

# Marketing 101 for Consultants

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What does it take to succeed as a consultant? Whether you're a lone consultant, a part-owner of a small firm or a consultant at one of the big organisations, the answer is all the same - marketing! Your skills in analysis, problem solving and strategy to name but some of the tools most consultants have in their toolkits, do not guarantee you a future no matter how good a consultant you are.

As a sole practitioner, doing a great job for an existing client may put you on their list for future work but that does not help if they do not need a consultant in the future. Even being a real hotshot in a big consultancy will not necessarily save you from the axe if they are downsizing. Who do the big firms keep? Those that bring in business - the marketers. Which small consultancies survive? Those that market themselves on an ongoing basis! Let's focus on small consultancies and sole practitioners.

One has come across many consultants who are working 18-hour days to deliver results for an existing client. But where will the next client come from? Advertising on a small budget has no impact. So what can one do? Well, marketing does not consist only of advertising. There are many other elements which have a recognised success rate but where the biggest cost involved is time. You don't have time, you may say given the long hours you are working. Well, consider the amount of time you'll have on your hands when your current assignment is completed and you don't have the next one lined up. No matter how busy you are you have to make time for marketing.

What can a one do?

**Write.** Write articles for trade publications that reflect on your area of expertise. Identify common problems experienced in a particular industry and write about them &ndash; and the solutions. Given the limitations to length in most publications you will not be able to give the full solutions but merely allude to them &ndash; this is, of course, a good thing. You want to establish credibility not give away your expertise. Many publications are constantly looking for articles and the only cost to you is your time.

**Speak.** Identify and get yourself on the mailing lists of the many seminar and training organisations that exist. There are dozens of them. Send them your brochure. Send them copies of the articles you have written. You will receive invitations to speak at seminars or the so-called conferences they offer. A well prepared presentation will generate enquiries from people attending. If you are one of the vast majority who fear public speaking, get over it. Join a public speaking organisation where you will get the opportunity to speak in front of a group that are there for the same purpose as you &ndash; to gain confidence in public speaking. You need to become an entertaining speaker because no matter how good your message, if you put people to sleep or make them uncomfortable they won't talk to you. When you receive an invitation to speak arrive early, talk to the people attending, stay for lunch and have plenty of business cards available.

**Project professionalism.** Don't call yourself 'Global International Solutions' if you're a small firm. Don't have only a mobile number on your business card. And don't use your home number even if you work from home. It does not generate much confidence when a prospect calls and a three year-old answers. There are services that will answer your landline number using your name and allow you to use their physical address. They will also SMS you any messages. Get your own email address that has your operation's name as the domain name in the address. For goodness sake don't use a Gmail or Hotmail address. And set up a decent webpage.

**Network.** Networking is not attending those contrived meetings arranged to facilitate 'Networking'. At these events you will meet only people looking for business. Those that have business to offer don't go to these 'meetings'. They go to industry association meetings, seminars, conferences and trade shows. What do you do when you attend these events? Introduce yourself, sure, but don't try and make appointments to see people. Ask questions, listen, ask about industry problems and don't talk too much. Hand out business cards but don't get pushy and make people uncomfortable. If you were a good listener and showed an interest and insight into their problems they may get back to you. Remember that marketing is a numbers game; see more people.

Networking is also about helping people. You give advice, share information or offer to find things out for people. Act as an informal consultant not a salesperson and the sales will follow.

It's clear that marketing does take time. However, you need to set aside time even when you are extremely busy.

You will be more confident than and won't have that edge that people have when they're desperate for work. Potential clients will wait for you to become available and probably be suspicious if you're immediately available.

While the focus above has been on the small consultancy, if you're a consultant employed by a big firm you should start marketing today – marketing the business and marketing yourself. It's all in the interest of ensuring your future success. Make marketing in some form a part of every day.

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