred? What are we doing to sustain these relationships? What joint marketing efforts makes sense?
- Are there any other attractive referral sources that we should target? Who? How?

- Networking
 - What organizations are we involved with? Are we getting enough clients from here? How? Why? If not, why not? What can we do? Should we stay active?
 - Are there other important organizations where we should become visible?
- Marketing
 - How did we attract our new clients? Should we do more of this?
 - What does our top business generator in this field do? How can more of us do the same thing?
 - Who else is successful in marketing to this group of clients? What do they do differently from us?
 - What has worked best for us in the past? Should we do more?
 - What has worked for others in the firm in different service areas?
 - What marketing tools will work best with this group? How can we stand out from the competition?

List All the Action Ideas. Put these on a single flip chart. Ask each participant to list the five most important actions they think you should take. Go around the table. Ask each person which ones they selected and why. Put a tick mark on the flip chart next to each one. Circle the ones that are most important.

Briefly summarize the findings of the session and distribute the summary to the group for the third meeting.

Step 3. Define Marketing Action Requirements

Here's what you want to accomplish:

- *Set some goals that you can commit to as a group.* These are quantifiable goals in terms of new clients and new work sold to existing clients.
- *Review the action plan.* Review the summary of programs and action steps you agreed to at the last session. Do these still make sense? Are they doable?
- *Perform a quality control review of the plan.* Determine if these action steps are sufficient to produce the results you desire.
- *Assign responsibilities, tasks, and time frames.* Have people volunteer to take on tasks and commit to their completion. Don't assign tasks that you know won't get done. Just eliminate them.
- *Create a budget and action plan.* Summarize the costs and time commitments to see if both are reasonable.
- *Agree to a series of follow up meetings to implement the plan.* Remember, this is a "living" plan, so define how often the group will get together.

Participants

The same people who attended the previous session should be at this one. Obviously, if there are team members who will not participate in the process and/or will sabotage it, they should NOT be invited to be a part of the process.

Structure

Set aside two hours for this meeting. As with all meetings of this type (strategic and non-billable), the risk is not enough time is allocated. The more time invested, the more ideas and buy-in to the action plans will take place.

This meeting is a little different. There is less brainstorming and creative thinking called for—this is an implementation meeting, so the group leader must take a little more control. Mainly, this will be achieved by some advanced preparation. Be careful—you still want to maintain a participatory climate in the meeting.

Before the meeting, the group leader should review the list of marketing actions from the last meeting. Then, he or she should draw up a draft of each of the items above, preferably the goals, action plan, opinion of adequacy, a list of tasks, timing, suggested responsibilities, and the budget.

Keep it brief, though, almost in bullet point format. See Exhibit 7-1, "Sample Marketing Plan," for an example. Then, use the meeting to ask for the group's help in fleshing out the plan. Are the goals reasonable? Have you missed any steps? Are they willing to volunteer to accept their responsibilities?

Incorporate their revisions, additions, and deletions and then, revise the action plan.

What was the result? More marketing actions got done and higher and better uses of time were identified. That's hustling smarter and harder.

Step 4. Monitor the Implementation of the Action Plan

Get your team together monthly or quarterly (at a minimum) and cover the following questions:

- Is the plan working? Did we get the results that we wanted? Do we see progress?
- What milestones do we aim for by the next meeting?
- What tangible measures can we point to in terms of proposals, sales interviews, marketing opportunities, new clients, and additional services sold?
- Do we have to make any changes or enhancements?
- Did we do what we said we do?
- What are we going to do by the next meeting?



SUPPORTING A FIRMWIDE MARKETING PLAN

Time out! Let's see what you've accomplished so far. In Step 1, you've defined those industry groups and service line specialties that are most important to your firm's success. As a result of Steps 2 through 4, you have a summary of the most important marketing tactics for these top groups. And you've got an ongoing series of team meetings dedicated to implementing these plans.

Guess what? That's an effective marketing plan for your firm. A sample marketing plan and a sample client game plan are found at the end of this chapter in Exhibit 7-1 and Exhibit 7-2, "Sample Client Game Plan."

The sample marketing plan describes your strategic attack of the market you have decided to concentrate your efforts on. The sample client game plan discusses what you will want to accomplish once you get in front of one of the targeted companies in that demographic.

Here's what is left for the managing partner, marketing director, and others to do:

- *Testing the adequacy of goals.* Summarize the goals set by each of the major groups and roll them up to a firmwide figure. Are they adequate? Achievable? Who has to contribute more? Where will you fill in the gaps with revenue generated by other industries and service specialties?
- *Balancing the demands and priorities.* Add up the commitments in terms of time and budget. Are they reasonable?
- *Allocating money and time.* If your plans exceed your available time and money, how will you split them up among the opportunities?
- *Agreeing to "support contracts" with the practice groups.* As part of the bargain, develop an explicit contract with the practice group. Allocate the budget in return for their agreement to implement the plan. Also, have them contract for the services of your marketing director in achieving their goal. Make your marketing function demand driven.
- *Planning for umbrella programs.* There will be common ideas and marketing needs that cut across the groups. Also, some important marketing actions are independent of industry groups, such as "alumni meetings," firm anniversaries, and sales training. Plan for them in your overall budget.
- *Developing brief "mini" plans for the lower priority industries and service specialties.* Complete a shorter version of the planning process with your other opportunity areas.
- *Keeping the enthusiasm and motivation of the troops high.* This is your toughest job. Come up with an internal marketing plan and incentive program to keep morale high.



CASE STUDY—CREATING AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING PLAN

Our client—the managing partner of a \$6.5 million dollar practice in New York—was frustrated by the recent stagnant growth of his firm.

He was trying a number of things to see which one would catch on: opening a satellite office location, offering business valuation, running an outsourcing service, attempting to start up an IT computer consulting practice, and looking into financial services. However, it seemed like none of these new areas was really taking off. And his partners felt like they were running around in too many directions scrambling for business.

So, he engaged us to facilitate this planning process.

Step 1. Identify Best Marketing Opportunities

After he and his partners went through this step he found out that:

- They weren't paying enough marketing attention to their traditional areas of strength: real estate, homebuilders, construction, and family-owned wholesalers.
- The place where new service capabilities were *really* taking off was in these areas, and IT consulting and estate planning had untapped potential.
- All of the other new specialties ended up at the bottom of his priority list.

As a result, he refocused *all* of his marketing attention and investment on servicing the real estate, construction, and homebuilding industries and family owned wholesale distributors, as well as offering estate planning and computer consulting to these same groups. Everything else was a lower priority.

Step 2. Select Key Marketing Tactics

The industry segment most important to our client was the family-owned wholesale distribution industry. So, he organized a planning session with his two partners, an experienced manager in the industry, and two service line specialists—one in estate planning and the other in IT consulting.

Here's what they found:

- *They had become "lazy" and invisible at the Wholesale Distribution Association.* All the partners had held leadership positions and they had become "burned out." They decided to reinvigorate their efforts. They decided to find speaking opportunities. Also, they decided to find ways to get the estate planning and computer specialist to take more of a lead role.
- *They had to "package" and promote computer consulting.* Even though they had substantial experience in the industry, all of their promotional material was generic. They developed a specific brochure for this area. Also, they cre-

ated a client newsletter titled “The 5 Computer Disasters That Haunt Wholesale Distributors.”

- *They’d push succession planning and computer consulting as an entrée to new clients, along with their industry expertise.* Since this was their top industry area, they decided to put an all-out blitz on it. They’d try a series of high-impact direct marketing efforts highlighting the two services. Also, they’d organize CEO roundtables in conjunction with the association. All of their banking contacts would be asked for referrals.
- *They needed to use roundtables to discuss succession issues.* They decided to set up a series of informal discussion groups of eight to 10 wholesale distributors. First, they talked about succession planning challenges from the senior family member’s perspective. Then, with the second group, they had the same discussions with the next generation of family members. Working with the editor of the association newsletter, they would create a lead article for the association newsletter as well as a prominent commentary.

Here’s a final important point. *These were all the activities that they were willing to commit to completing.* Therefore, all other activities were eliminated.

Step 3. Define Marketing Action Requirements

The managing partner of our client firm never planned his marketing programs to this level of detail. In fact, when we went through this process, *he* recognized that he was a bottleneck to making marketing work in the past.

Without this process in place, partners and staff would just drop by from time to time whenever they had a marketing idea. Also, because he was a true entrepreneur, when he thought of something that made marketing sense, he’d just go out and do it on his own. In other words, he didn’t always look for ways to include others in his efforts.

This detailed planning approach gave him the advantage of leverage. He saw lots of opportunities for others to step up and take responsibility for things he did in the past.



CONCLUSION

Most annual, written marketing plans are useless. They over emphasize strategy and analysis and ignore the value of hustle, tactics, and entrepreneurial opportunism.

There is a better way, but it takes work. The entrepreneurial marketing planning process relies on the savvy, judgment, and commitment of your people. Like most quality efforts, it’s people intensive and participatory. And it’s ongoing.

EXHIBIT 7-1: SAMPLE MARKETING PLAN

Description of Target Market:

- Family owned wholesale distributors, \$6 million to \$5 million in revenue, current clients and nonclients
- Elderly or aging owner
- Located in and around New York City

Service Priorities:

- Succession planning/estate review
- Employee benefit plans
- Computer system-managed inventory

Business Goals: Fees

	<i>Last Year</i>	<i>This Year</i>	<i>Increase</i>
Existing clients	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Nonclient referrals	_____	_____	_____
New clients	_____	_____	_____
Total	_____	_____	_____

Marketing Actions:

- Develop client CEO roundtables and get 24 clients to attend.
- Set up quarterly CEO/CFO breakfast meetings with top 25 clients.
- Concentrate on fewer, better referral relationships.
 - Build relations with top three current referral sources.
 - Target and contact two new sources.
- Strengthen personal reputation through public speaking and article placement.
 - Five speeches and three articles based on speeches and CEO roundtables.
- Develop wholesale industry computer consulting brochure.

Client Relationship Marketing Program

Strategy With Resulting Marketing Program:

1. Highlight service priorities and showcase our capabilities.
 - Organize a series of three client CEO breakfast roundtables to discuss their business issues.

(continued)

EXHIBIT 7-1: SAMPLE MARKETING PLAN (CONT'D)

2. Make all client service partners and managers aware of the service priorities.
 - Develop client service checklist to spot opportunities in service priorities.
 - Develop case studies of successful engagements.
3. Strengthen contact with top five distributor clients.
 - Schedule quarterly meetings with CEO/CFO.
 - Qualify their needs in service priorities.
4. Organize succession planning mailings to all other distributor clients.
 - Develop personal letter. Ask them to invite nonclient CEO's to a breakfast roundtable.
 - Summarize and mail the results of the roundtable.

Evaluating Marketing Success:

1. Twenty-four client CEOs attending the roundtable, eight follow-up meetings to discuss service requirements, two engagements
2. Four new engagements for all other activities

Investment:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Your time: | 100 hours |
| 2. Others' time: | 50 hours |
| 3. Total: | 150 hours |
| 4. Marketing investment: | \$10,000 |

EXHIBIT 7-2: SAMPLE CLIENT GAME PLAN

Trauma/Service Needs:

- A. Still using some manual processes for critical areas of inventory control
- B. Need a succession plan review based on changes in their business and family

How We Can Get Attention and Interest:

- A. References from succession planning clients who are entrepreneurs in the local area and who are about the same age as the owner.
- B. Too small to be well served by current “Big Firms.”

Decision Makers:

- A. For succession planning, the owner would have to see the need to initiate the plan. Son/president would have to ratify the selection of the professional services firm.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Staff/Date</i>	<i>Next Step</i>
Ask client to introduce CPA at next Family Business Association Meeting	MGC 5/15	Send him roundtable discussion
Call to see if he'd like more information and discuss his company's situation	ASB 5/29	Meet with owner and his son

- B. For inventory control and computerization, invite client to our next IT seminar and have our in-house IT manager explain to him how computerization of this important function will have material impact on inventory control, shrinkage and spoilage. Get testimonial from two similar company client situations where we computerized the client's key inventory control functions at savings of thousands of dollars over cost of implementation.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Staff/Date</i>	<i>Next Step</i>
Invite client to next IT seminar on 4/1	MGC 5/15	Introduce IT Manager to client
Have our IT manager make an appointment to sit down with client for discussion of his situation and how we can help and then meet with client	ASB 5/29 JO/ASB 4/3	Notify IT Manager of impending meeting JO and ASB meet with owner and his son
Send one letter of reference before meeting take one with	ASB 4/1 ASB 4/3	Prepare estimate of and implementation cost
Prepare estimate	JO 4/4	Call for appointment to review estimate

(continued)

EXHIBIT 7-2: SAMPLE CLIENT GAME PLAN (CONT'D)

<i>Action</i>	<i>Staff/Date</i>	<i>Next Step</i>
Call for appointment to review estimate	ASB 4/8	Close on deal
Close on deal at meeting with client	ASB/JO 4/12	Implement software and hardware solution (JO)



HOW TO START OR
REINVIGORATE A
MARKETING FUNCTION

chapter 8

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, only the largest and most progressive accounting firms were building formalized marketing functions. Now, however, even modest-sized firms are likely to have marketing and sales support functions.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the proven methods for either starting a marketing function from scratch or boosting the performance of an existing marketing function. As you'll see, most of the success of marketing really comes down to your partners, staff, and you. In many ways, getting results from marketing depends on the quality of your management practices and personal commitment to growing your practice. An effective marketing function can only build on this foundation. It can't substitute for it.

This chapter answers the following questions step by step.

- How do you get organized?
- Who should you hire as a marketing specialist?
- What support should you provide?
- How do you manage and monitor performance?



WHY MARKETING FUNCTIONS FAIL

While at Arthur Andersen and in our consulting work with professional firms, we've seen hundreds of marketing functions across all sorts of situations. Some were extremely productive, but many were not.

What separates the most productive marketing functions from those that flounder? Based on our unique vantage point, we've identified the following 10 key reasons for failure; we will discuss them in detail.

Reason 1. Exhibiting a Lack of True Commitment to Marketing

The foremost reason that marketing fails is a lack of total commitment.

Many firms adopt a "me too" attitude toward marketing. Since everybody else is doing it, they hire a marketing specialist and direct them to "do marketing" for them. But then the managing partner and other leaders within the firm abdicate responsibility for making it happen. For example, they start with a minimal budget. And the managing partner and other partners don't invest any time in helping marketing succeed. In many cases, they "trivialize" marketing and concentrate on promotional gimmicks, or they treat the marketing specialist as simply a "gofer," someone to do all the grunt work on proposals, seminars, and special events.

To succeed at marketing, the firm as a whole must embrace the importance of business development. All the partners must see marketing and selling as instrumental to their success as entrepreneurs. Staff has to go the extra mile as well, finding the time to attend association

meetings or organizational events. Everybody has to have a personal stake in the success and growth of the firm.

Reason 2. Tolerating Poor Working Relationships

The success of a marketing function is determined predominantly by the quality of the working relationships inside a firm.

If you have a marketing director, he or she must secure the support and coaching of the managing partner to “sell” marketing within the firm. Also, the marketing director must gain the respect and cooperation of other key partners.

Even if you don’t have a marketing function, cooperative working relationships among the partners and professional staff are vital for success. For example, cross-marketing requires cooperative introductions. Without shared goals and objectives, your firm will be heading off in different directions, with everybody simply focusing on their own personal agendas.

Reason 3. Selecting the Wrong Marketing Specialist

Unfortunately, it’s tough to select the *right* marketing specialist. Why? Because there is no single set of criteria that tells you that somebody is a good fit. We’ve seen successful marketing directors and coordinators come from a variety of backgrounds. Some have been administrators, CPAs, or public relation specialists, and some have had more of a sales background. Many are professional staff who want to shift into marketing roles. A few have been hired right out of college.

However, one thing is clear. Most marketing specialists who get hired won’t work out. While predicting a good fit is difficult at best, there are some rules of thumb that can apply. For example, marketing specialists with an extensive background in advertising seem not to work out in general because they are so totally focused on the institutional instead of the personal side of marketing. Also, marketing “zealots” fail 100 percent of the time. These are specialists who expect everybody to do marketing because it’s the *absolute* best use of their time.

Reason 4. Lacking Management and Monitoring Systems

Anything that you don’t manage is bound to fail. Taking a “hands off,” passive stance toward marketing means that your marketing programs will be misguided and diffuse. Also, without strong management you won’t get the focus and follow through that is vital to getting a payback from marketing.

Monitoring your marketing performance is also overlooked. It’s basic. If you can’t keep score, then you don’t know if you are winning or losing. If you don’t monitor your marketing performance, you can’t tell if it’s working or not.

Marketing is like every other business discipline. It can be managed and monitored using a few simple tools. We’ll cover these tools later in the chapter.

Reason 5. Using Marketing as a Scapegoat

Who is ultimately responsible for the success or failure of marketing? It's not the managing partner or the marketing specialist. Instead, it's the troops—your line partners, managers, and staff. One can only lead them and supply the support and tools needed to succeed.

In some cases, however, marketing becomes a convenient scapegoat for the line. Rather than accepting responsibility for designing and following through on marketing efforts, many professionals assume that marketing is somebody else's responsibility, so they sit back and criticize or they make a half-hearted effort. Then, when results aren't forthcoming, they point fingers at the marketing specialist, claiming that the program was an ill-conceived waste of time.

Reason 6. Overinvesting in the Wrong Marketing Program

Let's face it. CPAs and consultants hate wasting money. So, large investments in campaigns with no tangible payback will drive them crazy. If you want to guarantee that marketing will fail, simply invest in expensive newsletters or costly advertising that doesn't produce any new business. Those failures will taint all future marketing campaigns.

Reason 7. Ignoring the Internal Marketing Component

Ninety percent of marketing success is determined *inside* your firm.

If marketing programs play an explicit, tangible role in your partner's success, your marketing efforts will be embraced by all the members of your firm. But securing and sustaining their commitment and participation is a often a tough sale.

So, your most important selling and marketing job is internal. How can you make your partners see that marketing is vital to their personal success? Who will be the champions for marketing? How can you make heroes out of those who will fully and enthusiastically participate in marketing? Which specialty teams will go full out in marketing?

Reason 8. Lacking Business Development Training

It's impossible to excel at something that you don't understand, but marketing and selling are foreign to the vast majority of CPAs and consultants. Without proper training of how to capitalize on marketing, many professionals will latch onto those business development actions with the *least* chance of success—ones that "sound good" or appear easy (like telemarketing).

Without a common outlook and understanding of marketing, you are likely to fail. Moreover, if you don't know how and why marketing will help you, you won't commit to marketing programs on a whole-hearted basis.

Properly designed and conducted, business development training will help you build "true believers" within your firm. Moreover, you'll strengthen interest among your colleagues

and staff, so that they'll eagerly join in marketing efforts. As a final benefit, you'll strengthen the confidence of your people in their business generation prowess. Hence, they'll be more likely to contribute because they'll see success as a strong possibility.

Reason 9. Misunderstanding the Dynamics of Marketing

Lots of firms are looking for the "magic bullet." I can't tell you how many times we've heard the following statement: We tried a direct mail campaign once and it didn't work—what should we try next? This isn't the way that marketing works. Results come only when you promote your services through a linked series of consistent marketing tools in a program that is consistently and persistently applied over time.

In other words, marketing is a process, not a one-shot effort. You have to experiment and strive for continual improvements over time. In other words, there is no "magic bullet."

Reason 10. Expecting Big Results From Minimal Investments

There is no way around it. Effective marketing costs money. Even the best and most brilliant marketer cannot succeed without an investment in the right tools. Frankly, if you aren't willing to invest, don't even get started.

Recognize that going cheap also affects your reputation. How can people learn about your expertise and capabilities if they throw your mail out as "junk mail"? What does it say about your quality of work if people see a Xeroxed promotional piece or an inept, poorly designed, and graphically unappealing brochure.

These are the challenges that you face when starting or reinvigorating your marketing function.



A 15-STEP PROCESS TO START OR REINVIGORATE A MARKETING FUNCTION

Now, let's see how you can beat the odds. Review the necessary steps in developing a productive marketing plan below. The rest of the chapter will show you how to create a productive marketing function.

-
- Step 1.* Define the goal of your marketing function.
 - Step 2.* Secure the commitment of leaders.
 - Step 3.* Target two or three areas for a marketing blitz.
 - Step 4.* Involve your "top guns."
 - Step 5.* Define the critical marketing support functions.
 - Step 6.* Employ a marketing specialist.
 - Step 7.* Identify the gaps requiring outside experts.

- Step 8.* Outline an explicit, year-round marketing process.
 - Step 9.* Commit to a marketing budget.
 - Step 10.* Develop personal marketing contracts.
 - Step 11.* Monitor, mentor, and coach your marketing specialist.
 - Step 12.* Track marketing results.
 - Step 13.* Create peer pressure and motivation.
 - Step 14.* Discuss status at every significant meeting.
 - Step 15.* Celebrate success.
-

Step 1. Define the Goal of Your Marketing Function

This is the right place to start. Simply put, you have to ask yourself *why* you want to invest in a marketing function.

- What do you expect marketing to contribute?
- How will it aid you in capitalizing on your industry and service line strengths?
- How can marketing help you to cross-market additional services to your existing clients?
- What role will it play in building your relationships with allies?
- What kind of leads do you want generate?

The key here is to write down your goals for marketing in precise terms. Doing this ensures that all the partners can understand and agree with goals whole heartily.

Quantify the results you expect.

- What incremental business do you desire?
- What specific role will marketing play in achieving this objective?
- How will your current success be enhanced or amplified by marketing?

Please note: This is a *must* area to start, or reevaluate your existing marketing program. Many firms simply have the wrong expectations of the marketing department in particular and the whole marketing function in general, or the marketing function was commenced under much different market or economic conditions. This step gives you a great opportunity to step back and reevaluate and agree upon priorities for your marketing function.

Step 1 is *not* doing a marketing plan. That is an entirely separate topic that will be embraced in Step 8, where we create the year-round marketing processes to help secure the goals set forth here in Step 1. We are talking about two distinct topics: a plan versus the piece of the organizational structure that affects and facilitates the marketing success of the firm. Once the goals for them are agreed upon, they can then create their various marketing plans of action.

Step 2. Secure the Commitment of Leaders

Now you need to get buy-in from the leaders who can either make or break the success of marketing within your firm because they are the ones who must get behind marketing for it to work best.

What do we mean by “buy in”?

First, they must agree to devote time—because this is the most precious resource for professionals. Look for a minimum of 10 hours a month from each leader to both manage and participate in marketing programs.

Next, they must agree to volunteer to apply marketing in their personal area of expertise. This is how you build true ownership in marketing’s success. By experimenting and generating results, your leaders can legitimize marketing’s value to others in your firm. Also, they’ll find a way to make marketing work—because it will be in their own personal interest to do so.

Then they must agree to “sell” marketing to others in the firm. For example, they must agree to coach or mentor a few other professionals in the firm. Or, they might present their approach to other partners so others can learn from their hard-won expertise.

Finally, they have to contribute to the management of marketing. As you’ll see, they must be responsible for developing and signing off on the marketing plan and the budget. Regularly, the leaders have to get together to see how marketing is progressing. They’ll have to examine what’s working and how it can be extended to other areas. Also, they’ll need to identify where marketing is falling short. What steps can you take to remedy these problems?

Step 3. Target Two or Three Areas for a Marketing Blitz

Often, firms spread their marketing investment too thinly. They try to make sure that every service area gets equal marketing treatment and that all the partners get the same piece of the marketing pie. This doesn’t work well.

Instead, focus on a few opportunities that will have the biggest impact. For example, invest marketing in the industries where you are already strongest. Concentrate on a service line that is currently “underpromoted” to your existing clients. Perhaps, pick one or two bank allies for a special cooperative marketing effort.

Using this focused approach, you build intensity and inspire hustle. Also, you are more likely to intently follow through on a small number of your best opportunities.

Be selective and don’t try to do too much marketing all at once.

Step 4. Involve Your “Top Guns”

It’s a sad fact, but many of your professionals lack a natural interest and enthusiasm for marketing. Although anybody *can* get better and more proficient at marketing, many aren’t interested in even trying.

What does this mean for your marketing function? Select the professionals with an interest in marketing and involve them extensively. Conversely, *don't* involve those who are cynical and disinterested in marketing, selling, and relationship management because these people will drag your marketing programs down to defeat.

I know that this is difficult for you. Many of you want to be fair. You want everybody to be treated equally. But what happens with this approach? You get what we call the “lowest common denominator” effect. This means that you try to get everybody to put in a minimal level of marketing. Also, you end up trying to “force feed” marketing attitudes and skills to professionals who aren't hungry for them. You'll find that getting unmotivated marketers to put forth the effort is like “pulling teeth.”

In other words, you'll end up dragging these professionals along on your marketing journey.

Instead, get your “top guns” motivated and actively marketing. Spend your time encouraging them to do more. You'll find that you won't have to drag them along—you just ask the top guns to work a little harder and smarter in area where they are already comfortable.

Step 5. Define the Critical Marketing Support Functions

Time out! Let's see what you've accomplished so far in this process.

First, you clearly defined your goals for marketing and seen how marketing will add to the personal success of your partners. Then, you enlisted the support of your firm's leaders to push marketing ahead; in effect, they are now champions of the marketing process. Next, you targeted a few areas for a marketing blitz, areas where you see the best possibility for tangible success. As a final step, you identified those “top guns” in your firm—the partners, managers and professional staff who have a solid interest in marketing and have demonstrated their strengths in marketing, sales, and relationship management.

Do you see what you've done? You've built internal marketing momentum and developed allies who will make marketing work for your firm. Think about it. You really haven't addressed the detailed marketing resources and programs that you'll employ. Instead, you've laid the internal groundwork necessary for productive marketing.

Next, let's take a look at the “mandatory” marketing support programs. These are the supportive activities that are fundamental to the success of your marketing function. Look at this list, carefully. It's critical that you address each of these areas in your marketing support function. The list contains questions to help you do a needs analysis for each category. To help you determine: Where are you doing a good job? Where do you need enhancements?

Client Quality Service Assurance Program

- What programs do you have in place to ensure client satisfaction?
- Do you meet with them to conduct a service review?
- Do you make it a habit to conduct satisfaction surveys?

- Do you have a special program for your “family jewels”—the top 20 percent of your clients that generate the bulk of your revenues?
- Do you analyze your clients additional service needs on a regular basis (at least on an annual basis)?

Speaker’s Bureau

- Do you have a list of the organizations that are most attractive to you?
- Do you have a credentials piece that promotes the topics you can cover?
- Is somebody calling up these organizations to see how you can secure an opportunity to speak?

Entertainment Budget for Clients and Allies

- Do you provide adequate and reasonable funding for taking clients and top referral sources out for lunch or other social events?
- Are the staff allowed to occasionally to take their client counterparts out for lunch?
- Do you “celebrate” the end of substantial engagements with your top clients?

Proposal and Sales Support

- Do you have a standard selling approach and design for your proposals?
- Do you pay attention to the graphic look and quality of your proposals?
- Are your slides for oral presentations of the highest quality?
- Are your proposals customized to the unique circumstances and needs of each prospective client?
- Are proposals written in a brief, benefit-laden manner?
- Do you use graphics to make your proposal more easily understood?
- Do you conduct postmortems on both winning and losing proposals, so you can continually improve your proposal process?
- Do you catalogue, modify, and reuse the best proposals for similar opportunities that you encounter?

Client Information System

- Do you have an easily accessible computerized database of your clients? Can you select by industry? By size of company? By nature of the service provided? By indicators of likely service requirements (for example, estate planning, computer consulting)?
- Can you link together related clients, such as a business owner’s individual tax return and his or her business tax work?

- Do you have the banker and attorney for your clients identified on your client records?
- Does your software allow for easy inquiries into the information?
- Is this database secure from unauthorized duplication?

Marketing Database

- Do you have a system for inputting all referral sources and prospective clients that you are actively pursuing?
- Is the information in this database periodically updated?

Sales Management System

- Can you easily evaluate the new clients you've brought in?
- Do you know the amount and type of new work being sold to existing clients?
- Are you able to tell what proposals are in the pipeline?
- Do you have a handle on the status and progress made in each of these situations?
- Do you routinely discuss the proposal opportunities in the pipeline to see where things stand?

Internal Marketing Program

- How do you publicize the marketing success stories within your firm?
- Do you conduct individual meetings with staff regarding their marketing goals, activities, and schedules?
- Are marketing results routinely discussed as a part of firmwide meetings?

Community, Social, or Business Association Program

- Are all of your staff members devoting some free time to become active in associations and groups that are important to your growth?

Business Development Skill Building Program

- How are you going to open everybody's mind to becoming active in business development?
- Who could benefit from intensive training in selling, networking, and public speaking?
- Which service specialties are most critical to your continuing growth? How are you building more specialists in these service specialties?
- What on-the-job training do you provide in business development (for example, taking younger professionals along on sales calls and networking events)?
- Do your top partners mentor and coach younger professionals?

Incentive or Recognition System

- How are you making “heroes” out of your professionals who put forth the effort to market your firm?
- Do you give out awards or monetary incentives?
- Do you make it a point to praise those who market in public settings?

Step 6. Employ a Marketing Specialist

Now it's time to take stock of your marketing talent.

If you have *no* marketing director or coordinator, we'll show you how to either hire one (either on a part-time or full-time basis) or shift an existing employee into this role. Also, consider this alternative: outsourcing. A few accounting firms are entering into long-term contracts with outside marketing specialists to act as their marketing directors.

If you already employ a marketing director or coordinator, compare his or her strengths and capabilities to the qualities and criteria that we'll now cover. Then decide how you can coach them toward higher performance, or how you can complement their skills with other outside resources to fill in the gaps.

Now, as we move forward, we won't be covering some of the standard hiring practices that make sense for every employee. For example, we won't discuss how to check references or how to indoctrinate new employees. We're sure that you already have some policies on these matters.

Instead, we'll show you the qualities that are desirable in a marketing director or coordinator. Again, his or her particular background and experience can range from a marketing or public relations expert to an experienced salesperson. If you shift an existing employee, choose anyone from an executive administrator to professional staff people—we've seen success with both.

Qualities

Despite his or her background or past discipline, each successful marketer we've encountered shared the following strengths. Use these attributes as a way to establish hiring criteria for a new marketing coordinator or as performance review criteria for your existing marketing person.

Here are the qualities that you should seek in a marketing person.

Is a Self-Starter. The best marketing directors and coordinators thrive at operating independently and self-managing their projects. In fact, partners can't invest a lot of time supervising their work; you should only review their progress, provide input, and offer the support they need to move their projects ahead.

Thrives as a Team Player. In many firms, the marketing person can become isolated from the others in the firm. Only a team player can surpass this barrier.

Takes a Proactive Stance. Also, marketing directors who wait for partners and staff to become interested in marketing will fail. Marketing specialists need to take the initiative. They must find ways to be helpful, actively propose new ideas, and bring marketing opportunities to the attention of the partnership.

Excels at Being Entrepreneurial. The most successful marketing specialists see the marketing function as their own business. In other words, they are always looking for ways to be more valuable. They're service oriented. And they are looking to expand their horizons within the firm. Moreover, they seem to take a personal stake in the new clients you land and the sales that you make.

Maintains a Professional Manner. Let's be honest. Most professional firms don't embrace odd ducks. So, your marketing director or coordinator should be generally similar to your professional staff or top administrators. This trait is also vital to establishing good personal chemistry with your professionals. The more similar you are to one another, the easier it is to build rapport.

Understands Your Business. If a marketing specialist cannot grasp what you do, why people buy your services, how you are unique among firms, and what it takes to sell your services, then how can that specialist hope to help you succeed?

Is Able to Empathize With Your Partners and Staff. In failing marketing functions, there tends to be a adversarial relationship between the marketing specialist and many of the professionals. Or, they end up pointing fingers and blaming one another. Instead, the marketing specialist should excel at seeing the world through the eyes of the partners and staff. Your specialist must strive to understand what pressures your professionals are facing and find ways around these limitations.

Fits Into Your Culture. In our work with over 500 different firms, one thing is clear. Each of them was different. All had something unique about the way that they operated and how to thrive within the culture. For your marketing person to thrive, he or she has to fit it. So, for example, if you have an informal, seat-of-the-pants management style, don't hire somebody who needs a highly structured environment akin to a large corporation. In other words, you cannot change your firm to fit your marketing function. Find one who can become one of the family.

Influences Without Authority. A successful marketing specialist must be adept at selling and marketing their ideas. In most firms, the marketing person cannot order your partners and professionals to market. Instead, marketing specialists must be able to persuade and promote. They'll have to get your professionals to see that marketing is in their own personal interest. And, they'll have to enlist volunteers to participate in marketing programs.

Is Comfortable as a Marketing Generalist. A marketing specialist has to be a jack of all trades. Most firms don't have the luxury to employ a specialist in market research, market planning, graphic design, marketing database administration, executive information management systems, copy writing, sales and account management, and media relations—in every discipline. Your marketing specialist must be willing to fulfill these broad responsibilities.

Strives to Grow Professionally. As we said in the previous section, your marketing specialists must strive to continually strengthen their marketing skills. They should be avid readers of the professional marketing journals and newsletters. And, they must be looking for seminars and courses to expand their personal skills.

Gains the Confidence of the Managing Partner. Frankly, the quality of the working relationship between the managing partner and the marketing specialist will either make or break your marketing function. The managing partner must support and sell the marketing programs to the partnership.

And, only the managing partner can apply the pressure and discipline necessary to motivate others to market the firm. Over time, it's critical that the managing partner comes to respect the judgment, ideas, and capabilities of the marketing specialist—or else marketing won't work.

Focuses on Sales and Qualified Leads. Your marketing specialist should have the same goals as your partners and you. All that matters is marketing that makes money. So, the best marketing specialists fixate on new business, new clients, and qualified leads as the only meaningful measures of marketing success. So, don't accept nebulous goals, such as increased name recognition or getting your name out in the community.

Is a Good Project Manager. A lot of marketing success comes from taking care of the details and following up. Also, most marketing functions require working on multiple projects simultaneously. Marketing specialists have to excel at planning, budgeting, scheduling, and administering. Otherwise, your marketing efforts will get out of control.

Acts Effectively as a Consultant. The best marketing specialists act as a respected consultant. In other words, they should treat the partners, managers, and staff within your firm as their clients. This means that they should seek to understand the unique marketing problems of each practice specialty and partners. Also, they should act as problem solvers by working with your professionals to agree on the mutual challenge and move ahead with the solution. This requires a consultative demeanor, which means your specialist should be a good diagnostician, skilled at questioning and able to gently challenge and counteract bad assumptions, limitations, and poor judgments.

Hiring Tips

Some of you—especially those who run more modest-sized practices—may be in the position to hire your first marketing director. The previous sections contained guidelines about the qualities that you're seeking. But what kind of person should you be seeking? What background is best?

This is a tough question to answer. First, a firm's size and marketing sophistication dictate the necessary fit. Also, the salary that you offer defines the type of person you can attract.

For example, to attract an experienced marketing specialist with five-plus years of experience, you'd have to offer a salary of \$50,000 to \$75,000, or more.

Here's what we suggest for a smaller firm: Most of the early challenges you'll face in setting up a marketing function are administrative, organizational, and internal. Frankly, you don't need a wealth of in-depth marketing know-how; you can always contract for this outside your firm. In fact, a highly experienced marketing veteran could be frustrated at the level of sophistication and budget that you have available. And this would cause problems for both of you.

We advise that you hire one of the following types of people:

- An administrator with strong clerical, PC, and organizational skills
- A professional staff person within your firm who wants to make a career change and shares the same strengths as the administrator above
- A marketing specialist with one or two years of experience

Now, you'll have to choose which of these three options makes the most sense for you. But our strong advice is to look inside your firm first. Why? It's less risky because you already know the person and his or her strengths. Second, he or she already knows your firm and how to operate successfully within the culture. Finally, it's easier to project his or her ability to grow with the added responsibility and challenges that you'll be asking them to shoulder in the years ahead.

Here's what we suggest for a medium-sized to large firm: Hire someone with experience who can take your firm to the next level. Chances are you have already started marketing some fairly sophisticated products and your top line can support the investment. Despite which path you choose, however, we strongly recommend that you take the following key steps:

Draft a Specific and Detailed Job Description. Clearly spell out the responsibilities and duties of the position. In particular, what do you want this person to accomplish in their first year? What major projects do you want to get off the ground immediately?

Consider a Part-Time Commitment. It's easier for all parties involved if you try out the working relationship first. There is another reason why an internal resource might be best for you: It will allow both of you the chance to see what's involved in making marketing a success. Make the trial period about three to six months; after that, both of you should be able to commit fully to going ahead with the working arrangement. Otherwise, others won't perceive the marketing function as a meaningful responsibility in your firm.

Have All Key People Interview the Candidate. You must get buy in from your key partners that this is the right person to entrust with your marketing success. So, even if you are shifting over an internal person, get your partners to interview and sign off on the hiring of this person.

Step 7. Identify the Gaps Requiring Outside Experts

Now that you have hired or retained your marketing specialist, identify how you can complement him or her with additional resources.

Realize that no marketing specialist can be an in-depth expert in all aspects of marketing. In many ways, you should see your marketing specialist as a “general contractor.” This means that they should find and manage the special expertise and talents of outside suppliers to get the marketing job done for you. Our experience shows that you always need to go beyond your marketing specialist for some expertise and perhaps manpower.

Here’s another way to look at it—a way that is increasingly popular in the industrial sector of American business today: You need to establish strategic alliances. Basically, you should look at your suppliers as strategic allies in building your practice. See them as instrumental to building and maintaining your image of quality service within the marketplace. A deficient or substandard resource in any of these areas below will most certainly drag you down.

Types of Outside Experts

What kind of outside help is vital? Here’s where you are likely to need help:

Printer. You’ll find that a top-notch, reliable printer will be invaluable for you. Conversely, a shoddy, unprofessional, and ineffective printer will be a source of constant headaches. Review the printer’s work carefully before you choose one. Ask for other professional firms as references.

Test your choice out on a small project before you give it all your work. Make sure that you can trust the printer’s promises of cost and delivery schedules before you make a serious commitment.

Graphic Designer. At some point, you’ll need a graphic designer to help lay out advertisements, brochures, and special flyers. Find one who is comfortable working with professional, serious pieces. Again, look at his or her portfolio of work. See if his or her style is right for your audience and firm.

Direct Mail House. You’re likely to be doing a lot of mailing. Now, if you have the capability to do the mailings in-house, you don’t need this resource. However, if your mailings are constantly delayed or put off because of limited time or resources, look to a direct mail house to remove the burden from you.

Professional Firm Marketing Expert. From time to time, you could use an experienced consultant to help you out with a special project, such as putting together a client satisfaction survey or facilitating a market planning effort. Also, consider hiring a consultant to act as a coach and sounding board for your marketing specialist.

Sales and Personal Marketing Training Firm. At some point, you’ll have to train your people on how to bring in business effectively. Otherwise, they’ll keep using their current approach and producing the same results. Look for a firm with an established track record

in training professionals. Don't hire a firm whose training is geared toward salespeople and based on selling tangible goods.

Public Speaking Training Company. We can't stress this enough. Public speaking is vitally important to the success of your professionals, both in serving your clients and promoting your firm. Training can help them put their best foot forward.

Public Relations Agency or Freelance Writers. Depending on your in-house capabilities, you may need a public relations firm for three key purposes. First, they can arrange speaking engagements for you. Second, they help you to write and place articles in publications. Third, they can help you to write copy for your brochures and newsletters.

One word of caution. Public relations firms are often a money pit. Don't sign a retainer relationship, at least initially. Always work on a project basis with clear responsibilities and deliverables.

Guidelines for Hiring Outside Experts

Outside experts can add a lot of value to your marketing efforts. Getting help from outside experts is not without some problems, however. There is no easy answer, and diligence on your part is needed.

Whether the resource is a public relations firm, part-time marketing specialist, advertising agency, printer, Web or graphic designer, freelance writers, or a business development training firm, keep in mind the following guidelines when employing one.

Assess Your Needs, First. Make sure you know what your needs, wants, and desires are regarding this function before you start searching for assistance. It helps if you brainstorm this with other partners before beginning the selection process; others may think of something you haven't. And if you follow their lead, there is less likelihood that they will be less likely to criticize your hiring decision later.

Look to Your Clients and Referral Sources. Sometimes we forget our own clients, their spouses, and referral sources when filling our needs for outside help.

Always consider those you are beholden to in the selection process—at least give them a shot. If you were to hire a public relations firm without considering your own client, and they found out about it, you might lose them.

If you decide not to select your own client, make sure they know why. There might be some miscommunication about their capabilities or your needs.

Of course you can't cannot engage an inferior resource who will harm your marketing efforts merely to avoid upsetting an existing client, and you might have more than one resource in your client and referral base. So be sure to document why you have hired one resource over another, to use if the issue comes up.

Ask for Referrals From Your Clients, Allies, and Associations. Search out resources who have dealt with people you know and trust previously to their satisfaction. Have them tell you the upsides and downsides of dealing with them.

Pay Attention to the Selling Process. Do these people talk more than they listen? Are they most interested in telling you how great they are or in finding out specifically how they can help you succeed? How many questions do they ask? Are they interested in getting your business or do you feel that they will be doing you a favor? Are they taking notes? How will they remember what you are telling them? Do you feel substance or fluff?

The courtship during a selection process can tell you a lot about the ensuing relationship.

Tell Them Exactly What You Will Expect From Them. Your resources should be helping you build your practice.

Set expectations for referrals from the outset. They can't refer business to you unless they know exactly what you are looking for.

As the relationship progresses, keep track of the business sent to you by them. If they aren't helping you build your practice, you may have to remind them or fire them.

Hire the Individual You Will Be Dealing With, Not the Firm. Don't be enamored by big names. You need to engage that person you will be interacting with.

Get them to be candid with you. Find out what they like and dislike about working for their company. What are their career plans? Are they planning on staying, or leaving soon? Why engage a firm where the person you will be dealing with is planning on leaving in the near future? Does the company have a lot of turnover? Are you comfortable with this particular person?

Check References. Look for experience with other professional service firms in similar circumstances.

Do they work with your direct competitors? Decide if confidentiality is an important issue.

Expect to hear good news from references. Nobody in their right mind gives you names of people who are dissatisfied with their work. Request that they not contact the reference before you call, so the reference isn't "prepped."

Ask references what they like and dislike. Whether they have worked with the same people you will. Was the project successful? Why? Would they use their services for certain again? Why might they not?

Get samples of what they've done for others in similar situations.

Be Very Clear About Fees. There must be no unpleasant surprises.

Be Direct and Distinct About What You Want Them to Accomplish. Tell the resources exactly what it will take to make you happy; they have to know what to shoot for as your goals, or they won't hit the target. Ask specifically what steps they will take to make sure the project is a success.

Have the resources describe similar situations and problems they encountered, how they handled them, and what they did specifically to make the project a success.

In order to make sure they are on your wavelength, have them restate to you in their own words what they think you want to accomplish.

Be Clear About Meeting Deadlines. Toss out examples of deadlines you will have to meet in your marketing projects. Can they work within your time frames? What happens if they're late?

Consider How Long They Have Been in Business. Older businesses and service providers may have more experience, but younger, less experienced resources may be more aggressive and anxious to please. Weigh these characteristics based on your goals.

Consider How Big They Are. Will you be the proverbial small fish in a large pond, or will you get the attention you need?

Meet the Owner or Top Management. People on the top drive the culture of an organization. Pay close attention to how they deal with you as the prospective new client or customer and how they deal with others on their staff.

Will you have access to them if problems arise?

Check If There Is an Escape Clause. If you have to sign a contract, make sure there is an escape clause for dissolving an unproductive or uncomfortable relationship.

Assign a Contact Person. In engaging a resource, there should be one person assigned as a liaison between them and your firm.

This allows them to know who they should be in contact with, clears lines of communication, and allows for fewer foul-ups.

Review Their Progress Regularly. Ask the resources to quantify results whenever possible. Set specific dates to review their progress—set them more frequently in the beginning, when the relationship is new and you are getting used to each other.

Step 8. Outline an Explicit, Year-Round Marketing Process

Don't develop an old-fashioned, formalized written strategic marketing plan. That's right. Sounds like pretty strange advice, doesn't it?

Well, here's why it makes sense. First, if you saw your competitor's written marketing plan, it would look exactly like yours. Frankly, everybody's marketing plan looks just about the same. Identical strategies emerge and often the tactics are similar. Second, they often overemphasize meaningless market research and demographics, or they are simply glorified marketing budgets.

Also, these are typically written by a marketing person and reviewed by the partners. Since the partners haven't invested too much time in their creation, they don't have a lot of ownership in following through on the plan. Said differently, "That may be a collection of good ideas, but they are not my good ideas."

Here's a final problem. Things change. What good is an annual, written plan when circumstances change all the time? Partners and managers leave, new opportunities arise out of the blue, and budgets grow or shrink.

Based on these factors, guess where most marketing plans end up. You got it! In a binder on a shelf or in a file folder that you've never touched. In either case, they gather dust.

What's a better way to handle it? Through a participative, ongoing and "living" market planning process. We call it entrepreneurial planning, a process that continually reconfirms the strategies, tactics, and highest priority action steps. It's a process that requires the commitment and judgment of your key partners, so it's their plan.

This is a critical step and one we discussed at length in Chapter 7. Review that chapter again if necessary. Right now, let's move on to the next step.

Step 9. Commit to a Marketing Budget

Now it's time to put your money where your mouth is. How much money are you willing to invest on the future growth and prosperity of your firm?

Well, there are some informal standards available from the Association of Accounting Marketing and other sources. Basically, most firms invest between 2 percent and 5 percent of their revenue in marketing. This includes out-of-pocket expenses such as entertainment expenses. So, look to invest at least this much. Allocate at the beginning of your normal budgeting cycle.

Now, how do you create the marketing budget? It comes directly out of the marketing plan. Look at your marketing plan as a series of projects. Then, budget each one individually and roll it up. It's just like a client project: define the marketing deliverables and approve the cost needed to produce the deliverables.

Here are some other tips on creating the marketing budget:

- *Allocate the full budget up front.* The budget shows how serious you are about growing your firm. So, decide the percentage allocation and stick with it.
- *Use a three- to six-month horizon for most detailed items.* Even though you allocate the full amount, don't budget it. Use a real-time budget that clearly defines the steps and costs associated with getting projects done.
- *Project only the major marketing projects.* There are some yearly expenditures, such as salary, that you can budget. Also, define the costs associated with an absolute high priority program that will occur beyond the three- to six-month horizon. For example, you may have a partner's marketing retreat or client golf outing that you know is a priority. So, factor these activities into your plan as well.
- *Keep "hot" opportunity funds available.* Now, hold the rest of your budget in reserve. But, don't spend it on nonmarketing activities. Instead, incrementally invest in the programs that are working for you. Or, direct the money into a new idea or opportunity that has recently come up.

What's the benefit of this approach to creating your marketing budget? First, it's a demand-driven budget because you link the investment to the direct marketing strategy

that you've identified into the plan. Second, there's accountability because you'll be able to relate the investment directly to the payback on a specific marketing activity.

The final benefit is this. You are planning and budgeting like an entrepreneur. You recognize that opportunities and priorities shift, and you want to invest in the highest and best uses of marketing. And there's an important by-product.

This budgeting process also solidifies the ownership your partners have in the marketing process. Because they will be required to make investment judgments, they'll have a sincere interest in making the marketing plans work.

Step 10. Develop Personal Marketing Contracts

Let's look back briefly. Now, you've reviewed or hired your marketing specialist, and they know what's expected of them. Also, your key partners are intimately involved in developing the marketing strategy and tactics, as well as approving the investments necessary to achieve these objectives. So, what's next?

It's time to make sure that everybody is doing their best to grow the firm. And the way you do this is through the personal contract of action. For lack of a better term, this is a marketing to-do list. And, it's a planning tool to make sure that the well-intentioned professionals are consistently and intensively marketing your practice.

There is an example of a personal marketing contract in Exhibit 8-1, "Sample Personal Marketing Contract of Action." Note that ours concentrates on results; you may want to create your own.

Now, how you implement the personal contract is up to you. Some firms require their professionals to send it in to the partner in charge of their practice area or to the managing partner. Others review the contracts in their staff meetings—so they can tell who is committed to following through on marketing and spotlight those who are shirking their duty. Still other firms review their personal contracts using a one-on-one coaching style.

Again you decide on the proper approach for your unique circumstances. But, it's imperative that you build personal accountability into the marketing process. And the personal contract of action is the best tool we've found to accomplish this goal.

Step 11. Monitor, Mentor, and Coach Your Marketing Specialist

There's no doubt about it. Managing a marketing specialist is a challenge. Throughout the profession, there's a lot of frustration with this aspect. Marketing specialists don't know what's expected of them. How do they know that they are doing a good job?

Also, managing partners tend to manage by the numbers. You can pretty much tell how well professionals are doing their jobs by statistics. What is their chargeability? Are their projects done on time and budget? Are their clients complaining or are they happy? Do they do a good job on proposals? Are they cross-marketing? Do they bring in new clients to the firm? Are they active in industry associations or business groups?

The performance of your marketing director, however, is not as easily quantifiable. So, these numbers-oriented management systems are inadequate.

Well, here's the solution. Recognize that marketing is a professional discipline, just like accounting, tax, and consulting. All that is required is to use some tried-and-true management practices, as illustrated in the following paragraphs. The steps outlined may appear to be a lot of work, but, it's a commitment that you need to make for everyone's benefit.

Management by Objectives (MBO) Plan

At the beginning of the year, ask your marketing specialist to summarize the key accomplishments that they are striving for. Make sure that they are specific and measurable. Also, ensure that the achievement of the objectives are under the control of your specialist. Review the objectives with your coordinator and sign off on the MBO plan. Keep it in their personal file for use throughout the year. A sample MBO plan is included in Exhibit 8-2, "Sample Management by Objectives Plan for a Marketing Director."

Personal Performance Contract

This is similar to the personal contract of action that we discussed earlier. Basically, it describes the key goals that the marketing specialist is committed to accomplishing during the quarter. It also strives to provide tangible indicators of performance. In essence, it is a contract in the truest sense of the word—a performance agreement. A sample contract of action is included in Exhibit 8-3, "Sample Quarterly Performance Contract for a Marketing Director."

Performance Review

On a quarterly basis, get together with your marketing specialist. Engage in a frank discussion of his or her performance. What are they doing well? How could their performance be enhanced? What frustrations are they encountering? What help do they need from you (and others) to progress further? Also, have your other partners review the marketing specialist. Build a consensus on the quality of performance. Do this on a quarterly basis in conjunction with the personal performance contract review.

Work Program

Have your marketing specialist create and maintain work programs for the major projects. Are the projects coming in on time? On budget? If there are variances, isolate the cause and explore ways to get the projects back on track. We'd suggest that you review these work programs on a monthly basis. A sample marketing implementation work program is included in Exhibit 8-4, "Sample Work Program."

Progress Report

On monthly basis, ask your marketing specialist to create a one-page summary of their progress and key next steps. Carve out some time to quickly review this document. (See also Exhibit 8-5, "Sample Monthly Progress Report.")

Step 12. Track Marketing Results

You can't tell if you are winning or losing unless you know the score. So, let's see how you're doing. See how well you can answer the following questions. What results are you producing this month? Do you know how much new business you have already closed? Do you know the amount of outstanding proposals in the pipeline? What percentage of these are likely to go in your favor? How many leads are your marketing campaigns generating? What is the cost per lead? What is the cost per sale?

Don't worry if you can't answer these questions right now. We'll give you some ideas on how to answer these questions with a reporting system shortly. Instead, concentrate on the *value* of the information. Wouldn't your life be easier if you were fully up to speed on all these factors? What decisions and actions could you take if you were armed with these "early warning systems"?

That's why we recommend a process called *cash reporting*. As the title implies, you want to track those factors that will either make you—or cost you—*cash*. For, after all, isn't this the true purpose of business development?

Now, we don't want to go into great statistical detail here. So, we'll just cover the basic marketing reports you'll need. Then, you can modify these samples to fit your personal circumstances. All we want to do is give you some ideas that have worked for others. You might want to build in profitability or other factors. Right now, we just want to keep it simple. Outlined below are the five basic cash monthly marketing reports that we recommend. Exhibit 8-6, "Sample Formats for Results Reporting," shows ways to present the information gathered in these reports.

Report 1. Year-to-Date Revenue and Hours

You probably already report on these statistics, but we'll mention this report anyway, for the sake of completeness. Basically, you want to track your year-to-date fee revenue and chargeable hours both against last year's level, against your goals or budget for this year, and benchmark it against some standards. Break it down by type of work.

Report 2. New Clients and Lost Clients

The next vital sign is the number, type, and size of new clients. Identify the type of work, whether it's recurring or nonrecurring, the professional closing the business, and others playing a role in the sale, as well as the source of the lead.

Also, report the bad news. Identify the clients that leave, as well as their reasons for departure.

Report 3. New Work for Existing Clients

Keep track of the additional project work that you are doing for your existing clients. What is the type of work? What are the fees? When does the project begin and end? Who sold the engagement? Who aided in the sale?

Report 4. Proposals in the Pipeline

In many ways, this is the most important report of all. Proposal activity is the best barometer of how hard you are hustling. How many proposals are outstanding? What is the fee volume? What is the aging schedule of these proposal opportunities? Also, evaluate the quality of the proposals. What is your projected hit rate?

Report 5. Leads Generated

Now, as best you can, keep track of leads that are generated by each major marketing effort. Again, this is a good leading indicator of your future success. It also gives you a feel for your return on investment from the various activities.

Now, take a look back at the questions that we asked at the beginning of Step 12. Could you answer these same questions with the reports prescribed above?

That's why we ask you to consider the cash reports. Again, unless you keep score, you won't know if you are winning or losing.

Step 13. Create Peer Pressure and Motivation

To gain momentum, you have to instill a marketing attitude with *all* professionals. We say *everyone* because marketing and client service is everyone's responsibility.

Use your best tool at your advantage—peer pressure. There is a natural sense of comparison and competition among your professionals. So, employ it as a marketing motivator.

What do we mean by peer pressure? All we mean is to reward those who *put the personal effort into marketing*. Make it clear the marketing is an essential part of their job, and those who participate will get a greater share of rewards.

So, how do you motivate your partners and staff to market more? Here's one way to think about it. Reward those with a marketing mindset and hustle through the 4 "Ps."

Reward 1. Pay

Performance and effort should be directly reflected in paychecks. First, pay an incentive bonus for bringing in new clients (that is, 10 percent of first years' fee). Next, make achievement of marketing goals an explicit factor in promotions and pay raises.

Reward 2. Praise

Sometimes the simple touch means the most. In staff meetings, openly praise the staff who exhibit a commitment to marketing. Circulate a congratulatory memo when somebody goes the extra mile for marketing purposes, or when they land that big new client. In others, remember to say "thanks" in a tangible and visible way.

Reward 3. Publicity

Let's face it. Everybody has an ego. So, find ways to make heroes out of those who market. Put up posters that list out the new clients along with *all* of those who helped to land

the business. Promote your success stories through an internal newsletter. Highlight all of the people who are making speeches and taking leadership positions in business associations. Sponsor monthly marketing lunches or breakfasts and honor the “marketer of the month” with a gift certificate of additional day of paid vacation.

In other words, develop an *internal marketing plan*. It’s purpose will be to keep marketing on everyone’s mind. And, you’ll publicize those actively go out and market. Over time, the others will get the message that marketing is everyone’s responsibility.

Reward 4. Privilege

Too often, professionals treat marketing as a chore or a burden. They participate grudgingly. Well, here’s how to change that mindset. Make the participation in marketing programs and training a *privilege*. Tell professionals that they have to qualify in order to take on a marketing responsibility. Involve those with a demonstrated commitment to marketing.

Step 14. Discuss Status at Every Significant Meeting

The next way to build internal marketing momentum is to talk it up. Make it an important part of your agenda at *any significant meeting*, whether it is a partner meeting or staff briefing. Even when you get together for your client service team meetings, make sure that you *continually explore additional service needs*.

Step 15. Celebrate Success

Here’s a final idea for you. At least once a year, most firms have some kind of retreat or annual meeting. Our suggestion is that you *always devote a large portion* of this meeting to marketing. Treat it as a State of the Union address for marketing. Celebrate your important marketing successes over the past year. Sell everyone on the fact that marketing will be an enduring high priority for each and every person in the firm. Invite guest speakers who can build your professionals’ marketing confidence and skills. It’s one thing to motivate people to a certain action. *They still need to learn the skills, which are not innate for most professionals, to execute the actions*. Do some action planning exercises to reaffirm goals and personal plans of attack.



CONCLUSION

Let’s wrap up. Our goal in this chapter was to give you a blueprint for building and managing a quality marketing function.

Like most total quality improvements, the success of a quality marketing function within your firm is dependent on a system of interrelated processes. This chapter summarized the 15 critical marketing processes that will either make or break your marketing success. Any weak link in this chain will limit your success.

Hopefully, you've grabbed onto a few key concepts.

First, marketing requires the right internal climate in order to blossom. This means that you have to install several key management disciplines, like planning, budgeting, reporting, controlling, and taking corrective action. Next, motivating your professionals towards consistent, productive marketing action is an ongoing struggle. But, in the final analysis, the enthusiasm, determination, eagerness, and hustle of your people will win the business development war.

Simply put, success in growing your practice is more of a management and leadership challenge, not a marketing challenge. You can always learn how to correctly implement marketing programs. But if your people are not following through, then you are doomed to poor results.

The bad news is that management and leadership is a tough job, especially in a professional partnership environment. But, the good news is that you now have a blueprint of the critical processes you need to address. In essence, we've provided you with a quality control, systems analysis of what it takes to make marketing work for you. Now you have a huge leg up on those who haven't taken the time to grasp these principles. You can start making progress, while they'll be defeated by the same old barriers year after year.

EXHIBIT 8-1: SAMPLE PERSONAL MARKETING CONTRACT OF ACTION

NAME _____

DATE _____

Personal Marketing Contract of Action

Wins

<u>Client Name</u>	<u>What Was Sold</u>	<u>Projected Fees</u>
_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____

Comments: _____

Losses

<u>Prospective Client</u>	<u>What Was to Be Sold</u>	<u>Projected Fees</u>
_____	_____	\$ _____
What Happened? _____	_____	\$ _____
What Happened? _____	_____	\$ _____
What Happened? _____	_____	\$ _____

(continued)

EXHIBIT 8-1: SAMPLE PERSONAL MARKETING CONTRACT OF ACTION (CONT'D)

In Process

<u>Prospective Client</u>	<u>What Is to Be Sold</u>	<u>Projected Fees</u>
_____	_____	\$ _____
Current Status/Change Since Last Report _____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____
Current Status/Change Since Last Report _____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____
Current Status/Change Since Last Report _____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____
Current Status/Change Since Last Report _____	_____	\$ _____

New Referrals/Leads

<u>Prospective Client</u>	<u>What Is to Be Sold</u>	<u>From Whom?</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Referrals Given Out

<u>Prospective Client</u>	<u>What Is to Be Sold</u>	<u>To Whom?</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

EXHIBIT 8-2: SAMPLE MANAGEMENT BY OBJECTIVES PLAN FOR A MARKETING DIRECTOR

OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
1. Develop and implement a marketing action plan for our two strongest specialty areas: financial services and IT consulting.	40%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Plan completed and approved by partner in charge. ✓ Bring in at least 10 new clients through these campaigns. ✓ Generate \$100,000 in new business to our existing client base.
2. Improve our marketing database capability.	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evaluate and select a database system by June. ✓ Have all professional staff using the system by year end.
3. Conduct training to improve the sales skills of our partners.	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Training gets on average evaluations of greater than 4.0 (very good). ✓ Perceivable increase in use of the techniques in the sales and proposal process.
4. Improve my ability to produce marketing materials with desktop publishing.	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Complete desktop publishing course. ✓ Improve the look of our newsletter using desktop publishing.

Submitted by: _____

Date: _____

Reviewed by: _____

Date: _____

EXHIBIT 8-3: SAMPLE QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE CONTRACT FOR A MARKETING DIRECTOR

OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
1. Develop and implement a marketing action plan for our two strongest specialty areas: financial services and IT consulting.	40%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Complete two planning workshops for each service line. ✓ Get team leader to sign off on the marketing strategy.
2. Improve our marketing database capability.	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Call five marketing directors to see what software they have. ✓ Research which software requirements are most critical to our people.
3. Conduct training to improve the sales skills of our partners.	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview three marketing directors to see who they recommend for training. ✓ Call up three training organizations and conduct telephone interviews.
4. Improve my ability to produce marketing materials with desktop publishing.	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sign up for the desktop publishing course.

Submitted by: _____

Date: _____

Reviewed by: _____

Date: _____

EXHIBIT 8-4: SAMPLE WORK PROGRAM

**IMA Manufacturing Consulting Practice
Marketing Implementation Work Plan**

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	TARGET DATE
A. Project definition and plan		
1. Agree on the conceptual design of the program		
a) Define IMA goals (# jobs, # leads)	LA/JR	DONE
b) Structure mix of marketing activities	DRAG/SAGE	DONE
c) Approve conceptual approach	LA/JR	2/13
2. Develop detailed implementation plan		
a) Define roles, responsibilities and timing	Joint	2/13
b) Set budget for marketing tools	DRAG	2/17
c) Approve work plan and budget	LA/JR	2/22
B. Design theme and premium for the direct mail piece		
1. Develop the list of targets		
a) Order the data file from Ill. Manuf. Assoc.	LA	
b) Scan list to identify clients	LA	
c) Put this list into lead tracking system	LA	
2. Test positioning concepts for direct mail piece		
a) Identify premium options	DRAG	DONE
b) Develop positioning concept boards	DRAG	2/24
c) **Define alternative approaches for testing the concepts	DRAG/MC	2/24
1) Focus group (formal; clients and nonclients)		
2) Focus group (informal; clients; friends)		
3) Review at client sites		
d) Review prototypes and pilot test options	Joint	
e) Conduct the pilot test	Joint	2/24
C. Develop and distribute the direct mail piece		
1. Develop pamphlet		
a) Produce first draft based on concept testing	DRAG	
b) Review first draft and comment	AMG/SAGE	
c) Finalize brochure	DRAG	
d) Approve brochure	LA	
2. Develop personalized cover letter		
a) Draft client version and nonclient version	DRAG	2/24
b) Review and comment	AMG/SAGE	
c) Finalize letter	DRAG	
d) Review and approve	LA	
3. Select options for responding to mailing		
a) Define options	LA/MC	
b) Review and approve	LA	

**Optional tasks

(continued)

EXHIBIT 8-4: SAMPLE WORK PROGRAM (CONT'D)

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	TARGET DATE
4. Finalize box and premium		
a) Produce art boards for box	DRAG	
b) Review and approve box	LA	
c) Approve premium		
d) Print box and bounce back card	DRAG	
e) Order premiums	DRAG	
5. Arrange for distribution		
a) Select vendors for assembling and mailing	DRAG	
b) Fulfillment (where to send card, how to register for seminar by phone, follow-up with requests for info, etc.)	DRAG/SAGE	
c) Send out the direct mail piece	DRAG	3/31
D. Arrange for telemarketing follow-up mailing		
1. Review telemarketing vendors and obtain bids		
a) Identify possible vendors	DRAG/SAGE	
b) Review qualifications and costs	LA	
2. Conduct telemarketing (if needed)		
a) Assess early response		
b) If needed, conduct telemarketing	Joint	
1) Select vendor	LA	
2) Identify targets	LA/SAGE	
3) Write script for telemarketers	DRAG	
4) Meet with vendor and review script and staffing required	LA/SAGE	
5) Make calls	Vendor	
6) Do quality control on calls	LA	
E. Agree with Garwood on arrangements for the seminar		
1. Conduct the seminar strategy session	LA/MC	
a) Speaking topics on seminar approach	LA	
b) Invitation strategy	LA	
c) Following up on the seminar	LA	
2. Schedule date		
3. Prepare for conducting the seminar	LA	
a) Secure facilities and make arrangements	DRAG	
b) Write speech materials	DRAG	
c) Create PowerPoint presentation	DRAG	
d) Train and coach speakers	DRAG/SAGE	
e) Ask clients to appear on panel	AMG	
f) Ask clients to refer other CEOs	AMG	
g) Arrange for videotaping of the session	DRAG	
h) Define follow-up and selling strategy	AMG/SAGE	
1) Ongoing forums		
2) Client contact strategy		
3) Nonclient strategy		
i) Conduct sales training for IMA personnel	Allan Boress	
j) Arrange for publicity of seminar	DRAG	

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	TARGET DATE
F. Design and conduct client forums	SAGE	
1. Define objectives and approach	Joint	
a) Consider Garwood's participation	AMG	
b) Define role for other AMG personnel	AMG	
c) Develop implementation plan	DRAG/SAGE	
2. Review with managing partner	AMG	
3. If approved, prepare for conduct		
a) Develop invitation piece	DRAG	
b) Distribute and follow-up with phone calls	AMG	
c) Conduct facilitator training	DRAG	
4. Conduct the roundtable	AMG	
5. Debrief participants on value, structure & conduct	MC	


EXHIBIT 8-5: SAMPLE MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT

PROGRESS THIS MONTH	KEY NEXT STEPS	PROBLEMS/SUPPORT NEEDED
A. Computer consulting marketing plan 1. Conducted planning workshop with key partners and managers 2. Developed written project report work plan	1. Develop the budget 2. Explore and define the best direct mail approach	✓ None
B. Benefit plans marketing 1. Agreed to research the needs of our existing clients for this service 2. Collecting promotional material from competing firms, attorneys and insurance agencies	1. Developing an interview guide for client needs analysis	✓ Get okay on which clients to talk with from managing partner

EXHIBIT 8-6: SAMPLE FORMATS FOR RESULTS REPORTING

Business Development Results Reporting
 January, 20XX

	<i>Client or Prospect Name</i>	<i>Nature of the Service</i>	<i>Source of Client</i>	<i>Who Contributed to Selling the Work</i>	<i>Estimated Fees</i>	<i>Hours</i>
1. Expanded Services to Our Existing Clients						
2. New Clients						
3. Lost Clients						
4. Proposals Pending						
5. Qualified Leads						
				<i>Total Fees</i>	<i>Total Hours</i>	
Expanded Service to Our Clients						
New Clients						
Results Generated						
Proposals Outstanding						



**HOW TO CREATE
BROCHURES
THAT SELL**

chapter 9

It's easy to create a brochure that is totally *ineffective*. Poorly conceived brochures have absolutely no impact on the prospect. Consequently, they have no worth in the marketing and selling process.

Here's the classic general firm brochure: some pictures with a bunch of professional-looking people grinning uncomfortably into the camera. Most times, there are a few pictures of their office, just to let clients know that they actually have one, or to show off how pretty it is.

In addition to the pictures, there are lots of words crammed onto the pages that drone on and on about the quality of the firm and its commitment to responsive, personal service. And, usually, there is a menu of all the different potential services that you will try to sell to the prospective client.

Does this sound familiar? You've probably seen a few that look like this yourself.

Here's the problem: These kinds of brochures were not written to sell and influence prospects. They were written to appeal to the sensibilities of the partners within the firm and, perhaps, to impress their in-laws and immediate families.

That's why most firms' brochures read like eulogies. They end up being wordy, expensive and self-absorbed testaments to the firms' glory and professionalism.

It doesn't have to be this way. If it's designed and produced properly, a brochure can be an effective complement to your marketing and selling efforts. It can persuasively articulate your understanding of and empathy for the client's problems, in written form. Also, a brochure can reinforce your perception as a quality firm, if it is classy and functional.

Here's something to keep in mind.

Marketing Truth. Your prospects don't care all that much about you!

They care about their problems and how you can help them. And this is what your brochures should summarize briefly. Said differently, remember that your prospect is basically asking one question throughout the selling process: What's in it for me if I do business with your firm?

A brochure that simply answers this question in a valid, benefit-laden, brief, understandable, and powerful way adds to your chance of getting the prospect as a client, *but it won't land the client for you—that's up to you.*

The purpose of this chapter is to advise you on the best approach for creating a brochure (or revamping your current one) that will make a difference in marketing your services. In the process, we'll show you how to avoid some of the common pitfalls that trap your fellow professionals.



THE ROLE OF BROCHURES IN THE MARKETING PROCESS

The first lesson to learn is that nobody buys anything based on a brochure. Instead, sometimes a brochure can simply fuel interest on a prospect's part. But, most often, a brochure is meant to complement a personal impression that you make.

In other words, the role of a brochure is simply a supportive one—it amplifies the impact of a personal contact. It gives you something to “leave behind” after a sales call or speaking engagement. Or, it can be something that you mail to a contact or prospect after you’ve been referred to them or met with them.

As we go on in this chapter, keep in mind the following:

Marketing Truth. No marketing tool can substitute for personal marketing effort and skill.

But, designed and produced properly, brochures can be an effective weapon in your business development arsenal.



THE TYPES OF BROCHURES

Most firms need two basic kinds of brochures.

The first is a *general image brochure*. This means a marketing piece that describes the firm, its principle partners and professionals, its uniqueness in terms of service specialty or industry concentration, and a brief overview of your service portfolio.

The second kind of brochure focuses on an *individual industry concentration* or *specialty service* that you offer. These brochures describe specifics:

- What kind of “pain” do you see in this area?
- What kind of credible, tangible solution are you offering?
- What results can the client or prospect expect?
- Who are some clients that you’ve worked with in this area?
- Do you have any case studies?

Generally, these brochures should be small (tri-fold, for example). Also, since they can be used for a variety of marketing purposes, they should also include a means for response—typically a tear-off portion that can be mailed to you, postage-free.

In our opinion, the focused brochure is far more valuable from a selling and marketing standpoint because it speaks more directly and powerfully to the prospect. But it’s still important to have a general descriptive brochure that can “wrap around” any materials that you customize for a unique marketing or selling event. So, it’s likely that you’ll need both kinds.



THE FLEXIBLE FORMAT

Your initial step in creating the brochures is to define their *form and functionality*. Start by identifying the type of brochures that you require. Look at your top industry and service line specialties. Determine which of these you promote most frequently. Which of these are

most important to your future growth? In other words, which services warrant an independent brochure?

Next, think about your marketing programs for these service lines. Will you be making speeches? Doing some mailings? Do you need a supply to hand out to referral sources? Based on these answers, how many brochures will you need over the next year or two? 100? 500? 1,000? 5,000?

It's okay if you don't know the precise answers to these questions. The point is that you need to decide how you are going to use your family of brochures before you get too far into the design process.

Your best bet is to use a flexible format so you don't paint yourself into an expensive corner. Flexibility should allow for the maximum options and minimal obsolescence.

Here's what we mean by a flexible format. Recognize that you are actually planning a "family" of brochures and complementary marketing pieces—even if you are only starting out with a general firm brochure. This means that *all* of your marketing materials must have a consistent look and feel. *Consistency* means that the logo and color schemes should match across all your materials. The paper should be of a similar style and texture. Finally, the typeface should also be generally consistent across all your brochures.

Now, let's address form. You want the maximum flexibility so that you can customize the promotional message to suit an individual purpose. For example, you may want to send a general brochure with a specialty service line brochure, as well as a personal résumé or two that reflects your experience in this service area. Also, you want to ensure that you can either mail it out or leave it behind on a sales call.

The last consideration is to minimize obsolescence so that out-of-date material can be easily discarded and new material inserted. Also, you want to avoid printing something in a predominant place that will date your material, such as the names of professionals who might leave your firm. Although it is vital that a prospective client knows whom to call if there is an immediate interest in the service so described in your brochure, this can be accomplished via the insertion of a business card in the brochure.

So, what do we recommend? We suggest that you design for three basic tools:

- Make your general brochure an 8½" x 11" piece with a "folder" flap that allows you to insert additional marketing pieces. Depending on the circumstance, your inserts may be additional brochures, résumés, lists of clients, or a letter. Put a slot in the folder flap where you can put your personal business card. This gives the prospect a specific name and direct-dial number to follow through with if they are compelled to action.
- Create focused industry and service line brochures that are pocket-sized. This way you can either incorporate the brochures into the folder flap or mail them out independently in a standard number 10 business envelope with a

letter attached. Remember to include a “bounce back” card—a tear-off section that an interested prospect can mail back to you.

- Get a supply of blank “masthead” paper that matches the graphic look and feel of both brochures. Masthead is simply paper with some artwork on the top, like the first page of a newsletter, for example. In this case, it may be your logo along with some color lines across the top that match the color scheme of your brochures. Masthead allows you to create one-of-a-kind or “short run” materials that you can print from your laser printer—materials that look exactly like “printed” promotional material.

We’ve seen this approach work best for every sort of professional firm, from the largest “Big Firm” down to the single practitioner. Recognize that this approach works best from both a *marketing value* and *cost-effectiveness* point of view.

The marketing value comes from the quality image portrayed by consistency. Also, it allows you to customize a “promotional message” to the various specific uses you’ll need to accommodate.

The cost-effectiveness comes from unlimited uses, as well. If you plan correctly, you’ll have to design and write a general brochure only once. As you add or change people, you can accommodate these changes in the “reusable” portions by inserting new résumés into the folder flap. New specialty areas that you add can be promoted through the smaller, less expensive, pocket-sized brochures. Any unforeseen or short-term requirements can be handled using the masthead. That’s the value of a consistent and integrated flexible format.



THE OUTSIDE EXPERTS

Our strong advice is that you get outside help to both design and write your brochures. Why? For the same reason that it makes sense for your clients to hire you to do their service work. Experts know what they are doing; amateurs make costly mistakes and typically create lousy results.

First of all, much of the impact of a brochure comes from the way it looks—the graphic appeal, amount of white space, pictures, and artwork. Let’s face it: CPAs and consultants are not the world’s most artistic types. Also, self-developed brochures tend to be extremely wordy because professionals put too much value on words and not enough on graphics.

Second, professional service providers aren’t trained in the skill of marketing copywriting. So, outside counsel is invaluable, simply because a good marketing-oriented copywriter will look at developing the brochure from the client and prospect point of view. That’s precisely the perspective that is important to you. Moreover, a skilled copywriter can translate technical jargon into “plain English” so your prospects can easily grasp the selling points you are trying to make.

The third reason for seeking outside counsel is that you are *too close* to the product—which is you! Promoting yourself in writing causes you to go on and on because you are sold on yourself and the value that you deliver. Instead, the process of working with a third party will be helpful and educational because it gives you an opportunity to clarify your thinking.

The final reason that you should get some help is that writing your own brochure is an *enormous* waste of your time. What would be a better use of your time? Spending time with your clients, schmoozing with referral sources—or sitting behind a computer struggling to write headlines?

On the face of it, many of our peers think that they can save themselves money by writing the brochure. But, again, we're talking about an investment in future business, not just another office expense.

Remember the critical role that a brochure plays in building your practice by adding persuasive impact and depth to your personal selling message. Do you want to trust this job to an amateur? Then don't do it yourself.



AN EIGHT-STEP PROCESS TO CREATE BROCHURES THAT SELL

Let's be clear. Your role is not to be the expert graphic artist or writer. But, you are the personal marketer and salesperson. It's up to you to provide these experts with the ammunition they need to produce a quality brochure for you. Your experts can only "dress up" your selling message; they can't define it.

The biggest mistake we see firms make in creating a firm brochure is that they rush into the writing and production process without a carefully designed selling proposition. So, be smart. Slow down at the front end of the process. Do some planning and investigation — so you avoid wasting time and money on production.

Here are the steps we recommend when you are designing any brochure. We will discuss the steps in order.

-
- Step 1.* Gather samples of brochures you like and dislike.
 - Step 2.* Assign one person responsibility.
 - Step 3.* Define your audience.
 - Step 4.* Define your unique selling proposition.
 - Step 5.* Test your message.
 - Step 6.* Ask your clients to be in the brochure.
 - Step 7.* Summarize your findings for outside experts.
 - Step 8.* Monitor quality of work from outside experts.
-

Step 1. Gather Samples of Brochures You Like and Dislike

The best way to start is to go out and get a variety of brochures. Because you want to be distinguishable from your competitors, start with the brochures from other firms. Better yet, find brochures that you like from other fields. Survey your contact and referral networks and ask them to send some samples to you. Start to interview a handful of graphic designers who specialize in business-to-business marketing. Pick out the ones that catch your eye for some reason, whether it's the form, functionality, paper texture, color, or tone of the writing.

Step 2. Assign One Person Responsibility

Marketing Truth. Don't let a committee draft the brochure.

Getting consensus feedback each step of the way is an enormous waste of time. Also, you'll end up with a convoluted, obtuse, and watered-down final product. Gather some input informally, but, give one person—ideally your best business generator—the sole responsibility.

Step 3. Define Your Audience

This is the most critical step in the planning process.

Remember, the goal of the brochure is to market and sell, not to educate prospects on your capabilities. You are striving to impact a *real person* and get him or her to take the next step to becoming your client. Consider the following:

- Who is going to receive the brochure?
- What problems and pains do they face?
- What do they need to know in order to hire you?

Empathize with your targeted prospect. What kind of questions do they ask you about this service? Aren't these questions less technical and complicated than you'd expect? Remember that they aren't interested in the *detailed* process you'll use to produce the results.

In a nutshell, determine what can you do for them and lay out the tangible ways that they'll benefit.

Step 4. Define Your Unique Selling Proposition

Now that you've defined the audience, you've come to the tough part of the job. What is your unique selling proposition? Check your BVDs—that is, find specific, client-centered reasons to describe why you are *better*, *valuable*, and *different* from the comparable options that the prospect or client has open to them. Is it:

- Your experience?
- An unusual expertise?

- Your network of clients or prospects?
- Your people? What is it *specifically* about your people that make them *better, valuable, or different*?

Give every consideration to:

- How you can solve problems
- Make their life easier
- Reduce their risk
- Avoid disasters
- Do the job better

Strive to make this message as brief and compelling as possible. *Give examples* to add spice and validity.

Now, we know that this is a tough job, but it's central to the success of your brochure. And, really, you're the only one who can gather this information.

Don't rely on "motherhood and apple pie" statements. They tend to make you sound generic. Instead, find a way to communicate the value of your uniqueness.

Step 5. Test Your Message

Now, here's the acid test. Review the notes and phrases that you've jotted down in the previous two steps. Create a mental picture of the type of prospect that you are trying to persuade with this brochure. Next, think of *a real person or two who fits this profile*. Consider what their reaction would be. In fact, go meet with a few — maybe three or four clients or contacts whom you know well and whose judgment you trust. Test your thinking and get their reaction. See what enhancements they suggest.

Step 6. Ask Your Clients to Be in the Brochure

The best brochures that we've seen tend to be extended client testimonials on your value to their business. Whether it's client lists, brief case studies, thank you letters or simply one liners, get your clients into your marketing and selling act. In effect, this is a "paper version" of a client referral.

But, be careful. Select only those clients with whom you have a stable working relationship and superb personal chemistry. Also, choose impressive clients whose size or standing in the community will add to your prestige.

Step 7. Summarize Your Findings for Outside Experts

Well, you've done a lot of important planning work here, and you've added enormous value and impact to your brochure. Now make sure that your outside experts get the full

value of your work. Briefly outline your findings and key selling points. Show them the buyer profile and related “aches, hurts, needs, problems, wants, and desires.” Give them your unique selling proposition. And make arrangements for them to talk with your clients that will be highlighted in your brochure.

Arrange to spend some time going through this information in detail with them. And make sure they are listening to you; ask them to “feedback” the key points to you so they are following what you are saying.

Step 8. Monitor Quality of Work From Outside Experts

At this point in the process, your role is predominantly quality control. You want to make sure that the outside expert is producing the kind of final product that you can be proud of, something that you are willing to stake your reputation on in the marketplace.

Since you are not an expert in the brochure field, the best service we provide for you in this chapter is to give you some “quality standards.” The elements you should be looking for in the work of your outside experts are discussed below.

Make Sure That Copy Is Written From the Buyer’s “Point of View”

The best promotional copy creates the impression of a dialogue with your buyer instead of a monologue of your great qualities. Make sure that your promotional copy reads like an extended conversation between a skillful, concerned doctor and a patient with a pressing illness. Know what your target audience wants and show them that you are a credible, reliable resource for helping them to get what they want. To put it briefly, don’t preach to them about yourself. Show them that you understand their problems.

Avoid Too Much Copy

Don’t make your brochure too wordy. The tendency is to always include way too much information in a brochure. Remember this is not an autobiography, and your prospects won’t spend time pouring over all the details. They will simply browse through it. So, just hone in on a few key selling points that you want the prospect to remember. Don’t let these critical selling messages get lost in a blizzard of words.

Also, don’t cram the words together on a brochure. Include a liberal dose of “white space” to make the brochure more pleasing to the eye. White space also makes your brochure appear more “readable,” so your prospects may be more willing to pay attention to it.

Use Charts and Graphs

More people are more visually oriented than they are verbally oriented. Therefore, whenever possible, use graphs, charts, or process flow diagrams. It will make it easier for the prospect to grasp your point quickly and easily.

Pay Close Attention to the Headlines

Think about how you read a newspaper. Do you go immediately into the body of an article? Or, instead, do you first scan the headlines to see if it is a worthwhile article first? If you are from the like most of us, you are probably more likely to scan the headlines first—and remember them most. That is why headlines are the largest and most prominent part of a newspaper. So, use the same approach for your brochure.

Do your headlines get to the point fast and hit it hard? Will it draw your prospect into reading the copy below it? Why?

Make It Personal

Use *inserts* that play up the uniqueness of your people and their experience. Short biographies and probably photographs should be included. Bear in mind that partners and staff may come and go. So you should have their names and photographs printed on a loose insert. A single color insert can be produced inexpensively and discarded when dated. Convey the right, personal touch with this approach.

Keep It Professional, but Appealing

You don't want your brochure to read like a tabloid or be full of hype. But, on the other hand, you don't want it to be full of "technical-speak." Make sure that the sentences and paragraphs are brief and active. Don't make claims that sound inflated. Confirm that the color scheme and typefaces support a "professional feel." But, don't be dull, either; make sure that there is color and interesting artwork built into the brochure.

Eliminate All Jargon

Make sure that your brochure reads like a "normal business person" speaks. This means that you should express even the most highly technical ideas in plain English. Remember, you're trying to market and sell the prospect, so he or she needs to understand what you're saying. Therefore, use their vocabulary, not yours.

As a test, give your brochure to a friend or business colleague who is unfamiliar with the details of what you do. Can they follow it? Do they understand why your prospect needs this service?

Clearly Identify Your Company and Contact Information

We know; this sounds basic. But prominently spotlight your contact information. Make sure that your logo, firm name, proper address, phone number, and fax number, and Web site address are included. Put this information on the front cover, back cover, or on the folder flap.

Make Sure to End With a "Call to Action"

The purpose of the brochure is to inspire the buyer to do something that gets you one step closer to becoming a client.

So, build up some enthusiasm as you close the brochure. End with a “bang!” Give the prospect one final big bold benefit. Then tell the readers what you want them to do. And make it easy for them to contact you. Give them a specific name to call with a direct dial phone number via an insert or a business card enclosed. Have an enclosed bounce-back card addressed to a specific person (these are cheap and easy to change and update) and have them mail it in to you.

Remember, the easier you make it to respond to a brochure or direct mail piece, the more likely they will.

Get “Buy-in” From Your Fellow Partners

Once you get a final drafted “paste up” of the brochure, run it by a few of the leading partners in the firm to get their “buy in.” Sell them on why the approach makes sense. Ask them to review it in detail to see if anything erroneous catches their eye. See if they can add or refine a selling point.

Why does this make sense? First, if they spot something wrong, you can still change it before your print the brochure. Next you want them to use the brochure—so get them to see the value of the specific approach and design. By asking for their opinions and ideas, you can get some “buy in” to the brochure.

Warning! You don’t want to re-do the brochure! You’re looking for vital input to perhaps modify it. If there are too many changes, it will be confusing and look like a committee created it—exactly what you want to avoid.

Have It Proofread

One problem in the brochure process is that you can get too close to the copy and graphics. This means that you could look at the various drafts of the brochure so frequently that you become blind to “little” problems and omissions. So, get two people who are “removed from the process” such as your secretary, spouse, or professional staff to review the final draft, to catch grammatical errors or inaccuracies.

Take One Last Look Before Printing

It’s time for the final check. Put the final draft away for a day or two. Then, review it when you are fresh and at your peak of attentive powers. Start by convincing yourself that something is wrong (a “fatal flaw”) with the brochure—and scour the copy trying to find it. Then, when you can’t find anything, send it along to the outside expert to get it printed.

Get It Professionally Printed

Here’s where you have to be careful. Make sure that you or your outside expert go to a top-notch printer. Our strong advice is that you have the graphic designer review the brochure in detail with the printer. Make sure that the color schemes are understood. Also,

ensure that the printer is using a heavy paper stock, which you should approve before the printing begins.

Beware of using quick-print printers, unless you definitely know their quality is superb.



THE DISTRIBUTION OF BROCHURES

Now, after the brochure is printed and delivered to your office, your job is done, right? Wrong!

To take full advantage of all your efforts, you must distribute the brochure within your firm and encourage others to actively use it. You've got to make sure that everybody knows how to use it effectively. Fill them in on the background work that you did:

- What hurts and problems are you targeting?
- What is the rationale for your unique selling proposition?
- How do you envision each member of the firm using the brochure?
- Is it okay for them to mail or send the brochure to their personal contacts?

Now, this last step is often overlooked. It's not unusual for some members of the firm to be mystified at how they should use the brochure. So, make the brochures accessible to all. And, train your people on how to make the best use of your brochures.



CONCLUSION

There is no question that many firms waste lots of money on brochures with no marketing and selling impact. And that's a shame because it detracts from their reputation in the marketplace. A drab, boring, and self-absorbed brochure makes a poor impression on a buyer, no matter how much it cost.

Three problems arise in the brochure creation process that lead to poor quality products. First, some professionals try to go it alone, and their brochures typically look and read like something that an amateur would put together. You get the same results that you could expect if you asked a copywriter or graphic designer to audit your books. If you don't have the experience or skill, don't expect a good result.

Remember the critical role that a brochure plays in building your practice by adding persuasive impact and depth to your personal marketing message. Do you want to trust this job to an amateur? No? Then *don't do it yourself*.

Second, even if they do hire an outside expert, many professionals launch into the process of writing the brochure without a careful definition of the unique value that they provide to clients. This leads to the eulogy brochure that is focused on *them* rather than on the buyer's point of view. So, do your *homework*—step into the buyer's shoes. Find out what

hurts, aches, desires, and problems haunt them. Specifically, define how you can supply a credible and reliable solution—one that is better, different, and more valuable than other options open to the buyer. And, test your promotional message before you use it. Try it out on real people who fit the profile.

The final problem that defeats many brochure efforts is a lack of quality control. Since this may be an unfamiliar sphere for you, it's easy to get hung up on the wrong areas or overlook a problem until it's too late. Use our quality control guidelines and your chances for success will be greater.



**HOW TO USE
NEWSLETTERS
EFFECTIVELY**

chapter 10

These last 10 years have seen a proliferation of newsletters sent out by firms. It seems that a vicious circle has been created: They've got one, therefore, we need one.

There are several companies that will gladly sell you newsletters; all you have to do is put your name and address on them.

Some firms write their own newsletters, which can be good or bad—good if they have talented writers with a nose for news and style, and bad if the articles are written by accountants without thought to the audience. These often turn out to be unreadable by the general public or business audience to whom they are targeted.

In this chapter we'll take a look at what the real purposes of traditional newsletters are, what can be expected from them, how they should be produced, and how to use them as marketing tools. We discuss electronic newsletters, or e-zines, in chapter 20.



THE REAL PURPOSE OF NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters became popular years ago as CPA firms saw them as a way to generate business without being personally involved. Your peers thought that the phone would ring off the hook by sending out newsletters to prospective clients and referral sources. Unfortunately, based on our experience, this has certainly not been the case.

Real Life Marketing Example. A few years back we brought in a new client firm of four partners and about \$3.5 million in revenues. This was not your typical CPA firm—the dominant two partners were very marketing and growth oriented and were even willing to spend money to grow their firm.

Several years before they met us, they decided to purchase a newsletter, and accompanying protected territory, from a company that specializes in producing materials of this type for CPA firms. They bought a medical newsletter because doctors constituted a very significant portion of their practice, and they wanted more of them as clients.

To use this newsletter, they had to sign a contract for a certain number of years, so they just couldn't back out if they didn't like the results. Annual costs of buying and sending this newsletter: about \$20,000.

Interestingly, the newsletter was quite excellent—well written, good topics, beautiful graphics, and quick to read for a busy target audience. Each newsletter was sent out with a bounce-back card to facilitate response and interest by the doctor. The newsletter was sent out quarterly to about two thousand prospective clients in a two county area.

Net result over the previous three-year period: one inquiry from a physician, no new clients.

Real Life Marketing Example. Another client has been writing its own homegrown newsletter for years. Well written by staff and partners, simple to read with great topics and graphics, this newsletter is sent out bimonthly to clients, referral sources and prospective clients, all of whom have had some contact with the firm over the years.

Almost 1,000 prospective clients receive this newsletter, all of whom should know who the firm is and what they are about from some sort of previous interaction.

Net result of sending this newsletter out: no new clients.

Real Life Marketing Example. Still another client produced a newsletter that was so well written (the writer was the director of marketing—a former journalist for a major newspaper) and so superior at delivering its targeted message, that other offices of the same firm didn't just ask for it, they demanded it!

Alas, that newsletter was discontinued two years ago by the person who started it, because no new business could ever be traced to it.

Are there firms who generate business from their newsletters? Sure! We occasionally run into them at conferences or seminars. Perhaps your firm has generated business, in which case, please contact us because we'd like to hear about it. Or maybe you know of a firm that has grown its practice because of its newsletter. It's just that these circumstances are far and few between, in our experience.

Marketing Truth. The real purpose of sending out newsletters is that it's another contact with the client, referral source, or prospect.

Always remember marketing is a contact sport! It's a proven fact: The more contact you and your firm have with your clients and referral sources, the better, more productive, and more profitable relationships you will enjoy.



THE DOWNSIDE TO USING NEWSLETTERS

Here are the risks you take by sending out newsletters:

Risk 1. Newsletters Will Not Produce New Business

In our opinion, and in our experience, the purpose of a newsletter is not to produce business for the firm.

Risk 2. Newsletters Can Be Expensive

Whether you buy them or produce them yourself, this is not an inexpensive proposition. You might be investing funds that could be better spent elsewhere.

Risk 3. Newsletters Can Produce the Wrong Impression

In our interviews of clients of CPA or consulting firms, we regularly ask how they feel about their service provider's newsletter. In the cases of "store-bought" newsletters, many of which are easily identifiable as such, some clients are offended that the firm merely purchased something and then sent it out. And some don't appreciate receiving something that has obvious little relevance to them.

Others are so poorly written that they harm the firm's image as a communicator, because staff authors tend to write as if other CPAs or consultants were going to read the articles, not "civilians."

Risk 4. Newsletters May Be Ignored

Two years ago we completed a study of over 400 clients and other recipients of a firm's newsletter. Result: less than 2 percent admitted to reading the newsletter.



A FIVE-STEP PROCESS TO USE NEWSLETTERS EFFECTIVELY

Marketing is a process, not an event. If you think the advantages of publishing a newsletter outweigh the disadvantages, stick with it. Review the following steps as you explore the newsletter possibility. We will discuss each step individually.

-
- Step 1.* Consider the purpose.
 - Step 2.* Consider production tips.
 - Step 3.* Consider feature options.
 - Step 4.* Consider ways to distribute.
 - Step 5.* Obtain feedback.
-

Step 1. Consider the Purpose

In and of itself, the newsletter won't do much in the way of new business. But as part of a comprehensive, integrated, and committed marketing plan of attack (including personal marketing), directed to a niche marketplace, the newsletter tells the world that you are an expert in this area! After all, you've got a newsletter on the subject to prove it!

Do you want to attract and keep a certain type of clientele? A newsletter can help you do both. Want to attract and maintain an upscale client base? Use your newsletter to run articles specifically directed to them and give it that well-polished look.

A well-designed newsletter can help project the image you're trying to create and the message you want to send.

Step 2. Consider Production Tips

Below are production tips to consider when putting together a newsletter.

- Whether you do it bimonthly, quarterly or semiannually, do it regularly so people consciously or subconsciously come to expect it and look forward to it. Quarterly is a good publishing frequency.

- Make a commitment. If you're going to do a newsletter, keep it going for at least a few years.
- Photos and graphics are important; they make the newsletter easier, more interesting, and much more likely to be read.
- A badly edited newsletter sends out a negative message about you and the firm. It should be edited by someone with a good working knowledge of writing for the targeted audience.
- Some newsletters are filled with stale, unimportant information people have read or seen many times before. Create value and readership by publishing news.
- If articles are kept brief and to the point, they're more likely to be read and appreciated. If an article is too long (say, over 500 words), consider splitting it into two parts, thus drawing people back for more next time.
- Keep the newsletter to a manageable size. It's proven that the longer a newsletter is, the less likely it is to be read. Four pages is a good size.
- Unless you have a superior copy machine, take it to a printer to have it done professionally. Cheaply copied newsletters give an impression you may not want.

Step 3. Consider Feature Options

To ease the burden of coming up with new topics, consider the following suggestions.

Suggestion 1. Feature Clients

Let's face it: your clients probably have egos the size of Yankee Stadium. Everybody likes to feel important. So, feature your clients, their companies, and whatever nuggets of brilliance they've discovered in building their businesses in your newsletter. Put their picture in it, too.

Clients of ours who have taken this advice rave about how well it's been received. Usually, here's what happens: The client is highly flattered that you'd like them to share their ideas with your other clients and people receiving the newsletter. Next, there's increased client contact as you coordinate, interview, and publish their article.

Finally it's printed with their picture in it. Offer them some additional copies in case they'd like to share it with their friends, business associates, family, attorneys, and others. Offer them 50 or 100 copies if they'd like. Extend them help in getting it sent out.

What usually happens? With this offer of extra copies, the client puts together a list of his or her buddies at the country club, business associates, and other people he or she wants to impress by sending them a personalized note with your newsletter, which they will pay much closer attention to than if you were to send it.

Suggestion 2. Feature Case Studies

Use the newsletter as a forum to market additional services to your existing clients and to new clients by publishing mini case studies of how you've helped a particular client solve an important business problem (with their permission of course).

Perhaps you've just completed the successful installation of an important IT project at one of your clients. Now is the time to feature that client and its story in your newsletter. Send out the finished newsletter with personalized notes to those clients and nonclients you think could use the same service. You've just presold and directly marketed the service, with an invaluable, published, third-party referral, making it much easier to call and set an appointment to discuss the service for them.

Suggestion 3. Feature Employees

Have a regular "This Is Your Life" section that highlights a firm employee (not just a partner), and lists his or her expertise and something about his or her personal life and background. Do this in an interesting way that encourages employees to feel good about working at the firm. Not only will this help to boost firm morale, but it will also allow clients and others to connect a face with a voice they may recognize. People love articles about other people; just check out the newsstands.

Suggestion 4. Feature Articles by Junior Staff

Make junior staff feel an important part of the team and have them expand their knowledge base at the same time as they write articles and do research for your newsletter. Yes, you can take credit for their work; just edit what they produce and share the byline with them.

Also, writing articles for an industry-directed newsletter, for example, can broaden their knowledge of the industry and its challenges as they do research and interview clients for their article. This creates additional value in them, as they are more expert in this industry and more valuable to the client and prospective clients.

Have your staff bring you ideas for the next newsletters, ideas for articles that they can then write, or at least outline, for you.

Step 4. Consider Ways to Distribute

If you're going to do a newsletter, don't just send it out! Pair it with a personalized (word processed/mail merged) cover letter telling the contact what the important articles are in this month's issue. Or attach a post-it note, with a similar message: "Joe, don't miss the article on the new tax credits for higher education."

By doing this, you've taken a piece of paper and turned it into something personal and much more valuable. Based on our interviews with clients, a newsletter accompanied by a personalized note is at least 10 times more likely to be read and appreciated.

A good newsletter, handled correctly in this manner, causes the person receiving it to say, “They’re thinking of me—and I appreciate that!”

Sure, this takes time to do! You might have to spend an hour or more every time a newsletter goes out personalizing post-it notes or writing a cover letter. But it’s worth it! You’re separating yourself from 99 percent of all the other professionals out there who haven’t thought of this and wouldn’t invest the time to do it right! That’s the essence of excellent personal marketing: creating special feelings for you as the service provider!

Delegate the rest of the process down. No reason for you to fold, stuff, and send the newsletters. Hand those steps off to someone else to get out once you’ve done your part. Leverage off your available resources. Don’t have anyone at work to delegate to? Take them home and hand off to your children, spouse, mother, anybody—just get them out!

Have a little blurb in there offering to send a copy to someone else that might be interested. At the least, you’ve planted a seed that the newsletter is meant to be shared with others.

Parlay your newsletter for all that it can do. Get every piece of value out of it. For example:

- You’ve just set up an appointment with a prospective client. Send this person a copy of your most recent newsletter, with a personalized note, to let him or her get to know you a bit before your appointment.
- Or, you’ve just left an appointment or just met someone new at a networking event. Send your newsletter with a personal note. It’s one more contact!
- You’ve just done a seminar for a group of bankers. Send them your newsletter as a follow-up piece.
- You’ve just contacted the editor of a periodical that you’d like to be published in. Send them a copy of a newsletter in which you’ve written a solid story. Same thing with the person who books speakers at the industry association you want to speak at.

Use your newsletter as what it is—your personal advertisement done in professional form. Encourage everyone in the firm to read it immediately after it comes out. Make it a big deal in the office—you’ll create more value for it. And you’ll avoid the embarrassment of having a client mention the newsletter to someone in the firm who doesn’t know what the client is talking about.

If you write it internally, offer an article from every newsletter to be republished in the local newspaper or industry journal. Always look to magnify your marketing and have it be much more effective by getting more than one use out of the articles. Not only will you hit nonreaders of your newsletter in this way, but the regular readers will also see the same article twice, thus making the firm look important enough to have its work reprinted.

A great article makes a good foundation for a seminar or speaking engagement, and vice versa. Again, always look to maximize your marketing effectiveness by hitting clients, prospects, and referral sources in as many ways as possible with your message.

Step 5. Obtain Feedback

Monitor the newsletter's reception and importance to your clients and referral sources on a regular basis. Find out what they think about it, how it could be improved, how much they value it, and whether they would miss it. Ask clients what articles or topics they'd like to see covered.

Exhibit 10-1, "Sample Newsletter Analysis Form," is a form to help you capture these comments and analyze them for ways to improve your newsletter.



CONCLUSION

Taken for what it is—a marketing vehicle enabling you and your firm to increase and maintain contact with certain people—a newsletter can be a valuable adjunct to a well-managed marketing program.

EXHIBIT 10-1: SAMPLE NEWSLETTER ANALYSIS FORM

1. List positive comments you've received about the newsletter:

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

2. List negative comments you've received about it:

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

3. How would you improve it?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

4. Have you used the newsletter before in your personal marketing?

_____ Yes _____ No

5. How would you like to use it?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____



**HOW TO GET
PRESS RELEASES
PUBLISHED**

chapter 11

Similar to newsletters or articles, press releases can greatly enhance your marketing efforts (and profits) by attracting clients and establishing credibility; they're simply additional ammunition at your disposal in your marketing arsenal. Although they may not always focus attention directly on you, press releases—or media releases, as they're sometimes called—can be a most valuable marketing tool. In some ways, releases can be even more effective at increasing your bottom line than articles.

A word about the Internet: Though press releases are discussed in this chapter within the context of their traditional, printed format, and print media outlets, many of the techniques discussed here hold true for Internet press releases and those sent out through e-mail.



SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON PRESS RELEASES

By definition, a press release is a short, factual account featuring a person, event, organization, or product. More important, a press release is also your *opportunity* to attract the media's attention and to focus their publishing power on something important to you.

Press releases can be used to promote a variety of things. If you don't have something specific in mind that you wish to promote, take a moment to think about what's happening in your practice or firm that might be newsworthy. Have you or your firm recently been involved in a charitable event? Have you received professional honors or recognition of some sort? Perhaps you are scheduled to give a talk for a local business group? Or, does your firm distribute a free pamphlet on preparing tax forms?

Try to think of an event, person, organization, or item that would be of interest to others. For example, the celebration of a major firm anniversary would be good reason for a press release; an employee's wedding anniversary would not. A promotion or the hiring of new staff can be news; staff meetings are not. Important firm events, especially those linked the community or industries you specialize in are news; Christmas parties aren't. Your story must have an angle that will be of interest to the reader. To get some ideas, scan your local papers and industry-specialized publications. Note the types of articles that get printed, and what sorts of columns or pages are dedicated to local news and industry happenings.



A SIX-STEP PROCESS TO GET PRESS RELEASES PUBLISHED

All things considered, if your release lands on the right desk—even at a news giant—at the right time, and it looks good, you still have a fair chance of seeing it in print. However,

Note: We are extremely grateful to Ms. Stella Ashen, director of marketing at Allan Boress and Associates, for compiling the information and writing this chapter. Many of you in the profession know Stella, as she has worked with me since 1981. A great deal of our success is owed to Stella, as she is the most diligent, concerned, capable person I have ever worked with.

your chances will increase dramatically if you appeal to a certain niche and you include smaller publications in your target list. If you follow the steps below and send a presentable press release to a local publication, the odds are in your favor that it will be printed.

-
- Step 1.* Select publications.
 - Step 2.* Create a database.
 - Step 3.* Identify editors' deadlines.
 - Step 4.* Verify publication information.
 - Step 5.* Use the standard format.
 - Step 6.* Follow up.
-

Step 1. Select Publications

As with an article, your press release must be newsworthy; meaning it must contain information that will appeal to the readers of the publication. The key here is to decide in advance who might be interested in your item or story and to research publications with this in mind. That is, think about what you have to say and who might want to read about it. Then, research periodicals to find the ones whose readers fit your profile.

To compose your list of targeted publications, start with the ones you know. To improve the scope and breadth your public relations efforts, you may want to take a trip to the library. Visit the reference section, and do some additional research. Reference books on periodicals (such as the *Oxbridge Directory of Newsletters*, the *National Directory of Weekly Newspapers*, and *Newspaper Rates and Data*) will help you be sure you're reaching the readership you want, and that you are not missing any publications that may be important to you (there may be many local newspapers and magazines that you're not aware of). Or, better yet, hit the Internet. Do word searches on Yahoo for the kinds of publications you are looking for.

Be sure to choose these media outlets based on who their readers are, knowing that if their readers are apt to be interested in the information contained in the release (and if the release is well-written and looks good), the editor will most likely run it.

When selecting your list of periodicals, do not overlook the smaller publications. As with articles, you may want to be published in the most prestigious and widely read periodicals; but then, so does everyone else. Besides the fact that these publications receive many, many more releases than smaller papers, they also have large staffs to produce articles, and various news services at their disposal to generate more copy. Let's face it—it's harder to get printed amidst that kind of competition.

Newsworthiness is not the only criterion for deciding what goes in a publication. Many publications include small news items that can be targeted, as well. For instance, when writing a product release, look for publications and Web sites that feature a new-product page

or category. If you wish to publicize an firm event or speaking engagement, look for a calendar of events listing or page.

For example, to promote your upcoming speech at the local chapter of the Automobile Dealer's Association, you'd probably want to send releases to the major newspapers in your area, as well as to all the community newspapers you can find. It would also serve your marketing goals to make sure your information is featured in that association's magazine as well as the individual chapter's newsletter. Newspapers (and the association publications) are likely to be interested in promoting industry-related events. Web sites devoted to the auto dealership industry may also be contacted for possible inclusion, either as an event posting or by displaying your press release.

Step 2. Create a Database

This investigative search for publications will build your "target" mailing list or e-mail list. Use this information to build a database of useful contact information that will aid you in targeting press releases in the future.

A database system will be invaluable to you if you plan to send out press releases on a regular basis (and for many other marketing and client relations functions as well). Even for that first mailing, it will be most helpful to have the media contact names and addresses in some sort of file that can generate labels (if not a database, a computerized merge list or address book of some sort).

A database can be a storehouse of marketing information (for example, contact person, publication, contact information, and e-mail address) that will assist you in targeting specific publications and people.

Databases can be extremely helpful in all your marketing endeavors; if you're not using them, you may want to do some research on them as well (while you're at the library, anyway). Of course, the most common database today is Microsoft Access, which integrates with Microsoft Outlook and Microsoft Word. We have found these to be more than adequate. Such programs are helpful because they can arrange your list information any way that you want; they can also sort your data and select elements of your list with just a key-stroke or two.

Having the ability to select specific clusters from your mailing list will enable you to tailor your mailings to these special groups. We entered our media list into a database, so the information would be at our disposal whenever we wanted to send out press releases (or other mailings). Then, we coded these files so the releases could also be targeted to specific groups.

For example, accounting publications were coded "CPA" and law-related periodicals coded "ATTY." Additionally, we coded the media list to indicate which sources had a new product page (because we planned a special mailing to them). Using a database program, you could apply similar concepts to your own list.

Targeted mailings based on sorted categories and selected codes are much more likely to be effective and successful.

Step 3. Identify Editors' Deadlines

Another factor to be aware of is the editorial deadlines. You need to be sensitive to the time factor involved in putting a magazine, newsletter, or newspaper together. Newspapers may only require that you mail in one or two weeks before an event; newsletters and magazines often prepared their events calendar months in advance and therefore require more lead time. If distributing your press release through Web media outlets, you will have to be aware of any deadlines they may have for site updates, as well.

Deadlines are usually more critical when you're promoting an event on a specific date; you have a greater window of opportunity if the news is more general, for example, your distribution of a new pamphlet available to help people prepare their taxes. In that case, you may want to send the information to newsletters and magazines in December but you would probably wait until January or February for periodicals with a shorter deadline.

Regarding deadlines, think about when the information will be of interest to the readers, and when you need to get it to the editor to have it published at that time. Those two factors dictate your personal deadline; you'll need to send your releases out accordingly.

You can discover the editor's deadlines in different ways. If you have a copy of the publication, look through it. Many periodicals plainly state when they need to receive materials for inclusion (especially with community calendars and the like). However, if you cannot find what you're looking for, just call the publication directly.

The surest way to fail at press releases is to miss deadlines. Highlight deadlines in your database or mailing list information and be certain to check it regularly.

Step 4. Verify Publication Information

Before sending out a release, it is advisable to confirm the editorial information you have (for example, name, mailing address, department), and perhaps even discuss your release with the editor. If he or she has the time to talk with you, this is an excellent opportunity to develop an important business (that is, marketing) relationship.

If you're feeling particularly aggressive, you can call everyone on your media list. Although time-consuming and not absolutely essential, this cannot hurt (if you don't waste an editor's time), and might help (by building more editorial relationships).

Editors, writers, and reporters tend to move around a lot throughout the year, and reference books are printed only at certain intervals (usually annually or biannually). Current reference books—although generally accurate—cannot always keep up with the changes. Calling everyone will help you ensure you're sending your releases to the correct individual.

If you don't make these calls, and your release is addressed to someone who's no longer there, it still has a chance to be printed. It will simply be routed to the new editor. However, this routing could delay delivery and subsequently cause your release not to be printed (if it arrives too late to the person who needed to review it). Also, like any mail, it's

always better to send the release addressed to the correct person; that individual is more likely to pay attention to something personally addressed. And if the editor is brand-new in the position, your mail may stand out and get special attention because you're the only person who took the time to find out about the staff change. Yours may be the only mail correctly addressed!

In addition to confirming media contacts and cleaning up your mailing list or database, another argument for calling each publication is that you may get to talk to the editor personally about your release. Although busy, the editor may have a moment to talk with you. You can inquire if your topic is relevant, and if he or she is the correct person to mail it to. You can also ask if he or she has any special requirements for releases, if yours is likely to be printed, and what you can do to make it more likely that you'll be printed.

Step 5. Use the Standard Format

Okay, so now you have your topic in mind, and you're confident that you've identified publications that will likely print your release. You're aware of the deadline structure, have contact names, and have a mailing schedule in mind. The next step is to actually write your media release.

In addition to having reader value, a press release must be well written. Unlike an article, which an editor will work on, a *press release must be received ready-to-print*. It is highly doubtful that any editor will take the time to improve your release. If it's not prepared in the correct format, or if it's sloppy or poorly structured, it goes to the circular file!

Media releases flow in constantly. Editors simply look for the best of the bunch, just what they need to fill their available space. If yours isn't prepared perfectly, it hasn't got a chance.

Now, that may sound intimidating, but it really isn't that bad. Press releases follow a very definite format; quite simply, they answer the questions who, what, when, where, and why, in the most factual and readable manner. Generally, they look something like the illustration in Exhibit 11-1, "Sample Format for a Press Release." A few guidelines are listed here.

- The contact information—who should be called if the editor wants to discuss the release—goes in the upper right-hand corner. "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" and the date are placed above the body of the release, on the left side. This indicates to an editor that the document is, indeed, a press release and—this is very important—that it's current.
- The headline should capture the purpose of the release; a simple statement will do. Essentially, it sums up the heart of your story, why you sent the release out. Think about your main goal in sending the press release; what message did you want to get across? The short answer to that question should be your headline.

- The first sentence and paragraph, the “lead” of your release, is key. If the lead does not attract the editors’ attention, they won’t read further and your release will not be printed. The lead must contain the substantive elements of your story, in as concise a manner as possible.
- The entire release should be written in a direct, succinct manner. As you “tell your tale” in the ensuing paragraphs, stick to the point. The release should be factual, reading just like a news story, and answering those famous “w” questions. Forget the hype! The more your release reads like an actual story, the more likely it is to be printed.
- Try to keep your release down to one page, although a two-page release is acceptable if absolutely necessary. The editor has very limited time to spend on each document. Your release should be like a résumé: The most important information should appear first and most prominently; it should be easy to read, and the shorter the better. Don’t leave out any important details; just try to keep it as brief as possible.
- You can increase your chances of getting printed by making sure the release is meticulous (no typos).
- Use a nice font in an easily readable size (in other words, don’t make the font smaller than 10 points just to get your story to fit on one page). If you have an attractive logo, use it. Printing the release on nice paper will help; subdued colors can be used, as well. Remember, you want your release noticed. Initially, its inherent attractiveness might be what catches an editor’s eye.

An editor may receive hundreds of releases every day, so do what you can to help yours stand out. However, keep in mind that the point is to attract editors’ attention and encourage them to read and run your story. Your goal is to make your release as attractive as possible without sacrificing readability and content.

Step 6. Follow Up

Following your mailing, you could also call everyone again to verify that your release was published and to thank the editor for running it. Again, this is not an essential step in the press release process, but it could be helpful. If you have the time and inclination, these calls will help you further your relationships with editors and also find out how successful your mailing was (for example, how many publications actually ran your piece versus the total number of those that received it). Due to time constraints editors face, this is probably more appropriate with smaller publications (particularly weekly community newspapers) and publications with a long lead-time, where the editors are not under daily pressure to put out an issue.



CASE STUDY—GETTING PRESS RELEASES PUBLISHED

To illustrate how to apply all of this information, including building a mailing list or database, we're going to share with you our own experience with press releases in the following case study. We hope that this case study will help you get a greater understanding of the components and value of press releases.

A few years ago we released our first tape set, an audiotape series on professional development. These tapes were unique in that they taught professionals how to sell their services in a manner that was both extremely successful *and* quite comfortable for the would-be rainmakers.

We felt these tapes were of importance to CPAs and consultants who need to sell their services, so we decided to send press releases to targeted publications—those read by CPAs, attorneys, and other such professionals.

Researching

Although we were avid readers and *quite* familiar with the professions, we knew that there would be a lot of periodicals out there that we weren't aware of. So, the first step was research. We were determined to find *all* of the publications read by CPAs, attorneys, and other professionals (or, at least as many as we possibly could).

When researching, we also paid particular attention to publications that featured a "new product" page, the perfect place for a press release describing our tape set. For your own research, you should also consider *what* you wish to promote *and where* you might expect to see such an item in a newspaper or magazine. For example, if you want to publicize an upcoming event (such as a seminar you're conducting), you may want to look for publications that have a calendar of events. Although a well-written press release has a fair chance of being published regardless, it can only help you if the editor has a very specific place to put your information (not to mention space in that column or page that he or she needs to fill).

So we poured through several reference books on newspapers, magazines, and newsletters (hint: make friends with the reference librarian; he or she can be of *great* help in your search). Our research netted us a hefty general media list (consisting of all publications read by our target group), as well as a list of about 30 periodicals that featured a specific space for promoting new products. After many sessions at the copier, we had all the information we had set out to find. Our next step was to head back to the office and enter our media list into a handy database program.

Writing

Armed with our media list and keeping our readers in mind, we set about the task of writing our release. The first step was to decide on the gist of the story. Why were we sending

the release? That was easy: to promote a new tape set that teaches selling skills to professionals (remember, the short answer to that question is basically your headline).

Next, we had to review the “w” questions:

- Who: Allan Boress & Michael Cummings
- What: brand-new audiotape series
- Where: based in Chicago (at that time; now we’re based in Coral Springs, Florida); tapes available by mail
- When: available immediately
- Why: to fill the need we saw in the marketplace (the professions had become so competitive that CPAs and others needed to learn how to sell to survive)

Contacting

Exhibit 11-2, “Sample Press Release,” is one sample of a press release we issued for our tape set. Note that we tailored this release to CPAs and the accounting and consulting profession. We were able to ensure that this was sent only to the targeted group of *accounting* publications by selecting those publications in our coded database. By targeting a specific group, and tailoring the press release accordingly, we improved our chances of getting printed. Also, by using a specialized release, we helped the editors easily identify that the information was pertinent to their readers (accountants), and we hoped we made it an easier decision to print the piece.

You may have noticed that we altered the style slightly; instead of having biographical information as the final paragraph, we placed the price and order information *after* everything else. Recognizing that editors will not want to run copy that is essentially free advertising, we put this information at the bottom (where it would be easiest to cut). The information was *very* important to us but might prevent such an announcement from being printed. The end placement was another attempt to make it easier for the editor to run the announcement. Assuming that most of your press releases will not be promoting a specific product (essentially selling something), you probably won’t have to deviate from the standard release format.

In our research we mentioned that we paid particular attention to periodicals that contained a new product section. We mailed press releases and product announcements to our entire media list, but we focused on the new-product placements. These designated columns were the perfect venue for our release. Because they promoted new products in each issue, we had no doubt that these periodicals would consider our release. Also, since the editors of the new product section *had* to fill space each month with just new product information, we had a very good chance of being featured. As an added bonus, readers who read the new product sections are at least mildly interested in what’s available in the marketplace. All things considered, this was an important group for our marketing strategy. Therefore, we paid special attention to these periodicals.

For the 30 publications we focused on, before mailing, we called each one to confirm the editor of the new product area, and, when possible, to talk with him or her directly. This was helpful in cleaning up our list. Also, we developed a relationship with certain editors. We were able to ask each editor if he or she had any special requirements for printing, deadlines, and so forth. We could then tailor our mailing to his or her specific needs, and he or she would then be expecting to receive our materials. We would always ask that the editor send us a copy of the publication we appeared in; in cases where we made direct contact, we almost always got published, and we often got copies of the periodical to boot.

Results

Did all of this pay off? Yes! Of course, we sold lots of tape sets, but the research, phone calls, and mailings lead to many other good things. We developed relationships with several editors, who subsequently asked us to write articles for their publications. Others saw the promos, and called to inquire about our services; we booked several seminars and conferences in this manner. Still others were intrigued by the information and wanted to sell the tapes through their organization or work with us on other projects. All in all, the press releases were a very important part of our marketing strategy and success.

What It Took to Succeed

It should be noted that all of these wonderful results did not happen after issuing just one press release. The effects of marketing are quite cumulative; everything builds on everything else.

We worked hard to find the right publications, built a mailing list or contact information database, developed editorial relationships, worked within deadlines, and kept sending out materials. Just because an editor has no space in this issue doesn't mean that he or she won't have room for your release in the next one.

However, we can guarantee that no one is going to save your story, "just in case"; they just don't need to. There are always a lot of fresh, new stories coming through the mail—make sure that your important release is one of them.

Keep writing and mailing on a regular basis, and you'll get to enjoy the results. Remember, you can't hit a home run if you don't show up at the ballpark!



PRESS RELEASES VERSUS ARTICLES

We mentioned early in this chapter that press releases can sometimes be even more valuable than articles. Since all marketing builds on itself, it's hard to say which individual tools will give you the best results. Generally, all of the marketing components work best when

used together, in some kind of overall marketing plan. Of course, the more you work at marketing in any form, the more successful you'll be.

Press releases have advantages and disadvantages when compared to articles. Both venues can get your name out, and help attract interest and establish credibility. Press releases are usually much, much shorter than articles. They offer a limited amount of information about you, and you really have no control over whether they'll be published (by applying the tips we've discussed; however, you can increase your chances). When published, though, press releases can be very helpful. They are presented from the publication's perspective. That is, although they are essentially self-promotion, they do not seem like advertisements—they seem like news. Even in these cynical times, people tend to believe what they read.

Articles are valuable as well. Their length gives you an opportunity to really show your expertise. Also, if you follow the editorial procedures we suggested, you will almost certainly have your articles published. Articles don't usually appear in multiple venues (whereas your press releases can pop up everywhere). However, articles are much more effective at establishing you as an expert in your field, and they are a valuable promotion piece for you to personally distribute to clients and prospects.



CONCLUSION

Having press releases published will help your marketing efforts and make you more successful. It can facilitate the growth of your practice by establishing your credibility and attracting new clients. Building a mailing list or database of contact information can also help you network your practice to a broad range of potential clients and other business contacts. All such public relations efforts are additional ammunition; devices you can choose to employ in your quest for greater exposure and bigger profits.

Marketing Tip. Try those things you feel most comfortable with and work from there. If you apply yourself to marketing, you will see the results.

EXHIBIT 11-1: SAMPLE FORMAT FOR A PRESS RELEASE

For further information

CONTACT: [Name]

[Phone number]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

[HEADLINE]

[CITY, STATE]—[Important lead sentence. What is the most significant information you wish to convey?]

[Informational paragraphs continue, until you've answered the questions, who, what, where, when, and why? Press releases are always typed, and double-spaced. They should be no longer than two pages, although one is better. Use 8 ½" x 11" paper; use one side only. If you have two pages, staple them together.]

[The press release format requires that your most important information appear immediately; the next critical, next, and so on from there. This gives editors great flexibility. If they have lots of space, they can run the whole release. If their space is limited, they can cut the release at any point after the first paragraph or two, and not lose any crucial information. Keep this concept in mind when you're writing your release.]

[After you've answered all of the important "w" questions, your release should end with a standard paragraph providing background information on you and your firm. If applicable, this paragraph can remain the same in every release you issue.]

—END—

EXHIBIT 11-2: SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

For further information
CONTACT: Stella Ashen
(312) 555-5555

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 2, 2001

CONSULTANTS RELEASE NEW TAPE SERIES ON BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FOR CPAs

Chicago, Illinois—Allan Boress and Michael Cummings, partners in a Chicago consulting firm devoted to helping accountants grow their practices, announce the release of their brand new audiotape series, “Achieving Your Personal Best in Business Development.” These tape resources are designed to teach CPAs how to market their practices and grow their firms.

The series consists of two tapes. Tape 1, “Lessons from the Best Business Generators: The Critical Success Factors in Business Development,” focuses on the common characteristics, success strategies, and productive business-generating techniques of the top producers in the profession. Tape 2, “Client Relationship Management: How to Keep Your Best Clients and Strengthen Relationships,” acknowledges that the heart of a CPA’s opportunity for growth lies in his or her existing client base. This tape centers on teaching accountants how to build close alliances with their clients, and the best means of protecting these valuable client relationships.

Allan Boress, a practicing CPA, has over twenty years of experience in helping accountants and consultants grow their firms. Michael Cummings, MBA and marketing maven, was one of the founders of Arthur Andersen’s marketing department. Boress and Cummings, both noted authors and seminar leaders, have appeared in such periodicals as *The Practicing CPA* and the *Journal of Accountancy*. They’ve conducted training sessions for accounting firms across the country (including several of the Big 6), and at top accounting organizations (including the AICPA, state societies, and accounting associations). This series is the result of what they’ve learned from working with the most successful CPAs and consultants in the country.

Just released, the tape series includes a resource workbook that contains additional material and practical examples. Cost of the series is \$95.00 for a single set (quantity discounts are available). For more information, or to order, contact Stella Ashen at (312) 555-5555.

—END—



**HOW TO CREATE
ADVERTISING THAT
MAKES MONEY**

chapter 12

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as the prominence of marketing grew in the profession, there was an explosion of interest in advertising. Print advertisements in business periodicals proliferated. Billboards pitching CPAs and consulting firms went up in major metropolitan areas. Radio spots for CPA firms started hitting the airwaves. All of the big firms came up with catchy slogans to go with their image advertising. Even television advertisements showed up on the Super Bowl.

All these advertising campaigns had one thing in common. Ninety percent of them were failures and tremendous wastes of money. They succeeded only in “getting the name out”; they attracted few new clients.

Not only were these failures, they were *expensive* failures.

The same is still true today. The Internet banner advertising boom of the late 1990s is essentially over. Effective advertising, in any medium, is tough to pull off. But, using the proper strategy and tactics, there may be a role for advertising in your mix of marketing activities.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to show you when to use advertising effectively and how to make it work for you.



ADVERTISING DISASTERS

In our experience, we’ve seen firms waste enormous amounts of money on advertising.

Real Life Marketing Example. In Chicago, a top independent firm invested over \$80,000 advertising in a leading business periodical for over a year. Do you know how many calls they got over that time? Three! And one of them was from us because we were trying to find out why they were advertising. What a waste!

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case. Whether it’s a small practice putting an advertisement in the local business section or a big firm creating eye-catching expensive ads, we hear the same complaints time and time again: Advertising did nothing for us. No phones ring. No one comes in. No one writes. Nothing happens.

Some advertising does make an impact, but it’s rare. In fact, CPA advertising is a lot like actors in Hollywood—a handful make good money, but 99 percent don’t work.

So, if you are one of the lucky ones to get results from advertising, congratulations! You beat the odds.



HOW ADVERTISING CAN WORK FOR YOU

Despite what we’ve said so far, there may be a role for advertising to play in the growth of your firm. But, successfully using advertising requires an understanding of the few rules of thumb, discussed below:

Rule 1. Forget Image Advertising

Promoting your general capabilities in a general way is a losing game. Instead, use advertising *only* to promote a specific service or industry expertise to a homogeneous market niche. Look for highly specialized newsletters and periodicals that concentrate on this niche.

Rule 2. Make Advertising the Caboose, Not the Engine

One reason that CPAs invest in advertising is that they have such high hopes for it. Their fondest wish is that buyers will see their ad and beat down their doors with a stampede of interest. So they make it the cornerstone of their marketing program, and then they get frustrated when it doesn't work. Instead, make advertising only one piece of your integrated marketing puzzle. Expect it to complement your other activities and add a few more leads to your results—on the margin.

Rule 3. “What” and “Where” Are the Foundations for Success

What you advertise and where you advertise it are the foundations for success in advertising. Picking the wrong service to promote will guarantee failure. Also, running the ad in a publication with the wrong readership is a money waster too. Too often, however, our peers get hung up on designing the advertisement itself. Sure, that's important, but first things first. Take care of what and where before you worry about how.

Rule 4. Repetition Is Essential

Advertising once is like not advertising at all. Repeating your ad four to seven times is necessary for results. Keep in mind that productive advertising relies on the cumulative impact of repeated placements for results.

Rule 5. Good Advertising Strategies Are Expensive

If you are unwilling to invest the money to get a high-quality advertisement, to place it in the right media for your market, and repeat it four to seven times, then forget about doing any major advertising altogether.

Rule 6. Buy Prominence

Getting buyers to even look at your advertisement is your biggest challenge. Therefore, the size and placement of your advertisement should be maximized. Obscure, tiny advertisements don't sell.



A FIVE-STEP PROCESS TO CREATE ADVERTISING THAT MAKES MONEY

I know. We've been extremely negative about advertising up to this point. But, that's okay, because our goal is to get you to see the difficulties involved in making advertising work. As you'll see, it's an uphill battle.

But you can get results. Using the approach outlined in the step below, you'll find the proper way for advertising to fit into your overall marketing program.

Step 1. Identify how the service affects the buyer's critical "trauma."

Step 2. Identify who needs your services the most.

Step 3. Identify where you can reach those in need.

Step 4. Determine how your advertisement will grab their interest.

Step 5. Keep score of your advertising wins and losses.

Step 1. Identify How the Service Affects the Buyer's Critical "Trauma"

By now, you certainly get the message; this is always the first step in developing a marketing tool because to influence the buyer, you have to know what's bothering him or her. We've covered this before, but let's recap the key points for clarity's sake.

Define the challenges your buyer faces. What frustrates your buyers in this service arena? How are they better off personally when they engage your services? What negative consequences can they avoid by taking action now? What aches, pains, problems, frustrations, and aggravations surround your service offering? Which of these are most severe and traumatic? Make sure that you are focusing on urgent, personal, and compelling "trauma," for this is what will make your prospects take action right now.

Step 2. Identify Who Needs Your Services the Most

Next, you have to define your precise buyer profile, for this will drive your selection of media and design of everything else in your advertising campaign.

Take a close look at the buyers you want to attract. Who is most likely to need your help? Who will be most likely to hire you right now? Why? How would they see you as uniquely valuable to them?

In other words, describe your best prospect as specifically as possible. The more precisely you're able to define your best opportunities, the more successful you'll be in direct marketing your services. And the quicker you'll see results.

Step 3. Identify Where You Can Reach Those in Need

This step is called your “media strategy.” You’re basically trying to answer the questions, Where will I reach the kind of buyers who need my service most? and, What media will be the best to directly connect with my target audience?

Start with your profile of your ideal prospect and define this person or company as specifically as possible. Then, cast a wide net looking for the right mix of media to reach this ideal prospect. Recognize that you have a lot of options: newspapers, magazines, newsletters, directories, trade journals, church bulletins, and charitable programs, to name a few.

Ask Contacts

Research is the key here. Meet with a few business contacts and clients who fit the profile. Ask them what type of business periodicals they read to keep up-to-date in their business. Probe especially for the more obscure newsletters, association publications, and industry-specific periodicals. In addition, go see an ally or referral source who serves the target market as well. What do they read?

Visit the Library

Next, go to a good business library and look through one or two of the following periodicals:

- *Oxbridge Directory of Newsletters*
- *Newsletter Yearbook and Directory*
- *National Directory of Newsletters and Information Services*
- *Guide to Periodical Literature*
- *Guide to Media Resources and Audits*

Each has a brief description of its readership demographics. Create a spreadsheet and summarize the number of prospects that fit your profile. Also, get some ideas of the rates that they charge.

Now, you have to whittle down the list a little bit. Which media has the largest numbers of your target audience? Will you be able to afford an advertisement in it? Is the media’s circulation within your geographic scope? Be selective, then choose a handful of periodicals for further investigation.

Request a Media Kit

Next, contact these publications and ask for their “media kits” for prospective advertisers. This will give you a much more specific breakdown of their readership. Many times, the publications will also lay out their upcoming editorial calendar, so you can see if a particular special issue would be especially appropriate.

After looking through your media kits, refine your numbers a bit. How many prospects will you reach that fit your precise target profile?

Hire an Expert

Remember, the success of your advertising program will hinge on your selection of this media. So, guess what? Even though you've done your homework, you're still a novice at this process. Consider hiring an outside expert to check your thinking. There are professionals and firms that specialize *only* in media selection. At least consider tapping into their expertise.

Consider a Few Questions

Before you make your final selection of your media mix, ask yourself the following questions:

How Difficult Will It Be to Stand Out From Other Advertising? Take a look at *Business Week*, *Time*, or *Inc. Magazine*. Browse through all the advertisements and see how many there are. What would it take to stand out from this group? How many are well-crafted, four-color advertisements? How many full-page ads versus eighths? When you advertise in a periodical, you are competing with *all* the other advertisements to a certain degree, because each one is trying to capture the attention of the same audience. Are you willing to invest the money you need to stand out in the crowd?

Would I Be Better Off Mailing to This Group Rather Than Running an Ad? Sometimes you may be better off buying the mailing list instead of advertising. For example, if your target audience is only a segment of the total readership, you may want to direct mail to just your buyer profile instead. For example, you may find a newsletter that fits your profile perfectly. But you want to mail only to those prospects within your geographic reach.

Are There Any Competitors Currently Advertising in This Media? What will I have to do to look better than they do? Nothing is worse than being one of the pack, especially if your competitors have better, more prominent ad placements. Either outdo them or go to a periodical where they aren't advertising.

Are There Any Upcoming Special Editions That Make Sense for Me? Your local business section may have a special issue on estate planning, taxes, financial services, or technology, for example. Or your association periodical may have special topics that fit into your promotional message.

Am I Willing to Test This Media Out for at Least Three Consecutive Issues? This is what we call the "Las Vegas" rule. Experts say that when you go to Las Vegas, budget the amount of money you are willing to lose, then, make sure that you gamble only that amount—or you may get in over your head. The same is true of advertising. You have to be willing to commit to an experimental trial, with the expectation that you *may* get no response. That's what you are risking when you take the plunge.

Step 4. Determine How Your Advertisement Will Grab Their Interest

All right. Let's see what you've accomplished so far in the process. First, you have a clear "pain relieving" solution that you know is important to your clients and prospects.

Second, you precisely defined your target audience, so you have a clear picture of the ideal prospects for this pain relief. Third, you found the mix of media that will do the best job in reaching these prospects.

What's next? Well, you have to design and produce an advertisement that *sells*. And this isn't easy. You have basically two options at this point: make or buy.

Making your own ad will require some outside help. Like other marketing tools that we talk about in this publication, effective advertising requires graphic appeal, such as color, photographs, artwork, and layout. Creativity is called for to grab your prospect's attention. And, brief, benefit-laden, and catchy copy is hard to write.

So, look for an outside expert for assistance. Believe us. Your time is better spent in the previous three steps. It's up to you to find a "hurt" in the marketplace, define the right "pain relieving" solution, and make sure that the media mix is focused on the right buyers.

Your other option is to "buy" an advertisement already created by outside sources, especially if you are promoting a mainstream sort of service. This is a good option because much of the tough creative and artistic work is already done. But be careful. Make sure that one of your competitors is not already using this same ad in the marketplace.

In either case, you should see yourself as performing two basic roles. First, you're the product manager; it's up to you to define the right positioning for your service. This means that the selling message has to be on target.

In addition, you are in charge of advertising quality control. Make sure that all the key elements necessary for effective advertising are working in your favor. Here are the essential tactics for a winning advertising campaign:

Placement

A large, visible placement adds to the impact of your ad. Front and back covers are premium space. Sizes vary, but most periodicals offer full-page placements along with half, one-third, and one-quarter page placements. Smaller placement options are also possible. But go for the largest, most prominent placement that your budget allows.

Have a Hook

Your goal in advertising is to grab the reader's attention with one trauma-inducing phrase. In fact, this is more important in advertising than in any other form of marketing. Therefore, work diligently on this aspect. Get a 10-second commercial, which means you need a powerful one-line phrase that makes your *entire* sales pitch for you. Remember that your prospect will glance at this headline to see if your ad warrants any further investigation.

Strong Visual Appeal

More so than any other form of marketing, graphics, artwork, and photographs are central to a successful advertisement. Keep in mind that you are competing with all the other advertisements for attention.

The artwork and other visuals have to directly and obviously link to your hook. Use at least a two-color scheme to heighten the appeal of your ad. Pay attention to the typefaces—use bold, italics, shadings, and other graphic treatments to boost the power of your ad. Don't crowd your ad; use liberal doses of white space to make it more readable and pleasing to the eye.

Speak Directly to a Single Buyer

Don't use "preachy," generic selling points. Only one person will read your ad at a time. Seek to connect with that one target buyer on a personal basis. Create a dialogue. Use the word *you* prominently in your ad copy. Show that one person how he or she will be better off as a client of yours. Speak his or her language using his or her own vocabulary.

Brief, to-the-Point Copy

Beyond the headline, use copy that is tight and clear. Aim for two or three paragraphs at the most, but make each one only a sentence or two. Don't have more than 10 or 12 words in these sentences. Avoid big words, long sentences, and run-on paragraphs. Explain your selling point in simple, nontechnical and buyer-centered language. Spell it out—tell the buyers what's in it for them if they take the time to respond.

Call to Action

Create a sense of urgency and give the prospects a compelling reason or incentive to call you *right now*. Tell them specifically what you want them to do. Offer a special report or self-diagnostic. Invite them to an upcoming seminar or roundtable, but create a deadline.

Make It Clear Who You Are and How to Reach You

Give them the relevant details that they need to contact you. At a minimum, give them a person to contact, the name of your firm, and a telephone number, as well as your address. If you have a logo or distinct type style, include it as well. Despite your natural inclination, don't make this information more prominent than the headline. Just make sure that the average person can read it easily.

Use a "Spoiler"

You may have noticed the following commercial on TV: It starts out with what looks like a normal commercial for a pain relief product, then right in the middle a *big rabbit* beats a *bass drum* and a loud voice comes on and says "Energizer batteries, they keep on going and going and going" This is an example of a "spoiler." Its intent is to startle you and confuse you momentarily, so you pay greater attention to the commercial.

There are similar approaches in print advertising and direct mail. Make your unique selling message stand out. Use a different color or shading pattern. Put your key selling message in a box or banner—then place it on an odd angle from the regular copy.

Go for Multiple Exposures in the Same Issue

Many periodicals offer you options for more than one promotional exposure in the same issue. For example, you can write an article on the same topic as your ad. Arrange to have the advertisement placed near the article for the highest impact.

Or get yourself quoted in the lead article. See if you can be listed in a directory or vendors list in the article. Look to see if they have a new products and services section. Get a brief blurb of your firm placed there as well.

Step 5. Keep Score of Your Advertising Wins and Losses

You always want to know how well you are doing in marketing, so keep the same kind of statistics that we suggest in the chapter on the direct marketing campaign. Measure using these two key statistics:

Statistic 1. Number of Inquiries and Leads

This tells you how many people responded, by calling either you or others in your firm. In addition, it includes people who sent in reader inquiry requests via the magazine requesting some kind of follow-up from you.

Statistic 2. Number of Sales Interviews

This is the true measure of success. Remember, the goal of marketing is to get you in front of people that you want to have as clients. So, keep track of the meetings that you have with existing clients or prospects.



CONCLUSION

The bottom line on advertising is this: Advertising that makes money is the only advertising that matters. Learn from the mistakes of others. Avoid image-oriented advertising of general capabilities—that won't make you money unless you get real lucky.

Recognize that advertising works best when it's concentrated on a single service line or industry expertise. By pointing out the critical and traumatic challenges faced by your targeted buyer, you can speak most directly and potently to them in your advertisement. Therefore, aim at a highly precise target audience. Make sure that you are clear on what their current and compelling aches, problems, hurts, needs, wants, and desires are right now. Use the buyer's vocabulary and frame of reference when developing your advertising strategy.

Once you've defined the value of your service and identified your precise buyer profile, you've got two more hurdles to go in your advertising campaign. First, you've got to select the right media and stick with it. For if you don't reach your buyers, they won't know that you exist. Carefully examine all the relevant options. Quantitatively analyze how many targeted buyers that you'll hit with your advertisement. Go slow and be certain that the media you select makes the most sense for you. Then, repeat the ad for four to seven repetitions and evaluate your response.

Second, you have to design an advertisement that ignites interest and spurs action. Smart advertising means that you get the best and most prominent placement that you can afford. Also, the attention-grabbing power of your headline will make or break your advertisement, for it will have to "hook" a busy reader into looking closer at your ad. The rest of your copy should be brief and buyer centered. Your aim is to persuasively build a sense of urgency. Give the buyer a reason or incentive to call you.



**HOW TO PRODUCE
A DIRECT MAIL
CAMPAIGN WITH
GREAT RESULTS**

chapter 13

The growth in the direct marketing field has been explosive in recent years. Direct marketing campaigns—which are typically defined as a direct mail effort followed up by telemarketing calls and supplemented by other linked marketing tools such as public speaking, seminars, roundtables, and service-specific advertising on the *same service offering*—yield direct and tangible indicators of their success or failure. In other words, you know if you are getting results, so you know if your marketing investment is paying off.

Marketing Truth. Marketing that makes money is the only marketing that matters.

That's right. You should be able to see a direct and explicit link between a series of integrated and linked marketing steps and results—like new clients, expanded work to existing clients, new referral sources, proposal opportunities, and sales interviews.

Other marketing tools, such as public relations and image-oriented advertising, yield “fuzzy” results, such as increased brand recognition or “getting your name out.” Consequently, many huge companies, including IBM and AT&T, are diverting large amounts of money away from advertising, trade shows, and public relations. Now, the bulk of their money goes into direct marketing. And if you doubt this, just take a look at your mailbox today. How many product solicitations did you find?

How does this trend affect your profession? The same surge in direct marketing is taking place, but the difference is that most firms don't understand the basic principles that lead to success.

The purpose of this chapter is to show you a step-by-step approach for developing an integrated direct marketing campaign. We'll take you through a series of steps that illustrate the entire direct marketing process from start to finish. To reinforce the lessons, we'll include a case study demonstrating those steps. In addition, we'll provide detailed instructions on how to create an effective direct mail letter and companion piece, because this is the single most important and frequently used marketing tool for most professional firms.



WHY WE ARE ALL TARGETS OF DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGNS

If you are wondering what a direct marketing campaign is precisely, just take a look in your mailbox. As an example, here is what we found in our mailbox today:

- A boxed videotape from Chrysler corporation promoting one of its new cars with an incentive inside to come in to my local dealer for a test drive
- Three catalogues from companies that we purchase products from regularly—Dell Computer, Road Runner (running gear), and Paper Direct (paper and supplies for desktop publishing)
- A letter and coupon from a tree service and landscaping company
- A solicitation from a “financial planner” with regard to helping me set up a retirement plan for my business
- A *personal letter* from Ed McMahan telling that I may have already won close to \$2 million

Does this sound familiar? All of us probably get bombarded with this same quantity and quality of direct marketing. In fact, the odds are good that you will also be solicited over the phone at least once in the office today, as well.

These are “direct marketing campaigns.” Sophisticated marketing companies recognize that they can target a specific promotional marketing message to appeal to likely buyers. These buyers fit predetermined criteria that define their strong likelihood to purchase the product or service, such as level of income, age, and stage of life. Using these indicators, the companies purchase highly specific mailing lists (or phone calling lists) and send you the little gems that you find in your mailbox each and every day. Then, they quantitatively measure the success of the campaigns, using such indicators as the number of inquiries, product trials, appointments, and sales.

In fact, the best direct marketers know their specific return on investment for a campaign by calculating statistics such as cost per qualified lead or cost per sale.

Simply put, for these companies, the good news is that direct marketing is money making marketing when done right. But, the bad news is that it is extremely difficult to make direct marketing campaigns work. You’ll find that the best campaigns make their companies a lot of money, while the average campaigns waste a lot of money and time.



WHY MOST DIRECT MARKETING PROGRAMS ARE DOOMED TO FAIL

It’s easy to predict which direct marketing programs will fail. Listed below are the most common reasons for direct marketing disasters. These are the major challenges you face in using direct marketing technology to grow your practice. But, if you follow each of the tips that we’ve provided, your chances for success are good.

Reason 1. Marketing to the Wrong People

Whom do you want to target? First, you want to concentrate on people or companies with a compelling need for your service, with an ability to pay your fees, and in a position to value your unique strengths over other options. Also, you want to capture the attention of the decision-maker, the person who can say yes or no to buying your product or service. Thus, the first big mistake is marketing to the wrong target. This means that you may target too broadly, for example, hitting a lot of prospects with no compelling reason to need your service.

Reason 2. Marketing the Wrong Service

Marketing broad general capabilities is a surefire way to fail. If your mailing basically comes down to the fact that your firm has good CPAs, tax advisers, or consultants, you’re being far too generic and inconsequential to warrant the attention of a buyer.

Reason 3. Failing to Focus on a Buyer's Critical "Trauma"

People pay attention to their aches and hurts—that is, their problems, worries, troubles, and discomforts in their business or personal financial life. Ineffective direct marketing strategies don't zero in on these trauma points. In fact, this concept of buyer trauma should be the starting point in your strategy. How are companies hurting in the market niche you are targeting? Which companies are hurting most? How is their business or personal success affected by these aches and pains? What can you do to highlight your understanding of their problems? What "pain-generating" headline will get their attention?

Reason 4. Using the Wrong Mailing List

Even if you target the right buyers and focus on their current compelling trauma, you'll still fail if your mail doesn't reach the right kind of buyers. With all of the mailing lists available to you, it's easy to buy the wrong one. In some cases, a list may only contain a small portion of your best prospects. Or, it may not contain the decision-maker. Some lists contain old, outdated, and erroneous information.

Reason 5. Failing to Test

Developing a direct marketing strategy means that you have to make a lot of judgments and assumptions up-front. Who are the best prospects in your market niche? What problems are they facing that are most painful to them right now? How can you best capture their attention given all the other marketing messages competing for it? This is why it's vital that you always test first, before taking the full plunge.

Reason 6. Taking a One-Shot Approach

Most direct marketing efforts fail because they are a "one timers." This means that you send one mailer to one prospect one time, and then you get discouraged when the results aren't forthcoming. Instead, bear in mind that effective direct marketing is an ongoing campaign, where you send "waves" of related mailings. Moreover, you look for other ways that you can hit these same targets with the same message, such as writing articles or speaking on the topic. Your goal should be to connect with these buyers six times over the next year in various fashions. It's this repetition that gets your message noticed.

Reason 7. Sending Mailings That Are Too Mundane

Look at your in box. How much junk mail do you have? How many pitches are you bombarded with each and every day? What does it take to stand out from all the clutter and catch your attention?

It's important to remember that your clients and prospects face the same dilemma—a plethora of promotional pieces competing for their time and attention. So, you have to do

something special to stand out! And your central selling message has to be brief, to the point, attention grabbing, compelling, and pain-inducing.

Reason 8. Sending a Message That's Too General

If you're lucky, you have about 10 seconds of your prospect's attention to hook him or her into concentrating more thoroughly on your message. Lots of firms waste money sending out materials that basically say to the prospect, "Hi! We're CPAs and consultants. We can serve all of your needs." Now, how compelling does this sound? Don't you think that your prospect *may* have received something similar from other firms?

Reason 9. Not Providing Options for the Next Step

Be real. Our hope for direct marketing campaigns is that a prospect reads our letter and they are so impressed that they reach out with a phone call and beg us to take them on as a client. It would be nice if it worked that way, wouldn't it? But this is not the way that buyers behave; they are skeptical or they may not be willing to take a dramatic step like hiring you right away. So, the best direct marketing campaigns give the buyer a range of options that they can take that marches them along in the buying process. For example, offer such options as inviting them to a roundtable session on the topic. Or, offer them a self-diagnostic promotional piece that helps them to better understand and amplify their trauma. Always offer the option of you calling the prospect. Don't expect them to call you.

Reason 10. Not Following Up

If you want to guarantee that your direct mail campaign will misfire, don't follow up. You'll be almost certain to get little or no results. Instead, call a few prospects who look like the best suspects for your services. See if you have a contact you can call at one or two of the companies. Or, send a second wave and third wave of mailings as a brief reminder, but reinforce the same points.

Reason 11. Not Offering a Mechanism for Making Contact

The goal of your direct mail is to spur some *action* on the part of the prospect. But too often firms make the prospect do too much work to move things forward. Always include a tear off bounce-back card with your mailing. Put a person's name as a contact with their direct dial number. Specifically, tell the prospect what to do to take the next step.

Reason 12. Not Using a Mix of Marketing Tools

Integrated direct marketing means that you promote the same pain-relieving service using a linked mix of related marketing tools. Smart marketing relies on repetition, variety, and intensity. So, promote your pain relief through an ongoing series of mailings, speeches,

articles, roundtables, and executive briefings. Remember, results come from the cumulative and complementary impact of your full mix of marketing activities—not just any single tool.



A NINE-STEP PROCESS TO PRODUCE A DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGN WITH GREAT RESULTS

In this section we discuss the steps that lead to a successful direct marketing campaign. First, review the real life marketing examples that follow. Do you think these examples constitute a success? Are any of the steps they followed applicable to your practice?

Real Life Marketing Example. In a Midwestern city, there is a large wholesale distributor industry. Many of these companies were started by entrepreneurs who are now elderly and who want to pass the business along to the next generation. As you know, this is a complicated endeavor.

An accounting firm wanted to target this segment because the succession process often opened the door for a switch of the accounting and tax work, along with the potential for succession consulting fees.

One CPA firm teamed up with its best banking ally. Together, they scoured the local wholesale distributor market and identified 25 to 35 companies that met the profile.

They invested in a special, three-dimensional mailer, including a premium (a Swiss army knife). The basic message was this: A business succession is inevitable, but most companies don't plan for it. That's why only one-third of all family businesses are successfully passed along to the next generation. The Swiss army knife was intended to highlight the breadth of skills that the bank and accounting firm could bring to bear on the succession strategy.

The basic promotional strategy was to send the mailer. Then the accounting partner would follow up with a phone call three days later. The purpose of the call was to get an appointment for a sales interview.

They contacted 35 prospects. They secured sales interviews with 15 of these companies. Seven interviews warranted a proposal. And three of these companies became succession consulting clients.

Real Life Marketing Example. The same firm knew it was onto something. It wanted to do more mass marketing on the succession planning issue. It needed a simple format so it could mail hundreds of pieces instead of dozens.

The lead niche partner worked with his marketing director to come up with a two-page mailer titled "The Ten Biggest Mistakes That Family Businesses Make in Transferring Ownership to the Next Generation."

This format is a powerful marketing piece because it highlights severe buyer trauma. As your prospects read down the list, they realize that they may be making some (or all) of the same mistakes. Also, this format positions you as a knowledgeable expert with a depth of expertise.

Another key to its success is that it's written from the business owner's point of view, using concise, simple language. This helps to build a sense of empathy with the reader.

The partner decided to mail this piece out in an inexpensive three-dimensional fashion. In the packet, he included a brief cover letter on his personal stationery, along with a preaddressed and prestamped bounce-back card and the two-page "Ten Biggest Mistakes ..." newsletter.

Our client mailed this packet to 1,000 wholesale distributors with whom he had no contact. He generated 10 sales interviews and three new clients.

Now, we're going to take you through the step-by-step process you should follow when designing and implementing a direct marketing campaign, such as the two examples above. To aid in your thinking, we'll be using a "doctor analogy" because our experience shows that this is a powerful way to help you think creatively about your direct marketing strategy. One of the main reasons this works so well is you stop thinking about your services in the traditional way. Instead, you start to see yourself as a specialist looking to heal some hurt out in the marketplace. And this is the critical first step in the marketing strategy process: being in tune with the way your prospects see the world.

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- Step 1.* Identify your strengths.
 - Step 2.* Identify where it hurts.
 - Step 3.* Identify who needs intensive care and treatment.
 - Step 4.* Identify where you can find prospective patients.
 - Step 5.* Identify how you can make them realize that they are hurting.
 - Step 6.* Confirm that you are using all the tools of your trade.
 - Step 7.* Run a few tests.
 - Step 8.* Operate.
 - Step 9.* Track the vital signs.
-

Step 1. Identify Your Strengths

Start by seeing yourself as a "business doctor" or "personal financial doctor." What are your one or two top specialties? Where do you truly deliver the most value? What do you do best?

In other words, play to your strengths. Be careful. This is the most critical decision you'll make in your direct marketing strategy: defining the highly specific, market niche you want to target. Everything else in your direct marketing strategy follows from this one judgment, so carefully examine your strengths. What makes you unique? What groups and subgroups of clients are you best at serving? How would your top clients answer these same questions?

Step 2. Identify Where It Hurts

This next step is equally vital. Too many professionals miss the mark by promoting *only* the features (what they do) and benefits (results of their service). This is wrong. Like a doctor, you want to identify the aches, pains, and danger signals that lead to a serious condition.

Therefore, your next step is to define the most compelling trauma associated with the service you offer. Let's make this clear. This is not a benefit, like improved cash flow or enhanced profits.

Benefits are too intellectual; trauma is more emotional and frustrating. Also, benefits are impersonal, while trauma is a personal feeling. Benefits are logical good reasons to do something, while trauma is an urgent call to action. The bottom line is that benefits may sound good, but trauma drives buyers to make important changes in the status quo. Said simply, trauma-based marketing is the marketing that makes money.

What frustrates your buyers in this service arena? How are they better off personally when they engage your services? What bad consequences can they avoid by taking action now? What aches, pains, problems, frustrations, or aggravations surround your service offering? Which of these are most severe and traumatic?

Can you see the trauma here? Is it personal? Emotional? Do you feel a sense of urgency surrounding these matters?

Step 3. Identify Who Needs Intensive Care and Treatment

The next step is to become even more focused in the buyers you target. Based on the trauma you identified, some buyers are going to be critical, some will be serious, and others will have only a mild case.

Others may also have their condition under control. They may be able to afford the best business "doctors" already. Or they may be sophisticated and forward thinking, so they already have the problem solved.

Take a second, closer look at the buyers. Who is most likely to need your help? Who will be most likely to hire you right now? Why? How would they see you as uniquely valuable to them?

The more precisely you're able to define your best opportunities, the more successful you'll be in direct marketing your services. And the quicker you'll see results.

Here are the final two reasons for this refinement. First, you can't do too much all at once because you are already busy. You want to focus on your "golden opportunities" as your top priority. Second, you also want to know the relative size of your market segment. Your direct marketing strategy will be vastly different if you are going after a handful of targets instead of going after a few thousand prospective buyers.

Step 4. Identify Where You Can Find Prospective Patients

By this point, you know who your best targets are for your service offering. Furthermore, you've defined the triggers that cause frustrations and irritations for your prospects.

Now, you have to find out how to best reach these prospects. This is the only way you can get them to pay attention to your pain-relieving solutions. In other words, you need a good mailing list. Otherwise, your patients won't know that you have a remedy that they desperately need.

Where do you find the best mailing lists? Here's the most important rule: Look for the most homogeneous, specific source that is appropriate for your target market. Avoid general lists that cut across a wide range of industries and include a large number of people. The smaller and more specific the mailing list, the better.

Don't overlook the possibility of combining and testing two or more of the lists. Depending on the size of your mailing, you can always weed out the duplicates rather easily.

In general, you should put some quality effort into finding or building the *right* mailing list. Getting a high quality list is a gold mine for you because it gets you direct access to the type of buyers that you want to attract, whereas a poor list will cause your campaign to go down in flames. Here are the sources where we tend to have the most luck:

Source 1. Business Library

You'd be amazed at the quality of lists you can find at the library. Don't be shy about asking librarians for help. Many times, they can quickly point you to your best options so you don't waste time. The options include:

Special Directories. Directories are a main resource. Many industries have specific directories, such as the *Directory of Manufacturers* or the *Directory of Municipal Executives*. Also, you may be able to get the membership directories of some associations when you join them.

Specialty Newsletter. The sheer number and variety of subscription newsletters in this country are staggering. And, newsletters, by their very nature, are typically highly targeted by area of interest, industry and topic. But again, not all newsletters make their subscription lists available for sale.

Specialty Magazines. This is probably the most widely used source for mailing lists. Again, the more highly specialized the magazine, the better. Also, almost all magazines are in the business of selling their list. Therefore, magazines will have lots of demographics on the nature of their readership—by level, job function, and a variety of other selection criteria. This allows you to combine a number of different criteria to get a thoroughly customized mailing list.

Rankings. Many business newspapers and magazines will have special editions where they list the top companies within a certain category, such as the top 100 privately held firms in your local area. You can easily find any special rankings by scanning through the comput-

erized subject index that is common in most libraries these days. Using rankings, you know that you are hitting the “big players” in high priority market niche.

Source 2. Online

If you are a subscriber to America Online, Microsoft Network, Earthlink/Mindspring, CompuServe or other online services, there are a wealth of directories that you can access. Go to the Research section and initiate a word search using “Directory of Manufacturers.” Similarly, search engines like www.Google.com or www.Yahoo.com can help.

Source 3. List Brokers

Another option is to discuss your mailing requirements with several list brokers. Explain the goal of your mailing and get their recommendations for the specific list sources. But buyers beware! Make sure you know exactly what you’re buying from a broker before you agree to purchase. When it comes to mailing lists, your best bet is to cast a wide net looking for a number of alternatives before settling on a list that you want to try out. Your success in all the next steps in your direct marketing strategy will hinge on the quality of your mailing list.

Source 4. Association Membership Lists

Prospects often invest their time in the professional and industry associations that mean the most to them. This is a prime resource for good mailing lists. But not all associations will make their membership lists available for sale.

Source 5. Conference and Seminar Attendees

Another prime source is the seminar and conference attendance list, especially if it’s a recent one. It’s prime because the information is up-to-date. And if it’s based on the topic of the seminar or conference, you can gauge what kinds of problems will be fresh in attendees’ minds.

Source 6. Referrals

The previous five sources are resources for mass mailings. But don’t forget referrals, even though they may be a small part of your total mailing.

Ask your clients, allies, and contacts if they know of any people facing the kind of trauma you are seeing in the marketplace. Then include these referrals in your mailing strategy.

Step 5. Identify How You Can Make Them Realize That They Are Hurting

The toughest job in direct marketing is grabbing the attention of your buyers and igniting their interest. Remember the clutter in your own mailbox. Think about all the promotional messages that constantly bombard you. Consider how busy you are today. How

much attention did you pay to the promotional mail in your in box? Wouldn't it take something out of the ordinary to catch your attention?

Keep in mind that your prospects face the same clutter and promotional saturation that you face. Don't expect them to be eagerly waiting for mail from CPA firms.

Remember, you need something with a high impact, an approach that stands out in the crowd. That's why you need to consider a specialist, a direct marketing expert who can design something for you. This aspect of your direct marketing strategy requires some creativity and a wealth of experience in the field. Keep in mind that these direct marketing experts spend their entire day thinking about how to get people to respond to mailings. Take advantage of what they know.

Even though we advise you to look for a direct marketing specialist to consult with on your strategy, you should be familiar with some of the key elements of effective direct mail promotional approaches. As we said, the central challenge that you'll face is reaching the buyer, which means getting your mail past his or her assistant and grabbing their attention. Here are some tried-and-true methods for creating direct mail that gets noticed:

Recommendation 1. Be Highly Targeted

Direct mail is most effective when it is concentrated at a specific, tightly defined group, such as physicians or attorneys. This also allows you to custom tailor the message and pitch the uniqueness of your expertise.

Recommendation 2. Use a Three-Dimensional Approach for Initial Contact

This is the best way to stand out from the blizzard of mail that we all get. Basically, a three-dimensional direct mail strategy is a fancy way of saying you should send your mailer in a stylized tube or a box. Done properly, these pieces stand out from the business letters and junk mail. Especially when combined with the next element.

Recommendation 3. Incorporate a Premium

A premium is basically a trinket that you include in your mailing. For example, our clients have used some of these premiums in the past:

- Magnifying glasses
- Swiss army knives
- All-purpose office tool
- Universal wrench
- Free software or diskettes

A premium amplifies the impact of your mailer. Buyers will glance at your item, see how it ties in with the promotional message, and look to see who sent it to them and remember the mailing for a period of time. In other words, they'll pay attention to your mailer. And that's half the battle.

There's more. The mailer also sets up the prospect for future waves of mail because prospects will be more likely to recognize your name, message, and colors. That's why it's crucial to have a consistent, integrated series of mailers.

Also, a premium sets the prospect up for a telephone follow-up call. Why? Because the prominent nature of the mailer and strong relevance of the message make an impression on some buyers. They recognize that you've gone the extra mile to reach them and grab their attention. So, they'll be more willing to invest some time with you over the phone.

Recommendation 4. Use Consistent, Eye-Catching Colors

An appealing color scheme and graphics will be central to your success. First, you want your mailer to look classy. Your color scheme either adds to or detracts from the impression of class, so make sure that your mailing doesn't look like junk mail—gaudy or cheesy—or your marketing piece will be “trash canned” without even a glance. Second, colors will make your message “*stand out*” more than a simple black-and-white mailing. Finally, color is important in highlighting your key selling message. Your headline or central selling message should be emblazoned in color, so it hits your prospect right between the eyes.

Recommendation 5. Use an Effective Attention-Grabbing “Hook”

Direct marketing is like fishing. You cast out your line into market. And the quality of the bait on your hook separates success from failure. So, you need a powerful, punchy hook (headline) for your mailer. What makes a good headline? Here are the elements. They have to:

Be Brief. Imagine you have a 10-second interview with the buyer. What would you blurt out to get him or her interested in hiring you? That's how a headline works. Less is more here. Your headline should number between one and nine words.

Be Simple. You have to be clear. Buyers won't struggle to understand your message. It has to be obvious and apparent. Use normal, everyday English.

Grab Attention. Boring headlines don't sell. Your message has to be humorous, clever, or catchy.

Induce Trauma. Buyers invest in your services to either avoid or alleviate trauma. Said differently, you have to create a personal and compelling discomfort with the prospect's status quo. The best, most productive headlines are “painful.”

Answer Two Big Questions. Remember this: Your buyers don't care about you. They care only about themselves and their current problems or frustrations. Therefore, your headline has to answer two questions, “What's in it for me [the buyer] if I hire you for this service?” and “Why is that valuable to me?”

Recommendation 6. Use a Brief, Pain-Generating Letter

The rule of direct marketing letters is this: *Less is more*. This means you should aim for getting your message across with as few sentences as possible. Why? First, a short letter with

lots of white space looks more “readable,” so it increases the chances your prospect will read the letter. Second, your buyer won’t spend a lot of time reading your prose in depth, so you have to make your point quickly and powerfully. Finally, forcing yourself to be concise means that you have to boil your letter down to its most potent and persuasive points.

Recommendation 7. Offer Follow-Up Options

The goal of direct marketing is to get your prospect out of neutral and moving toward buying your service. Any action that gets them off of dead center is positive.

Your direct marketing piece must create a sense of urgency to act now. Get your prospects “hot to trot.” One way to do this is to offer them something valuable for free or at a reduced rate if they call you. We know—we can hear you cringing in your seats. This may strike you as unprofessional, but at least consider it. Many of your competitors are doing it. For example, offer prospects a special self-diagnostic tool for the service area or offer a management briefing. Perhaps, invite them to a roundtable. How about “free electronic filing”? Think hard. Come up with some valuable options for your buyer to act on.

Many direct marketing campaigns require the potential client to figure out how to follow up on his or her own. Instead, be explicit about what you want the prospect to do. How do they go about accepting your offer? Call? Send in a self-addressed, postage-paid card? Is there a deadline?

Recommendation 8. Send Successive Waves of Mail

As we said earlier, one-shot approaches miss the mark. Promoting one service, to one person, one time is a losing game. Instead, you succeed by connecting through three or more “waves” of mail. Plan out a series of mailers that build on one another.

Recommendation 9. Mail to More Than One Person at the Same Company

Too often, direct mail campaigns target one high-level person at a company as the sole recipient of a marketing message. Therefore, if they don’t pay attention, you’re out of luck. So increase your odds. Send your message to two or three people at the same company. This gives your mailings a “second bounce”—somebody at the prospect’s company might see the mailer, appreciate the message, and send it along to others with some kind of “endorsement” attached.

Recommendation 10. Mail at the Right Time

Don’t mail just before or right after major holidays or during peak vacation times. Many experts recommend that you time mail to arrive on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.

Step 6. Confirm That You Are Using All the Tools of Your Trade

When surgeons operate, do they rely only on one tool? How effective would it be if they just used one scalpel to do *all* the various tasks required for a successful operation?

Well, direct marketing works the same way. An integrated marketing campaign means that you link together a consistent mix of marketing tools to get maximum promotional power for the *same* service. This allows you to take advantage of the various strengths of each kind of marketing tool.

Articles and advertising gets your pain-relieving service out to a lot of readers in a hurry, and you can use these as sales collateral and direct mail pieces as well.

Speeches, seminars, and roundtables give you the opportunity to prospect with a large group on a face-to-face basis.

Direct sales calls can be focused on referral sources, existing clients, and qualified prospects.

Step 7. Run a Few Tests

Do doctors rush into a full-scale operation on a “hunch”? If they were unsure, wouldn’t they do a few tests so they knew what condition they were dealing with?

Again, direct marketing programs should work the same way. You need to test them and then refine the approach based on your findings and response rates. Many CPAs and consultants resist this notion, however. They tend to believe in the *power* of large numbers. They mistakenly feel that if they mail out a lot of promotional pieces, even a tiny response rate means they are effective.

There is a science to direct marketing. You should see your mailings as a series of experiments. Here are two forms of tests to run:

Test 1. Preliminary Research

This is where you test the “trauma” before you even develop the promotional strategy. How are people struggling to cope with the problem you see? What frustrations, discomforts, aches, and pains are they experiencing? In other words, confirm the urgent need for your service and define how you can best position yourself.

How do you research this? By interviewing. Talk to some clients that fit your profile of buyers who desperately need this service. Get some counsel from your allies that serve this same niche. Talk to the association directors and editors of the periodicals for this niche.

Test 2. Pilot Test

This is where you test your promotional approach. Basically, you want to answer one question: How can we best capture their attention given all the other marketing messages competing for it?

Here’s how we test our approach. First, do an alpha test: mail a small number of promotional pieces first and gauge the response. Perhaps call a small number of the recipients to see if they remembered the mailer and see what they thought of it. Show the mailer to a few clients that fit the profile. How do they respond?

Now, do two or three beta tests. Based on your alpha findings, revise your approach and test again. Did the response rate improve? Decline? Stay the same? Incrementally mail more as you confirm the soundness of your strategy and the effectiveness of your promotional piece.

Step 8. Operate

At some point, you've got to stop testing and begin operating. Otherwise, the patient may weaken or worsen while you wait.

Decide if your tests are producing acceptable results for you. Then, put your money where your mouth is. Pick your best approach and make your final adjustments in your promotional strategy. Stop sending out small numbers of mailings. Double and triple the amount of mailing that you do. See if the response rates improve, stay the same, or decline.

At some point, direct marketing can become a predictable "numbers game." You can almost predict how many responses you'll get based on the number of mailings that you send out.

Step 9. Track the Vital Signs

How can you tell if an operation is a success? You carefully monitor the "vital signs" to see if the patient is getting better. Direct marketing works the same way. You need precise statistics to see if your marketing investment is paying off for you. In other words, you have to keep score. By keeping these statistics, you'll know exactly what results your marketing program is delivering.

You appreciate numbers, so set up a simple system that allows you to keep track of the following:

Vital Sign 1. Costs

Track your out-of-pocket investment for materials, postage, and services. You want to know your cost per lead and cost per sale because this lets you know how much you spent to get each selling opportunity.

Vital Sign 2. Number of Inquiries and Leads

This tells you how many people responded by calling either you or others in your firm. In addition, it includes people who sent in the bounce-back cards requesting some kind of follow-up from you.

Vital Sign 3. Number of Sales Interviews

This is the true measure of success. Remember, the goal of marketing is to get you in front of people you want to have as clients. So keep track of the meetings that you have with existing clients or prospects.

Vital Sign 4. Amount of New Business From Existing Clients

See how this campaign adds to your working relationship with existing clients. This is always the number one priority, so see if your marketing campaign is adding value here.

Vital Sign 5. Amount of New Business From New Clients

How many new clients did you add? How much in fees?

Vital Sign 6. Hit Rates

Now, calculate two hit rates. First, see what percentage of leads turn into sales interviews (divide the number of sales interviews by the number of inquiries). This tells you the quality of your leads. In other words, if a high percentage of your inquiries are pained enough to submit to a sales interview, you know that you are hitting the right buttons and marketing to the right people.

Next, calculate the number of sales divided by the number of sales interviews. This is your sales hit rate. If this is low, then you're getting a lot of shoppers or you're doing something very wrong in your selling techniques.

**CASE STUDY—PRODUCING A DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGN WITH GREAT RESULTS**

This case study demonstrates how one practitioner used direct marketing techniques to double the size of her practice in one year.

Step 1. Identify Your Strengths

We worked with a top partner of a firm in the Midwest. This woman was in her mid-30s and excelled at estate planning services. She felt that the secret of her success was not her technical expertise in estate accounting and tax work. Instead, she saw herself as a superb estate counselor, helping her clients deal with the full range of issues they must wrestle with when an elderly parent becomes ill or incapacitated or passes away. She helped them deal with insurance and power of attorney issues, long-term care strategies, Medicare trusts, and all other manner of practical matters that we all must address under stressful conditions.

Unfortunately, this was a crowded field—personal financial planners, insurance agents, and attorneys all were competing for this same general concern. She needed a unique twist.

Here's what we came up with as her unique selling proposition. All of these estate specialists were directly targeting middle-aged and elderly prospects. And many of these prospects put off dealing with these issues because they didn't want to come to grips with their own mortality.

Instead, the partner thought about her own experience when her father had passed away. Even though she was an expert in these matters, she recognized that she was overwhelmed by dealing with these matters when her own parent was involved. Sadly, she hadn't known some of the important details herself.

As she talked to more of her friends and acquaintances, she found they all struggled with this same issue when their parents had become seriously ill or incapacitated or passed away. Many of the adult children of the elderly suddenly became responsible for their parents' affairs, even though they were struggling with their own day-to-day lives. In other words, a swift and sudden burden was placed on their shoulders, and many lacked the basic know-how and understanding of how to best handle this responsibility.

She decided to target these adult children of the elderly. Her specialty would be to counsel them on how to best care for their parents' future well-being when a lingering illness or terminal condition disrupted their parents' financial affairs.

Step 2. Identify Where It Hurts

Luckily for our client, she was offering a truly valuable service because there is a lot of trauma involved in helping to manage your parents' affairs when health problems arise. And this trauma is amplified because many adult children with elderly parents end up dealing with the problem at the same time they are struggling with their parent's health crisis.

She thought about her own personal experience, as well as the stories that her friends had told of their experiences. Also, because she was active in her church, she talked to the pastor, who counseled many of his parishioners through these situations.

It turned out that there was a lot of trauma. The children felt overwhelmed by *all* the details that suddenly became vital. Obviously, they wanted to do a good job organizing and caring for their parent's financial, medical, and living situations. But most didn't feel competent. They didn't know it was such an enormous job until they were thrust into the responsibility. In many cases, they didn't know where to turn for advice. Even more so, many of them felt guilty that they didn't have this situation under control before an emergency arose.

Step 3. Identify Who Needs Intensive Care and Treatment

As our client thought through her direct marketing strategy, she became more precise in her targeting. Here is how she focused more intently:

- She knew that the adult children would hire her. They must be able to afford her fees. Therefore, she knew that they would need to have a relatively high income, and she settled on \$80,000 per year as a ballpark minimum.
- She knew that people valued a local adviser for convenience, so she concentrated in her local community and directly adjacent suburbs.
- She thought that professionals and people with advanced degrees would best understand the value of proactive, future-oriented planning of this type.

- She targeted families with a husband or wife in the 35- to 45-year-old age bracket, for they would be most likely to have elderly parents.

Step 4. Identify Where You Can Find Prospective Patients

Here's what we did about our client's mailing list. We started with her existing mailing list—of both clients and referrals. She went through and selected those clients or contacts who were in the right age group.

Then, we looked outside. There were many options. There are mailing lists of people active in various charities and church groups. We looked at lists available from the credit reporting bureaus. Every conceivable periodical has a mailing list.

In the end, we decided to use three lists. The first one we purchased was a subscriber list to one of the major business publications (for example, *Business Week*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Forbes*). The second list was the homeowners in a particular subdivision in her community. The final list was the local members of an affluent women's organization that we entered from a membership directory.

In the months ahead, we would test each to see which one produced the best results.

Step 5. Identify How You Can Make Them Realize They Are Hurting

Here's the strategy used by our client. We developed a five-pronged direct marketing approach:

Tactic 1. The Trauma Hook

Our hook was the question "Are you fully prepared to take care of your parents?" Most adult children would have to honestly answer no to that question. Many of them might not have even considered this burden of responsibility.

Tactic 2. Three-Dimensional Mailer With a Premium

The approach we decided to take was mailing the following combination. Using a small cardboard tube with our "trauma hook" printed on the outside, we sent a brief letter, bounce-back card, and magnifying glass. The premium was intended to signify that it was time to take a closer look at helping your parents to plan for their future. In fact, this phrase was printed on the premium, along with the name, phone number, and address of the CPA.

Tactic 3. Second Wave Mailer

A second promotional piece was sent to the *same* prospects about a week after the first wave. It was a simple, self-mailer brochure titled "The Ten Biggest Mistakes We All Make in Caring for Our Parents' Financial Security."

Tactic 4. Parental “Financial Care” Self Assessment

Our client developed a self-audit questionnaire that we offered to the prospects who responded to the mailing.

Tactic 5. The Offer

To maximize our response rate, we offered a few ways that prospects could get moving towards becoming a client. Here were the options that we incorporated into the mailing:

- First, for immediate help, we offered a two-hour review and planning session for \$100.
- Second, we offered the self-assessment to anyone interested.
- Third, we offered an invitation to a roundtable seminar session that we were offering through a local church.
- Finally, we told them how to make contact by either calling the CPA directly or returning the tear-off bounce-back card.

Step 6. Confirm That You Are Using All the Tools of Your Trade

Here are the other marketing steps that our client took, beyond the mailing strategy that we covered in the last session.

To promote her services to the adult children with aging parents, our client put together the following:

- *Client and referral mailing.* She let her most immediate contacts and clients know about her new specialty. She simply sent these allies and clients a letter along with the self-diagnostic questionnaire.
- *Group seminar.* In conjunction with her church, she conducted a seminar for four successive weeks to help people prepare a strategic plan for managing all aspects of caring for their parents’ financial matters. And, she charged \$100 per couple. Thirty-five couples signed up.
- *Public speaking engagements.* Our client was starting to get overwhelmed with her personal “marketing to-do list.” She engaged a public relations firm to take some of the burden off her. Then, they selected some groups to approach for speaking engagements, including the Junior League, church groups, and charities.
- *Articles.* In addition, the public relations firm helped her to write and place articles in a variety of targeted newsletters and magazines.

What results did this integrated approach yield? She landed clients and new work from the referral/client mailing, group seminar, and public speaking, in addition to the mailing. She achieved leverage because she was using the same marketing materials, slides, and messages

for all the activities. Plus, the use of the mailings and engaging the PR firm to set up speaking engagements allowed her to spend most of her time selling and servicing clients.

The word-of-mouth advertising was substantial. And this meant that prospects sought her out based on what they heard from friends and colleagues.

Step 7. Run a Few Tests

In the case of our CPA client, her early mailings got a decent response, but they didn't generate a torrent of prospects.

Her research revealed two problems. First, she was getting a lot of returned mailing pieces, so the mailing information may have been a bit out of date. We decided to test a new list in the upcoming mailings. And the number of qualified inquiries increased by 33 percent. Second, she found that there was confusion about the service due to its name. When people read the headlines "Taking Care of Your Parents" or "Managing the Care of Your Parents," they took them to mean "buying long-term care *insurance*." In the direct mail game, *nobody* wants to be mistaken for an insurance agent—that's a sure-fire way to get your material thrown away in a hurry.

Accordingly we changed some of the copy. We described the service as "a comprehensive strategic plan to care for *all* your parents' financial and personal needs." Also, we played up the fact that our client is a CPA. Finally, we added a case study to the mailing packet, with a picture of an actual client and a brief endorsement. This served to make the nature of the service clearer and more tangible.

Step 8. Operate

In the case of our CPA client, she was doing 200 test mailings a month for three months. The number of responses for the third mailing was greater than the first two. The last test was sent out April 1. Because people started taking off for vacations from June through August, she decided that May was the time to go all out, with a mailing of 1,000. Then, she would hold off doing any further mailing until she gauged these results. If they were okay, she'd resume an aggressive mailing campaign for this service in September.

Step 9. Track the Vital Signs

What kind of results did our case study campaign produce? The summary for the mailing portion to nonclients *only* is included in Exhibit 13-1, "Summary of Direct Mail Campaign Results—First Three Months." Her results from the other activities, such as the speaking engagements, are not included.

Let's be clear: This particular case study is for an individual providing a service to individuals. Although these numbers look small, they are for three months only. Also, any direct mail campaign conducted as we have delineated here, should be similarly suc-

cessful, no matter the price tag of what you are selling. If you are marketing a big-ticket consulting gig, these numbers should change accordingly. We have many more case studies of successful direct mail campaigns, with much higher dollar figures. This one was a great sample because we were involved every step of the way and recorded exactly what happened.



A TWO-MINUTE DRILL ON WRITING AN EFFECTIVE DIRECT MAIL LETTER

Time out. Now, we've gone through the full scope of a direct marketing program from start to finish. Through this work, you now have a handle on what it takes to create a direct marketing campaign that makes money.

There's one direct marketing skill, however, that you use each and every day: writing a marketing oriented letter. We're not just talking a solicitation letter to a prospective client here. You write cover letters to proposals as well as letters either to a referral source or clients.

Here's how we'll wrap up this chapter. We'll give you a step-by-step process for writing an effective direct marketing letter for any purpose. You'll see that the promotional writing process is a systematic process that anybody can learn—it's not some artistic, creative talent that eludes us.

There are two components of an effective direct marketing letter. The first is style, which refers to the way you write and present the material on a page. The second aspect is structure, which means the content and flow.

Style

Let's start with a few words about style. Pay attention to effective direct mail letters that you receive. Start a file and look at them for ideas when you have to write a letter yourself. Next time you see a print ad you like, pay attention to the copy writing. See if it meets the standards we list out below:

Standard 1. Write From the Buyer's Point of View

The goal of your letter is to get your reader to call you for an appointment or send in a bounce-back card so you can call the prospect. Therefore, see your sales pitch through the client's eyes—not yours. The buyer wants to know how you will help him or her either to avoid or eliminate the aches and pains he or she is facing.

Standard 2. Forget What Your English Professor Told You

It's okay to violate some grammatical rules. Start a few sentences with *and*, *or*, and *because*. In fact, sentences can be one word long. Right?

Standard 3. Be Brief and Clear

Use short sentences and paragraphs. Don't over explain your selling points. Use punchy phrases.

Standard 4. Always Use the Active Tense

Don't be passive. Use the word *you* a lot. Start sentences with verbs to make your message active. Be all you can be!

Standard 5. Write Like People Talk

Look at the previous three points once again. Basically, good direct marketing copy "sounds" and reads like a dialogue—instead of sounding like a term paper or letter to the IRS.

Standard 6. Use Questions Liberally

Too often, direct marketing letters end up being a series of declarative sentences. Bad copy is "preachy" and one-sided. Instead, involve the reader by "interviewing" them on paper. Ask questions time and time again to create the feel of a dialogue. What have you got to lose?

Standard 7. Use Bridge Phrases

Make sure that your copy flows logically. Use phrases that begin with *therefore*, and *consequently*, and similar words to keep it flowing.

Standard 8. Incorporate Bullet Points

Use bullet points when you are making important selling or pain-generating points. People's eyes are immediately drawn to bullet points.

Standard 9. Use Boldface and Italics for Highlighting

Create graphic variety in your letter. Put your pain-generating questions in italics. Use boldface to break up the copy. Why recreate the wheel?

Standard 10. Proof and Re-proof

Nothing screams "poor quality" like misspelled words and incomplete sentences.

Standard 11. Make It Personal

Insert your prospect's name and company name throughout the copy. Speak to that person. Don't make a generic speech.

Structure

Let's move on to structure. This is a step-by-step approach to creating a direct marketing letter that *sells*. But, here's one point before we start. Limit your direct marketing letter to a single page—or two at the most. Keep in mind that you can add the details in an appendix or attachment. Just present your top selling points.

Here are the components.

Component 1. An Attention-Grabbing Lead Sentence or Two

Start with a hook—a brief sentence or two that is your central appeal—like a headline on a news story. This is your “make or break it” sentence. Make it personal and painful.

Here’s an approach that works well. Start with a trauma-inducing question or two. Highlight it using boldface or italics, for example:

Are you prepared to help your parents successfully manage their financial matters and ensure their quality of life? Are you aware of all the responsibilities that this entails?

Keep this first paragraph to a bare minimum. The brevity adds impact.

Component 2. Pain/Anxiety Paragraph

Now, use the next paragraph to amplify the hurt. Consider bullet points that briefly lay out the aches and pains associated with this area, for example:

At some point, it’s likely that parents will count on their adult children to take care of them and their key personal business affairs. For many of us, this is a sudden and unexpected burden. Often, it hits us in the midst of dealing with a parent’s health crisis. Think about all the factors we suddenly become responsible for—insurance policies, long-term care strategies, living arrangements, wills, and estates. And most of us are not experts in these areas.

Component 3. Track Record

At this point, briefly present your credentials, track record, depth of understanding, and expertise. But make it value oriented, not a litany of your personal qualities:

I specialize in helping to organize and prepare for the challenge of managing your parent’s financial and personal affairs. As a CPA with over 14 years of experience in this area, I’ve assisted dozens of families like yours in our local community. And, I’ve had to shoulder this same burden for my own parents not too long ago.

Here’s how I can help you. You need to understand all the factors involved in helping your parents. Moreover, you need to get organized to gather facts and learn what priorities are most important right now. By tapping into my expertise, you can accomplish these goals faster and more easily.

Component 4. Here’s What to Do Now

Tell the prospect how to *take action* and *make contact* with you. Who do they call for an appointment? Call their attention to the bounce-back card. Give them their options.

So, what’s the next step? That’s up to you. If you see a need to set up an appointment, call me at (555) 555-5555. Or return the bounce-back card—and I’ll call you at a convenient time.

Component 5. Your Parting Shot

This is your “close”—your last-ditch effort to create a sense of urgency.

The sooner that *you* call or contact us, the quicker *we* can increase your capability to help your parents when they need it most.

Component 6. P.S.

Always include a P.S. Research shows that people *almost always look at the P.S.*—even if they merely browse through the rest of your letter.

P.S. You are invited to our seminar, “Coming Through When Your Parents Need Your Help Most.” The next sessions are Saturday, May 2 and 9, at 9:00 a.m. at Bart Simpson University.



CONCLUSION


Direct marketing is a cost-effective and productive way to land new clients. It should be an integral part of your practice building strategy.

Your goal should be to use direct marketing technology on a consistent, disciplined, and ongoing basis. It’s a moneymaking tactic that complements and leverages your personal marketing efforts (not precludes them).

**EXHIBIT 13-1: SUMMARY OF DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGN RESULTS—
FIRST THREE MONTHS**

Cost of the campaign	\$ 3,750
Number of mailers	1,600
Number of leads	42
Number of sales interviews	21
Number of new clients	11
Revenue generated first three months of campaign	\$18,250*

* Fees for this service only; several *new* clients are now full service tax clients for their personal matters also.



HOW TO USE
PUBLIC SPEAKING
TO GENERATE
CLIENT LEADS

chapter 14

Tired of one-on-one personal marketing? How would you like to market yourself to many prospective clients, simultaneously?

Here's the good news: Public speaking may be the fastest way to boost your practice because it can expose you to many prospective clients at one time. Before continuing the chapter discussion, consider your own past experiences with public speaking. Review the following exercise in Exhibit 14-1, "Self-Marketing Exercise: The Joy of Public Speaking."

Now the bad news: As you may be aware from the exercise, being an accomplished public speaker is not a short-term project. It must be taken seriously and will require you to invest time, effort, energy, and likely, money. But your investments will pay off, as you become an accomplished speaker, thereby obtaining the results you want.

More good news: If you're willing to "pay the price," you'll likely face little competition in this arena in the town where you practice.

Most people are scared to death to get in front of an audience, thereby limiting the number of their competitors. Sure, there might be a few professionals who do public speaking in your niche or area (most are too busy to consider it), but they could be wasting their time pursuing the wrong audiences. And it's likely they're not very good at it, as professionals tend to be stiff and boring speakers who use technical jargon that turns people off.

Even more good news: You don't have to be a born performer to become very good at public speaking.



THE PURPOSE OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

Be clear about the only purpose of public speaking: to set appointments that lead to business. Contrary to popular belief, public speaking is not intended to get your name into the community, or to get the word out. That's for people who like to waste their time and energy. Public speaking, done correctly, will lead to many new clients.

This chapter is based on what works and what has led to superior evaluations by tough audiences—and lots of new business.

We have learned from our experiences of thousands of professional speaking engagements, and those of others, to help you avoid the mistakes newcomers and veterans alike make in this excellent marketing tool.



A 13-STEP PROCESS TO USE PUBLIC SPEAKING TO GENERATE CLIENT LEADS

Throughout the rest of the chapter we'll take you step-by-step through cultivating the skills you need to become an in-demand public speaker. And we'll show you how to gen-

erate client leads *right now* from your programs. Consider the following steps involved in successful public speaking.

-
- Step 1.* Evaluate the market and the competition.
 - Step 2.* Invest in yourself.
 - Step 3.* Find a hot topic.
 - Step 4.* Write an article.
 - Step 5.* Have a professional picture taken.
 - Step 6.* Arrange bookings.
 - Step 7.* Practice.
 - Step 8.* Recruit for the engagement.
 - Step 9.* Prepare materials.
 - Step 10.* Do it.
 - Step 11.* Set appointments.
 - Step 12.* Congratulate yourself!
 - Step 13.* Follow up.
-

Step 1. Evaluate the Market and the Competition

Before you decide to become a public speaker, ask others if they think it's a good idea.

Remember the *marketing truth* from our introduction: *Marketing is a contact sport!*

We believe in using any excuse to get in front of a client or referral source because each "touch" keeps us fresh in their memory. Step 1 is a very good reason for contact.

People like to help other people and love to be asked for their advice. It makes them feel important and boosts their self-esteem. And outsiders can give you an objective evaluation of a situation, as they're not emotionally involved.

Sit down with a couple of clients and referral sources before you begin this project and ask them what they think about the idea. Do they know any people in your business who are really good public speakers? Who have they seen in the past? Where have they seen them? What topics do they think would be hot enough to draw people to an event? Whom do they know in organizations that you could plug into to get speaking engagements? Have they ever tried it? What were the results? Why?

This conversation is especially important if you have a relationship with the executive director of the association or other similar organization you are concentrating on. These people are usually extremely well-connected with other organizations, and simply by discussing it with them, you have already started marketing your services to their contacts. Directors can also help you by telling you what types of speeches have been good draws in the past and by plugging you into their counterparts in other groups.

Even if there is an accomplished, excellent public speaker in your business, don't give up quite yet. It's possible this person has had so much exposure that people are tired of hearing them. Also, his or her topics might be stale or limited.

Step 2. Invest in Yourself

Okay, you've decided to pursue public speaking. Don't make a mistake by thinking you can simply go out there and do it, just as you wouldn't want to embarrass yourself with important prospects by going golfing without ever having picked up a club or taking a lesson. Those of you who have done that know exactly how it feels to want to crawl under a rock.

Even if you've spoken publicly in the past before, are you as good as you should or could be? Here's an investment that will pay off dozens of times in your career, whether you are going to be a public speaker or not: Take the Dale Carnegie basic course "How to Win Friends and Influence People." (No, we're not being paid a commission to suggest that.) The Carnegie people will make you speak week after week in front of a good-sized group of fellow sufferers. They'll give you great feedback and show you the ropes regarding what it takes to be dynamic in front of an audience.

We know, you're probably thinking about how you took a speech course in college 20 years ago—well, forget that. We're talking real-world, practical experience here. Don't want to invest the time (an evening a week for 14 or so weeks), money, or effort? Then stop right here; you may not be serious enough to succeed at public speaking.

Real Life Marketing Example. We'll never forget the time one of our clients decided to try public speaking. He got an engagement and had a hot topic, and his organization did super public relations.

Against our advice, he skipped one basic step: getting good at public speaking. He didn't practice, had no training, and proceeded to make a complete fool out of himself in front of 90 important referral sources and prospective clients (and clients, too). Not only didn't he get any interest from the audience in his services (they couldn't wait to leave), he blew future opportunities to speak because no one in their right mind would ever allow him to do it again. And he embarrassed the program chairman of the organization who was kind enough to schedule and promote him. It was very painful to watch him struggle in front of an audience, but we're sure he felt much worse than we did! Don't follow in his shoes!

If you've been speaking for years, or you've already recently taken an intensive speaking course, the next thing you should do is hire a voice coach, a pro who can help you learn enunciation, projection, and body language. Such a coach will help you fill in the missing pieces and make you the best you can be. Be prepared: It might take you more than one or two sessions with a coach to get really good.

Step 3. Find a Hot Topic

How many boring, stale, and similar-sounding topics do you see written up in your community newspaper, chamber newsletter, or organization bulletin?

Your topic and title needs to be *hot*. People have got to look at it and say, “I’ve got to see that!”

So how do you find such a topic? Ask everyone you know, for starters. Tell them what your plans are and elicit their input. We promise you they will come up with more fresh ideas than you would on your own.

Or read the newspaper and everything else you can find with an eye for a theme that you can piggyback off of. What’s the media talking about now? Another impending tax hike? Lack of profitability of U.S. corporations? Employee fraud? Skyrocketing health care costs for employers? Predicted business or tax impact of a new administration?

Make your title and topic tangible. There will have to be solid reasons for people to want to invest their precious time with you at an event. By making the topic and title tangible, you add tremendous value in the eyes of the future attendee.

You can add tangibility to your topic by adding a number value to your title. For example, here’s one of my earliest and still most popular speeches: “The Three Biggest Mistakes Professionals Make in the Selling Situation.” There has always been a great response to it.

Other possible titles include:

- “Six Ways to Boost Your Bottom Line That You Haven’t Thought of Yet.”
- “Eight Ways to Beat the Consolidators at Their Own Game.”
- “Four Ways to Lower Your Health Care Costs Immediately.”
- “Nine Ideas to Save on This Year’s Tax Bite.”
- “Four Ways to Pass More on to Your Grandkids and Less to Uncle Sam.”
- “The Five Biggest Mistakes People Make When They Do Their Own Tax Return.”

You get the idea. All of the above titles are ones our clients in various cities have used to secure and produce winning speaking engagements.

Ideally, your topic should be unique—something nobody else is speaking about at the moment in exactly the same terms as you will.

Select a subject that allows you to show yourself off—something that ties into your already existing expertise, be it taxes, computer consulting, office or factory productivity improvements, or profit enhancement.

However, if someone brings you a topic to speak on, don’t shoot it down, even if you’ll have to research it at length. You might open up an entirely new market niche.

Real Life Marketing Example. One of our clients was approached by her women’s business club to speak on initial public offerings (IPOs). She knew nothing about the subject, but she saw an opportunity. She researched the subject for more than 40 hours over a two-month period of time.

She took our advice and wrote an article that was presented to the attendees at the program (and wasn't published until after her speech). It immediately established her credibility in the mind of the audience. She didn't volunteer the information that she had never done an IPO, but then again, nobody thought to ask.

Her engagement went so well she was immediately booked into two other engagements at different organizations. (Many times people in the audience will want to talk to you afterwards because they are looking for speakers.) She parlayed her contacts who had seen her speak into getting the article published. With the publishing of the article, she was seen as an expert in the community on IPOs. Today, she has successfully built a rewarding market niche for herself in the firm and in the community, as well as a sizeable book of business. She is well on her way to being a partner because of it.

Step 4. Write an Article

All right, you've studied and practiced to be a public speaker. You have a topic. You want to put together an outline for a speech and get booked. Not so fast!

We suggest that you write an article first. Below are some reasons why an article serves many important purposes to a public speaker.

Reason 1. It Establishes Credibility

What makes you think someone is going to take a chance on letting you speak in front of his or her group? If you're just breaking in, you'll need a reason for them to book you.

A published article gives someone an idea of who you are and what you know, and creates solid trustworthiness in your ability to communicate to an audience. It allows, in print, a sampling of your speech. Even an unpublished article can work; many of my first speaking engagements were booked based on a typeset article that was never published anywhere.

Reason 2. It Creates a Basis for Your Speech Topic

To write an article, and in the hopes it will get published, you must spend some quality time thinking the topic out and placing your ideas on paper where they will be refined and improved.

Reason 3. It's a Wonderful Promotional Tool

Sending a cover letter with an article is a sure "attention getter" to organizations you would like to speak in front of.

Reason 4. It Gives You Prepublicity

In publicizing your speech, an organization can use your article to promote your speech to the membership and public in its newsletter, thus increasing interest in the topic, giving you lots of free publicity, and boosting attendance at the speaking engagement.

Reason 5. It Acts Like a Follow-Up Mechanism

An article is a great follow-up tool to send program attendees after your speech. It reinforces the value of what they saw and heard and reminds them of who you are.

Reason 6. It's Something to Send Clients, Referral Sources, and Prospects

An article is a wonderful piece of public relations to send to your own clients and contacts, and a great precursor or follow-up to meetings with prospective clients. It acts as a superior follow-up with people you meet at networking events.

Reason 7. It's a Solid Basis to Get More Articles Published

It's easier to get published once you've been published. Even an unpublished article will help.

Reason 8. It's Something to Show Relatives and Friends

You can finally prove to your folks that you turned out okay after all! And it's a good reminder to your friends who should be referring business to you, but aren't.

Step 5. Have a Professional Picture Taken

It's a proven fact: Speaking engagements that are promoted using the speaker's picture are better "draws" than those that don't. People are much more likely to recognize you in the promotional materials than if your name is merely mentioned (more efficient marketing).

And, it's also proven that you are much more likely to get booked to speak if the program director or executive director sees what you look like ahead of time (you can enclose your picture when you send your article, outline, and speech proposal).

Spend the money to have your picture taken by a professional photographer. Have them shoot a black-and-white 5" x 7" portrait. They'll take a couple of dozen shots and you'll get to select the best one. After that many practice shots, even we came out with one good picture! Then have the studio "machine print" 3" x 5" copies in quantities of 50 (which cost about a dollar each). It's an excellent investment, and you'll need a picture anyway, to send with your future press releases.

Do *not* have your picture taken at one of those places in the mall that are designed to make you look like a movie star with the makeup and lighting. You are a professional person, not Madonna. Your picture needs to look like it belongs in the *Wall Street Journal*, not the *Enquirer*.

Step 6. Arrange Bookings

The best way to do this is to start from the inside out. List all possible sources of people who can book you to speak, such as executive directors, program chairmen, and people you know at the chamber or other organizations. Next, list clients and referral sources who would be nice enough to introduce you into organizations where you can speak.

Put together a package including your article, an outline of the speech, your biography, picture, and business card. As you accumulate them, insert evaluations and comments from

previous engagements. Go to an office supply store and place this material in a presentation folder (a nice folder will cost about a dollar or two).

It's always best to make contacts for speaking engagements person-to-person or on the phone, rather than through the mail. But you don't have to be that person arranging the engagements. In fact, it's better if you're not, as it looks less like self-promotion.

Save your time and give the information to your secretary, assistant, spouse, parent, staff—anybody—and have them call for you. Merely have him or her introduce himself or herself to the program chairman, and find out if they would like to schedule you to speak. Have your representative say he or she is filling out your speaking engagement schedule for this year and next. Chances are they'll ask for information, but you're prepared with your professional-looking packet.

In the beginning, take any speaking engagements you can get. Business and community clubs such as the Kiwanis and Rotary, among others, are always looking for speakers, as they have to fill up their weekly luncheons. Those are the places you can get your experience practicing on people for free.

As you get more proficient and better known for delivering excellent speeches, you can be more selective about who you'll want to be in front of. And get paid to do it, as well.

Step 7. Practice

Congratulations. You're booked to speak before the Rotary on October 3. You'll have 25 minutes. Now what?

Practice Tip 1. Practice Until You're Comfortable and Confident

Your job is to practice, practice, and practice before your dry run. Break your outline down into 3" x 5" cards by subject area. Take out a tape recorder and practice your speech in private. Time it; make sure you leave space for questions and answers. You'll want to avoid the cardinal sin of running over your allotted time.

Practice Tip 2. Visualize

Before you go to sleep at night, close your eyes for five or 10 minutes and visualize yourself speaking in front of the audience. See how the audience is responding well to you, how magnetic you are, how powerful you look, how the experience feels, and what it sounds like.

Practice Tip 3. Study a Great Speaker

Ever see Tom Peters speak on PBS or video? Sure, his material is excellent, but watch how he emotes and gets his audience involved. It's no wonder he's one of the most sought after, and highly paid, speakers in America.

And his material simply doesn't carry his message; if he weren't as powerful as he is, if he was a boring speaker, most of the audience would tune him and his message out.

Do we expect you to become the next Tom Peters? Not necessarily. We would like you to step out of your normal routine and be committed to becoming a strong speaker who attracts clients and referral sources by his or her very being.

If you can't catch Peters on TV, rent a video of him or someone like Les Brown (also frequently on PBS). Go see other speakers perform, professional and otherwise. Note what you like and dislike. Ask someone else in a different profession or business for their opinion, so you have a more balanced view; remember, unless you're speaking to an association of peers, it's highly likely you view the world differently from others in different vocations.

Practice Tip 4. Secure a Timer

You really should have a timer until you become an experienced pro (actually, even pros use them). Get one at the local electronics store (most timers will retail at \$15 or so). The timer allows you to see in big numbers exactly how much time you have left. Without it, relying only on your watch, the program chairman may cut you off when you run over. That is not good. Or you'll spend an inordinate amount of time staring at your watch, causing your audience to be aware of the time, too. You don't want distractions like that to happen; you want them to concentrate totally on you and your message.

Practice Tip 5. Do a Dry Run

Readers, this is what families and friends are for. You've never spoken before, or rarely, and now you'll be speaking to a group of 30 business people. It's time for a mock program. Invite family, friends, and anybody you can find over to your house for pizza on a Friday or Saturday night for a dry run. Expect this practice program to be the final preparation before your engagement. Besides family and friends, you can also use staff for a dry run on a Friday at lunch, perhaps where you bring in sandwiches.

Conduct your dry run as if it were exactly the real thing. Tell them you want questions, input, and real reactions. Your dry run will remove most of the fear of your real speaking engagement. Afterwards, have the audience give you their honest feedback.

Practice Tip 6. Do a Second Dry Run

Before I conducted my first professional, paid speaking engagement, I conducted two dry runs with different sets of people. First, I spoke in front of family and friends at home. Then I called in a lot of favors from more friends, relatives, and business associates for the second dry run, to put as many faces as possible in a room at a hotel that I rented specifically for this purpose. The second dry run was better than the first, but if it had been the real thing, it would not have been good enough.

I felt so comfortable after the second practice experience that my very first professional speaking engagement was a solid winner with great evaluations and offers to do two more—as well as appointments set that led to seven new clients.

Have your practice videotaped, if possible, so you can see yourself, where you need to improve, and where you did well.

Practice Tip 7. Determine the Most Comfortable Setup

The program chairman, or your liaison, will have to know your program setup. Sometimes you don't have a choice in the seating arrangement. If it's a luncheon or dinner meeting, chances are the tables will be circular. That's okay.

However, you still must be set-up most efficiently to properly present. We recommend the following:

- A bar stool (for you to sit on during your speech)
- A PowerPoint or overhead projector (You may have to bring one from your office; they are expensive to rent and the group may not do so; always ask for one and have them provide it if you can.)
- A screen
- At least one table up front near the projector to put your materials on
- A wireless microphone and/or large rooms for crowds of more than 30
- A flip chart and pens (to use in your presentation in case you need to illustrate a point)

The wrong arrangement can set you up for a bad reception.

Step 8. Recruit for the Engagement

Ever play poker in Las Vegas? At the tables you'll find people called skills. Skills are folks who work for the establishment and are filling seats at the table. You'll need your own skills at your first couple of speaking engagements. No, it's not illegal!

For your first couple of engagements, you're going to want people planted in the audience who absolutely adore you, find you fascinating, and ask questions, just in case no one else in the audience reacts as you'd like them to.

Group psychology is a fascinating subject. We promise you, based on many years of speaking experience, that you will definitely want fans seeded in your audience the first couple of times out; it will ensure a more positive reception, boost your confidence, and help you dramatically when you see some friendly faces out there.

If you don't have fans in the audience, and the program gets off to a sluggish start, or you don't know what to do because you're relatively new at public speaking, you could be in for a very long and painful adventure.

No, your fans shouldn't go overboard, nor should they announce that they are planted to make the event go better. Just have them be involved and look for everything positive in your program.

Also, get a copy of the promotional material for the event and send it to your clients, referral sources, and prospective clients. This will help ensure an interested audience.

Step 9. Prepare Materials

Attendees expect to receive handouts at seminars and speaking engagements. Make your handouts notable. No speaking engagement is complete without some sort of handout, and you can use this to your advantage by considering the following:

Visual Aids

People learn in different ways. Some people are more auditory, they like to talk on the phone and are apt to listen to tapes. Others are visual, they learn best by seeing. Some are kinesthetic, they learn best by doing or being shown the way.

Many speakers make the fatal error of using poor visual aids, or not using any at all. We strongly recommend a PowerPoint presentation or at the very, very minimum, overheads. Make them look as good as you possibly can; it's a reflection on you and your firm. You may use a flipchart with the pages neatly printed. Some experienced speakers use flip charts and do it as they go along to customize the presentation to the audience as an added benefit.

Promotional Materials for the Engagement

To maximize the impact of the speaking engagement, you'll want to put promotional materials in the hands of the audience, something of value they can take home or back to the office with your name, address, and if possible, photo on it. Perhaps it's a copy of your article, a firm brochure, or another article you've found on the same subject. This adds value to your engagement and is good marketing. Always include your biography and picture so people are more likely to remember you and contact you. Bring promotional materials with you (to ensure they get there) or send them ahead of time (it's easier, but they might get lost). Take some 3" x 5" cards with you to distribute to the audience for questions and contact information.

Promotional Materials for After the Engagement

Prepare your follow-up materials *before* you speak. Ideally, you should have that material mailed the day after the engagement in order to reach your audience's desks a day later—before they forget who you are. Follow-up material can include an article on the subject (yours or someone else's), but must include:

- *Something of value.* An article, pamphlet, summary of your speech, or case study are all good follow-up materials.
- *A personal letter.* Thank them for attending the program and suggest they contact you personally to discuss their situation, or any other accounting/consulting related needs (whatever you are selling).
- *Your business card.*

- *Your firm brochure.*
- *Optional: A bounce-back card.* Make it as easy as possible to have someone contact you after a speaking engagement. This card should be preaddressed to you and stamped. It should allow them to indicate their name, address, phone number, and when they want you to call them to set an appointment.

A Public Relations Piece

Compose a short public relations piece about the speaking engagement and topic and have it ready to send to the editor of your local newspaper after the program.

A Gift for the Audience (Optional)

You may want to give a popular business-related book away to someone in the audience as a way to show your appreciation for coming. Buy it ahead of time, so you don't forget. We'll discuss later how to use it to secure hot leads.

Step 10. Do It

If just doing it was easy, everybody would be a public speaker. Here are some final tips to consider.

Do It Tip 1. Look Your Absolute Best

Always remember that in marketing professional services, you have only yourself to market. People do business with other people. They refer and hire those they know, like, and trust. The great majority of your clients, future clients, and referral sources probably aren't peers. These "civilians" don't have a clue about how qualified you are, except by the way you look, sound, and "feel" to them, and how you conduct yourself.

Your actions in nonbusiness environments are understood by others as unvarying from your performance as a professional! They have no other way to judge you! So be powerful, enthusiastic, and vital. Make sure you look your absolute best.

Do It Tip 2. Do Voice Exercises

On your way to the program, do some voice exercises in your car. It is imperative that you sound your best and enunciate properly. Speaking in front of an audience requires much more flexibility in your mouth, lips, and vocal cords.

Here are some exercises you can practice to get better at public speaking and do right before an engagement:

Tongue Stretching. Your tongue really helps you enunciate words much more clearly and precisely if you stretch it out. Stick your tongue out of your mouth and rotate it around the circumference of your lips many times in each direction. You'll feel it loosen up and you'll have an easier time speaking.

Vocal Cords Stretching. Starting with a very low voice, slowly work your way up the alphabet, pronouncing each letter to its fullest expression. Once you get to the top of your vocal range, come back down and you'll notice you can go a bit further. This helps in eliminating a monotone and will stop you from slurring words. Do this several times.

Do It Tip 3. Bring a Spare Biography With You

Don't take the chance that the program chairman has lost your bio. It's important to be introduced properly.

Do It Tip 4. Get There Early, Set Up, and Mingle

You're as ready as you'll ever be. To help your speech be well received, introduce yourself and mingle with and touch as many people as you can. This is a proven winner in improving their reception of you and of what you will say and in setting appointments after the program. People are much kinder to others they have already met and know.

Say hi to the program chairman and executive director. They'll be delighted to see you early—they won't have to worry you're not going to show up!

You are a special guest now for them, even if you're a member of the organization. Review the room setup now to make sure you have everything perfectly laid out. About 98 percent of the time, the room arrangement and your setup will have to be corrected.

Ask the program chairman to kindly have your materials placed on the tables or chairs for the attendees. It always helps to have people reading your propaganda before you speak. It'll ensure their attention, because they know something about the topic; otherwise they may sit there for a while trying to figure out your topic as you've started speaking. Don't worry; they'll pay attention to *you* during the speech, not your hand-outs.

Lay out your speaking materials (overheads and such) now on the table set up front for you. Set up your projector and computer. This way you'll be totally prepared to speak when the time comes. Test the microphone. Check to see the pens with the easel are in working order.

Do It Tip 5. Eliminate Your Fear, Relax, and Enjoy the Meeting

If you're not ready by now, it's too late to be concerned. Every professional speaker gets some anxiety before going on. The way to deal with these normal fears (stage fright) is *not to fight the fear*. Trying to confront your fear by fighting it will only make it worse. Instead, accept it as being perfectly normal given the situation. You're supposed to be afraid when you take a risk, otherwise you'd be neurotic or nuts. Accepting fear and uneasiness as normal has a magical effect—it diminishes the fear and removes its power.

Do It Tip 6. Start With Confidence

Heeere's Johnny! The time has come. All your preparation will now bear the fruit in direct relation to your preparation. If you feel comfortable in your abilities, everything will flow very well—they'll love you.

Take a few deep breaths, put a great big smile on your face, and thank the program chairman for his or her introduction. Place your timer directly in front of where you can see it easily.

Never stand behind a podium. It blocks off 80 percent of your body and is boring to the audience. It's not all that easy to keep an audience awake, involved, and interested. Don't take two strikes against you and hide out. Come out and let them meet the real you—that's what they're buying.

Leave your joke book at home. Unless you're an accomplished comedian, this is not the time to practice for cable TV. Introduce yourself; say hello to the audience. Sit down on the bar stool; everyone's going to have a swell time.

Do It Tip 7. Get the Audience Involved From the Beginning

Remember, *you must get the audience involved emotionally from the very beginning*. This is not a college lecture; you're there to engage in a relationship with clients, referral sources, and lots of future clients—they're buying you!

All decisions to purchase, all decisions to give you excellent evaluations, all decisions to like you are made at the emotional level. A person sitting cross-armed staring at you is very tough.

We suggest you start your program with a question or two. Sometimes, we have participants bring filled-in questionnaires to the program. You can ask them to write down a couple of questions they would like to ask. You are the leader; they will follow your direction. Even the most difficult audiences we have ever faced have written down questions to ask at the beginning of a program. People are curious, or they wouldn't have come to hear you speak!

You can pass out 3" x 5" cards for questions and have them brought forward to read for larger groups. Here's how to do it: "Folks, kindly take out a pen and write down one or two questions or issues you'd like me to discuss tonight about the new tax act. I want to make sure you leave with what you wanted to learn."

Not everyone will have a question or issue, but plenty will.

Now, poll them to find out what they've written: "Okay, what did you write down?" Call on those who have raised their hands or respond to them if they've started talking to you. If no one raises his or her hand, call on someone: "Hi—what did you write down?"

Write down some questions using your flip chart. Never turn your back to the audience; write sideways, facing the audience.

"You wanted to know more about how the new tax act will affect your estate? Okay, we'll get to that."

At the end you can make sure you have covered the issues by merely reviewing the list at the front of the room. Starting a program with questions makes it look like you are concerned and want to do your best job. It's a proven fact from evaluations: People (not

necessarily you; we're speaking of the audience in general) don't care as much for speakers who already have all of the answers and don't consider the audience's input.

By this interaction with your audience, you have come to their level and begun the involvement of their emotions. This can be done with a group of six to 600. Size makes no difference.

Although this step is strongly suggested, it is not mandatory. Without getting the audience involved in this way, you have now put the burden of reaching them emotionally totally on the content and delivery of your speech.

Do It Tip 8. Speak English

We recently attended a program attended by more than 150 prospective clients on taxation conducted by a CPA firm. The organization did a great job of getting people there.

Once the program started, however, the speaker left everyone cold. Standing behind a lectern, staring stone-faced into the audience, the speaker spoke a language few in the audience knew and understood: Accounting-ese.

Declare a jargon-free zone. Never use jargon unless speaking to your peers.

It is a sure turnoff to attendees when they don't understand the terminology you are using. Rather than potentially embarrass themselves, they will generally not ask for clarification, but merely turn you off, seeing you as another typical accountant, and leave upset for having wasted their time listening to someone they couldn't understand.

Explain yourself and terminology. Never assume your audience knows any technical term.

Do It Tip 9. Don't Forget to Use the Visual Aids and the Flip Chart

They will help bring your points across and add interest to the presentation.

Do It Tip 10. Play Oprah Winfrey

Be open and engaging. Ask the audience questions during your speech. If you were doing a program on future taxation expectations during the next four years, you might ask, "How many people think that income taxes will go up over the next four years? Why?"

People love to express their opinions and it causes the entire audience to think (and thus be more involved).

Do It Tip 11. Tell Stories

Cite interesting case studies, experiences you have had or your clients have experienced (without divulging their identity, of course, unless you have their permission).

If you are speaking about how to add more dollars to a company's bottom line, you might offer a few suggestions and then explain what the result was for one of your clients.

These “third-party references” add credibility to your ideas. You might consider preparing a case study like this as a handout and guide to leave with or send afterwards to your audience.

Do It Tip 12. Leave Time for Q&A

Questions and answers allow you to show off best how well you know the subject matter. Tell the audience you will stick around afterward to answer any questions they might have.

Do It Tip 13. Use 3" x 5" Cards to Make Postspeaking Engagement Contact

Marketing is a contact sport! Parlay as much contact as you can from this one engagement. Earlier, we suggested you prepare follow-up materials before the engagement so as to get your materials into the mail ASAP.

Many organizations will give you a list of attendees (it’s the least they can do considering the effort you put into your speech, and they know it). Secure it before you leave or have them fax it to you the next morning.

Another way to leave with that information is to use the 3" x 5" cards we suggested you bring with you to the program.

Ask the audience if they would be interested in the additional material you can mail them on the subject matter. Distribute the 3" x 5" cards and tell the audience all they have to do is fill them out and pass them forward if so inclined.

Do It Tip 14. Give Away a Gift

A surefire way to get all of the cards back is to now give away your gift of appreciation for allowing you to speak to their fine group. People love to win things for free, even if they’ll never use them.

If you’ve purchased a book, tell them someone will select the winner if they fill out the cards for the follow-up information. Have the cards passed forward and have someone in the audience select a winner. You now will have close to 100 percent of the attendees’ names and information.

Do It Tip 15. End on Time

Everyone will appreciate it.

Step 11. Set Appointments

The period immediately following the program is vital to setting appointments. Stay as long as you can; if they like what they’ve heard and seen, you must be prepared to set appointments *right now*.

Have your calendar in your hands. Some people will walk right up and say that you need to get together. Set the appointment. You may have people literally waiting in line to speak to you. If you see someone slipping away, get their card and ask if you should call them.

Step 12. Congratulate Yourself

You did it!

Flatter yourself on accomplishing something most people would never dream of undertaking. Never beat yourself up after a speaking engagement. Always look first for what was positive. There are sure to be things you can do better next time out; that's true for the most experienced speakers.

Step 13. Follow Up

Don't let the euphoria of finishing a speaking engagement alive make you forget to perform these crucial follow-up tasks:

- Immediately send a personal note or flowers, or both, to the people who booked you.
- Have the names put into a database and get the follow-up materials out now.
- Multiply your effectiveness by mailing the public relations piece now.
- Set appointments now.

Our experience is that you will never have hotter leads than people who have asked you to call them after a speaking engagement. Remember, as soon as they left your program, they became reinvolved in their lives. The longer you wait, the colder that lead gets.

Your follow-up phone call will sound like this:

Them: ABC Company.

You: Bob Smith, please. Please tell him Jake Drake is calling.

Bob: Bob speaking.

You: Bob? Hi, It's Jake Drake, how are you?

Bob: Jake—good morning. Enjoyed your speech last night.

You: Thank you so very much. I hope everyone found it rewarding.

Bob: Oh, I think so; I did.

You: Good. Do you have your calendar close by? You said we should get together.

Bob: Sure. Hold on.

You: When would you like to get together for lunch? What's your availability?

After setting the appointment for lunch, you can ask Bob some informational questions about him and his company. Have Bob do some homework for your meeting; it's a lot easier to have a meaningful appointment if the prospect comes prepared and has made an investment of time. This leads to a much higher closing ratio:

You: O.K. We're set for the 20th at 11:45 a.m. I'll pick you up at your place. Please do me a favor. Take a couple of minutes to write down two or three issues we need to discuss, and I'll do the same on my end. Is that okay?"

This will make sense to Bob and shows how thorough and prepared you are.

Finally, call your friends, clients, and referral sources who attended. Get their feedback, positive and negative.

Multiply the marketing impact of the presentation. Some of your clients may now want to set an appointment to talk to you about your subject matter to do additional work. Referral sources and allies may now want to introduce you to their clients about your subject matter.



CONCLUSION

Some points from the beginning of the chapter bear repeating at the end.

- Public speaking may be the fastest way to boost your practice because it can expose you to many prospective clients at one time, thus giving you the opportunity to set appointments that lead to business.
- Being an accomplished public speaker is not a short-term project. It must be taken seriously and will require you to invest time, effort, energy and likely, money. But your investments will pay off, as you become an accomplished speaker, thereby obtaining the results you want.

EXHIBIT 14-1: SELF-MARKETING EXERCISE: THE JOY OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

1. List a sampling of public speaking engagements you have conducted personally and seminars you have participated in:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

2. List the tangible results you secured as the result of these marketing efforts (for example, the number of new clients, number of referrals, additional services sold, etc.):

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____


3. Pick one of the above activities. What would you have done differently, given the chance, to improve it?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____



HOW TO WRITE
ARTICLES AND
GET PUBLISHED

chapter 15

Having an article published, like giving a speech or seminar, can be a very important step to building your career. Both of these public relations tools will give you excellent exposure (by putting you in front of the people you want to reach) and credibility (hey, you're obviously an expert in your field—after all, you taught the class, conducted the seminar, gave the speech, and wrote the article).

Marketing Truth. Being published gives exposure that is invaluable to increasing your business and can't be bought.



THE VALUE IN GETTING PUBLISHED

It's much easier for potential clients to buy your services when they regard you as an authority in your field (it removes their fear of doing business with you). In addition to attracting new clients and allies, you can reinforce your expertise and increase your value to existing clients and referral sources through these proactive public relations efforts.

As mentioned in Chapter 14, getting published can help lead to speaking engagements. Being published not only increased your visibility, but your credibility as well. A few other benefits of being published include:

- *It's something to send clients, referral sources, and prospects.* An article is a wonderful piece of public relations to send to your own clients and contacts, and a great precursor or follow-up to meetings with prospective clients. It acts as a superior follow-up with people you meet at networking events.
- *It's something to show relatives and friends.* You can finally prove to your folks that you turned out okay after all! And it's a good reminder to your friends who should be referring business to you, but aren't.



AN EIGHT-STEP PROCESS TO WRITE ARTICLES AND GET PUBLISHED

The following steps are central to our discussion in this chapter.

-
- Step 1.** Think about and decide on the audience.
 - Step 2.** Select the periodicals.
 - Step 3.** Decide what you want to publish.
 - Step 4.** Do your precontact homework.
 - Step 5.** Make contact.
 - Step 6.** Write and rewrite the article.

Note: Special thanks to Stella Ashen for her input and guidance on this chapter. She has helped us publish dozens of articles over the years.

Step 7. Thank the editor.

Step 8. Play this article for all it's got!

Step 1. Think About and Decide on the Audience

Since grade school, no writing assignment could be started, let alone finished, until the writer was able to identify his or her audience. Remember all those fourth-grade lessons where the teacher spoke of themes in writing? You can use it here. It's very important to ask yourself the following questions before seriously entering the writing field.

- Who do you want to reach? What's your target audience?
- Who are the people you want to have credibility with?
- Who are the people you want to be familiar with your talents?

Step 2. Select the Periodicals

Consider what types of periodicals your targeted individuals might read, such as business newspapers and magazines, newsletters related to their profession and interests, and association publications.

Poll some of your targets. You don't want to waste time getting published in the wrong publication. The best way to find out where you want to be published is to ask clients like the ones you want to attract and referral sources that feed into that business. There may be some you haven't heard of.

There may also be an e-zine devoted to your field. A number of periodicals also maintain companion Web sites with different content than their print parent. A Web search will help discover if there is an appropriate Internet outlet for your content.

Research is a necessity here. Renew that library card if you need to. Research all the possible newspapers, magazines, and newsletters that apply to your target group.

There are several excellent, comprehensive reference sources for this information, including the *Oxbridge Directory of Newsletters and Business Publications, Rates and Data*. These sources will provide information on numerous periodicals you may want to target.

When choosing your targeted publications, you'll want to pay close attention to items such as who the readers are, circulation numbers, and so on. Note: circulation numbers are relevant only to a point.

Although everyone might like to be featured in a prominent, general business publication such as the *Wall Street Journal*, it's *much* more likely that you'll (first) be published in smaller periodicals, especially ones targeted to your specific area of expertise. This is not necessarily bad, because in this manner, you reach the exact audience you want to target (as opposed to business people in general). The numbers may be smaller, but your article is more likely to be read and acted upon by the people you want to reach.

After researching the periodicals, you can begin to narrow your choices. Using the reference books, create a list of the periodicals you're interested in. Note important data, in particular all the information about the editor, including name, address, and phone number.

Step 3. Decide What You Want to Publish

Perhaps you've already written a brilliant article that you believe would be perfect for trade publications. Or maybe you have an excellent idea for an article or even just the desire to write and be published. At this point, you need to give serious consideration to what it is you'd like published.

Consider your options. All of these are fine, because each periodical works differently; you'll simply need to apply yourself to the process of getting published and find the system that works best for you.

Step 4. Do Your Precontact Homework

Before going ahead, some preplanning is needed.

- *Create a quick introduction of yourself.* Tell the editor about your background and why you're an expert in the field.
- *Put together your mini-presentation.* Devise a catchy title for the article and describe the content of your piece, why you feel the readers will be interested in the article and topic, and the benefit to the reader from the information contributed.
- *Create a couple of alternative topics, titles, and outlines.* Keep flexible, just in case the editors you speak with aren't interested in your primary article. Why get shut out after you've made it this far?

Real Life Marketing Example. In February, 1992, I (Allan) had a featured cover article in the *Journal of Accountancy*. Amazingly, clients and participants at speaking engagements still remember it and mention it to me.

This article, "Building Entrepreneurial People," led to my book of the same name published in 1995 and to speaking engagements from Canada to Brazil to Europe. The following is my "precontact homework" that I saved on my computer for that initial conversation with an editor at the *Journal*:

Quick introduction (1991): "Hi! My name is Allan Boress, and I am a Florida CPA. I've been a consultant to the CPA profession since 1980, and have worked with many firms in the areas of sales, marketing and practice management. The AICPA is publishing my new course, *The I-Hate-Selling Course*, this year.

Mini-presentation: "I've noticed in recent issues there has been more of an emphasis on the nontechnical, practice management aspects of being a CPA. Have you had good response from the readership? [*I assumed answer is yes, or they wouldn't continue to run the articles.*]

“Over the last couple of years I have noticed a serious interest in grooming younger people to take more of a leadership role in the management of many firms as the partners contemplate their retirement and selling to the next generation. I believe that this is the biggest issue facing the profession at this time from a practice management view.

“Accountants are not known for their leadership or business development skills and I would like to do an article for the *Journal* on this very subject: building entrepreneurial people. I want to put together a process whereby firms can progressively groom their younger people for leadership roles and practice development.

“Might you have an interest in it?”

Alternative topics, titles, and outlines: Plan B: “Marketing in Recessionary Times”—How to boost a firm’s top line revenue in a difficult economic environment. Plan C: “Why Clients Leave”—The 10 top reasons CPA firms lose clients.

Step 5. Make Contact

Now comes the hard part. Your next undertaking will be to systematically contact each and every editor of your targeted publications to find out how you can best work together.

You might send a letter initially, but—as mentioned in other chapters—the best type of marketing is person-to-person contact. It’s better to call first and then send information. The one-on-one phone call will help you tailor your materials to the individual you’re trying to create a relationship with.

If you have an article you’d like published, you can offer your article to see if the editor is interested in publishing it. That’s why you prepared a mini-presentation in the previous step. In this situation, the best route is to describe the content of the piece, why you believe the editor’s readers may be interested in it and the benefit from the knowledge imparted.

After you’ve greeted the editor, this initial conversation can go different ways:

- The editor may be curious and request that you send the piece for him or her to read. If not, you can still work on getting published in that periodical.
- You might “strike out” with the article you’ve already written. Try discussing other topics, titles and ideas for articles that you feel may appeal to the readers. This also works if you don’t have an article to begin with. You’re prepared from step 4.

Here are some helpful hints:

- Make a determined effort to check out the periodical beforehand, so you know what its articles are like. If you cannot get this particular publication, try to read others in the same vein (you should be doing this anyway, as this is your selected field of expertise and you need to stay current on the issues, as well as what others are doing).

- Suggest topics that you feel are appropriate and listen intently to the editor's response. The editor may like one or more of your ideas and suggest that you submit an article for review.

Make no mistakes; this is a sales call. You want to “sell” the editor on you. Trying to gain his or her trust that you will produce an educational, intelligent, and readable article that will inform and stimulate the publication's readers as well as attract new ones.

If you “strike out” again, you still have one more option: asking the editor to assign you an article.

It's possible that this editor has several issues planned ahead, and is looking only for very specific pieces to fill his or her publication. Or, there may be ego involved: the editor may want complete control over the periodical, to the point where he or she decides personally on each topic.

At any rate, if you've got no articles ready and don't have any specific ideas (or, if you've “struck out” with all of these), ask the editor what pieces he or she is looking to fill for upcoming issues. Perhaps each issue has a theme, and you can do a piece that directly relates.

Ask what topics will be covered in the near future, and chime in when you feel you could contribute something to the topic or issue. If the editor requests that you do an article about something you know nothing about, say yes anyway. It's likely that you may need to do research for any article anyway; don't let that stand in your way.

This is similar to the example we cited in the chapter on public speaking regarding the CPA who didn't know anything about initial public offerings but accepted a speaking engagement on the topic anyway. This is your chance to investigate a new area, learn something, get published, and possibly carve out a new (profitable!) market niche.

There is no downside to accepting this challenge, except your time investment (don't worry about the possibility of bad publicity; if the article doesn't turn out well, it won't be published).

Step 6. Write and Rewrite the Article

Okay—you've got the go-ahead from the editor; he or she wants an article from you!

If the piece is already written, review it and rewrite it if necessary to best fit the publication and editor's needs. Send it immediately, along with your promotional materials (your bio, a picture, and your firm brochure).

If you need to write the article, make sure you understand and plan the article to meet the deadline you agreed to. Then, do the necessary research, write a draft, and have some peers and colleagues review it.

Incorporate their material comments and ideas, and redo the piece. Do this until you feel comfortable you are providing the best written, most informative article you can generate in the time allowed.

This whole process may sound tougher than it is. After all, you are knowledgeable in your field. You simply need to organize your ideas and then express them in a way that will interest the reader. The editor will help you with this during the editing process.

Next, call the editor, refresh his or her memory about you and your article, and say it's on the way (make it double-spaced, and send hard copy with a disk or e-mail the file).

You may want to call the editor about a week or so after you've sent your article, to get feedback and to inquire about if and when it will be published. Time frames vary greatly. It's possible that you could appear in the next month's issue, but it's more likely that it will be four to six months or even a year before your article will be printed.

Don't forget to request a copy of the publication after you are published. And make sure to secure one in case they forget to send it to you.

In the meantime, you can offer other articles to that editor, as well as continue to pursue getting published in many other periodicals. In this manner, if you persevere, you're likely to be published in more than one place, perhaps several at the same time. *That produces phenomenal market impact.* Won't that be impressive to your colleagues, clients, and prospects (not to mention friends, family and peers)?

In time, as you persevere in your writing pursuits, it is quite likely that you will establish excellent relationships with certain editors. As you build a rapport with these individuals, and as they become confident about the quality of your work, they may be willing to publish you quite often. Perhaps these editors will start to call you to request articles, and they may even solicit you to write a monthly column.

Remember, every time you give a speaking engagement or publish an article, you're opening a door that will make it that much easier to get booked or published the next time. People will refer others to you, and you will become an established, sought-after authority in the field.

Step 7. Thank the Editor

Every time you get published, the editor goes out on a limb for you. He or she is taking the chance that your piece will be very well received, or at least conjure up some controversy that will attract interest and attention to the publication.

This may sound menial to you, but so many people forget: Send a thank-you note or make a personal call immediately after receiving a copy of the publication. A sample thank you letter is included in Exhibit 15-1, "Sample Thank You Letter to an Editor." Ask for feedback; you've worked hard and gone the extra mile on this, so it should be excellent.

Step 8. Play This Article for All It's Got!

Get permission to reprint the article and start sending it to everyone you know: your clients, allies, people on committees, prospective clients, clients who haven't hired you in

the past, clients who have fired you—this is the perfect opportunity to toot your own horn a little. Make sure to distribute it to everyone in the firm (this is called internal marketing). Put it on the bulletin board in the coffee room.

Remember, by taking the initiative and showing that marketing efforts do come to fruition, you are paving the way for others in the firm to follow your example.

Expect to send a couple hundred copies with a cover letter or just a post-it note saying, “FYI—Thought you’d be interested in my latest article. What do you think? Fred.”

Send the article to people who can book you for speaking assignments. Use it as a follow-up to conversations with anyone you meet, especially prospective clients.

You’ll have people calling you; you’ll have people coming up to you at chambers of commerce and other meetings, saying they loved (or disagreed with) the article. Both responses are okay—you caught their attention!

If you are serious about building your practice through articles, consider writing at least one every year.

Real Life Marketing Example. Brian, a participant in one of our courses at a state society, approached us at the lunch break about how we felt about getting published and how to do it. For the next hour we coached him as we have just coached you. He was a bit reluctant to do all that was required as we suggested—after all, he was a busy professional.

However, getting published, at least once, was a long-time desire. He also wanted to develop his niche as a business consultant both in his geographic area and nationally, in his specialty of business succession and estate and financial planning. So he gave it a shot.

Nine months later, Brian gave us a call. He had done exactly what we had recommended. His article had been published four months previously and he had sent copies to just about everyone he had ever met, including some lost clients.

As we stated earlier, marketing is a contact sport. Prospective buyers are always some place in a buying cycle between “not interested” to “let’s do it.”

Brian caught four people he had previously met and spoken to at the prime time in the buying cycle; they were now ready to hire him. He also won over three clients *who had fired him over high fees* who now wanted to rehire him.

He parlayed the article into three local speaking engagements, picking up another eight clients, and he was scheduled to speak eight months down the road, at a national conference in front of 200 potential clients.

He contracted for two additional articles with the same publication and three articles in other publications.

Net result, in nine months from one article: over \$100,000 in new business.



CONCLUSION

Getting published, like other marketing endeavors, is not always easy. It requires you to exert a certain amount of initiative and effort.

However, the key element is often the desire to see your article and your name in print. If this desire is strong enough, it will sustain you through the challenge of researching publications and contacting editors, writing articles, and doing follow-up work.

Throughout this process, always remember that there are many potential rewards at stake: By publishing an article in a professional periodical, you are establishing yourself as an expert in your field. You are calling attention to yourself in a most positive manner. Clients, potential clients, referral sources, peers, friends, and relatives will likely be quite impressed with your achievements in this area. You will command new respect and credibility.

Handled properly, a published article cannot help but increase your bottom line. The more you pursue this marketing mechanism, the more exposure you'll get, and the greater effect you'll see on the growth of your practice.

EXHIBIT 15-1: SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER TO AN EDITOR

February 9, 20XX

Dear Chloe,

It has been a dream of mine to be featured in *Brainy Consulting* ever since I read my first issue at the outset of my career. I believe your publication helped influence me to become a consultant to the manufacturing industry.

Thank you so much for publishing my article, “Taking the Bite Out of Tax Time,” in the February issue. So far I have received no less than two dozen calls and e-mails, so we know it made an impact!

My next article is on charitable giving and the manufacturing industry. I will pass it along to you as soon as it is complete!

Thanks again,

Jonathan R.



**HOW TO CONDUCT
SEMINARS THAT
SECURE NEW
BUSINESS**

chapter 16

Some firms generate substantial amounts of new business from seminars; the great majority don't.

Our experience, and that of our clients, shows us that seminars can be a tremendous drain on financial assets, time, effort, energy, and lost morale due to the failure of tracing new business to seminars. Yet, some firms create seminars that are “multiplication marketing”: programs that put them in front of a number of qualified, interested prospects ready to buy, who then do purchase.

However, over the years, increasing numbers of firms have conducted more seminar programs, thus diluting the interest in, and response to, seminars as a viable marketing tool for professional service firms. So, to reap the benefits of multiplication marketing, you'll have to be better at it than your competition.

In this chapter we'll discuss what the pratfalls are of doing seminars. Plus we'll show you how those firms that create business from them do it.



SUMMARY OF PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH CONDUCTING SEMINARS

Here are the general problems associated with putting together and conducting seminars for CPA firms.

- *Professionals don't see seminars for what they really are.* Much more than educating the public or getting the word out, seminars offer a rare opportunity to market to many prospective clients at one time.
- *It's difficult to get people to attend seminars.* Even though it is a time-consuming activity for prospective and existing clients, the content of most seminars is boring.
- *Seminars are expensive and time-consuming to conduct.*
- *It's not impressive if attendance is low at a seminar.* Small audiences may reflect badly on the firm to prospective and existing clients.
- *It is difficult to make your seminar program sound much different or better than a competitor's program.*
- *It can be next to impossible to get partners or managers to talk to prospective clients before, during, or after the program.*
- *It is difficult to follow up on leads effectively after the program.*

Following are the problems you and the firm can expect when undertaking the production of a seminar, if managed and conducted incorrectly or half-heartedly:

- *Enormous amounts of billable time can be wasted on a marketing project that doesn't yield results.*

- *The opportunity to sell those who do attend the program may be lost because of poor qualification procedures before or during the seminar or poor follow-up.*
- *A seminar can be a wasted marketing opportunity, as the professional doesn't realize that mere education is not enough to move people into action.*
- *A seminar can send the wrong message to prospective clients.* Prospective and existing clients can actually become upset because they are ignored or not made to feel special at a seminar program. They will wonder if this treatment is an indication of how they would feel as a client: "Didn't these people invite me here because they believed I might have an interest or concern in this area? Is this, then, how responsive they'll be if I have a problem?" one client of a firm recently told us.
- *You run the risk of lack of service to potential clients that need you but—because you didn't know, weren't willing to conduct the program in an appropriate manner, or weren't willing to take risks—that continue on with inappropriate service from their existing resources.*
- *It can make the firm and you look like an "also ran" or second-rate operation if you run the same seminars as everyone else.*
- *Psychological investment in the wrong situations can result in feelings of failure and rejection and negative reinforcement to continue pursuit of marketing your services.*
- *There is an opportunity cost of not securing other prospective clients who would be interested in buying your services, because you were wasting your valuable business development time conducting a seminar that was doomed to failure, or you attracted prospective clients who couldn't buy your services.*

Real Life Marketing Example. An East Coast office of what was then a Big 8 firm formed a new consulting unit to market the solution to a perceived need in their target marketplace. A marketing function was formed to create business for this new unit from existing and prospective clients.

It was decided to kick off this new service in a big way. The marketing unit allocated the majority of its annual promotion budget to a seminar program that would attract enough clients and business for them to parlay into additional future marketing efforts.

Prominent speakers were flown in from all over the country. A targeted mass mailing was sent out to 2,000 existing and potential clients. Articles were published on the subject material and even an interview on a business-related television show was obtained.

The day of reckoning came. A total of 162 possible buyers showed up for a half-day seminar on the subject. The marketers were elated at the turnout. They began projecting all the new business (and their promotions) that would result from the program.

They were going to be heroes!

Unfortunately, the partners attending the program kept to themselves and virtually ignored the attendees. There was neither dialogue nor closure for appointments at the program. All had a good time, and they went their own way.

A list of participants was generated and doled out to partners to make follow-up calls for appointments. One partner made eight phone calls, resulting in one appointment and no sales.

No tangible results, or business, were produced. The marketing department fell flat on its face and received critical evaluations from the partners because no new business was generated for the \$200,000 expenditure.



AN EIGHT-STEP PROCESS TO CONDUCT SEMINARS THAT SECURE NEW BUSINESS

How does a firm get a busy executive to attend a seminar?

There's no question that attracting your target audience, be they business executives, retirees with money, or bankers, to a seminar is a tough job. Luckily, there are some models of success—those firms who consistently attract and convert business clients using seminars.

How do they do it? Below are the steps needed to make seminars into a “multiplication marketing” vehicle for you and your firm. We will discuss each step.

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- Step 1.** Design the Seminar Based on What You Want to Happen
 - Step 2.** Ponder the Best Logistics for the Highest Turnout
 - Step 3.** Market the Program to Boost Attendance
 - Step 4.** Invite Your Target Audience
 - Step 5.** Ensure Optimum Attendance
 - Step 6.** Prepare for the Seminar
 - Step 7.** Market at the Seminar
 - Step 8.** Follow Up to Maximize the Impact
-

Step 1. Design the Seminar Based on What You Want to Happen

What is your purpose in conducting the seminar in the first place? Is it simply to get your clients and referral sources together as a way of keeping in touch and adding value to the relationship? Below are some items to consider when designing your seminar.

Decide What You Want to Have Happen

Do you want to attract new business as the result of the seminar? Yes, we believe, for the sake of client and referral relations, a seminar by itself is fine, but our goal is to help you create additional business right now, so we will coach you from that viewpoint.

Don't misunderstand. A seminar as a marketing event must never come across as one, per se. You never want anyone to leave saying that it was a waste of time and just designed to sell your services. No, the attendee must get real value for attending the program and must never feel pressured into doing something. That's why you have to decide ahead of time exactly what you want to have happen as the result of the program:

- What do you want to market?
- How many leads do you want to generate?
- How many people (prospective clients including current clients who can buy additional services and referral sources) do you want to attend?

Test Relevance of Topic

Executives, and people in general, are bombarded with all sorts of promotional material and competing demands for their time and attention. Before you do anything, talk to a few of your clients who are representative of the type of person you want to attract. You want to make certain that your topic is relevant to your target audience.

Brainstorm possible topics and guest speakers that would serve to draw a crowd of the right prospects. This will ensure that you aren't offering a run-of-the-mill seminar. Remember, positioning your seminar properly is essential for impact.

Most professionals go into a closet and try to figure this information out for themselves. Don't do that—let others, your target market, drive the exact type of seminar you will produce.

Also, decide on the length of the program; again, go to your clients and other resources for input as to how long they think the optimum program should be.

Identify Resources Available

Now that you've come up with some topics, how are you going to produce it? Do you have resources in-house that can conduct or create the program?

Find a Co-sponsor With a Good Client Base

The seminars that draw best are typically a cooperative effort among strongly allied organizations such as banks, venture capital firms, law firms, or associations. Using this approach, each co-sponsor can invite its clients and prospective clients, and jointly fund a more intensive marketing program.

Real Life Marketing Example. A young partner was trying to build a personal financial planning practice as part of his overall mix. His revenue goals were *very* modest: He wanted to add \$10,000 to \$15,000 in business over the next year or so.

However, he really wasn't getting anywhere. It seemed like everybody was in the business—insurance agents, brokers, and bankers. Also, many prospects were reluctant to invest in the fees he had to charge in order to do a good job. This was also an area where many people procrastinated. So, he was looking for a unique twist to offering this service.

He decided to put together a workshop. Over a series of four two-hour sessions, he would take people through all the steps needed to build a personal financial plan. In this way, the attendees could accomplish any analytical work necessary as “homework” in between the sessions. Also, reading assignments cut down on the “lecture time” required in the course. After the session, he would spend an hour or so reviewing the financial plan with each attendee individually.

To market the course, he contacted a number of civic, church, and business groups and worked out an arrangement. He would charge \$95 per person for his time per person, and the group could add on whatever markup they desired. But the sponsor would market the course and be responsible for duplicating all materials.

Over the next three months, three organizations sponsored these “group consulting” workshops. Over 40 people attended, generating close to \$4,000 in attendance fees. Also, five of these people asked to schedule an “annual update” meeting with him at his standard rates. With this success, the CPA is looking for other organizations to target.

Feature Clients as Speakers

The most persuasive salesperson for your firm is a satisfied client. And, in many cases, an executive would be more interested in hearing the views of a prestigious peer rather than one of your partners.

Feature an Ally as a Speaker

Prospective clients are much more likely to attend seminars with, and newspapers and other publications are much more likely to promote, a speaker who could be considered a “big deal.” This speaker could be an ally who is an expert in the field or someone else who will draw some excitement.

Special speakers also create an aura of importance and vitality around a seminar for partners and staff that may not exist for programs conducted by in-house talent. This significance is more likely to motivate partners and staff into action regarding inviting, cooperating, and following up on the seminar.

A key factor in step one is knowing your strengths and limitations in a topical area. In the following example, we present a CPA who realized an “ally” was needed and was proactive enough to seek out the more experienced expert and develop a mini-seminar that worked for both of them.

Real Life Marketing Example. This is a “mini seminar” where you feature a well-known luminary as a way to attract attendance. You also carve out a portion of the seminar to promote a service yourself. In other words, you “piggyback” off of the guru’s speech in order to help promote your service.

A partner knew that he was onto an important service area, ISO 9000 financial and accounting procedures. But he was not equipped to speak expertly on the manufacturing issues involved in ISO 9000.

He noticed that a major publisher had just published a fast selling book on ISO 9000. A top quality consultant he knew slightly wrote it. He called up this guru and cut a deal. If the man would come to the partner's city, the partner would cover his travel expenses and buy 35 copies of his book. In addition, he would organize a "mini seminar" and promote it to his clients, contacts, and prospects.

The partner organized the seminar, and 20 clients and 15 prospective clients showed up. His managing partner welcomed the group and gave an introduction to the firm. Then the partner introduced the guru who conducted an excellent session. Toward the end, the accounting partner highlighted his work in the financial and accounting end of ISO 9000.

As a result, the accounting partner landed three more client engagements, and arranged three sales interviews with nonclients. Unexpectedly, the guru also agreed to introduce the accounting partner to some of *his* clients in his hometown.

Elect a "Controller"

We suggest one person be in control of this entire, thorough process. That doesn't mean one person has to do everything. A time budget needs to be developed and responsibilities must be delegated to those who will be helping to put the program together and participate in it.

This process has to be carefully managed for the program to come off as planned. Everyone involved has different priorities; the seminar may not be at the top of all lists. Someone must bear final authority and responsibility in order to pull it off smoothly.

Step 2. Ponder the Best Logistics for the Highest Turnout

Remember the old adage "location, location, location" and consider your target market when deciding upon a site. One firm asked us why they were getting such a poor turnout at their estate planning seminars. When we discovered who their target client was, including their already existing clients who could use the service, we quickly knew why: They were attempting to draw affluent people to a client's hotel that was somewhat run down (and they rented at a discount, of course). Although their heart was in the right place by trying to give their client the business, they were also going the cheap route and turning off those people who don't want to go to discount motels.

If you don't know where to conduct a program, ask your clients where they would like to go (and also what refreshments they'd like served); ask your allies who have successfully conducted programs of their own, as well.

Make it easy to attend. Remove obstacles to attending. Offer brief sessions (one to two hours) during breakfast hours, lunch hours, and after work. Offer the same session in multiple locations so travel is made easier for participants.

Step 3. Market the Program to Boost Attendance

Below are a few tips on marketing the program.

Marketing Tip 1. Position the Session as a Smaller, Elite Briefing

Appeal to the egos of executives and anyone else you want to attract. Tell them that you are intentionally keeping the numbers of attendees down so the group can share ideas with their peers. Also, be cautious about using the word seminar; it turns some people off.

Marketing Tip 2. Develop a Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

Everyone is bombarded with promotional materials vying for their attention. *To grab their consideration you need something distinctive—with a clear personal payoff for them.* That's going to be the USP.

- What makes this seminar important to the target?
- How would he be better off if he showed up?
- Do you have any unique ideas that can't be found in other places?

A sample USP:

We have helped more companies in the Metropolis tri-county area boost their bottom line than any firm we can find. Last year our average consultation resulted in a 86.32% increase in net profits for client companies.

Marketing Tip 3. Use the “30-Second” Rule for Promotional Copy

When you design the letters or flyers that will promote your seminar, start with the assumption that you'll have the reader's attention for approximately 30 seconds. That is the maximum time that a typical executive will realistically spend in browsing over your material. You need to grab their attention with your headline, graphics, and bold-faced selling messages.

Using bullet points and brief, action-oriented copy can draw them into reading more of your selling messages. Think of your brochure as a TV commercial—a 30-second spot to get your message across clearly and effectively. Sample copy is included in Exhibit 16-1, “Sample Letter or Flyer Copy for a Seminar Promotion.”

Marketing Tip 4. Create and Execute a Media Plan

A media plan is merely a list of things to do to attract attention to your seminar in the media. There are no wrong answers. And the more you do, the higher the attendance.

Brainstorm on what the best ways are to market the program to the community and target audience. We strongly suggest you re-read the chapters on press releases, direct mail, advertising, and newsletters, before creating your marketing plan.

In applying “multiplication marketing” understand that the more diverse ways you hit your target audience, the more likely the message will get through. Don’t just send out press releases to a few publications. Consider planting an article or two in target periodicals before the seminar to “prep” your target audience for the live version and your answers to the issues discussed in the articles.

Likewise, place an article in your newsletter, in addition to the notice for the seminar.

And, a reprint of the article sent with, or shortly after, invitations is another way to reinforce the importance of attending. A sample media plan is included in Exhibit 16-2, “Sample Media Plan for a Seminar.”

Step 4. Invite Your Target Audience

Getting executives and other target audiences to attend requires both personal marketing and effective direct marketing. The key to getting good attendance is to be disciplined and focused in your effort to get those you want to attend. You want to fill the room with the best-qualified prospects, those most likely to buy. Follow these guidelines:

Guideline 1. Invite Clients

Start by having partners and managers *personally* invite clients (a phone call and a personal letter).

Leverage off of your clients and their relationships by having your partners ask their clients who they know (for example, executives in your target industry, their associates, friends and other possibly interested parties) who would also benefit by attending a program on this topic. See if your client would like the prospect to be invited as her personal guest.

Important: *This step must not be glossed over.*

It’s much easier and more productive, marketing-wise, to have your valued clients “hand-carry” their buddies to your seminar. If an excellent client relationship exists with you, and if the seminar has value to them and others, why shouldn’t they?

When clients refer or accompany a guest to your seminar, they are putting their stamp of approval on you, the content of your program, and the firm.

The prospective client accompanied by an existing client is presold on doing business with your firm. They are predisposed to hearing your message. You must do everything you can to have as many of these presold prospects attend your seminars.

Most firms look outside of their existing relationships to get people to their programs. It’s much more difficult to get strangers to come and convert to your way of thinking than your referred guests.

Make sure that you send *all* of these prospective attendees a personal note and invitation.

Guideline 2. Invite Referral Sources, Their Associates, and Their Clients

Have partners and managers invite their allies. Make sure they, in turn, invite their clients and their associates who can bring their clients. Make sure that you send all of these prospective attendees a personal note and invitation.

Guideline 3. Have Employees Bring Prospective Clients and Referral Sources

Often overlooked are your employees and their contacts. What are your employees doing to help build your firm? Maybe they don't know or aren't told often enough.

Real Life Marketing Example. Recently a client conducted a seminar on the current year's probable federal individual and corporate income tax changes. The managing partner had never solicited his own staff and clerical employees for prospective seminar attendees.

Sure enough: his own personal secretary knew no less than 18 prospective clients and referral sources that she then personally invited.

Why hadn't she referred these people to her boss before for previous seminars and accounting services? Her boss was always too busy, and she had never been asked.

Of the 18 people invited, four new referral sources came to the seminar, bringing six of their clients. Eleven of the others came as well. Eight appointments were set at the seminar for additional dialog and seven new clients were enrolled from this one employee's referrals.

Guideline 4. Clean Up Your Targeted Nonclient List

Before inviting nonclients, have a secretary or staff person call every name on that list to ensure the proper spelling of the name, exact title, and accuracy of company name and address.

You will be amazed at how important this "clean" information is: One of our clients received a 47 percent response rate to invitations sent to nonclients after the client meticulously cleaned its invite list, a rate that was much higher than that for previous seminars.

Guideline 5. Invite Your Hot List of Nonclients

About four to six weeks before the seminar, send a personalized invitation from the managing partner or another prominent partner to those prospective clients you've had conversations and contact with before.

Make it look like something special, not your everyday, run-of-the-mill seminar. Follow this invitation up with either a second wave of letters or a phone call to stimulate response—it's a good excuse to call. A sample invitation is included in Exhibit 16-3, "Sample Invitation to a Seminar for Nonclients."

Step 5. Ensure Optimum Attendance

Each person who comes to the seminar should be an existing or prospective client or referral source. You will have worked too hard at setting up the seminar not to facilitate the attendance of those who are most important. Below are some tips to help assure attendance.

Tip 1. Make It Easy to Register

Make it as easy as possible for them to reply, using self-addressed, stamped response cards or providing a specific name and extension to call for direct and quick contact. You could also have invitees respond by replying to a specific e-mail address.

Tip 2. Address Envelopes With a Laser Printer or By Hand

Do not use labels on your invitations. Although clear laser labels are quite good, the address that is directly laser printed, or nicely hand written, on the envelope has a higher chance of being responded to.

Tip 3. Acknowledge Registrations

When somebody preregisters, make sure you acknowledge it in writing and thank him or her for coming. Send the attendee a prenumbered admission ticket. This will cut down on attendees backing out of the seminar. Allow for registration by phone or e-mail, since this is more convenient for some people who can't or won't plot out their schedule too far in advance to commit.

Tip 4. Give Directions

Send maps and easy-to-understand directions immediately upon registering people into the program.

Real Life Marketing Example. One of our clients went so far as to have the registrants picked up in limousines to attend his program. Ridiculous (and much too expensive to consider) you say? Perhaps—all it did was ensure that he didn't have one cancellation. And he sent out a partner or staff person with each limo to pick up the clients and guests. Do you think it made them feel special? Each limo picked up four or five guests in the same geographic area.

Other clients of ours have simply assigned staff and partners to pick up guests (sans limos). This personal touch cannot be bought and involves many more people with the seminar.

Tip 5. Send a Reminder

A reminder note to arrive one or two days before the program is a good idea. An even better idea is to send a note *and* call to confirm. A script for a verbal reminder would go something like this:

Hi there! My name is Sherwin from Schmaltz and Schmitz and we are confirming registrations to give the hotel a final number. Can we still expect Ms. Schultz to attend? Will there be any additional attendees from your company? Thanks!

A sample written reminder is included in Exhibit 16-4, “Sample Written Reminder for a Seminar.”

Step 6. Prepare for the Seminar

Once you have your audience there are many items to complete to make sure the seminar is a success.

Prepare Visuals

Seminars are very much visual presentations. More people learn and react to visuals than they do to mere speaking. Visual materials add interest, excitement, and spice to seminars. They assist the presenters in simplifying, amplifying, and expanding upon what might be complex, new, or difficult topics for the audience to grasp. Your visuals should support, not replace, your spoken words. More is not better; keep yours to an appropriate number based on your material.

We strongly recommend doing your own seminars using a professional-looking PowerPoint presentation or high-end overheads. Flip charts are valuable in encouraging discussion with the participants of your seminar. Don’t skimp here; it’s a reflection on the quality of the firm.

Prepare Presentation

The content and the quality of the presentation are of equal importance.

Presenters who aren’t prepared or sufficiently polished in their delivery will overshadow the best material. It is the “controller’s” responsibility to make sure that the presenters are prepared and practiced. The controller must be willing to work with the presenters by reviewing their notes, scripts, slides, and other materials ahead of time to ensure that the presentation is of the highest quality, given the available talent.

A seminar with more than one presenter can be likened to a tag-team race. If one leg of the tag-team messes up, the race is lost. Having one presenter botch his or her portion of the program results in a lost piece of your message, lowers the likelihood of appointments for follow-up sales interviews, and can very well ruin everything you’ve tried to create.

The psychological effect you want to create will be broken when the participants are distracted by someone who isn’t doing his or her part. Attendees then concentrate on how bad or unprepared the presenter is, not the subject matter, and it takes a lot of effort to get them back on track.

A poor presentation gives a bad impression not only of the speaker, but also of the firm. That’s why the controller’s role is so important—to ensure that all of the presenters are on

line. It's also why a complete dress rehearsal is absolutely mandatory, with all parties involved, preferably at the location of the seminar.

Prepare Room Setup

How your seminar room is set up will influence the response of the audience. Since it is your seminar, you control how the room should be set up based on the kind of interaction you want to create.

If you do want audience involvement, we encourage a U-shaped room, with tables to write on, for audiences of fewer than 20. This allows for face-to-face contact with every member of the audience and will result in more interaction.

If you want people just to relax and “soak it in” consider theater-style setup. Make sure the chairs are set far enough apart for comfort.

For seminars with more than 20, entertain “herringbone” classroom style, that is, chairs with tables for writing set in an angular fashion for more exposure to the seminar leader.

More tips on room setup are included in the chapter on public speaking.

Prepare Hand-Out Materials

In addition to the suggestions you'll find in our chapter on public speaking, you'll want to consider providing an actual course book, with brief key concepts as well as a lot of room for people to take notes. Course books add value to the seminar; they are more likely to be kept, and you can put promotional materials inside of them as well.

Prepare Follow-Up Materials

Check the section on materials for after the program in the chapter on public speaking for ideas on what to send out afterward. More important than what you send out afterward is the personal contact that must occur after the seminar.

Prepare the Hosts

It is vital—and this can't be understated—that there be a committed group of people who will act as the firm's hosts at the seminar. Hosts are people who are individually responsible to make sure that everyone who comes is attended to in every way. Hosts make people feel comfortable, welcome them, and find them a seat if necessary—anything that is necessary to make the guest, whether it be a client, prospective client, referral source, or total stranger, feel at home.

Remember, you and your firm are always marketing. People develop immediate impressions of professional service firms by the way they are treated as human beings. Sometimes they have no other means of evaluation, since they aren't in your business themselves. The best seminar can be ruined, both marketing-wise and for the firm's reputation, if attendees aren't treated like the most honored guests.

Why are we spending so much time on this? Because we've been at seminars where partners and staff gravitate toward each other, ignoring the guests instead of taking this active part. Hosts (and they should include everyone in the firm not participating in the seminar) should arrive at the program no later than 30 minutes before it starts. They must know exactly what's expected of them. Once the program starts it will be too late to straighten them out if they aren't doing their very important job.

Step 7. Market at the Seminar

Now that you've done all this work to maximize attendance, it's time to qualify the attendees and convert them into clients. Remember, you are not only educating them on the subject matter, you are also marketing to them.

Tell Them What You Want

Make it clear to your audience that your first responsibility is to give them valuable insight and information at the session. Also tell them you'd be interested in working with them to address these problems with them, if they are interested.

You might be thinking, *Why be so forward? Isn't it obvious to the attendee that you would like to help them solve their problems?* Absolutely not. You must tell people what you want before you can expect them to take action.

Real Life Marketing Example. One of our clients conducted an annual Business Issues seminar for five years before they started working with us. The seminar would cover the four or five hottest business topics they could think of. They would spend months writing and producing it. It was so phenomenally well done, that nonclients came back year after year.

Alas, very little new business and few clients could be traced to these wonderful programs.

Why did they fail? Because our client had *never* told the audience what they wanted to happen as the *result* of the program.

The issue came to a head when they did a portion of their program one year on computer networking. After installing their own network successfully, they had developed an expertise at it and wanted to install systems for their clients and nonclients.

But, being afraid that they might offend anyone, or appear "unprofessional," they never came right out in their program and told the audience that they would appreciate talking to them if they were considering such a change in systems.

Have you ever noticed that the people who work for you aren't mind readers? Have you observed that if you don't tell them when you want a project done, that it can come to you (much) later than you want?

Do your children clean their rooms without having been forewarned that it is what you wanted before they got in the habit of doing it themselves (wouldn't that be nice!)?

Why should this concept be any different than with your clients and others?

Well, you guessed it. Nine months later, these CPAs walked into their client's office to do some preliminary work on the audit and—the client had installed a brand new computer network! It had never dawned on the client to ask the CPAs to do it because “they didn't know accountants do these kinds of things”—no one had ever asked them for the business nor told them what they wanted to have happen at the seminar.

So, we leave this up to you. Tell people what you want to have happen at the program as the result of the program, or wait while your competitors pick up business all around you from your clients and people who should be your clients after you have done the selling for them (without a commission, no less)!

Inform, Entertain, and Also Share

Sure it's necessary that your seminar be informative, valuable, and even entertaining. Those are givens. You must, however, plan ways for participants to share their concerns regarding the subject matter at hand in order for them to be emotionally involved in the program.

Remember, that unless you can procure their emotional involvement, participants will not get the full benefit from the seminar as they sit back and critique your efforts instead of seeing how the subject matter applies to them.

Marketing Truth. An uninvolved audience is almost impossible to market to and sell.

You should consider giving your prospective clients an intriguing hook, something of value that increases their interest in your firm and moves them into action. Some examples of this are to offer a checklist or worksheets that help them personally diagnose their specific needs, in relation to the subject matter.

We suggest that a question sheet be made available for them to start working on when they sit down. That's always worked well for us and our clients who have used it.

Real Life Marketing Example. Exhibit 16-5, “A Seminar Feedback Questionnaire That Worked,” illustrates a very simple form used by one of our clients in conjunction with an ally—a securities broker—conducting a seminar on income taxes and estate planning. Dubious and critical at first that this would work, our client soon discovered the magic and ease of getting people involved in seminars.

When the participants arrived, he merely asked them to open their books and start filling out the questionnaire as a way to elicit their opinions on income taxes and the economy. Every single one of them participated.

The first 20 minutes of the program was invested in having 32 people tell him and his ally their opinions on the subject matter. Were they now emotionally involved in the program? You bet.

What could've happened if this step hadn't been taken? Our experience is that many would have sat back and analyzed, a difficult attitude to market into, indeed.

Net result from that program? Five people immediately set appointments with him at the program and six more set appointments afterward.

Your participants must feel free to share their problems and concerns (without dominating the seminar and wasting anyone's time) throughout the program, then they will take ownership of it and embrace your ideas as their own! You are much more likely to turn these prospects into clients when that happens.

Qualify Participants at Breaks and Lunch

Draw up a list of questions to ask the participants about their business or their concerns that will help you establish their level of need, want, or desire. Assign specific targets (the most attractive potential clients) to specific partners and staff (the ones you can count on).

Don't expect to be able to hit your potential targets yourself; even if you were able to talk to just one, chances are your time would be taken up before you could get to others. Don't miss out on this opportunity to qualify at the seminar, itself.

As soon as people leave your program they will become reinvolved in their problems and their lives. Their concerns—as they relate to your seminar—go away as soon as they depart. Get them while they are hot!

Getting feedback at the breaks from your colleagues and participants is a valuable way to “custom design” your program and have them more likely to buy.

Sample questions to ask at breaks:

- “Hi! Thanks for coming! Are you from this area?”
- “What's the name of your business?”
- “What kind of business are you in?”
- “What do you do there?”
- “How did you find out about the workshop?”
- “What brought you to the seminar?”
- “How is it affecting your business?”
- “What are you doing now to address this issue?”
- “Is there any specific subject you would like us to address today? Why?”
- “Would you like me to hook you up with one of our managers/partners who are involved in this area?”
- “Should we be talking about this subject for your company?”
- “Would it make sense to sit down and discuss this privately?” (to set the appointment)

Enhance Credibility

You can enhance your presentation's credibility through case histories and live client references.

You can include case histories (with client names left out, unless you have their permission) as part of your program books. When making a point, you can refer to the case history and go through it showing that your ideas are practical and produce results. This takes away the fear of the participants in buying what you have to offer, whether it is your ideas or a product or service. A sample case history is included in Exhibit 16-6, "Sample Case History."

Client references at seminars are powerful, as you might imagine. Asking clients to share what their experience was, or the results that were produced from your service, sells your audience in a way that you can't.

Remember, what you say about yourself (and your firm) is your opinion; what others say about you is fact.

Close People for Appointments at the Seminar

Tell existing clients that their own partners will be available to schedule a time to meet with them right there while still at the meeting. For prospective clients, explicitly ask any interested attendee to give you his or her business card and suggest a time and date for a meeting.

There must be a vehicle available to the participants, such as a 3" x 5" card that allows them to inform you that they want to be contacted immediately. You want to close as many appointments for follow-up at the seminar as possible. This saves time afterward, and they'll never be more inclined to take action. (See the chapter on public speaking for more ideas on closing appointments at the program.)

Leave Some Time for Questions and Answers

People like it when you allow them a specific time to ask questions after the material has been covered. But, don't leave more than a few minutes because your prospective clients will get bored and tired of sitting and start wandering out. You might lose an appointment that should be set if Q & A is more than a short time.

Merely ask your audience to write down one question or concern that needs to still be addressed. Chances are that you'll have a third or more of the audience with questions.

More detailed questions can be and should be handled after the program preferably in person, at an appointment.

Have Hosts On-Hand Following the Presentation

The seminar is not over ... until it's over. When the last guest leaves, the seminar is complete. Your hosts must know that their job doesn't end when the presentations are over—it may just be getting into full gear! It's the responsibility of each host to stick around and:

- Thank their clients, prospective clients, and referral sources for coming and tell them that they will be calling them in the next few days to see what they thought
- Set the appointment right then and there for a follow-up meeting and sale

- Field questions from other guests who cannot get to the presenters. Often, if the seminar is valuable, the presenters are bombarded with individuals immediately after the event. It is essential that those who cannot get through have someone else to talk to immediately, or they will leave the seminar with their needs unfulfilled.

It's perfectly fine if the hosts don't know the answers to questions or other details. Their job is to either get the name and phone number from the guest for the presenter to get back to and follow up with or secure the information themselves to get back to the guest.

- Help straighten up and pack up if necessary.
- Give feedback to the presenters and the controller about the program after the seminar (see Step 8).

Step 8. Follow Up to Maximize the Impact

Once all the guests have gone, there is still plenty of work to do. Below is a discussion of ways to keep the momentum and maximize the efforts that went into the seminar.

Stage a Debriefing Immediately

You must find out what worked and what didn't right after the program, while it is still fresh in the minds of the presenters and the hosts. Avoid the critical nature of most professionals who could be ready to concentrate on the negative and shoot you down for every tiny mistake. What you are looking for is *constructive* feedback, especially on what worked well so that it can be duplicated in the future.

Divide Up the Leads Immediately and Follow Up Properly

Whether it be at the postsession debriefing, the same afternoon, or the next morning, you must get the leads of the people who attended the session in the hands of those who must definitely follow up on them right away.

Every minute, every day spent not following on a lead makes it very much colder. Follow-up calls must be made immediately to clients who might need the service discussed at the program, referral sources who have clients that can use the service, and the prospective clients in attendance.

You have the perfect excuse to follow up:

- What did they think of the program?
- What did they like, appreciate, see as applicable to their own business?
- What other comments do they have?
- And if they've shown interest, when do they want to sit down for an appointment to discuss their particular situation? They may have referrals for you to others who might be interested in attending the next seminar or need your product or service.

Make sure that you follow through with all attendees via a personalized thank you letter signed by a partner. For your best prospects, follow through with a note tailored to their concerns and give them a call. Ask for some action on their part: Send them a bounce-back card to be returned, ask them to call you, or set up an appointment.

Don't be afraid of following up in the mail and over the phone; let's face it—some of your colleagues may not do anything, or do so inadequately, or contact the person too late. Written follow-up goes in the mail immediately and can amplify the follow-up process.

The controller must coordinate and make sure that follow-up is conducted properly or all that work will have gone for naught.

Get Those Follow-Up Materials Out *Now*

All too often firms wait much too long to send out follow-up information. The time to send out such information is the day after the seminar! You want your participants (prospects) to get the material while they still remember the seminar, are still hurting and still have an interest in your cure.

People have limited attention spans and by the time most firms send out material the prospect's interest has so much waned, it can be ineffective. By getting your materials out right away it shows you are organized and determined (two traits businesspeople respect). Also, if prospects receive your materials before any follow-up appointment with the firm, they will have much more of an idea of what you do—so the appointment can be spent determining how it can fit into the client's situation, not educating them to death.

In addition to the normal kinds of follow-up information you can send as delineated in the chapter on public speaking, consider as part of your follow-up materials a survey the participants can fill out and return in a preaddressed, stamped envelope. You can then send them the results afterwards as part of another follow-up package, thereby continuing the process of marketing to people who know you and have an interest in the subject matter. A sample follow-up letter is included in Exhibit 16-7, "Sample Follow-Up Letter for a Seminar."

Of course, any survey results can then be turned into nice publicity and ideas to be used for another seminar.

Incorporate All Attendees Into Your Ongoing Marketing Program

Too often, firms take only one shot at a prospect. If he or she doesn't buy at once, he or she is ignored in the future.

Not all of the people who are attending the seminar are ready to buy from you. They may have symptoms of a problem, but the full painful impact of their malady may not have fully hit them. However, they were interested enough to attend and invest their time with you. They are someplace in the buying cycle, but not at the place of movement yet.

So, develop a plan of attack to stay in periodic contact with them. Doing this will keep you “top of mind” in case their needs arise in the future. A plan might consist of putting them on your newsletter list and/or sending them articles on the subject matter as you find them. Sometimes we wind up marketing for our competitors by not maintaining immediate contact. A good rule of thumb is some kind of contact at least once a quarter.

Parlay the Seminar Into Joint Presentations

Doing something of the magnitude of a seminar only once may not make sense unless you can parlay your efforts into many more marketing tools. Now that you have conducted the seminar, created the materials for it, found it has value, and tightened it up where necessary, begin marketing it to the firm’s allies for your co-production in front of their clients. Also, it may now have value to associations and chambers who may want to sponsor you. Conduct the seminar at your clients with personal, custom presentations to their management and/or staff. Parlay the seminar materials into articles and collateral material surrounding the services you are marketing.



CONCLUSION

As you can see, getting business from seminars takes a lot of careful preparation and disciplined follow-through. But the payoff can be great, because you are dealing with people who have gone the extra mile to see and hear what you have to say.

Remember, seminars are “multiplication marketing.” The only difference is you are marketing to a targeted group of prospects instead of one on one.

EXHIBIT 16-1: SAMPLE LETTER OR FLYER COPY FOR A SEMINAR PROMOTION

All across the Metropolis tri-county area, sales are down and costs are up! What are you doing about it?

Last year our client companies averaged an 86.32% increase in net profits from our “Boost Your Bottom Line” program. No firm that we can find has helped more businesses in this way.

Read what one client recently wrote: *“Your people are great. We were flat for five years running and Schmaltz and Schmitz helped us cut our costs by 16%, increase sales by 23% and boost our bottom line by 162% over the previous year. Thanks, guys. Now I can afford to get my in-laws out of our house and into that nursing home in Florida!”*

Come to our workshop on May 18th at 9:30 a.m. at the Saddle Spur Country Club: “The Three Biggest Mistakes Companies Make in Managing Bottom Line Profits.” You’ll learn:

- How to cut your payroll and employment taxes in half
- How to use Nostradamus’ prophecies to predict the future of your industry
- How to extinguish your competition
- How to squeeze your vendors for lower prices
- How to boost sales in Eastern Europe
- How to bring out the best in your employees by being nice to them for a change
- The Three Biggest Mistakes businesses make in managing their net profits

Please RSVP immediately by calling (800) 321-5555. Seating is limited to 25.

This may be the best hour you’ve ever invested in your business!

EXHIBIT 16-2: SAMPLE MEDIA PLAN FOR A SEMINAR

1. Get article on “Taking the Bite Out of Tax Time” into *Brainy Consulting* magazine.
2. Place announcements in community calendars of all 18 local papers, dailies and weeklies, in the tri-county area.
3. Put shortened version of article in our November newsletter, along with an announcement for the seminar.
4. Place ads in four publications in the immediate area for three weeks consecutively prior to the seminar.
5. Have Joe, Jane, and Jim make announcements for the seminar at their respective associations. Have them hand out circulars.
6. Have invitations created using a “incarceration look.”
7. Get article reprinted for insertion with invitations.
8. Get Jim and Jane on the two local business radio shows discussing this topic one to two weeks before the seminar.
9. Place edited article on Web site and place seminar on Web site calendar.
10. Have Ed create a pop-up window for the Web site announcing the seminar.
11. Offer edited article for insertion in the firm newsletters of our law firm friends.
12. Have Jane interviewed for the business section of the main newspaper in town.

EXHIBIT 16-3: SAMPLE INVITATION TO A SEMINAR FOR NONCLIENTS

You are invited to a special presentation of *The Three Biggest Mistakes Companies Make in Managing Their Bottom Line* on May 18th at the Saddle Spur Country Club at 9:30 a.m.

Last year our firm helped client companies grow their net profits by an average of 86.32%. Nobody we can find in the Tri-County area has helped more businesses. Find out how we can assist your business.

This innovative program promises to make your time well spent. Don't miss it!

Kindly RSVP by May 15th to (800) 321-5555.

EXAMPLE 16-4: SAMPLE WRITTEN REMINDER FOR A SEMINAR

Just a reminder! You're registered for our seminar, *The Three Biggest Mistakes Companies Make in Managing Their Bottom Line*. On May 18th at the Saddle Spur Country Club at 9:30 a.m.

Now would be a good time to also register a colleague or associate to come with by calling (800) 321-5555.

See you there!

EXHIBIT 16-5: A SEMINAR FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE THAT WORKED

Questionnaire

Kindly complete this questionnaire in preparation for today's program.

1. Do you feel that you will have an increased tax burden this year? _____
2. If yes, do you feel that you can do anything about it? _____
3. Do you currently "tax plan?" If so, what do you do and when? _____

4. What do you think the economy will do the next four years? _____

5. Do you feel that interest rates will go up, down, or stay the same? _____
6. What are your three greatest financial goals for next year?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
7. Do you feel that you have made any investing mistakes? _____

8. Do you believe you will receive as much from Social Security as you put into it?

9. What business and financial periodicals do you read?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

EXHIBIT 16-6: SAMPLE CASE HISTORY**Case History of Schmaltz and Schmitz *Build Your Bottom Line NOW!* Project*****Facts of the situation:***

Client company is located here in the Metropolis Tri-County area and was established in 1953 by the grandfather of the current senior executives. Company is in a manufacturing business that uses a specialized plastic made from nuclear waste produced locally for creating hypo-cablecom devices for the aviation industry.

With the introduction of the space program in the 1960s, the business grew dramatically. Founder's son took over in 1967 and embarked on a very aggressive growth campaign, targeting communist countries as the Iron Curtain loosened a bit.

The late '70s brought worldwide economic stagnation and the elimination of the U.S. space program. All aviation companies cut back dramatically, but the firm weathered the storm as they had a material size share of the market. The 1980s brought the competition of the Japanese, Chinese and other Pacific Rim countries that could manufacture the same parts for much less. The company survived but saw market share shrink to less than 10%.

By 2001, the grandchildren were now running the business and business had been declining for years. A determination had to be made to stay in business or merely sell off assets and real estate.

Goals of the project:

The objectives of the project were:

- A. To help determine whether staying in business was feasible
- B. To assist the company in finding alternative uses for their product and manufacturing specialties
- C. To review production and office efficiency and make recommendations
- D. To groom the company's finances to make it attractive for a buy-out from a competitor or someone in a related business
- E. To boost the bottom line as much as possible

Our plan of action:

1. We analyzed the manufacturing and office processes and productivity as they compared to the best practices of other companies in their industry
2. We searched for alternative uses of their production facilities based upon capacity and experience of workforce
3. We conducted research into other companies in the industry and related industries to see if they were potential suitors
4. We contacted 28 national environmental groups for their sponsorship and support of the recycling of nuclear waste into safe products
5. This effort led to effective lobbying by 12 environmental groups on congressional defense and aviation committees to use our client's product in preference to foreign companies
6. We created a 12-step plan of action to streamline the warehousing, manufacturing, hiring, billing and all accounting related activities
7. We referred this client to another client who specializes in securing "low-cost" workers
8. Helped the client identify fourteen other uses for their production expertise and guided them to decide on producing nucleonic flash chips for the handheld toy industry

(continued)

EXHIBIT 16-6: SAMPLE CASE HISTORY (CONT'D)

9. Helped the client implement our ideas over an 18-month period of time
10. Monitor the client's progress every six months with meetings with management and employees

Results produced for client by Schmaltz and Schmitz:

1. Client has just completed the construction of a new production facility in Czechoslovakia to compete with low cost competitors and handle increased defense and toy business
2. Client implemented 34 of 38 suggestions related to streamlining and simplifying production, hiring and office processes resulting in a reduction of costs of 42.7%
3. Sales have increased 163% over the last three years
4. Profits have increased 232% since we started
5. Owners have created an exit strategy and hope to have company sold to a European suitor within three years

EXHIBIT 16-7: SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR A SEMINAR

Dear Ms. Schwartz:

Thank you so much for attending Tuesday's seminar "The Three Biggest Mistakes Companies Make in Managing Their Bottom Line" at the Saddle Spur Country Club. We hope you found it informative and valuable.

Enclosed is a post-seminar survey we hope you will return to us in the attached preaddressed envelope.

Our next seminar is June 23rd at the Crispy Creek Country Club on "*How to Safely Use Nuclear Waste in Your Manufacturing Processes.*" This breakthrough seminar explains the possibility of cutting materials costs to next to nothing by recycling unwanted nuclear by-products that are available from the government for free. Don't miss it! It starts at 9:30 a.m. RSVP to (800) 321-5555 to reserve your seat. Attendance will be limited to 25.

If you have not already set an appointment with one of our professionals about boosting your firm's bottom line, please do so now. Call Melody Schlitz at (800) 321-5555 to make it happen at your company!

Thanks again—see you in June!

Respectfully,



HOW TO USE
TRADE SHOWS
TO REACH A
TARGET MARKET

chapter 17

Increasingly, professional service firms are marketing their services at trade shows. Properly conducted, and held at the right exhibition, trade shows can put your people in front of more good prospects than they might meet in a month or even a year.

However, there's a lot more to it than renting a booth and showing up to market your firm effectively at a trade show. You can waste a small fortune in lost billable time, exhibits, and space rental unless you do it right.

In this chapter we'll show you how the firms most successful at trade show marketing do it—then you'll be able to judge whether it's right for you.



ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU DO ANYTHING

There's more planning involved in marketing at a trade show than you might realize. The investment can be considerable. Before committing to a trade show appearance, ask yourself the following:

- Is a trade show really an effective way to reach your targeted market?
- If so, is this particular trade show an effective way to reach your targeted market?
- Are there going to be enough potential buyers or influencers attending the show to make it worthwhile?
- What are your specific goals for the show?
- Are your objectives to sell, collect leads of prospective clients, expose your firm and services, and market a specific service line, or something else?
- Is your objective to enroll clients at the trade show, set appointments, or meet new referral sources?
- What should the booth design look like?

Deciding what you want to accomplish from the trade show will influence the layout of the booth. Have you thought about:

- What's the best size for your booth based on the layout of other exhibitors and the show?
- How much do you want to invest in a booth? Will you be using the booth again for the same function at another exhibition?

Skimping on a trade show booth where other companies have invested properly to create the right image and effect can make your firm look amateurish, cheap, and unprofessional. Have you considered competition factors, such as:

- Who else will be exhibiting? Competitors? What does their booth look like?
- Do you have a stable of outgoing and impressive people to staff the booth for the required hours?

- Do you have the commitment of the firm and of your partners and staff to effectively follow through on the leads generated by the show?
- What is the reputation of this particular trade show among your existing clients and other people you want to influence or respect?
- Is the show going to be promoted significantly enough to draw the traffic required for your effort?
- Is there going to be adequate exhibit time for the attendees to visit the booths between events and seminars?
- Where is the best location for your booth? You don't want to be tucked away in a bad traffic area. Look to be located adjacent to or near a booth or passageway you know will be heavily trafficked. Can you attract others?
- What are you planning to do to get people inside of your booth? You cannot just show up and expect people to wander into your area without some kind of draw. What is yours?
- What specific training are you going to have to put together or buy in order for your people to effectively turn the attendees into qualified prospects?
- What is your plan of action to draw your own clients, prospective clients, referral sources and their contacts to the show?

Whew! Just by looking at these lists, you now see that highly profitable trade show marketing is more than just renting a booth and having a backdrop.



A SIX-STEP PROCESS TO USE TRADE SHOWS TO REACH A TARGET MARKET

Below are six steps we consider imperative to trade show success. We will discuss the steps for success in detail.

-
- Step 1.* Commit to specific objectives.
 - Step 2.* Draw people into the booth and keep them there.
 - Step 3.* Ask the right questions and give the right information.
 - Step 4.* Practice, practice, practice.
 - Step 5.* Promote, promote, promote.
 - Step 6.* Plan and have your follow-up ready.
-

Step 1. Commit to Specific Objectives

Some firms invest significant amounts of time and money to designing and setting up displays at exhibitions. However, they fail to invest appropriate amounts of time to prepare their people with the proper skills and techniques to be applied at the show.

Setting specific goals up-front begins the process to determine the strategies involved in providing the most effective coverage at a trade show. Ranking your goals according to priorities will help you discover what has to be accomplished.

Step 2. Draw People Into the Booth and Keep Them There

Gimmicks can be effective: an eye-catching display, contests, giveaways, demonstrations, audio, video, different types of distractions that permit people to participate in something—whatever you choose, as long as it is distinctive—will get people to stop.

The good news is that exhibit booths today are relatively inexpensive, quite portable, and may be reused. The bad news is that time has to be invested in booth design, with thought given to the fact that you have only a few seconds to capture the attention of the people walking the show. Your message must be conveyed simply and concisely. It needs to be very visual and directed.

Decide on what literature you'll have in the booth—don't bring everything you have. You may have to create something special just for this show, such as specially created items and promotions, which are proven winners over standard brochures.

Never forget, though: business is relationships; people do business with other people. Your partners, managers, and staff will have to communicate with others. Are they prepared to deal effectively with their “guests,” giving the right impression and qualifying the person for the possibility of future business?

You must staff your booth with people who like other people—put your best foot forward. People buy other people; they don't buy firms. Enroll those who have the best personalities, who are most outgoing. Selling at trade shows is a lot like fraternity and sorority rush. Your staff must not chase away your guests by hanging out in the back of the booth, by reading the newspaper, by eating or smoking, or talking so engrossingly amongst themselves that they shut attendees out. They must never say anything that sounds like, “May I help you?” That doesn't work in retail stores, and it doesn't work in trade shows, either.

Training your staff to be different and powerful is just as important as, if not more than, any eye-catching display.

Step 3. Ask the Right Questions and Give the Right Information

Depending on the situation, your people must know about a range of factors.

Factor 1. How to Greet People

Don't take this for granted. A wonderful smile, a neighborly greeting, and an exchange of introductions make that best first impression. You must make absolutely certain that every single attendee and fellow vendor receives the exact impression you want him or her to take away from the people working the booth.

How many trade shows have you attended where the people working the booth couldn't have cared less who you were, why you were there, or how they could help? What impression did that leave with you about the sponsoring company?

Working the trade show for your firm must be presented as a privilege. It is also hard work, like being on stage for hours at a time.

Factor 2. Exactly, Specifically What Questions to Ask

The real purpose of a trade show is to market your people and your firm. In order to do that effectively, you have to “qualify” people and sort everyone into two groups: “not interested” and “prospective clients.” Therefore, staff should know what questions to ask every single person who approaches the booth, depending on the situation, your objectives, and the exhibition.

A list of prepared questions must be memorized and available to everyone working the booth. The best way to construct such a questioning strategy is to brainstorm with those who are involved in the service being marketed at the trade show as they know it best and the hurts, trauma, pain, desires, and wants of prospective buyers that would motivate them to set an appointment.

Also, by involving those people in the process, instead of just coming up with some questions and giving it to people to ask, you now have buy-in to the questioning strategy and they are more likely to be asked energetically.

Here are some sample questions to ask at a trade show:

- “Hi! My name is ... who are you?”
- “Where are you folks located?”
- “How have you found the trade show so far?”
- “What kind of business are you in?”
- “What do you do there?”
- “How's the economy treating you versus last year?”
- “What are you folks doing to boost your bottom line?”
- “We specialize in helping companies like yours here in Metropolis grow their bottom line. Would it make sense for one of us to sit down with you and discuss what we do and how it might apply to your business?”

Factor 3. Exactly, Specifically What to Say About Themselves and the Firm

Long-winded, vague statements about how great your firm and your services are bore people easily.

The pace of a trade show is usually fast. The people attending the trade show are in a mode to see a lot in a short period of time. If the show is well attended, your people do not have the time to get into drawn-out discussions; while one is getting sold, 10 might be getting away.

You must create a tight mini-presentation that each person working the booth must have memorized and deliver by rote, but with enthusiasm. This presentation must be invented expressly for the trade show's audience and what you are trying to market.

Although it is important to develop rapport and chemistry with the prospective client, the goal of the trade show is to set appointments leading to future business and qualify prospects for future follow-up, not selling the future business itself at the show.

Factor 4. How to Establish an Agreement for Follow-Up

People who approach the booth must be qualified according to their interest in what you have to offer and their ability and authority to make a decision. Staff must know exactly how to establish a closing agreement with qualified leads for an appointment or follow-up.

Step 4. Practice, Practice, Practice

Make sure that, shortly before the show, you hold at least one or two mock trade show sessions. Have a full dress rehearsal, with the booth set up and everything running.

Step 5. Promote, Promote, Promote

Make sure to get your clients and referral sources to the show. Often they aren't aware of what service line you may be promoting there. Promoting ahead of time is a wonderful opportunity to get their feedback and direction on how to improve your booth and presentation.

If there are going to be roundtables, seminars, and discussions as supplements to the trade show, get your partners and managers involved in participating in them as well as other speaking engagements associated with the show.

Have your firm mentioned in the major industry publications publicizing the show; an article placement in such publications coinciding with the promotion of the show can highlight your firm as a significant player in the industry.

Prepare enlightening and informational copy for the trade show's daily newspaper, if they are doing one.

Devise a press kit, with story ideas for the person running the newsroom at the conference as well as fact sheets and news releases for the industry and local publications covering the show. Arrange one-on-one interviews with reporters for the publications covering the show.

Step 6. Plan and Have Your Follow-Up Ready

The trade show ends, and there is a sigh of relief from everyone involved. Now you can get back to billable work!

Not so fast! The work now begins—the work of bringing in the return on investment for the effort, energy, time, and lost billable hours invested in the show.

Plan your follow-up materials before the show so they're ready to go immediately after the show closes. Even firms that have planned on sending out thank you letters, literature, or some other form of advertisement, however, often find themselves failing to make that all-important person-to-person contact so necessary to close the sale. Make sure you enclose a preaddressed and stamped bounce-back card to your follow-up materials indicating whether or not the prospect would like to set an appointment. A sample bounce-back card is included in exhibit 17-1, "Sample Bounce-Back Card for a Trade Show."

Malthus' Law of Trade Show Marketing applies: Every minute lost *arithmetically* not following through on a lead from a trade show, decreases the probability *geometrically* of setting an appointment and garnering that new client.

Those people who have expressed an interest, but who did not set an appointment for whatever reason, must be contacted by phone immediately after the trade show to gauge their interest. The purpose of a trade show is to set appointments and qualify prospective leads. Those leads must be overnighted immediately, preferably from the trade show itself, to the people who will be following up on them. A follow-up phone call might sound like this:

"Hello! My name is Elmer Krudd and I am with Schmaltz and Schmitz. Does our name ring a bell?" (You want to grab their attention.)

...

"I see from this card that you stopped by our booth at the recent Nuclear Waste Recycling Conference held here in Metropolis. We're in the business of helping companies like yours boost their bottom line immediately. I was not at the conference; you spoke to Melody Schlitz of our marketing department. What do you folks do at Tijuana Industries, anyway?"

...

"Well, that sounds interesting. And what do you do at Tijuana?"

...

"The purpose of my call is to sell if you have an interest in sitting down to see how we might be able to grow the bottom line of your company, as we have done for so many here in Metropolis. How has the last year been compared to the previous year?"

...

"Is your company generating the kind of return on assets it wants? Or could that be improved?"

If no:

"Well, thanks so much for your time. I see you have everything under control. If ever we can help, please give us a call or visit our Web site www.schmitzandschmaltz.com. Have a great day!"

If yes:

“That sounds important. When are you available this week or next for us to get together?”

The following case study illustrates the rewards of following up on leads.



CASE STUDY—USING TRADE SHOWS TO REACH A TARGET MARKET

A client firm of ours has many retail clients. Bob knew that mega-discount stores and warehouses were increasingly squeezing his client's profit margins. He also knew that retailers tend to be more concerned with selling merchandise than with maintaining superior records of inventory, product trends, and sales performance.

Out of concern and care for his own clients as well as fear of loss of unprofitable clients and poor cash flow, he created a simple database for his clients to generate the kind of information they needed to stay on top of their game. Bob's program was so popular with his clients that he soon realized he had a great marketing tool to generate new clients in the same industry.

Twice a year a local business expo is conducted in Bob's town. Many of the other exhibitors were good target clients for Bob, as well as those who attended the show. He consulted with us to see if trade show marketing was worth a shot.

The first thing we did was to establish his objectives for the show: what did he want to accomplish? Then we constructed a plan of action to create a booth design, the materials necessary for the booth, and the demo setup that would attract people over.

Bob contacted the publications that would be attending the show and arranged for a couple of interviews.

We decided on a live demo, along with videos of Bob's clients telling what a difference his system had made in their business. Every interested person was given a sample listing of product movement, inventory status, and sales analysis by salesperson and trends. They were all qualified as to their desire for further action and an appointment after the show. Bob's special trade show promotions were a free, no-obligation interview to examine how his program would work for a retail business and a trade show discount on the software.

No, Bob's clients didn't get mad at the discount offer; they were promoters by nature and knew that Bob was effectively marketing his accounting practice through the use of the software program; they also knew he would charge new clients higher rates than they were currently paying for his services.

Bob decided to work the booth himself with one of his more motivated partners and the two staff people that work primarily on retail accounts. We created a list of questions, such as what kind of business they had, what their job function was, how they were accumulating information of this sort presently, and why they might like this kind of information.

Everyone in Bob's booth had memorized a short mini-presentation explaining who they were, who the firm was, and what the program was designed to do. We did not hide the price to install a system like this—one that separated a lot of lookers from buyers.

He also did a mailer to other target vendors and participants who did not get to the booth; the mailer included copies of his trade show interviews and the promotional materials he prepared for the show.

Bob left the trade show with more than 50 prospective clients who wanted to set appointments with him, and the post-show mailer generated three appointments. Bob set up appointments with 43 of them, sold 37 systems, and brought in eighteen new accounting clients, as well.

Since the first trade show, Bob has been involved in six more, all with similar results.



CONCLUSION

More firms are marketing their services at trade shows. Trade show marketing is a time-consuming and costly effort. Properly done, though, it can pay off handsomely and is repeatable at different shows and future situations.

EXHIBIT 17-1: SAMPLE BOUNCE-BACK CARD FOR A TRADE SHOW

Kindly fill out and return if you have an interest in meeting with us to discuss your situation:

Name:

Company name:

Title:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone number:

E-mail address:

_____ Please call me to set up an appointment regarding your Boost Your Bottom Line Now Program.



HOW TO USE THE
TELEPHONE AS A
MARKETING TOOL

chapter 18

When should you use the phone for marketing your services? Rarely, if ever. We've spent the numerous chapters discussing how the Best Business Generators in the profession create more leads, clients, and profitable business for their firms. You've probably noticed that this is an "inside out" process, starting with what you already have going for you, then stretching out eventually to interaction with strangers through networking and other marketing vehicles.

The last thing you should ever want to do, or invest your time in, is cold calling on the phone, unless you enjoy pain and misery. Let's face it, people treat phone solicitors differently than they would treat a professional person. You don't want to expose yourself to that kind of treatment if you can avoid it.

Marketing Truth. We believe, based on our experience, that phone solicitation is the very last thing you should do in building a practice.

Some professionals think "cold calling" is following through on a lead given to you or a referral. Au contraire—that's not a cold call, *that's a hot lead!* Jump on it immediately, before it cools off.

A real cold call (also known as "dialing for dollars") takes place where you call someone you don't know, usually a name culled from a list, and try to set an appointment. Stockbrokers and insurance people do this all the time. There is a special place in heaven for those bold types.

In this chapter we will discuss doing just that—dialing for dollars—choosing names from lists in the most effective ways we've discovered.



WHEN TO USE TELEMARKETING

You should consider cold calling only if you've exhausted to the fullest extent every possible lead for business you could ever think of. Haven't called your Aunt Esther and asked her for a referral yet? Then it's not time to start cold telephone canvassing.

Cold calling also applies when you are pursuing a niche or a geographical market ice-cold. You have no referral sources, no possible referral sources, you don't know anyone in the business, and you have absolutely no contacts anywhere, anyhow. In that case, you could devote 25 percent of your time to cold calling.

There are two approaches to telemarketing—using a telemarketing company and running your own telemarketing function. Both methods are discussed in this chapter.



A FIVE-STEP PROCESS TO USE THE TELEPHONE AS A MARKETING TOOL—WORKING WITH AN OUTSIDE TELEMARKETING COMPANY

Wouldn't it be swell to have someone make these cold calls for you? Then you could just show up and get a new client, right? Not really. We can think of only a very few instances

we've encountered over the last 20-plus years of consulting where hiring telemarketers or setting up an internal telemarketing function in a professional firm has worked out. Yes, you may have heard of a firm that does telemarketing successfully, but they are far and few between. Telemarketing is difficult to get going productively.

The downside with hiring outside telemarketers is that it can be very expensive and the quality of appointments you will be sent on is low. A client of ours, one of the most successful marketing CPA and consulting firms in the United States, has operated what they consider an effective telemarketing function for years. Even they admit to securing only one client or so for every 10 appointments that are made for them. Readers, there are more effective ways to market and sell your services than waste nine appointments out of every 10.

Outside telemarketing firms can be a money pit. You have little or no control over what they do and how they do it. Hiring your own in-house telemarketers, on the other hand, can be a full-time proposition. Finding some of your own who will stick around more than a week or two and then monitoring their calls can be very time-consuming and wasteful.

The upside is that the goal of telemarketing is to catch someone (a decision maker) in the buying cycle, someone considering change or improvement in his or her current situation. Telemarketing can work, because you are polling prospective clients you wouldn't otherwise know about where they stand on the professional service you are selling.

Here are some steps to remember in engaging a telemarketing company.

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- Step 1.* Check references very carefully.
 - Step 2.* Review the script carefully.
 - Step 3.* Commit for at least two months.
 - Step 4.* Get the best lists money can buy.
 - Step 5.* Ask for a guarantee.
-

Step 1. Check References Very Carefully

We urge caution when hiring a business to do telemarketing for you. Beware of that feeling of excitement and hope you will feel, that same kind of thrill you can experience when chatting with public relations people. Don't forget that telemarketing companies are run by highly experienced salespeople who want to make a high-dollar sale. Both telemarketing and public relations are often very expensive to get up and going.

You're selling an intangible professional service. Telemarketing that has been done for newspapers, carpet cleaners, electricians, insurance agencies, is another ballgame when offered to a different consumer. Consider seriously only referrals from professionals like you in selecting the right company. Insist on talking to the reference. Bear in mind that any referrals you will receive are going to be good ones, or they wouldn't give them to you in the first place.

When talking to referrals, make sure to ask specific questions:

- How long did they use the service before they started going on good sales calls that led to sales?
- What did they like and dislike?
- What was the turnover?
- Who does the script writing, and how?
- What is client maintenance secured through telemarketing?
- What is the cost-effectiveness?

In any marketing or advertising endeavor, always look for a four- or five-to-one payoff on your investment.

Step 2. Review the Script Carefully

Make sure they are not misrepresenting you when they are calling to set appointments. Does the script sound like it would attract the interest of your target client? If you don't like the script they have come up with, make them redo it and explain to you exactly why it will work.

Step 3. Commit for at Least Two Months

Remember, marketing is a process, not an event. If you're not willing to give your telemarketing effort its best shot, don't bother to start. It takes time for the telemarketers to get to know what you are selling and the prospective client they are dealing with. There will have to be adjustments. And all of it takes time and your money.

Step 4. Get the Best Lists Money Can Buy

In shopping for lists, as in shopping for tires, you do get what you pay for. The more expensive the list, generally, the better it will be. Decide who you want to target (area, type of business, size of business) and then search for the best list you can buy. List brokers are abundant; talk to as many as you can. Ask your clients who they use for list brokers. Ask a lot of questions of the brokers: How old is the list? What's the percentage of mistakes? From what sources is the list generated?

It's best to know who the business owner, CEO, CFO, controller, or CIO is before the telemarketer calls, because it's easier to get to someone on the phone if you have his or her name ahead of time. Calling a business and saying, "May I speak to the boss?" is a dead giveaway to a cold call and will start the interrogation process ("What's this in regards to?" "We don't need any") and lead to more hang-ups.

A good list will provide that information to you. If it doesn't, you may want to consider having your telemarketer build that information first, in a two-step approach to cold call-

ing. After creating a list of a hundred or so names, he or she can then call back and ask for the person directly.

Step 5. Ask for a Guarantee

Don't deal with telemarketers who aren't willing to stand behind their work somehow. They need to guarantee you a certain number of leads per hundred or thousand dials. If we sound hesitant about using telemarketing firms, *we are*. Good luck!



AN EIGHT-STEP PROCESS TO USE THE TELEPHONE AS A MARKETING TOOL—RUNNING AN IN-HOUSE TELEMARKETING FUNCTION

Okay, you're still determined to do telemarketing. You figure that the best investment is for you to take it in-house. That way you'll be able to control it more effectively and not get lost amid a myriad of other customers and businesses being telemarketed.

Here's our advice on the steps needed when conducting an in-house telemarketing function.

-
- Step 1.* Schedule time for interviews and training.
 - Step 2.* Hire the right person.
 - Step 3.* Select location.
 - Step 4.* Monitor telemarketing calls.
 - Step 5.* Motivate telemarketing staff.
 - Step 6.* Clear time for appointments.
 - Step 7.* Work lists from back to front.
 - Step 8.* Rework the script.
-

Step 1. Schedule Time for Interviews and Training

Place the ads, or whatever means you are going to use to attract someone, and be prepared to pay a better wage and commission for a really top person. Or you can choose to pay less for ineffectiveness and likely turnover by hiring someone inexperienced or nonproductive. The more inexperienced they are, the more time you will have to spend getting them up to speed. This is not a two-hour project that you can delegate. You might need 20 or 40 hours more just interviewing and getting someone started, not counting managing the function.

Look for someone part-time. It's impossible to telemarket eight hours a day—it's very draining.

Step 2. Hire the Right Person

Hire someone with gobs of personality. In the telemarketing trade, certain people are prototype telemarketers, people who love to talk to other people more than anything else, people who have real personalities and are super-friendly.

Sample questions to ask a prospective telemarketer:

- “How long have you been doing this?”
- “What did they do before they got into telemarketing?”
- “How did they get into it?”
- “What were you telemarketing before?”
- “What are the biggest problems with telemarketing?”
- “What do they enjoy most about it?”
- “Describe your ideal telemarketing job.”
- “What’s the best way for them to be compensated to be motivated to produce quality appointments?”
- “How do they want to be managed?”
- “What are the two biggest mistakes people make in starting or managing a telemarketing function?”
- “Is it important for a telemarketer to understand what they are selling?”
- “What do they know about what we do, public accounting, consulting, or other services?”
- “What quality of appointments can we expect?”
- “What should the prospect know about us before we show up?”
- “Is there a way to set the prospect up before the appointment for a better opportunity?”
- “What can we legitimately expect from them as far as appointments and results?”
- “How long do they think it takes to get something like this off the ground and productive?”

Step 3. Select Location

The telemarketing function will be easier to control and manage if it is in your offices. Many telemarketers, however, will want to work from their home. That’s okay because it won’t tie up your lines, and it’s fine as long as they conduct themselves as professionals. You’ll probably want to hire them as independent contractors. But if they’re novices, forget it. They’ll get frustrated and stop calling, wasting all of the time you’ve already invested in hiring and setting them up.

Step 4. Monitor Telemarketing Calls

Your time is tight; however, you must be willing to sit down with your in-house telemarketer and spend at least one or two hours per day for the first week or so and listen in on the calls being made. Don't be overly critical!

This monitoring function is absolutely vital if you're going to come up with a script that works.

Marketing Truth. You must be personally involved in the telemarketing function if it is going to pay off. It's part of the up-front investment.

Some people have their telemarketers tape their calls so they can listen to them in their cars.

Step 5. Motivate Telemarketing Staff

These people are selling, not doing technical work. People who sell are a different breed. Remember, they are constantly engaging in risky activity—being talked to rudely and getting hung up on. They need handholding and encouragement.

You must motivate them also with a generous bonus or commission program. Ask them to design it. What will it take to motivate them? If they are willing to work for the hourly rate without bonuses, you may have the wrong person. The true salesperson lives for accomplishment and bonuses based on performance.

Step 6. Clear Time for Appointments

Every week, you have to have one or two days, or afternoons, totally clear so the telemarketer can book you for appointments. Allow for and expect to make only two appointments in a four-hour chunk of time, allowing for travel. You'll want to sit down and have a thorough conversation with the prospective client and close him or her on the spot if possible.

Do not consider a telemarketing function if you cannot live up to this commitment. If you start canceling appointments because of "client emergencies," you will lose the telemarketer as you cannot be trusted to show up for meetings.

Step 7. Work Lists From Back to Front

Does your last name begin with an A, B, or C? If so, chances are you've received every telephone solicitation ever made—because telemarketers and people calling from lists almost always start at the beginning of the list. People and companies that receive cold solicitations over the phone all of the time are much less likely to be responsive when approached on the phone. However, Ziggy Zelosky at the ZZZ Zebra Company may never have received a cold call in his life!

For increased effectiveness, have your telemarketer start in the middle of a list and work toward the end or start at the end and work to the top.

Step 8. Rework the Script

The key ingredients for a productive telemarketing function are:

- Have the best person making the calls.
- Use the right lists.
- Offer the most productive compensation plan.
- Use a script that works.
- Keep that person highly motivated and feeling important.

In designing a telephone script, know that it must accomplish the following:

- *It must be conversational.* Remember that businesses and homeowners are deluged with many calls from salespeople soliciting business. You never want your telemarketer to sound like a salesperson, because you will be lessening the chance of success.
- *It must deal with the decision-maker.*
- *Don't expect callbacks.* Don't have your telemarketer leave telephone messages to call back. Callbacks are unlikely, and if someone does call back, the telemarketer is already on the phone talking to someone else.
- *It must lead to an appointment.* That's the only purpose of a telephone call, to lead to a face-to-face appointment with you. Preferably, this is a highly qualified appointment, but that can happen only after a long period of time working with a telemarketer who really understands your business and is phenomenal on the phone.



HERE'S A TELEMARKETING SCRIPT THAT WORKS

One of our clients, who operates what staff consider to be a very successful telemarketing function, was kind enough to share the following scripts for different situations with you, their fellow peers reading this publication.

Please hold back your critical comments and feelings; these scripts work. You can decide to use them or not.

Response 1. Positive

Receptionist: ABC Company.
Telemarketer: Hi. Joe Smith, please.
 —or—
 Hi! Is Joe around?

Please remember that to be most effective, a telemarketing script must never sound like one. You don't want your telemarketer to get screened out. With this script, the telemarketer will be put right through 80 percent of the time because it sounds like he or she knows Joe. And, the receptionist has been told before not to screen out his friends.

This casual approach works a lot better than the "sales" approach that the receptionist responds to daily. For example:

Receptionist: ABC Company.

Telemarketer: Good morning. May I speak to Mr. Joseph Smith please?

Receptionist: What's this regarding?

Telemarketer: I'm with the ABC CPA firm. I'd like to speak with Mr. Smith please.

Receptionist: He's busy and we've already got CPAs.

Your telemarketer doesn't need to get into that foray. Use an informal approach:

Telemarketer: Hi! Is Joe around?

If the receptionist is suspicious, he or she might say:

Receptionist: May I tell him who's calling?

Telemarketer: Sure, it's June Swoon.

The less information June gives a secretary or receptionist, the less ammunition he or she has to shoot June down, make her life difficult, and waste her time and your money.

If the receptionist persists:

Receptionist: May I ask what this is in regards to?

June: Of course [*it doesn't hurt to sound just a little impatient here*]. Harlan Marlin [*your name goes here*] told me to give Joe a call.

This is true. You're June's boss; you tell her to call all of these names on the list.

—or—

June: I'm calling to set up an appointment for Mr. Smith with my boss, Harlan Marlin.

If June can't get through after this, chances are she won't be able to no matter what she says.

Receptionist: In regards to what?

June: Mr. Marlin would like to meet with Mr. Smith. Mr. Marlin asked me to call Mr. Smith. I'm only calling Mr. Smith to set the appointment.

If she can't get through after this, have her tell the receptionist that you (her boss) are a CPA (or whatever your title is) and would like to meet with her boss or whatever infor-

mation you want to give out. June Swoon may just have to move on to the next name on the list.

If June does get through, however:

Smith: Hello—Joe Smith.

June: Joe? Hi! It's June Swoon, how are you?

Smith: Fine. Who is this?

Note that this casual approach gets the listener's attention immediately. What will people be doing when your telemarketer calls? Not waiting for her call, that's for sure. She needs to get his attention immediately because there is little chance of setting an appointment if he is distracted by what he was doing when she called.

June: June Swoon. I work with Harlan Marlin. The purpose of my call is to set an appointment with you and Mr. Marlin. Mr. Marlin is a CPA with the firm of Marlin, Dolphin, and Fish. My job is to set appointments for him with prospective clients.

Do you already have a CPA firm that you are working with? Are you delighted with the level of service they give you? Or is it possible they could be providing more information, faster and better?

Often, Harlan meets with future clients who aren't receiving the level of service they want from their service providers or who feel they just aren't getting their money's worth and would like to get a second opinion.

Have you considered changing or would you consider receiving a "second opinion" on what services your current firm aren't providing for you?

This flurry of words is designed to catch Smith's ear. She's thrown a lot of topics against the wall; perhaps some of them will stick, causing Smith to get into a conversation with her. This is her one shot to catch his attention. Very few people will hang up until she stops speaking. Smith will say yes, no, or maybe. Perhaps he will just say thank you and hang up. That's what June faces on every call she makes.

If Smith says "yes," all June has to do is set the appointment.

Smith: Why, yes I have.

June: Good! Let's set an appointment. You'll like Harlan. He's available on Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning this week or Monday next week. Which one will allow enough time to meet with Harlan and discuss your situation?

Smith: Wednesday morning is fine.

June: Okay. Wednesday morning. Harlan's available at 8:30 or 10:30. Which is better?

Smith: 10:30 is better for me.

June: 10:30 on Wednesday the fifth. Where would be best to meet? We often have clients come over to our offices to get away from distractions at their business.

Smith: Actually, I'd prefer to do it here.

June: O.K. 10:30 on this Wednesday morning, which is the fifth, at your place of business—that's what I've got written down. Is that what you have?

Smith: Yes.

Notice that June mentioned the date and time a couple of times to make sure Smith has it noted. You don't want to show up for an appointment with someone who hasn't scheduled it.

It helps if June gathers some information before you meet with Smith, so you are somewhat familiar with the situation when you show up.

June: Would you mind giving me some background information about your business for Harlan when he comes to meet with you, so he might be better prepared?

This makes too much sense for Smith, so he will then talk about his business for a time and she should again close with the details of the appointment.

June: That's very helpful. I'll pass it along to Harlan right away so he can review it before your meeting at 10:30 this Wednesday morning. Thank you—have a great day!

Smith: Okay. Bye.

That's a proven script that works! It was tested over a three-year period to produce better results than 20 other telephone scripts. Any telephone script you decide to use should be massaged for your situation, city, region, and circumstances.

Some firms like to follow up appointments set by telemarketers with something to keep the prospective client in contact with your firm, a newsletter or brochure perhaps, until the appointment.

Of course, the decision is up to you, but we believe (if there's time for the prospective client to receive it) a preappointment note from you adds value to the appointment, can get him somewhat familiar with your firm beforehand and, most important, reminds him of the appointment.

See Exhibit 18-1, "Sample Telemarketing Follow-Up Letter for 'Yes' Respondents," for a follow-up letter we designed for one of our clients; they use it to follow up with "yes" responses. Does it work? They've been using it for over nine years now and maintain they

have more kept and better appointments when they show up after sending the letter than when they don't.

Response 2. Negative

Let's move on to the next possibility. We'll backtrack a bit to the proper point in the conversation:

June: Have you considered changing or would you consider receiving a second opinion on what services your current firm aren't providing for you?

Smith: No, I'm really not interested.

June: That's fine. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me. Have a great day!

Since Smith said no, he's not interested in meeting with you, June has just accomplished a great deed: She has sorted him out of your prospective client base for the time being.

Some telemarketers will stay on the phone with people attempting to overcome stalls and objections of why they aren't willing to talk to you. We don't think high-pressure selling is appropriate for selling professional services. And, even if your telemarketer did somehow change Smith's mind, our experience shows us that it is much more likely the appointment will be missed or certainly not lead anywhere.

Some firms like to offer people like Smith something to keep him in contact with your firm, a newsletter perhaps. An argument can be made both ways as to whether to follow up negative responses with a newsletter or brochure or to put him on your mailing list.

An argument could be made that Smith has had such minimal contact with your firm that any follow-up would be the same as sending direct mail to total strangers on a mailing list. Another argument could be made that your telemarketer may have well struck a subconscious nerve and Smith may start to think about the lack of quality he's receiving from his current service providers after he gets off of the phone.

We believe that since a contact was made, it would be a very good idea to follow up a "no" with a thank you note (word-processed) from you with a brochure or newsletter. Why? Because this lead is no longer ice-cold. Your firm has had some contact with Smith. And because marketing is anything that puts you in contact with someone you want to do business with.

Marketing Truth. Parlay every contact you make to its ultimate effect, and you have an effective marketing function.

Smith may have regretted hanging up the phone the minute he did it after he had a chance to think about it. You will now be giving him another chance to say "yes," for the price of a stamp.

See Exhibit 18-2, "Sample Telemarketing Follow-Up Letter for 'No' Respondents" for a follow-up letter we designed for one of our clients that they use to follow up those who

say no. Does it work? They've been using it for over nine years now and have received many callbacks that have led to appointments.

Response 3. Undecided

Let's move on to the final possibility, where Smith isn't sure whether he wants to set an appointment with you. We'll backtrack again to the proper point in the conversation:

June: Have you considered changing or would you consider receiving a second opinion on what services your current firm aren't providing for you?

Smith: I'm not sure [*or possibly, or perhaps*].

Here's where June needs to be prepared to ask some simple, probing questions designed to have Smith figure out that it would be a good idea to meet with you

June: What kinds of services do they provide for you now?

—or—

If there was one thing you could change about them, what would that be?

—or—

What are they not doing for you now, that they could be, to help you more with your business?

—or—

What kind of regular contact do you have with your CPAs? Do they ever sit down and explain anything to you or do they just mail the statements to you? Are they doing proactive tax planning for you? What are they doing to help you reach your goals?

Those are sample questions a telemarketer could ask in a "maybe" situation. Let's try one, and play it out.

June: What are they not doing for you now, that they could be, to help you more with your business?

Smith: All they do is our quarterly financial statements and our year-end tax return. When I hired them, they promised all sorts of help with my business, but I never see them, except for once or twice a year. I think my fees are way too high for the level of service that I'm getting.

June: I know that Harlan would be happy to sit down with you and see if there would be a better fit with our firm. He's a really nice person.

I know that Harlan's clients love him because he does take an active interest in their businesses. And he's an experienced businessman, not just another CPA.

Why not invest a small amount of your time and meet with him? What have you got to lose? There might be a good match.

Smith: Okay. Let's do it.

Once a telemarketer has someone's ear, 80 percent of the battle of getting the appointment is over.

If Smith says "no," he can be sorted out and you might send the follow-up letter in Exhibit 18-2, "Sample Telemarketing Follow-Up Letter for 'No' Respondents." If he says "yes," send the letter in Exhibit 18-1, "Sample Telemarketing Follow-Up Letter for 'Yes' Respondents." If he's still not sure, consider sending the follow-up letter in Exhibit 18-3, "Sample Telemarketing Follow-Up Letter for 'Undecided' Respondents."



DOING YOUR OWN TELEMARKETING

Perhaps you're starting a practice from scratch, have moved to a new town, are creating a new niche, or just want to build your business and have a couple of hours a day on your hands at certain times of the year.

As a way to hit your target market in a different manner, you might want to give telemarketing a shot yourself, in conjunction with the full pursuit of all of the other ideas we've set forth about how to market your practice most effectively.

As always, there are advantages and disadvantages to doing your own telemarketing.

The upsides are that you are in total control of the process. People will get to meet you, rather than some third party, on the phone. By doing your own phone work, you have the opportunity to engage prospective clients in a solid conversation about their business and find out some aches, hurts, needs, wants, and desires they might not have realized they had, or simply weren't bothering them, until they had an opportunity to talk them through with you.

Doing your own telemarketing gives the buyer the opportunity to get to like you. You'll save time training and listening in on phone calls. And, you might just do a better job on the phone than someone who doesn't have a personal interest in your practice.

Marketing Truth. People meet with, and hire, people they know, like, and trust.

The downsides are obvious. You're going to have to face the pain of rejection, failure, and hang-ups. In your mind you might believe it is unprofessional for someone who has worked as hard as you have to be a professional to have to resort to cold telephone calling. What will people think?

If you do want to make your own calls, we suggest following most of the script, with the appropriate modifications, for yourself. Here's a sample script we put together for one of our clients who wanted to do his own cold calling:

Receptionist: ABC Company.

You: Hi. Joe Smith, please.
—or—
Hi! Is Joe around?

Receptionist: May I tell him who's calling?

You: Sure—it's Rick Simon.

Receptionist: May I ask what this is in regards to?

You: I'd rather discuss this directly with Joe if you don't mind. Thank you.

Smith: Hello—Joe Smith.

You: Joe? Hi! It's Rick Simon, how are you?

Smith: Fine. Who is this?

You: Rick Simon.
The purpose of my call, Joe, is to find out if we should be meeting in person to discuss your business.
I'm a local CPA, and one of the ways I get to meet people I don't know is to call them up and find out about them and their businesses.
I wanted to call to find out if you already have a CPA. Are you *delighted* with the level of service they give you? Or is it possible they could be providing more information, faster and better?
Often, I meet with future clients who aren't receiving the level of service they want from their service providers or feel they just aren't getting their money's worth.
Have you considered changing or would you consider receiving a second opinion on what services your current people aren't providing for you?

Smith: Why, yes I have.

You: Good! Let's set an appointment. I'm available on Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning this week or Monday next week. Which one will allow enough time to meet and discuss your situation?

Smith: Wednesday morning is fine.

You can see the similarities in the scripts. The ideas are the same. Both sets of scripts work.



USING THE TELEPHONE TO MARKET

Besides telemarketing, there are other marketing-related phone uses that we will now discuss.

Setting Appointments From Referrals

A phone call to set an appointment, properly managed, will ensure your welcome as a guest and warm acquaintance when you show up for the sales interview.

Believe it or not, some professionals are so scared of the phone (or have unclear priorities) that they don't even follow through on referrals received from clients and others!

But you are focused on building your business. The phone is used to set a date that won't be broken by either party, where you can discuss the prospective client's problems, hopes, needs, wants, desires, and fees.

If your party isn't in, take the responsibility of calling back. This removes the mind games of wondering whether they will return your call.

Now, let's listen in on a typical telephone call between Hillary and Barbara, a person she has been referred to (refer to the chapter on eliciting introductions from referral sources to see how this call was set up to begin with):

Hillary: Hi. Is Barbara around?
Receptionist: Hold on please.
Barbara: Barbara speaking.
Hillary: Barbara? Hi, it's Hillary Davis. How are you?
Barbara: Fine, thanks.
Hillary: Does my name ring a bell?
Barbara: Why, yes. Hal Morris said you would be giving me a call.

Note: If Barbara did not recognize Hillary's name, she would say the following:

Hillary: Does my name ring a bell?
Barbara: No, I'm afraid it doesn't. What is this in regards to?
Hillary: Does Hal Morris's name ring a bell?
Barbara: Of course, now I remember. Hal said you'd be giving me a call.

Back to the conversation:

Hillary: That was nice of Hal to introduce us. How do you know him?
Barbara: Oh, Hal and I have known each other since college.
Hillary: Really—did Hal tell you why he was referring me to you?
Barbara: He most certainly did. Hal said that he just hired you as his CPA and that he was so impressed that he thought we should talk as well.
Hillary: That was nice of him to say that. What do you folks do over there at your company, anyway?

- Barbara:* We make an air purification product called “Oxygen in a Can.” People use it for spraying in offices and restaurants that aren’t yet smoke-free environments.
- Hillary:* Sounds pretty specialized—do you have much competition in the industry?
- Barbara:* My goodness, yes. A whole flock of fly-by-nighters have come in and try to sell to our customers all of the time. We’ve managed to keep most of our good customers, though.
- Hillary:* I see. Has the downturn in the economy affected you any?
- Barbara:* Absolutely. People cutting back on restaurant dining hurts us.
- Hillary:* May I ask why you told Hal it would be all right for me to call you?
- Barbara:* He seemed so delighted with finally having made a change that I figured there must be a reason why. Today, you need every edge you can get. Hal said you were going to be helping him in many areas besides just the monthly financials and such. All our accountant does is send the statements through the mail—he doesn’t even sit down and explain them to us. So I thought it made sense to talk to you myself.
- Hillary:* Good. Do you have your calendar available?
- Barbara:* Sure.
- Hillary:* I’m available for lunch next Tuesday or Friday. What does your schedule look like?
- Barbara:* Friday’s much better for me.
- Hillary:* Is 11:45 okay, to beat the crowd?
- Barbara:* Perfect.
- Hillary:* I’ll come by at 11:45 on next Friday to pick you up. I’d like to take a look around your place after lunch to get a better idea of what you do, if that would be okay.
- In the meantime, please do me a favor. Kindly write down a couple of issues you and I should discuss—perhaps areas of concern that your current service provider isn’t addressing. I’d appreciate that.
- Barbara:* Surely. I’ll see you next week.
- Hillary:* Thanks. Bye.

See how easily Hillary involved Barbara in a conversation about her business? People love to talk about their business and themselves. Notice, too, that Hillary gave Barbara some homework to do, a beginning list of her “aches” to discuss at lunch.

This easy conversation happened because the telephone appointment was set up correctly in the first place when the referral was initially requested or received. If you'll recall, we suggest pursuing introductions rather than mere referrals. Barbara was waiting for Hillary's call. This casual chat is typical of good telephone conversations used to set appointments that will result in very warm meetings and many more new clients.

Keeping in Contact With Clients You Don't See Often Enough

Another good way to improve your marketing via the phone is to maintain more contact with your clients. Although you personally may not like your work being interrupted by phone calls, be assured that the more contact you have, the more likely you are of receiving increased referrals and additional business from them just by staying in touch.

The Best Business Generators in our profession systematically call at least one client or referral source every single day no matter how busy they are. Many say it relieves the stress of daily business by giving them a required break from the grind of the day and keeps them more motivated.

Improving Connections With Referral Sources

Get out your personal address file and make 10 calls a month to old friends, classmates, and others you haven't talked to in a while. Meet for breakfast or lunch. Remember, if you are "out of sight, out of mind," it is most difficult for them to refer or do business with you. They are excellent referral sources only if they see or hear from you on a consistent basis.

Remember Mary your old college roommate? She may be a player at a major company by now. Call her up. How about Tony? He was just a struggling youngster with you many years ago before he started his own practice. Maybe he doesn't want to do audits any more. Ring him up.

Be committed to make 120 calls a year to people who may be in a position to help you, and your business will grow dramatically. Chances are it's 120 calls more than your competitors are making.

Setting Appointments With Warm Leads

Use the phone to set appointments (lunches are the best vehicle) with people you meet who are not yet clients or referral sources, but should be. These people are "warm" because you know them and something about them. No, you won't bat a thousand here, either.

However, let's say you've interacted with Ellen at the local Conservation Society for the last two years. You know she has her own business but aren't sure about where she stands in relation to her service provider or what aches she may possibly have. It's time to pick up the phone, ask her to lunch, find out what other organizations she's involved with, and see if there's a match.

You: Ellen? Hi! It's Sylvester Malone from the Conservation Society. How are you?

Ellen: Sylvester? Hi, how are you?

You: Okay. We missed you at last week's meeting. Jennifer filled in and gave your report.

Ellen: Oh, good. I had to rush to Fort Lauderdale to maintain my winter home.

You: What a beautiful place that is!

The reason I called was to see if you're available for lunch next week. I've made it a habit of getting to know as many people as I can in the society—networking with others is so important these days. What's your calendar look like?

Why shouldn't she meet with you for lunch? She'd be remiss not to. Everyone in business knows that professionals are great referral sources for them, too. And if she didn't want to meet with you, she would have just sorted herself out of your prospective client list, saving you time, effort, and energy of pursuing the wrong person.

You can have a mutually profitable conversation by gently probing and listening for her aches with her service provider and by finding out more about her so you can plug her in to your contacts if the need arises.

No, you might not secure her as a new client over lunch next week (but you very well might), and you can begin the process of qualification to see if she is someone you'd like to add to your client family in the near future.

Remember, people buy other people; they often change service providers for relationship and nontechnical reasons. Give her, and others, the opportunity to know who you are as a person away from the distractions of organizational meetings.

Selling to Potential Clients

Yes, you can sell your services on the phone. We've had to sell extensively on the phone over the years, as our clients are scattered from Brazil to India. People will hire you without meeting you in person.

Be careful! Don't consider using the phone to sell unless you consider yourself an experienced and effective in-person closer. Also, don't be lazy—or cute. Always visit prospective clients in person if they are geographically available. In-person meetings are always preferred to selling on the telephone.



KEYS TO USING THE TELEPHONE SUCCESSFULLY

Based on our experience with telemarketing, we have discovered a few key ideas to keep in mind when engaging in the art of phone selling. We will discuss these keys in depth.

Key 1. Keep Your Phone Calls Conversational and Casual

Let people meet the real you on the phone. Recollect that they may receive many calls from “salespeople” soliciting business, and you never want to sound like a salesperson because you might scare them away and they could treat you like one. Secretaries and receptionists are trained to keep salespeople (and anyone who sounds like one) away from their bosses, so never sound like you are selling anything.

Rather, you want to be treated like the successful professional you are. Conduct your phone conversations as the Best Business Generators do when they follow through on a lead—pretty much the same-sounding conversations they have with their clients.

Telephone marketing should be considered a “conversation,” above all else, not some sort of “selling.” People like to have conversations, on both sides of the phone. People don’t like being sold. And it’s a lot easier to pick up the phone if you only want to engage people in conversations.

Key 2. Maintain a Powerful “Physiology” While on the Phone

Many people find their telephone conversations more effective and influential when they conduct the conversation while standing or pacing in their office rather than slouching and staring down at their desk.

How you stand, if you’re sitting, whether you are looking down, or if your chin is up, can affect the results of your conversations.

This has to do with your physiology of posture—standing erect and looking up is more empowering and energizing than staring down into a phone or desk. An investment in a long telephone cord or a cordless phone could be a good investment.

Key 3. Remember, Marketing and Selling Is a Sorting Process

Your mission is to sort through people to discover who wants to meet with you and who doesn’t. That’s all you’re doing.

The problem is that you won’t know who wants to talk or meet with you until you contact them. There may be lots of people who want to do that right now, or there could be few. It’s up to you to sort through them. That’s all this is: a sorting process. Start sorting!

Key 4. Say to Yourself, What Would I Do If I Weren’t Afraid?

High-profile speakers have recently been discussing just this very thing. I (Allan) first started discussing the topic in 1987, and what I found back then, and still find today, is that even the biggest rainmakers get that familiar tinge of fear occasionally when staring at the telephone.

Next time that happens, let your actions and telephone conversations flow easily by first asking yourself, “What would I do if I weren’t afraid?”

Chances are you will reply to yourself: “Why, I’d pick up that phone right now and call....”

It’s amazing how this simple question dissipates the natural fears of using the telephone (especially when calling people you really don’t know all that well) and empowers you to call *now*.

Key 5. Get Started by Making Only One Call

You have to start somewhere.

Real Life Marketing Example. We remember several years ago when a client started her own practice from scratch in a city she had recently moved to. She needed new business right then to support herself!

Valerie was determined to spend a minimum of four hours a day on the phone soliciting potential clients. She thought she had all the tools she needed: She could talk and listen, she owned a phone, and she had a current telephone directory. Wrong!

She set herself up for failure by not having any sort of a prepared text and made her calls from the beginning of the book.

After a couple of tragic attempts with companies starting with the letter “a,” she approached us at a sales seminar we were conducting for a state society.

We described to her what we’ve related to you in this chapter. After working with us to build a base of business, she said the single most valuable piece of advice we gave her regarding telephone solicitation was to “start with only one call.”

On day one we insisted she make only one call and then call us immediately to discuss it. Under no circumstances was she allowed to make more than one call. Wouldn’t you know it? The first person she talked to was a real jerk—got mad at her and hung up!

She called us immediately after the call. We talked it out and she realized that she had just survived every telemarketer’s nightmare. Because her experience was so difficult, she decided to make only one call the next day, as well.

We talked to her the next day, and she felt better. Her call had gone much better. They also weren’t interested, but were pleasant about it. The following day she would make two calls.

You get the idea. After two weeks, she was investing two hours of her time productively every day (that was her self-imposed time limit: no more than two hours, under any circumstances). She was averaging two to three appointments from those two hours of daily phone work. After all these years, and a solid base of business, she still uses the phone for marketing, because she got used to it and became extremely good at it, very gradually.

Key 6. Avoid Monday Morning Phone Calls

Monday mornings are difficult times to catch someone's attention, especially when trying to create some chemistry or setting appointments. People are too distracted trying to settle in for their own workweeks.

Key 7. Avoid Secretaries and Receptionists by Calling at Odd Times

Consider making your telephone call-backs to people you weren't able to get through to at lunch, before 8:30 or after 5:00, when secretaries and other gatekeepers are less likely to be around to screen you out.

Key 8. Don't Worry About Interrupting People

Nine out of 10 times your phone call won't interrupt someone who can't talk to you or give you undivided attention. You may want to ask them if they "have a few minutes to talk at this time."

Key 9. Make All Your Phone Calls at One Time

It's easier to "get into the flow" if you schedule and conduct your phone calls all at one time. Schedule a break in your work; pick up the phone, and *do it*.

Key 10. Expect to Engage in Conversations When Setting Appointments

Don't just call up, say hi, and set the appointment. Expect to engage in a five- to 15-minute conversation as you begin the process of selling yourself to the prospective client. Find out about his or her business, how long he or she has known the person that referred you into the situation, and start listening for his or her aches.

Key 11. Set the Appointment for the In-Person Meeting Now

Don't forget to set the appointment for the in-person meeting at the end of the phone call! Lots of people forget to do it!

Key 12. Make the Telephone Your Friend

Although using the telephone to build your practice may be new and uncomfortable now, the more you use the phone to effectively set appointments and keep better contact with your clients and referral sources, the better you will get at it if you use these proven ideas.



CONCLUSION

In this chapter we've discussed how to use the telephone in marketing your practice. We discussed how to talk and be more effective on the phone, how to follow through on referrals received, and how to set up a telemarketing function. We've illustrated how a telephone script can be used to set appointments with strangers, and we've shown you the virtues and drawbacks of marketing your services on the phone.

**EXHIBIT 18-1: SAMPLE TELEMARKETING FOLLOW-UP LETTER
FOR “YES” RESPONDENTS**

MARLIN, DOLPHIN & FISH
Certified Public Accountants
1234 Main Street
Anytown, USA 55555
(515) 555-6789

April 5, 20XX

Mr. Joseph Smith
ABC Company
2222 S. First Street
Anytown, USA 55554

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for taking time out to talk to one of our people, June Swoon, on the telephone yesterday. We use June’s talents to find companies like yours who may be dissatisfied with the lack of service they are receiving from their current CPA or consulting firm.

We’re in the business of helping our clients be more successful. Very few businesses use their CPAs and consultants the way our clients make use of us—as an adjunct to their business, not mere accountants.

Before we meet, I would appreciate it if you would invest a few minutes and answer the following questions:

1. What services are you now *not receiving* from your current firm that could help you run your business more profitably and effectively?
2. Other than fees, if there was *one thing you could change* about your current service providers, what might that be?
3. Do you feel you are getting *your money’s worth* from your current firm? Why? Why not?

I’ve sent along our most recent brochure to help you get acquainted with us. I look forward to meeting with you on Wednesday, the fifth, at 10:30 a.m. at your place of business.

Respectfully,

Harlan Marlin
Managing Partner

**EXHIBIT 18-2: SAMPLE TELEMARKETING FOLLOW-UP LETTER
FOR “NO” RESPONDENTS**

MARLIN, DOLPHIN & FISH
Certified Public Accountants
1234 Main Street
Anytown, USA 55555
(515) 555-6789

April 5, 20XX

Mr. Joseph Smith
ABC Company
2222 S. First Street
Anytown, USA 55554

Dear Mr. Smith:

I just wanted to thank you for taking time out to talk to one of our people, June Swoon, on the telephone yesterday. We use June’s talents to find companies like yours who may be dissatisfied at the lack of service they are receiving from their current CPA or consulting firm.

We’re in the business of helping our clients be more successful. Very few businesses use their CPAs and consultants the way our clients make use of us—as an adjunct to their business, not mere accountants.

Although you weren’t interested in meeting, I’ve found that the following few questions shed light on the real value of the service businesses receive from their CPA or consulting firm:

1. What services are you now *not receiving* from your current firm that could help you run your business more profitably and effectively?
2. Other than fees, if there was *one thing you could change* about your current service providers, what might that be?
3. Do you feel you are getting *your money’s worth* from your current firm? Why? Why not?

I’ve sent along our most recent brochure to help you get acquainted with us. In case you have changed your mind and would like to discuss your business, I’d be delighted to sit down with you and provide a second opinion free of charge as to what you may be missing.

Respectfully,

Harlan Marlin
Managing Partner

**EXHIBIT 18-3: SAMPLE TELEMARKETING FOLLOW-UP LETTER
FOR “UNDECIDED” RESPONDENTS**

MARLIN, DOLPHIN & FISH
Certified Public Accountants
1234 Main Street
Anytown, USA 55555
(515) 555-6789

April 5, 20XX

Mr. Joseph Smith
ABC Company
2222 S. First Street
Anytown, USA 55554

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for taking time out to talk to one of our people, June Swoon, on the telephone yesterday. We use June’s talents to find companies like yours who may be dissatisfied at the lack of service they are receiving from their current CPA or consulting firm.

We’re in the business of helping our clients be more successful. Very few businesses use their CPAs and consultants the way our clients make use of us—as an adjunct to their business, not mere accountants.

I understand you weren’t sure whether you wanted to meet with me for a second opinion regarding the level of services you are currently receiving. In order to help you decide, please consider the following:

1. What services are you now *not receiving* from your current firm that could help you run your business more profitably and effectively?
2. Other than fees, if there was *one thing you could change* about your current service providers, what might that be?
3. Do you feel you are getting *your money’s worth* from your current firm? Why? Why not?

I’ve sent along our most recent brochure to help you get acquainted with us. I’ll have June give you a call next week to see if you would like to meet.

Respectfully,

Harlan Marlin
Managing Partner



**HOW TO CREATE
A BRAND THAT
GETS CLIENTS
IN THE DOOR**

chapter 19

It is generally accepted that after World War II the American economy entered a completely new phase of development and progress called “consumerism.”

If you study history you will find that the primary reason the Allies won (headed up by the United States) was we had the ability, capacity, creativity, resources, and drive to *make more stuff than the other guys*.

President Roosevelt tapped Henry Kaiser, the famous industrialist, to head up the massive transition from a peacetime economy to the war effort practically overnight. The auto industry, airline industry, household appliance industry—and just about every form of consumer or business production—were transferred and transformed to making munitions, planes, jeeps, bullets, and bombs. Imagine ... Kaiser transformed the economy from peacetime to wartime in a few months. His famous quote was, “Problems are only opportunities in work clothes.”

Why is this important? It’s just a little background to our subject. You see, American manufacturers were stuck with all sorts of leftover manufacturing capacity after WWII that they had to utilize or lose to waste.

What was their answer? Create a tremendous, unprecedented demand for consumer goods! Consumerism was born: the drive to create the intense desire to buy everything possible to satisfy one’s sense of self.

How? Through advertising, marketing, any kind of promotion you can think of (Happy Meals), and *branding*. The culture of selling products to the American public dramatically shifted to a much more aggressive, create-a-demand-where-one-didn’t-exist-before mode, more than ever before.



WHAT IS BRANDING?

A *brand* is a readily recognizable name, image, or product.

Branding is linking the firm name with a concept or area of practice with a goal to “own the market” for that niche, product, or service.

An obvious example is the name “Lexus” linked with the product “automobile” and the concept “highest quality.” The idea is that when the name of the product, service, or firm is mentioned, seen or heard, a *positive* idea or feeling pops into one’s head automatically. Lexus wanted to, and to a great extent does, own the position of being the foremost luxury car sold in the United States.

Here’s another example, as it relates to a service provided: “Ritz Carlton.” What went off in your mind? Ritz Carlton, does, in fact, own the position of premiere luxury hotel.

Branding, of course, can work the other way (negatively).

A great example of branding in the CPA profession is a New York firm based on Long Island. In New York, if you mention Grassi & Company, people will think and say “con-

struction expertise.” The feeling you will get is “they know what they are doing in their business.” The old national firm of Kenneth Leventhal accomplished the same thing in the area of real estate expertise.

It is possible, of course, that some of your associates might not want to create this kind of brand name recognition for a particular niche. They would rather be known for anything, than be well-known for something, so they don’t miss, heaven forbid, one dollar of business that might accidentally wander through the door.

To retain your sanity, always remember that professionals are not primarily “business people.” They are primarily “technicians,” great at doing their job, not necessarily great at running a business, managing and motivating people, marketing and selling ... you get the idea. How do you accomplish branding your firm, branding a niche, and making sure you don’t lose every possible client who might come in contact with you? Quite easy; just brand the firm name and the niche at the same time. For instance, if Lou Grassi’s firm decided to go into the investment banking business, they could create a new brand, “Grassi Capital.” Or if they wanted to pursue financial services, then “Grassi Financial.”

The smart idea is that if branding your firm does actually help get a client in the door, then you have the opportunity to cross-sell other services to the client (just as they do at the Big Five and other large consulting firms).



WHY BRANDING IS IMPORTANT

There are many positive attributes that can be derived from a well-branded product or service, which we will discuss further in this chapter.

Attribute 1. Provides More Sales Opportunities

The hope is that a firm that can successfully brand itself will find that it is on the short list of in-house counsel, senior executives, and other decision-makers who need outside assistance.

It’s a lot easier to access information about a product or service when you remember the name of the people who do it! When I say “mutual funds,” you think ... Fidelity, Janus ... It’s widely accepted that when opportunities occur in certain service areas, certain firms are always going to the party because they are well-known, or “branded” for that niche.

Attribute 2. Opens Doors Wider

Branding makes you and the firm more memorable because people have heard of you and therefore the name of the firm (or product) is embedded in their mind.

Anyone who works for a “branded” or well-known firm and introduces himself or herself starts out with a certain amount of recognition and credibility associated with that person.

Attribute 3. Allows Firms to Own Their Position

If you are the first ones in, or the ones with the most positive recognition, you will preclude a certain amount of your competitors from grabbing market share because of your “brand.” That’s why all those dot-coms spent fortunes promoting themselves—so they could own their position in their market. Best success examples of owning positions are Amazon and Yahoo.

Another great example is online auctions, where eBay owns the market, with about two billion or more hits a month.

Of course, the company that still owns the “fast food” market is McDonald’s. They were one of the very first ones in, they hit the market hard with a specific concept, and they targeted the marketplace to brand into.

Nobody owns the discount brokerage business like Charles Schwab. Of course, they laughed at him when he opened his doors 25 years ago.

Please understand: just because you own a position doesn’t mean you will hold it. Unless you continue to market and promote the brand heavily, someone else who sees an opportunity that isn’t being capitalized on properly—or where the management has gotten spoiled, lazy, cheap, and reactive—will move in.

Best example of that is the once great, and now discontinued brand name of Plymouth. In the 1950s and early ’60s, Chevy, Ford, and Plymouth sold the most cars, in that order. Note how Chevy and Ford changed to meet the times. They continued to be heavily promoted and evolved. Plymouth was treated like a stepsister to other brands Chrysler was trying to promote, and when the time came in the 1990s to put some muscle behind the Plymouth brand, it was too late.

Another great case in point: America Online (AOL). CompuServe and Prodigy were first into that market. AOL spotted the opportunity to provide the same service better and simpler to the user. Now they own Time Warner, and they are first into the integration of media and the Internet. Brilliant.

Attribute 4. Removes Some of the Fear of Doing Business With You

It is human nature to feel less fear about doing business with a well-known name than with one nobody has heard of. For a lot of years, the auto repair business was identified with hucksters. The smart people at Midas and Aamco came along and branded mufflers and transmissions and wound up owning their position to this very day.

“Oh yeah—I’ve heard of you,” is a very powerful statement when it comes to removing someone’s fear of doing business with you.

Attribute 5. Automatically “Implies” a Certain Level of Quality

Going back to 50-plus years of consumer brainwashing, humans are presold on something well-known and psychologically assume a certain level of quality when they are familiar with the name.

And higher perceived quality is more likely to result in willingness to pay *higher prices!*

Attribute 6. Makes It Easier to Introduce New Products or Services

Would it be easier for Honda to bring out a new car model or Daewoo? Dae-who?

Attribute 7. Creates a Great Tag Line That Can Be Used Forever

If you come up with a great tag line, one that is associated with what you do and who you are, you can use it forever and people will automatically think of you when they hear it or see it.

“*Good to the last drop.*” That particular tag line was a comment President Teddy Roosevelt made after drinking a cup of Maxwell House coffee over 100 years ago. And they wisely still use it.

Another great example is what the DeBeer family monopoly did to greatly increase the demand of diamonds. Diamonds are *not* the most precious stone. However, you wouldn’t know that if you looked at the tag line created years ago, which still holds power: “*Diamonds are forever.*” And a good tag line is forever, too.

In the financial services field, Smith Barney boasted, “We make money the old-fashioned way. We earn it.” Wall Street used to listen when E. F. Hutton spoke. And everybody still wants to “get a piece of the rock,” from Prudential.

But make sure your name is closely identified with the tag line. The award-winning “Where’s the Beef?” was a marketing mistake because the public remembered the line but not the chain.

Attribute 8. Makes It Easier to Attract Quality Recruits

Many people like to work for well-known firms so they can brag to their buddies and families who they work for. It’s discouraging and demeaning when you proudly tell your Uncle Lou that you just got a job at the ABC firm and he asks, “Where?”

Attribute 9. Makes It Easier to Spread Word-of-Mouth Advertising

Word-of-mouth advertising has always been the most powerful form of marketing. Movies rely on it. Even a film that gets bad reviews in the media can score at the box office if the target market tells their friends.

Other businesses rely on it too.

Of course, word-of-mouth advertising is easier if people can remember the name of your firm! And that is accomplished by branding a simple, easy-to-remember name over a long period of time. Also, when the good word is passed along, if people have heard of the firm or the product that has been branded, they can more easily assimilate the information and are more likely to take action.

Attribute 10. Can Link Products or Services

My first foray into real-world sales came immediately after college when I (Allan) went to work for Alberto Culver in Chicago. Our hottest product at that time was something called “Alberto Balsam” shampoo. Stores couldn’t keep it on the shelves. What made balsam so important as a shampoo additive? Who knows! Who knows what balsam really is? The fact was they had a neat ad campaign with a good-looking and amiable hairdresser. They dumped huge sums of money into this brand promotion. And the balsam thing was a new ingredient that people hadn’t heard of yet.

After about a year of getting rich off the shampoo, they figured people just might buy Alberto Balsam Hairspray. Well, of course they would—and did. Next came the Alberto Balsam deodorant. That was a stretch. What people were willing to put on their heads, they weren’t going to spray under their arms. A short time after this, the Balsam franchise expired and Alberto Culver came up with another device to sell stuff.

What’s the point? Once you build perceived quality and name recognition into one brand, you can transfer that perceived value into another—*as long as the consumer or client sees a viable relationship*. There is no way Alberto Culver would have sold that much shampoo if the balsam name weren’t on it. Similarly, Lexus could bring out a motorcycle and do well with it, but not necessarily ice cream.

The television industry spends millions every year trying to spin off one series from another. Recent examples are “Law and Order” (the brand name show), which was able to spin-off “Law and Order: Special Victims Unit” and “Law and Order: Criminal Intent,” as successful, derivative series.



THE DOWNSIDE OF BRANDING

Partners in professional service firms tend to love the concept of branding. We’re convinced that’s because they see it as some kind of miracle drug for marketing, which if done correctly, would further remove them personally from the marketing process so they could sit at their desks and never feel at all guilty about it, because their firm, service, or niche was now “branded.”

When branding alone doesn’t bring gobs of new business through the door because they refuse to actively and appropriately participate in the process, they blame you—they knew it wouldn’t work!

Before getting too exuberant about branding, let’s be clear—there are certain downsides.

Downside 1. Doesn't Replace Humanity

Branding doesn't make the sale for you. It is definitely *not* the final determining factor in hiring a firm. People buy people; they don't buy a "brand." There is a difference between marketing services and marketing soup.

This is why the Big Five firms lose business to firms you never heard of (and neither did they). The ultimate decision to do business when buying a service is based upon interaction between *human beings*. Personal chemistry is 50 percent to 80 percent or more of making the sale. And you will never, ever convince us otherwise.

Downside 2. Must Be Consistent

Here's one way for people to notice you: promote a certain service, level of quality in your marketing and advertising, and then have the actual delivery of the product be something else!

We have seen firms invest fortunes in "branding," pursuing a higher class clientele, a better paying customer. Unfortunately, nobody ever told their people how to dress or groom and many times their offices look much less than impressive. That'll get you noticed.

Downside 3. Takes Time and Investment

Professional people in general (technicians) just don't understand that marketing, branding, getting a message across, and breaking through the muddle, take time and repeat exposure.

Some firms in the accounting profession are renaming themselves to represent a more holistic approach to taking care of their clients' financial situation. Smith, Jones, and Xavier, CPAs, now call themselves "SJX Financial." If changing their name and the way the phone is answered is all they do (without changing the way they do business or deal with clients), there will be no effect regarding branding financial services, only confusion in the marketplace and trashing a recognized name.

Remember another one of our *Marketing Truths* from the Introduction: *Marketing is an investment, not a cost.*

Professionals must be patient with the process, and realize it's going to take three to five years with the appropriate monetary investments to create an effective brand and impression in the marketplace.

Downside 4. If Successful, Makes It Harder to Reinvent the Brand Image

If you do decide to brand your firm, the image you create and embed in the minds of your clients, referral sources, and others, will be tough to change.

Real Life Marketing Example. A great case in point was the attempt to reposition CBS several years ago. In 1996, CBS decided it didn't like its traditional demographics of viewers mostly over 35, or even older, and wanted to morph itself into a clone of Fox, which had a very strong presence in the 19 to 35 age bracket. So CBS started bringing out Fox-clone shows that season. Immediate result? Its traditional audience felt abandoned and ratings plummeted.

I (Allan) recently had the opportunity to meet one of the entertainment business's top consultants who was involved in CBS's successful re-re-positioning, back to its original brand of a mature audience. What a difficult project that was. They were fortunate to be able to accomplish it.



A NINE-STEP PROCESS TO CREATE A BRAND THAT GETS CLIENTS IN THE DOOR

There are certain key success factors in creating a powerful brand. Review the branding considerations below. Follow these steps and think about what you want from branding.

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- Step 1.* Identify exactly what it is that you want to brand.
 - Step 2.* Identify what message you want to convey.
 - Step 3.* Identify what feeling you want to impart.
 - Step 4.* Get lots of input.
 - Step 5.* Make your brand consistent.
 - Step 6.* Create a great logo.
 - Step 7.* Keep it simple.
 - Step 8.* Do not change names.
 - Step 9.* Get it out there everywhere you can.
-

Step 1. Identify Exactly What It Is That You Want to Brand

Do you want to brand your firm, a product, or a niche? The more specific you are about what it is you want to brand (is it your firm, a product, or a niche?), the easier it is.

Please refer to the exercises in Chapter 3 to help determine the characteristics of what it is you are trying to brand. A packaged service, or firm, is easier to brand as it is something solid clients can put their arms around.

Step 2. Identify What Message You Want to Convey

Exactly what message do you want to put across when people come in contact with your brand? Some idea should pop into clients' minds when they come in contact with your brand. Is it quality, efficiency, speed (think Nike's "whoosh"), caring, a specific expertise?

Step 3. Identify What Feeling You Want to Impart

What *feeling* do you want people to get when they see it, hear it, and come in contact with it? Do you notice that the feeling you get from the brand “Mercedes” is different from the feeling you get from the brand “BMW”? Both brands describe well-made, German cars that are expensive. But the *feeling* you get is different. Mercedes looks to create a feeling of efficiency, sturdiness, and precision. BMW wants you to feel sporty, fun, excitement. People buy for emotional reasons; this aspect of branding cannot be underestimated.

Step 4. Get Lots of Input

It is best to get lots of input during the branding process from those you are trying to influence, clients, referral sources, and recruits. This is because you are hopefully going to create something *permanent*.

Unfortunately, most firms spend most of their efforts eliciting responses from the partners, who often know much less about such subjects than do the people you are trying to influence. Conversely, young people on staff can be excellent sources for ideas as they are not yet skeptical and overly stodgy in their ideas and habits.

The more input you get, the more buy-in you will have once the brand is brought out.

Step 5. Make Your Brand Consistent

Based upon what it is you want, your brand and accompanying message and feelings must be consistent with those target clients and existing clients you want to influence.

The way the office looks, the way your people look and act, the quality of work product, and reputation for service are all going to have to be in harmony with what you are trying to convey. Don't fool yourself into thinking that the brand will overcome inadequacies in these areas.

Step 6. Create a Great Logo

Chances are you are going to need a new logo, one that is memorable, is simple, and conveys the message you want. A logo ties your name and service together in a visual. It has to exemplify what you are trying to convey. Take a look at www.grassicpas.com and www.larsonallen.com. Great logo work based on who they are and what they want. Get the best graphic designer you can afford.

Step 7. Keep It Simple

Smart firms shorten their name to make it memorable. It is *impossible* for one to brand a long, tedious multiple-named firm. Usually, every new partner wants his or her name on the door, and many times the firm obliges. Won't work! Keep it simple!

Step 8. Do Not Change Names

The name has to stay the same forever! Every time you change a name, you are taking a huge risk and have to undergo the branding process all over again. Look at how long it has taken KPMG to overcome the 75 years of branding of the name Peat Marwick.

Look what happened to what was once the largest selling import car company in the United States. Datsun sold more imported cars in 1983 than anyone else. Then it changed its name to Nissan, and it fell to third place, where it still resides.

We were happy to see Grassi & Company take our advice when it recently merged with a firm in Manhattan. New firm name: Grassi & Company.

Step 9. Get It Out There Everyplace You Can

Branding doesn't come cheap.

If you work for cheapskates, chances are your branding efforts will fail because they will fail to make the necessary monetary investment in the branding process.

Once you have established your brand, get it everywhere on everything all of the time. Splatter it all over your Web site, e-mails, stationery, office, ads, T shirts, mugs, water bottles—all the stuff you give away over and over again.

One Big Five firm recently redesigned its age-old logo and is spending \$30 million on the re-branding process. Another firm in the same profession is spending \$90 million this year to further impress its target market with its brand.

The brand is now the focal point of everything you do. Nothing should conflict with the brand image of what you are trying to create. The more the marketplace sees it and comes in contact with those people who represent it, the sooner it will be accepted and turn into a powerful marketing and client retention force.

*Real Life Marketing Example.*¹ Larson, Allen, Weishair and Co., LLP used to go by the brand name LAWCO. One difficulty with the name was that it led people to believe the company was a law firm rather than a professional services firm.

LAWCO was literally a household name among employees and long-term clients. But the company was fragmented in the way it presented itself. Lyne Noella and the LarsonAllen Marketing Group determined that a brand was needed to consolidate the company conceptually and make it more understandable.

The marketing group was responsible for the brainstorming, research, and early drafts of the new look. When they settled on the final three concepts, they sought feedback internally and externally. Using their Web site, the phone, U.S. mail, e-mail, and personal interviews, they surveyed clients, prospects, and employees. Though the response from the business community was very positive, the group met resistance inside the company. There were heated, emotional debates about the new name and brutal commentaries on the look and feel of the new concepts.

¹ Contributed by Lyne Noella and Paul D. Pfeiffer.

The LarsonAllen Marketing Group's Jackie Moser designed the new brand. It was called "the global LarsonAllen concept."

It had a clean, professional feel and the "o" of Larson was a radiant yellow, suggesting energy, leadership, and the power to grow and thrive in the world market.

After struggling with a variety of potential slogans, copywriter Paul Pfeiffer finally struck upon "Achieve the Desired Effect." The phrase suggested that whatever the clients needs were, LarsonAllen could bring about the result they were looking for.

When the Marketing Group rolled out the new brand, rather than the resistance and criticism that they'd experienced when gathering feedback on the concepts, the reception was much warmer. Employees were eager to get new marketing materials and pleased with the new look.

The key to the support of the new brand appeared to be that people had been included in the process. Yes, some had found little they liked in the earlier concepts, but many found changes and improvements that they could trace to their input. The brand was truly the result of the efforts of many people who had taken the time to give feedback.

People enthusiastically adopted the new brand, in part because they saw themselves in it.



CONCLUSION

Branding is a powerful tool that will help you, your firm, and your services stand out from the competition. It can help create a preconceived notion of value.

But branding, even when effective, does not replace humanity. Just because you're represented by a powerfully branded product or service, that doesn't mean you can remove yourself from the personal marketing process. People still buy people, not brands.



**HOW TO CREATE A
WEB SITE THAT
WORKS FOR YOU**

chapter 20

There should be little doubt about it, the Internet is going to continue to change the way we live our lives and do business.

Let's be clear. There's a big future in what you're selling if you can:

- Make someone's life easier
- Make someone more productive
- Help someone make or save more money
- Help someone have more fun
- Save someone time, effort, and energy

That's the promise and results of the Internet.

What's also evident is that buyers will have much more information and many more options available to them than ever before. You will see less business done locally and more business done nationally, internationally, and over the Net because buyers are no longer confined by geographic area as to whom they are going to do business with. Because there is more information at the buyers' fingertips, they will have more control over those they bless with their business and the level of their expectations, performance-wise and fee-wise.



WHAT THE WEB WILL NOT DO FOR YOU

In order to best utilize the Web to your advantage, we need to be clear about what your expectations should be. Some firms have made large investments in their Web sites only to be disappointed later as their expectations were not realistic and the results were not realized.

You must limit your expectations of what can be accomplished in the electronic marketing of professional services. Here are some things that your Web site will not do for you.

It Will Not Make Sales for You

As we have mentioned elsewhere in this publication, there is a real difference between marketing professional services and marketing a tangible product. Sadly, few firms or even marketing consultants to the professions have picked up on this.

A perfect example of this is the success of eBay, where they sell lots of "stuff." It is the world's largest garage sale, with two billion hits or more a month.

On the other hand, there are numerous sites that auction off "services." We haven't found anyone yet in our research that has sold any material amount of business from those sites.

Services do not lend themselves to direct sale, as people hire people.

It Will Not Leave You Alone

Most people in the professions would just as soon have someone else magically provide new business for them. They prefer not to be involved in the process.

Your Web site won't leave you alone! When you have a functional Web site, certain things are going to happen that are going to require someone's response.

And, you can't put it up there and let it be. This is not like printing a brochure or getting a newsletter done. The Web site needs to be constantly changed, refreshed, challenged; *it is a living thing*.

A good Web site is not just another brochure on the Internet (as most firms treat it—where it is static and boring). You must see it as a *powerful marketing tool*, not a stepchild.

It Will Not Allow You to Eliminate Other Marketing Activities or Staff

Some companies have thought that this magical Web thing would allow them to save money in other areas of promoting their business. This is not true. Your Web presence is an adjunct to what you are already doing and will be doing, marketing-wise.

An effective Web site is an additional way to go to market—not a cure or replacement for marketing professionals, salespeople, or human contact.

It Will Not Come Cheaply

Once again, here is a case where the powers-to-be would just as soon turn the whole thing over to somebody else so they can be left alone to sit at their desks and bill. A great (or even good) Web site requires an investment of time, effort, and energy, as well as money.

Do you want to delegate how thousands of people are going to perceive your firm by letting someone else do it without significant input?

In addition to the time investment necessary to make a winning Web presence (or to reinvent your existing one) it may well require the retention of a professional who is more than a mere graphic designer to create, recreate, and update your site. Unless you are a sole practitioner, with a low market profile, attracting small clients with little money to spend, we would not suggest you have your 12-year-old kid do it. We have seen sites that are so amateurish that the created impression harms the firm's brand and image.

And there are sites that are beautiful but worthless because the designer didn't understand how to get your site to the top of lists on search engines and directories. Tom Antion (www.antion.com or Tom@antion.com), who is the best we have seen on electronic marketing of products, suggests you ask any Web designer you are interviewing the following question: "What plan do you have to work key words into our site?" If the answer is "Uh, we will put metatags and keywords on it," chances are you have the wrong Web designer. There's much more to it than that.



WHAT THE WEB CAN DO FOR YOU

There are many advantages to a Web site that works. We will discuss each idea below.

It Can Attract More Quality, Potential Clients

The ultimate idea is to generate revenue from those Web site leads. The main purpose of your Web site is to market your services, not sell them.

The purpose of your Web site must be to lead someone to call you to set an appointment now, certainly not just to have you give out more information. Are you a library? And the contact you want should not be via e-mail, but a phone call to a specific human being. It is through human contact, not e-mail, that people are “sold.”

A well-designed and marketed Web site makes it easy to find you, determine what you do, and qualify you for further contact. We have clients who are developing leads for business from all over the world, where they used to have just a regional or local presence. The Web gives you an opportunity to talk to many more people you might otherwise not reach.

It Can Maintain, Manage, and Create Relationships

An effective Web presence provides another link to clients, referral sources, staff, job candidates, and prospective clients that didn't exist before.

Remember, the more ways you can involve clients, referral sources, prospective clients, and job candidates in your business, the more quality business opportunities and new hires you will have.

And the rest of your marketing will be enhanced because *marketing is a contact sport*. The more *quantity* of contact you have with people of influence, the better *quality* of opportunities you will generate, as you will be foremost in their minds.

Also, the more involvement your clients have with your business, the more likely they are to stay clients (as our studies have proven).

Smart firms are using electronic magazines (e-zines, which are newsletters broadcast via e-mail) to generate lists of prospects and stay in touch with clients, referral sources, and prospects.

Place articles and features on your Web site and in your e-zine about special clients and friends of the firm. Then they will be referring traffic to your site for you.

Highlight marketing, speaking, and writing activities that your people are up to. Have them tell their family and friends that they are featured on your site.

Never before has there been a medium that could so easily allow you to get a positive message out readily to so many people.

It Can Make You Look Good

As with speeches, seminars, and articles, an impressive Web site can make you, your staff, and your firm look like experts in those areas of business you are pursuing.

And, maybe your offices are due for a refurbishment. Your Web site can still look top-drawer, thus increasing the perceived value in doing business with you (especially if clients or referral sources don't visit your offices).

*Real Life Marketing Example.*¹ The LarsonAllen Web site (www.larsonallen.com) is open 24 hours a day and contains more information than any billboard or print ad could ever hope to. Also, people who use a computer are likely to be the same people who could use their products and services. Their Web site is their online sales representative, and they believe it accurately conveys a sense of the culture of LarsonAllen.

LarsonAllen is not a dot-com company and, though they try to make their site as interactive as possible, it is simply a source of information. They provide articles about business and lifestyle.

The Web site has an interactive, ongoing mystery that bank presidents and computer programmers have contributed to. The Web site gives you the idea that although LarsonAllen is a large and complex organization, you can easily access them.

They launched their new Web site in November 1998 and have consistently upgraded it. They have redesigned pages and significantly improved the navigation. Not only has their number of hits been on the rise each month (from 18,000 early on to over 112,000), but they have also found that *they can direct a viewer's attention to certain services or events* with banner ads or the placement of an article or image on the front page. This lets them expose the public to elements of the company that they might not discover otherwise.

Also, by integrating direct mail or ad campaigns with the Web site, LarsonAllen can pull a targeted audience into a specific part of our site for information, contests, or surveys. Once there, the quality of the site, the ease of navigation, and some of the fun elements keep the viewers around, investigating products and services on their own.

The LarsonAllen Marketing Group works with each LarsonAllen group to customize their pages so they can offer the information, services, and tools that are most beneficial to their particular clients. Each group decides how much time, effort, and energy they would like to put into their section of the site beyond the basics provided by the LarsonAllen Marketing Group.

The Web site provides an extremely easy way to direct a potential client to comprehensive information that they can view on their own time. But *LarsonAllen is also getting new clients who learn about them solely from the Web*. So when prospects call looking for a consultation, it's the reverse of a cold call. In fact, it's a hot call—the sale has practically been made.

¹ Contributed by Lyne Noella and Paul D. Pfeiffer.

In a recent meeting, CEO Gordy Viere commented that merger candidates had been using the site to get a sense of the organization. He reported that candidate responses were overwhelmingly enthusiastic and that they were impressed by the progressive look and feel of the site.

It Can Further Enhance Your Existing Marketing Efforts

Multiply your marketing effect by integrating your Web site into everything your firm does. Want to enhance the attendance at and value of your current marketing seminar? Put the outline on the Web. Put the invitations on the Web. Do a Web cast. Send e-mail invitations with responses to your Web site for sign-ups. Make sure there is a map on the site so they know where to show up. Then do an e-mail newsletter with an article on the seminar you just completed.

Got a referral or a new lead? Make sure they visit your Web site to get a flavor for your firm and what you do.

Met prospects at an association meeting last night? E-mail them and provide the link to the Web page where your article on their industry can be found, so they can just click on it and get there from inside the e-mail.

Host a chat room with one of your partners, managers, and staff with college students from around the world who are wondering what your business, and your firm, is all about.

Offer articles written by your young staff people about what they do at your firm, why it is interesting and fun, why your business is a worthwhile career and why your firm is outstanding in particular. Have candidates e-mail you their résumés.

It Can Add Humanity to Your Firm

We believe part of a professional services firm's Web site should be set aside to be sort of like those family Web sites you see now and then.

What's going on with the *people* of your firm? What new designations do they have that you can brag about? Maybe someone has just accomplished something outside of work that would be appropriate, such as election to the board of directors of the local chamber of commerce or the school board. Perhaps someone is now a deacon at his or her church.

Did a staff person have a baby? Put the pictures on the site (and have them tell their family and friends to come see it). What about your annual golf tournament? Put the photos on the Web site. Maybe your firm won an association award. Put the pictures and description on your site.

Humanize your site and people will feel more familiar and comfortable with you before you even talk to them. And it will make client transitions easier because your clients will already be familiar with your people before they take over their work.

It Can Give You an Opportunity to Involve Your Young Staff

Young people love playing with computers; they think it's fun!

This is a very nonthreatening way to involve younger employees in marketing from the beginning of their careers, and it can lead to added responsibilities and make their foray into personal marketing much easier, as they will have marketing successes behind them. Use your Web site as a way to involve your young people in marketing through Web design, management, and lead follow-up.

Have a committee of staff people take over the management and update of your site. A good site is changed almost daily.



TERMINAL MISTAKES FOR WEB SITES

Over the years we have reviewed hundreds of Web sites for content, impression created, and marketing effectiveness. Here are some things you want to avoid or change when designing your site.

Mistake 1. It Is a Pretty Site, But It Gets No Leads

There are lots of visually attractive sites out there that generate few or no leads for new business. Just being good-looking isn't enough.

Mistake 2. It Gives the Wrong Impression

Of course, the only thing worse than a merely pretty site is the one that gives off a different impression than the one you want to create.

We were working with a firm, an established high-quality firm with outstanding people and reputation, that had a great Web site for content and material that would involve the visitor. The only problem was that the site looked amateurish and the color scheme (out of sync with their branding or even office colors) was dull (lots of green and brown).

Much more even than mere colors, the design of the site and quality of what you will find on the site create an immediate impression that may be difficult to shake, especially if the visitors aren't familiar with your firm because they live or work elsewhere. Nonverbal communication is 93 percent of total communication, and this applies to Web design and implementation, too.

Mistake 3. It Takes Too Long to Load

Not everyone has high-speed modem access, and many won't for years. We have seen sites, as you have, where you are waiting and waiting for their revolving graphics or 30-odd pictures on their front page to load. Forget about it!

Your pages must be easy to load and fast. Yes, pictures and designs are important, but watch the number of them per page and their definition. Some sites have pictures and visuals with 1200 x 1200 or more dots per inch (dpi), but the human eye looking on a Web site can only discern at maximum 300 dpi. Net result is that the page takes much longer than necessary to load and viewers leave or get upset at their time being wasted.

Mistake 4. It Contains No Pictures of Members of the Firm

We have been speaking and writing on the topic of professional services marketing for over 20 years around the world. When, oh when, will firms realize that people buy people?

The mere thought that one would have a Web site with a description of principals, or leaders in a niche, without their accompanying pictures is so insane and obvious we can only conclude that these firms haven't paid attention to how people market most effectively to them.

Mistake 5. It Is Too Generic

It looks like everyone else's. It's hard enough for a professional services firm to separate itself from the competition in the day-to-day marketing of the business. Then when you add a Web site that looks and sounds pretty much like everyone else's ... how is the client, referral source, or job candidate going to remember yours?

This is just another area of marketing that makes succeeding as a professional easy because by having an exceptional, hot site, you will get more than your share of quality opportunities.

Mistake 6. It Is Stale—It Doesn't Change

As stated previously, a Web site is a living thing. People will stop coming to your site when they see you haven't added or changed anything.

Mistake 7. It Doesn't Get the Visitor Involved

Chicago is a city of wonderful museums. By far, the most popular of all of them is the Museum of Science and Industry. We remember as children our parents took us there over and over again *because we could play with or interact with the displays*. The other museums were high quality, but boring. You couldn't touch the dinosaur at the Museum of Natural History, play with the fish at the Shedd Aquarium, or touch the art at the world-famous Art Museum.

You will never hear a truer sales maxim: the uninvolved party is impossible to sell. If you somehow do not get visitors drawn into your site, they will quickly leave and you will lose.

Mistake 8. It Is Just Plain Boring!

In the desire to make their sites look "professional," some firms wind up with sites that are just painfully boring. If your site is uninspiring ... maybe you as a firm are tedious as well.

We just love the section of LarsonAllen's site where they have created a fictional accountant character where people are allowed to add to its life and career experiences. Different? Yes. Involving? Of course.

Mistake 9. It Does Not Allow for Visitors to Contact the Firm

This is a surprisingly overlooked area on many Web sites. Not having contact information available is a surefire way to avoid getting new business. Include contact information: a real-live address for mail inquiries, a staff contact directory with phone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses.

An interactive forum where visitors may post a question may also work, but it must be monitored to discourage spamming and other unprofessional conduct.



A FOUR-STEP PROCESS TO CREATE A WEB SITE THAT WORKS FOR YOU

There are certain steps that it just makes sense to follow in creating or recreating your Web presence.

-
- Step 1.* Identify what business you are in.
 - Step 2.* Identify what services you want to highlight.
 - Step 3.* Make the site user-friendly and useful.
 - Step 4.* Give one person ownership.
-

Step 1. Identify What Business You Are In

Exactly how do you want to be "positioned" in the marketplace you are pursuing? What message do you want to make sure people receive when they visit the site? How do you want people to feel when they visit the site?

Avoid the commodity trap. The Web allows you to represent your firm as you really want to be perceived, without the obstacle of making a change that would cost you \$20,000 (as with other types of marketing materials).

Because marketing is both an individual and a team effort, we strongly suggest you involve your partners. More importantly, your staff in this discussion. They invariably will see things the "leaders" won't.

Step 2. Identify What Services You Want to Highlight

You cannot effectively highlight all the services, niches, and various tertiary interests partners have on a Web site. It becomes a mishmash.

Of course, this will lead to hurt feelings. “What about my business valuation practice?” one of your partners may say. “Golly, Joe, you can’t get the ones finished you already have on your plate. Sure you want to expend our limited resources there?”

Step 3. Make the Site User-Friendly and Useful

The Web site is not a job description. The people visiting your site must have a clear idea of what you desire from their visit. Work hard to identify what will make the visitor want to stay and come back repeatedly. This will change constantly as people come up with ideas.

This is a great place to get your younger staff members involved as they will have a better idea of what success looks like here than the “old folks” running the firm. They may have to do research, surf the Net, find other sites, come back with ideas ... but this gives them buy-in as to how your firm is run. They’ll feel more important, they will be more likely to stay, and their work product will improve as their self-esteem goes up.

Of course, they will have to be repeatedly acknowledged for their contribution or they will quickly become discouraged. If you don’t plan to implement their ideas, don’t involve them in the first place.

Step 4. Give One Person Ownership

Who is going to make it their “baby”?

Somebody, or a small committee, is going to have to monitor, manage, and change the site regularly. They are going to have to badger others in the firm for ideas, articles, and input. They are going to have to make sure changes are made quickly. A Web site is a powerful tool, not to be ignored.

And (forgive us) they are going to have to be compensated or bonused beyond their current salary for this involvement.



INCREASING YOUR VISIBILITY

The following is a collection of information and experience in making your site the most effective it can be if the goal of your Web site is to attract more quality potential clients and to generate revenue from those Web site leads.

By no means is this meant to be a complete discussion of the subject. Because the Internet is changing on a minute-by-minute basis, it will be necessary for you to supplant anything you learn here.

We recommend the book *Maximize Your Web Site Traffic*, by Robin Nobles and Susan O’Neil (Adams Media Corporation, 2000). It is the most thorough discussion we have seen on the subject of getting your target market to your site. Below are some ideas on Web site design considerations and why they are important.

Track Hits

Hits mean nothing! A hit is registered every time a page is accessed and the number of graphics opened adds to the number of hits. For example, one page and six graphics equal seven hits! Page views, unique visitors, repeat visitors, and time spent on site are of utmost value. You can get this information from your Web host. It has to be monitored and managed on a regular basis. Track these statistics and publish it visibly.

Get to the Top of Search Engines

You want to get to the top of search engines and directories. Your site will be veritably hidden from your target market if it's listed 552nd when a prospective client or job candidate is looking for something you may have. Directories and search engines look for certain things in determining who gets ranked where. Obviously, you want to be as close to the top in a specific area as possible.

There are at least four keys to successfully placed sites: Key Words, Metatags, Links In, and Links Out. Directories and search engines use things called "spiders" that are computers that search the Web continuously examining Web site after Web site. They then place you in certain specific categories so people can (or can't) find you when they do a search.

Every page on your site needs certain key words embedded in the text so that the spider can see it and recognize it and direct traffic your way. And such key words need to be placed in the title of the page and in text toward the top of the page to be seen by the computer.

Let's say that you have a niche in illegal alien consulting. If people are going to be looking for this, chances are they will input the term *illegal alien consultant* in their key word search when they go to Yahoo or Google or one of the many others. The specific page you want them to go to must have this near the top, especially in the title.

Your main page should feature only one or two key words that are a must for the main page of the site. Too many key words and the spiders think you don't know what business you're in! You can see, then, that the key words will change based upon where in the site you want to direct someone.

Metatags are hidden words that are picked up by search engines and directories, so you need the right metatags on each page. You can move up on the lists if you have a lot of other sites linking yours to theirs as the spiders see you as being more important.

And if you also have many links out, they will see you as a valuable resource to the surfer and you will also move up the lists. Obviously, you will want to feature as links friends of the firms, clients, and so on—and have them reciprocate for you.

This is by no means a full discussion of how to move up on search engines and directories.

Ensure an Effective Search Capacity

Make sure there is an effective search capacity. A successful site has an effective search capacity so that people can find something they are interested in quickly (or they will leave!).



INCREASING USER INTERACTION

You want “stickiness.” Stickiness is a combination of content, interface, and well-chosen extras, all working together to get and keep visitor interest, as defined by *PC Magazine*. Your site should be the “must visit” place for the industries, niches, and targets you are pursuing. You want people to access your site as often as possible and never leave.

Suggestion for content to help create this stickiness follows:

Suggestion 1. E-zine

You need to have a way to acquire lists of prospective clients and referral sources. One of the best ways is to have a must-read e-zine, delivered directly to their e-mailboxes. One advantage an e-zine gives you is that you can get your message to the market immediately, not in a month or two. Being responsive or proactive to current events makes your firm look like a leader. Also, if you include media contacts on your e-zine list, it is possible they will contact you and use you as a reference for their articles.

A great example of a hot e-zine is www.accountingweb.com's weekly newsletter. Every Friday they send you the top 10 news stories of the week. It's a must read. Why not do the same thing for your clients, referral sources, and others, as it relates to your geographic area, business stories, and expertise?

E-zines should be published at least every month, and they don't have to be 20 pages. In fact, the shorter and to the point, the more likely they are to be read.

Also, they should be by niche—not just one for the general firm. Of course, it will not be likely that all niches jump on this bandwagon, as the team always reflects the view of the leadership of the niche. Only your aggressive teams will see this phenomenal vehicle for the marketing gem that it is.

E-zines make you look like experts, and chances are your competitors haven't thought of it yet or are too busy billing to actually do one. Especially within a niche, you will most likely be the only ones communicating to key people in this way, separating you from the competition and adding value to your relationships.

Delegate articles for your e-zines to every young person on staff. This is a phenomenal way to get young people involved. It makes them look and feel important and takes the burden of production off of marketing and partners.

Sign-up buttons for your e-zines should be on every page of your site. And there should be a link in all of your e-mails for contacts to sign up for the e-zine. Place reminder cards in your monthly bills to enroll for your e-zine. Ask staff what other ways they can think of to gather willing readers. Chances are their gut instincts will be better than set-in-their-ways partners about how to get attention for your electronic newsletter.

Use e-zines mini-ads to reference an upcoming event. Don't ever pass up opportunity to get a marketing message out, especially since this is free. Do *not* mention more than one event per e-zine. People will see it as pure advertising and ignore it.

Make sure there is a link to make contact with someone specific at the firm for the specific event you are promoting, not a generic mailbox.

Of course people are overwhelmed with e-mail now, so the chances of your e-zine being read are less than they were a few years ago when e-zines were a novelty. So what! If you place a tantalizing topic in the subject line, they may be more likely to read it. And even if they don't, for that very brief period of time, you have reminded the client, referral source, prospective client, prospective employee, family member, friend of the firm, and others of the fact that you care enough about them to provide this kind of expertise for free. And when they have an interest in what you are writing about, or have a hurt they can feel you can solve, they will merely click on! The easier you make it to do business with you, the more likely people will.

Suggestion 2. Case Studies

Don't forget case studies. One of the most powerful sales tools in marketing and selling services is the concise case study of a success story. Publish one for each niche on the site and you will boost your credibility, interest, and closing ratio. Use case studies to sell more compliance work, separate yourself from the competition, overcome fee objections, and make sure the client or prospective client *really* understands what they are buying compared to what they have been getting or are being offered by the competition.

Suggestion 3. Ask the Expert!

Feature sections of the site where people can submit questions to your "experts." Then post the answers in that section for others to view. No questions for your experts? Have your younger staff members interview more experienced staff for interesting Q&As.

Suggestion 4. Published Articles

All the articles ever published must go on the site. Keep in mind that spiders also search pages of articles on a site. The more stuff on your site, the more likely you are to be found (and the more likely you will be seen as a valuable resource by people you want to influence).

Suggestion 5. What's New

What's new in your industry? Make sure you are seen as the source for the latest happenings in your niche.

Suggestion 6. Forms

Maybe you have forms for clients or visitors to help them better run their business. Put them on the site. Perhaps your clients regularly ask you for certain kinds of forms—put them on the site for them to download, rather than photocopying and sending them. You'll save time and postage and get your clients to your site. If they're impressed, they'll tell others.

Suggestion 7. Surveys

People love to have their opinion asked. Have a survey on your site for information you want to collect about certain problems people may be having in their industry. You can then publish the results of the survey and turn their pain into new products you can sell them.

Suggestion 8. Contests

Have your young people in the firm create a contest to get visitors involved, such as “name our niche” or “pick our new firm logo.”

One of my favorite ideas would be to run a contest where visitors could select a new photo to be used by the managing partner (or someone with a sense of humor; you may have a hard time finding one). Visitors would select from one of four to six pictures; it would be the “Which Photo Do You Like Best for Publicity? Contest.”

Not only is this fun, but also it sends the indirect message that this person welcomes publicity. It is also the kind of thing Southwest Airlines is known for—not taking its leaders too seriously and not putting them on a pedestal. Which is a good reason they have never not had a profitable quarter and are continually voted one of the best places in America to work. In 2000, they had over 30,000 applications for 5,000 positions (in a very tight labor market).

There needs to be a prize and feature on the person who wins. Just another proven way to get people to your site and keep them there!

Suggestion 9. Contact Information

A quality Web site design encourages viewer contact. Let them know you exist. Display a staff directory with contact information: phone and fax numbers, e-mail addresses, staff responsibility areas, and so on. Display the actual mailing address of the firm.



CONCLUSION

The Internet has given all of the professions the ability to market themselves more effectively than ever before. Take advantage of this opportunity before your competitors do, make yours better, and it will impact your firm's profits, market share, and morale.



AFTERWORD

By Allan S. Boress, CPA, CFE

We have now come to the conclusion of the book, so I thought I would share with you my own personal marketing plan.

Over the years I have been influenced both by Norman Vincent Peale, author of one of the best-selling books of all time, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (which I strongly recommend) and by his widow, Ruth Stafford Peale, who is in her nineties. (I advise you to visit their Web site, www.guideposts.org and order their monthly magazine *Guideposts* as well as their new *Positive Thinking* magazine.) Their writings and philosophies are an integral part of my personal approach to marketing, which can be summarized in the steps below.



STEP 1. I ASK GOD TO GUIDE ME

Every morning I spend some time with the Lord. This habit started in 1983 and has allowed me to develop a very personal relationship with God and a great deal of peace of mind and strength in a confusing world and challenging business.

I also ask that He put me in front of those people He wants me to help.

As Mrs. Peale writes, “You may have a lifetime of dreams that are begging to be brought to reality, so believe that God has given them to you as a special gift. Hold on to the deep belief that He will help you.”

Now, I never thought, nor asked, that He send these people walking by my desk in my office. Rather, I felt my part of the bargain was to be in a position where they could most readily find me. So ...



STEP 2. I WRITE DOWN IDEAS

These ideas are things that I should do to put me in the flow of prospects and referral sources and to have people find me. Unlike most consultants and professionals, I keep a list with me at all times of action steps to take as it relates to marketing.

What I have noticed is that neat marketing ideas can come at any time: in the middle of the night, driving down the street, in the shower, or in church. The difference is I don't let them pass ... I capture these nuggets and never dismiss any as being foolish.



STEP 3. THEN I DO SOME

We do lots of high-impact marketing activities, activities that will attract a great deal of attention because of where they are conducted or placed, who they are in front of, and the content of the speech, article, or seminar.

Mrs. Peale advises: “Don't wait for success to find you—that's unproductive and will get you nowhere. Be open to new ideas and projects. In your [place of worship], through your school or job, you can seek out ways to learn and gain experience in various fields.

One opportunity often leads to another [emphasis added]. Use each experience as a springboard or as a stepping-stone to the next. *Keep alert and aware of what's happening around you, and you will see opportunities in abundance* [emphasis added].”

We try for at least 10 high-impact marketing activities a year, in addition to the *multitudes* of the regular articles, direct mail, and speeches we produce.

Quantity equals quality in marketing, remember?



STEP 4. I WORK ON MY PERSONAL STYLE

This is a suggestion Mrs. Peale has recommended as well. She writes, “Also, develop a magnetic, appealing personality. Think of yourself as full of vitality and enthusiasm, ready to tackle any challenge that crosses your path. The law of magnetic attraction will draw opportunities to you as sure as bees are attracted to honey. Model yourself after those who have succeeded before you. Make them your heroes. Get to know what has worked for them and adapt their methods to your own plan of success.”

To her point, there are at least three media personalities one can think of off the top of their head who stand above all the others in terms of popularity and success. All three of these people make many millions of dollars a year. It's hard to argue with that kind of success.

Dr. Laura Schlesinger, Howard Stern, and Rush Limbaugh are the most successful in their very competitive business. What do they have in common? *People don't forget them once they have heard them.* Whether you agree with their viewpoint or style or not, theirs is an effective marketing tool because they generate an emotional response. *The uninvolved party is impossible to sell.*



STEP 5. I UNDERSTAND THAT NOBODY SELLS EVERYBODY

Some opportunities aren't meant to be, no matter how hard you try. Your job is to do your best to impact your market. One of our greatest presidents, Teddy Roosevelt, wrote the following words.

It's not the critic that counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have actually done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs, and often comes up short again and again. Who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause. And who, if at best in the end, knows the triumph of higher treatment and high achievement. And who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly so that his soul shall never be with those cold and timid ones who know neither victory nor defeat.

Now go get in that arena!



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



ALLAN S. BORESS, CPA, CFE

Allan S. Boress has been a business development consultant to the professions since 1980. He was recently designated one of the *100 Most Influential People in the Accounting Profession* by *Accounting Today Magazine*. Nobody we can find has trained more professionals in the arts of systematic selling, personal marketing, and client retention—over 200,000. He is acknowledged as the Dean of Sales Consulting to the Accounting Profession.

An internationally-known speaker and trainer, Boress is the author of *The I Hate Selling Book*, the only learning tool ever created custom-designed, from scratch to teach professional service providers how to interview, qualify, present, and close more sales opportunities. He is also the author of *Building Entrepreneurial People*, the only book ever written that describes how to change the culture in a professional firm.

With these credentials, Boress brings to his writing and to his programs a unique and in-depth knowledge of the professions, along with an appreciation of the practical sales and marketing realities faced by all professional service providers.

His seasoned insights into building client relationships and his talent for audience interaction have earned him four consecutive annual Instructor Excellence Awards from the ICPA Foundation—an honor bestowed on only the top five of over 200 instructors.

For the past 20-plus years, Boress has consulted with the top accounting, law, engineering, consulting, architectural, public relations, advertising, and software firms to install productive business development systems and to build their professionals' sales and marketing abilities.

A prolific writer, Boress has been published regularly in the *Practicing CPA*, the *Attorney's Marketing Report*, the *Journal of Accountancy*, and the *Practical Accountant*, to name a few. He was honored with the lead story, "Building Rainmakers," in the *Journal of Accountancy's* February 1992 issue; his was again the featured lead in March 1993, with his article, "Marketing in Troubled Waters," and again in September 1999, "Stop Small Firm Brain Drain." In 1994, he won the Article of the Year Award for his piece entitled "The Three Biggest Mistakes Professionals Make in Marketing Financial Services," which appeared in the *Planner*.

Boress is acknowledged as creator of the *Professional's Selling System*.





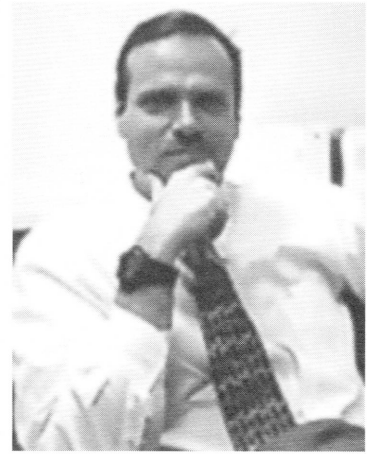
MICHAEL G. CUMMINGS

Michael G. Cummings, a principal in the Communications, Information & Entertainment Group of Mercer Management Consulting, specializes in helping the leaders of information technology companies build winning business designs. He has over 15 years of experience in the information technology (IT) industry, combining a systems integration background with extensive strategy, marketing and business development expertise.

Cummings helps clients to attract, develop, and retain profitable customers by achieving a superior understanding of their customers' current and emerging priorities, developing winning value propositions, anticipating and countering competitors' moves, and aligning their customer-facing sales channels and marketing strategies to seize opportunities in the "profit zone."

Before joining Mercer, Cummings was a founding member of Arthur Andersen/Andersen Consulting's Strategy and Marketing Group, which pioneered many of the industry and competitive strategies and marketing, sales, quality service, and client account marketing techniques used more broadly in business today. More recently, he founded his own consulting firm, SAGE.

Cummings holds a B.A. and an M.B.A. from the University of Illinois in Urbana. He is also an ASQC Certified Quality Auditor.

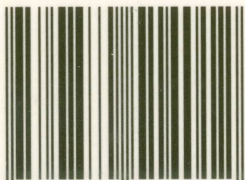


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