



## **Savvy Consulting: Rethinking Marketing for the Independent Consultant**

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**By Gloria Reisman**

It's not enough to have great expertise as a consultant. To be successful, you need to understand where marketing fits in your consulting practice. But if you're like most consultants, you may actually resist seeking many of the marketing opportunities around you.

By rethinking marketing as information giving, creative problem solving, and setting goals & strategies, you can enhance your marketing efforts and gain visibility.

### **Marketing as information giving**

Think about how you communicate what you do. Be clear and descriptive about the business needs you are addressing, the benefits of your approach, and the results you can deliver. Develop succinct "scripts" to qualify customers and to explain your expertise.

Write your own 30 second commercial to describe what you do to help clients. Your 30-second commercial is a way to be more descriptive about your expertise and the benefits to your clients vs. a job or consulting title. Here are some sample "commercials".

"As a financial advisor, I help people make money WITH their money."

"As a marketing representative, I help consultants reach the right clients, leverage their time, and achieve their business goals by applying my communication and marketing expertise."

"As a human factors expert, I help companies maximize the fit between new technology and the people who use it."

Find key phrases and descriptions that convey your expertise and how you can impact the bottom line. Collect success stories that illustrate the creative solutions and "workarounds" you've used on challenging projects. For example, describe in a positive way how you handled projects with limited resources, tight timelines, difficult people, etc. Don't be shy in communicating how your efforts save money and time for your clients.

Keep a file of brochures you like and other "packaging" ideas, especially competitors'. Present your expertise in ways on paper that use visual appeal, simplicity, clarity, and most of all, white space! Make it easy for your prospects to "scan" your marketing materials to learn about your services.

Get testimonials from satisfied clients.

## **Marketing as creative problem solving**

Marketing involves moving prospects along a continuum from point A to point B – into clients. Think about one goal for every client interaction and find creative ways to keep in touch with clients, such as updating them about a recent project. Other examples include trying out different telephone “scripts” for cold calls and client calls. Networking, joining organizations where you stand out as the expert. Deliver great customer service. Build on your successful client relationships to get referrals. Use agencies to leverage your marketing efforts. Write articles and press releases that enhance your credibility. Read the business section of your newspaper and the want ads for names of new clients. Give workshops and free presentations that relate to your billable services. Volunteer to get known in a professional organization.

## **Marketing goals and strategies**

Developing an effective marketing plan begins by dissecting your successful and unsuccessful marketing efforts. By describing some recent projects, you can begin to see which marketing efforts to build on. Identify the typical decision-maker by title for your services – who brings you into a company. What are the steps in your sales process and how long does the sales process take?

Set goals and strategies as part of a marketing plan, such as making 5 cold calls per week, writing 2 articles per year, presenting at a national conference, joining a new organization, etc. Work hard to gain key marketing skills for success to serve clients better. Ask clients the best way for you to work with them. Listen! Build a client database and use software to manage clients. Use alarms and calendars to set a follow up schedule and keep it!

## Soft skills

By developing and applying effective soft skills, you bring added value to your projects and to your customers throughout your entire career. Here is a list of some soft skills and characteristics that can enhance your value on any project.

Verbal communication skills – giving feedback saying no listening, writing relating to all levels of people facilitating interviewing, probing, qualifying	Time management Negotiating Problem solving Humor Self-discipline business etiquette patience humility
Follow-up Set boundaries Analyze people and situations Read cues Sensitivity	Flexible Manage conflict Organization Customer service oriented Integrity
Independent worker Team player Collaborate Diplomatic	Easy to work with Networking Persistent

You can improve marketing and soft skills by taking workshops and classes, asking for feedback from peers, bosses, placement agencies and clients, reading books, listening to audio tapes, and getting a mentor or coach.

## Summary

Strive to be the perfect consultant – Do great work, be easy to work with, and ask your clients for more!

**About the author**

Gloria Reisman is principal and marketing director of Reisman Consulting Group, Inc., a consulting services and placement company based in Philadelphia, PA. Reisman provides experts to Fortune 1000 companies in the areas of technical writing and documentation, online help, marketing communications, interface design, web usability, training development and instructional design.

Reisman lectures and coaches independent consultants on marketing techniques to reach more clients, maximize their time, and achieve their business goals.

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