

Why Smart People Don't Know How to Market



As an educated professional, your success is based on what you know, your education, your intelligence, and your creativity. Even if you're just starting out, you've achieved success just to get your many qualifications and accreditations! Your clients return and refer because you apply your expertise and insight to guide them to appropriate answers for their unique situations.

But who's growing your business while you're busy tending to your clients' needs? What are you doing to attract and maintain a steady stream of qualified, motivated prospects? How do you find and keep interesting clients who pay you what you're worth? Like most professionals, you may not be able to answer those questions because the answer involves marketing.

Sure, referrals can be a decent source of new clients, but they're only one approach in a system of balanced strategies for guaranteeing you'll have many desirable clients for as long as you wish.

It doesn't matter how many referrals you get, if you don't know how to build and extend the potential relationship that each referral represents.

As a Smart Person, you have lots of options at your disposal for attracting more clients to your firm.

And they don't have to include the expensive things that spring to mind when you say "*marketing*," such as slick brochures, advertising, or direct mail.

However, your professional expertise alone will not differentiate you in a crowded marketplace - nor will it bring clients to you.

You've got to let them know you exist and help them understand why you're different - why you are uniquely qualified to address their needs.

This is called positioning. It takes some thoughtful, creative work to nail this first, most important step in attracting more clients.

Once you've determined your positioning, you have four more major steps that will bring clients to you and your firm: packaging, promotion, persuasion, and performance.



Each step requires that you are able to communicate with your target client audience in a variety of ways that they can understand - in their need-based language, not your expert language.

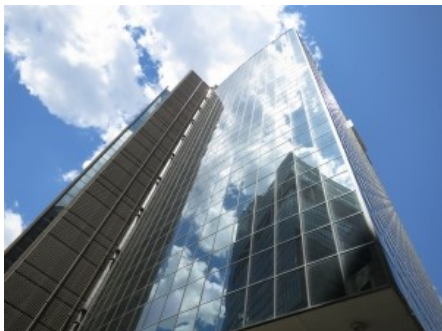
Chances are, you're on a learning curve in one or more of these major steps.

Even if you've been in business for years and have built a successful firm, taking your practice to the next level means setting new metrics, ensuring your niche hasn't grown stale, and learning new ways to reach that next stage in your firm's growth or maturity.

For larger firms, maybe now it's time to pay attention to how your firm delivers on your brand promise - do principals, management, and staff really "walk the talk" of what you promise in the marketplace?

Or are you, like many professional service firms, a cobbler whose children have no shoes?

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Or perhaps you serve "internal clients" inside of a very large organization, and need support or buy-in for the services your department offers.

You can put these principles and strategies to work for your work to get noticed, get invited, attract positive attention, and get buy-in.

So what's a Smart Person to do to attract more clients? Here are some suggestions:

Raise the role of strategic marketing in your practice to a conscious level.

Get it on the agenda and apply your smarts to it, just like you do with any other crucial aspect of your business.

Create a niche in your practice - you cannot be all things to all people.

However just because you enjoy working with a particular market or prefer a special approach, it doesn't mean your target clients will. You need to understand the difference between a good niche and a bad niche, and strategise accordingly.

Position yourself to others through their world-view, not yours. Instead of saying, "I'm a strategy consultant," start with "I help (Fortune 500) companies (increase market share)."

Obviously you'd tailor the statement to fit who you help and what problem you address, but you get the idea.

Develop a system of marketing strategies that both attracts new clients and helps you retain the ones you have. Start with the metrics of what you want to change or improve in your practice and tie the system to driving those metrics.

Develop an action plan that translates your marketing system into specific tasks, with real assignments, deliverables, and deadlines.

Commit to and put a system in place to keep you on track and motivated as you work through your plan. Build non-billable time into your business model dedicated to marketing. A rule of thumb is at least 20% of your firm's time should be allocated to marketing.

Get expert help and resources for any of these suggestions, including implementation. For many professional organisations, this requires getting away for a day or two of focused thinking and discussion among key people. When you consider that stakes, it's well worth the time and effort.



There are actually two more "p's" in marketing. Intelligent, effective marketing requires a great deal of patience.



And the ability to see this not as a series of transactions completed in a few weeks or even months, but as a relationship-building process with your current and future clients over time.

Marketing really is a life-skill and something to learn as one of your core competencies as an educated professional. Now that's being smart!

Here are some suggested strategies for each major step:

Positioning: create a niche or build a speciality around your expertise and reputation; consider your unique competitive advantage that will distinguish your business.

Packaging: share your knowledge through articles, reports, surveys, websites, podcasts, videos, books, e-books.

Promotion: promote yourself through speaking, writing, networking, referrals, newsletters, webinars.

Persuasion: use your skills: listening, diagnosis, openness, curiosity, visioning, education.

Performance: maintain your reputation and respect by keeping promises, managing expectations, intelligence, creativity, guarantees, thank you's, commitment, walking the talk, innovation, persistence, integrity and generosity.

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