



IMPROVING YOUR MARKETING MESSAGE

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I have observed that many firms grow soft in periods of strong economic growth. People become complacent and fail to challenge existing paradigms. The term “Don’t fix it if it ain’t broke” becomes commonplace because most things don’t look broke when the marketplace is strong. Technology consulting was this way for much of the nineties. Business was booming for technology consultants and many became complacent in how they did business. However, what happened when the Y2K scare had passed? Pipelines were left thin and sales dried up for many consulting organizations.

Many firms I visit with indicate they haven’t spent much time trying to improve their marketing message. A marketing message is basically what you say when you are in front of each new prospective client. It stands to reason that a better message will lead to greater results. Finding new clients does cost money . . . usually more than most of us think. If a better message could help expedite the process of landing more or better clients, then it should be pursued.

If a better marketing message can help give us an advantage over our competitors, we will have a better chance of landing the best clients (A-level clients) while our competitors will be landing the B & C-level clients. This should be a part of our marketing strategy.

The following three questions will help you determine if you have become complacent in your marketing approach:

- 1) How much time have you or others in your firm spent on your marketing message in the past three years?
- 2) Do you have a written marketing message?
- 3) Have you standardized your message so others in your firm are able to deliver the same professional marketing message?

The Better Way

Over the past several years, I have talked with many partners who want to grow their firm. When asked how they plan to get more business, most simply respond they will find ways to get in front of more prospective clients. It’s hard to find fault with this line of thinking because there is a science of sorts to the numbers game. If I currently average one new client for every 30 new prospects, then logic says that with every 90 new prospects, I should average three new clients. Again, there is logic to growing a firm through this means. But, there is a better way.

I advocate spending the time necessary to develop a marketing approach that leaves little chance for failure. With a better marketing message, you will experience greater success with the same number of prospects than you will with an average marketing message.

You must find a way to set your organization apart from the competition . . . to gain a competitive advantage every time you meet with a prospective client. You must create a feeling with prospective clients that they will be settling for second best if they do not choose your firm. You will greatly increase your success when you learn to effectively establish your services as the best solution for each prospective client.

Improving your Marketing Message

Here are 10 ideas for improving the content and delivery of your marketing message.

- ① Hold a series of brainstorming sessions with your partners, managers and staff to review your current marketing message. You may find that each person uses a different marketing message. Specifically discuss how you can set yourself apart from the competition and gain a competitive advantage each time you meet with a prospective client.
- ② Spend the time to understand your key competitor's marketing message. This can be done by reviewing their web site, marketing literature, and by listening to them speak or present.
- ③ Spend adequate time defining the types of clients you want to land, including their key characteristics. (You may end up with a different type of prospective client for each service and/or solution you are selling.)
- ④ Identify the "needs" of prospective clients. Based upon their characteristics, try to identify what key factors will drive their decision process. What are they looking for in the form of services and solutions? Tailor your message so these prospects know you feel their pain and you are there to provide the very best solution.
- ⑤ Develop a great 30-minute presentation. This doesn't mean all presentations to prospects should only take 30 minutes, but you should identify your best marketing message to fit a 30-minute timeframe. The reasoning behind this is two fold. First, most prospects will allow you an uninterrupted block of 30 minutes to present what you can really do to benefit their organization. Second, a 30-minute presentation will fit into the attention span of busy prospective clients.

- ⑥ Develop the visual support for your 30-minute presentation. This involves developing the sample reports, projections, budgets, checklists, procedures, implementation plans, etc., demonstrating you can deliver the promised results. Remember this principle . . . you can seldom convince a prospect that you can deliver a particular service the best with mere words. In order to convince . . . prospects need to be shown.
- ⑦ Develop scripts for your 30-minute presentations. These scripts will be a key component in standardizing your marketing message throughout your firm.
- ⑧ Develop a marketing binder to help you standardize your presentation. This marketing binder contains all the physical documents created in step 6 and is organized in the proper manner specified by the scripts created in step 7.
- ⑨ Role-play with key team members to practice delivering your marketing message.
- ⑩ Reduce your message to key bullet points and have these points printed on the back of your business cards.

Conclusion

Your marketing message should become a key part of your marketing strategy. As we move forward in this new century, competition for professional services will increase and those with a great marketing message will stand to have better success. Will you be one of them?