



36 Life Hacks to grow your Training and Consultancy Business

ITOL
INSTITUTE OF TRAINING &
OCCUPATIONAL LEARNING

GROW YOUR TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY BUSINESS



- 1) Make sure that your name is never associated with that of a client whose reputation will damage yours. The cost to your reputation as a professional is far greater than the loss incurred by not being prepared to work for undesirable clients.
- 2) Be prepared to walk away from business if:
 - The client has the reputation for not paying his bills.
 - The client asks you to do anything that suggests that their ethics are questionable; The client absolutely fails to appreciate your value.
 - The client has the reputation among your peers of being more trouble to serve than he is worth.
- 3) Avoid cutting your daily rate or you will be stuck at the cheap end of the market and will struggle to cover your costs.
- 4) When you write a sales e-mail, letter or brochure concentrate on communicating not impressing. Check everything for readability. If an intelligent nine-year-old would have difficulty understanding, most clients will.

- 5) Consider holding, free of charge, clinics a couple of times a year and invite existing and prospective clients. Take a theme that relates to your field for example *"Current thinking in World Class people development"*
- 6) Bringing people together, under your leadership, to discuss matters that are important to them will enable you to identify the major problems and issues facing business. Show something of what you can do and build your reputation at a stroke.
- 7) Don't go overboard on the cost and quality of your marketing and promotional **BUMF - Short for "bum fodder" army slang for toilet paper. Did you know?** - Try to match where possible the quality in general use by your clients. They will feel more comfortable with that and will not assume that you overcharge to spend their money in chasing their competitors. In recent research into what clients like and hate about consultants, "excessive fees" remains firmly at the top of the list.

Never even hint that your fees offer anything other than value. On the other hand, remember that buyers put high value on whatever is deemed to be expensive. Never risk belittling your services by undercharging.

- 8) When presenting a proposal to a senior group prepare a short introduction for your host, or the chairperson, that provides relevant information that you want your audience to know about you. They may not use it, but if they do someone else is doing some subtle selling on your behalf and that adds credibility.
- 9) If you have difficulty finding the time for all activities never reduce the time spent marketing. Subcontract, if you must, some of your fee-earning activities but always do your own marketing. It is that important if you are to avoid excessive "feast and famine". If, however, you stick to low cost/no cost marketing techniques, having materials available becomes a habit and odd minutes spent producing for example an e-book can lead to major outcomes.

10) Promise only what you can deliver!

11) Deliver more than you promise!

12) Carry on delivering more than you promise!

13) Continue to deliver more than you promise!

- 14) So that you can afford to walk away when client business is lean, build passive income. Write and sell little booklets with succinct "how to" guidance (a bit like this booklet). Make and sell webinars or podcasts or start a subscription VIP Group.
- 15) Consider franchising your successful seminars. If you want to franchise your best stuff, make sure it works. Write a manual so that others can do exactly what you do. Ray Kroc, founder of MacDonal'd's had a very simple agreement: "You either do everything exactly as I say, or you don't do it at all."
- 16) Set up a Mastermind Group. Be "a nice person to do business with" and justify an annual fee by delivering support and personal improvements. This is often a good option for consultants in particular.
- 17) Add a handwritten P.S. to letters. In spite of its overuse by the direct mail pro's it still gets read.
- 18) Use your P.S. to direct your reader back into the main text. For example, "P.S. John Harley of Megabucks estimates savings of one zillion in the first year using the approach described in paragraph three."
- 19) As we increasingly market by email the PS becomes too artificial. Email marketing can assume the personal touch by using the recipients first name. Most automatic mailers now have this facility.
- 20) On your website never be tempted by 'click through' advertising, particularly at the head of your site. This says to the potential client; "Now that you've got here, go away!" If you do sell advertising, have it at the end, just before any links so that the visitor has at least seen all that you offer before clicking off elsewhere.
- 21) If you decide to offer seminars or workshops to existing or potential clients, approach it with an entrepreneur mindset rather than a trainer. Select your subject as one that you could do off the top of your head while standing on it. Keep costs and handouts to a minimum. You can always develop fancy materials when you know that it is worthwhile from a healthy and potentially profitable response.
- 22) Advertise seminars/workshops so that the last notice falls about 8 to 10 days before "lift off". Longer than 10 days and the potential delegate may put off acting until it is too late. Shorter than 8 days and a businessperson is unlikely to be able to re-arrange appointments. (Research Shenson and Lambert.)

- 23)** Titles are important. Express the subject as a "How to..." and, if your offer is credible people will beat a path to your door.
- 24)** Always have available 2 or 3 short talks that you could give to audiences of prospective clients at the drop of a hat. Meeting organisers and Association secretaries who can turn to you in an emergency are friends indeed.
- 25)** Arrange client "Thank You" events. Keep them low key and informal, just serve coffee and cake or cheese and wine. It will enable those who have used your services to tell each other, and interested prospects, how good you always are.
- 26)** Set aside half a day each month to call prospects. Don't try any hard sell. Just say hello and pass on some piece of information that may be of interest. Ask what the important issues are at present by way of natural conversation. Ring off earlier rather than later, they will call you or stop you ringing off if they see a need for your services right now. It's an easy way to keep in touch without pressure and to be the name that they think of when the need arises to buy in your expertise.
- 27)** When awards, unusual or prestigious assignments or honours come your way let people know. Write a short press release and send a friendly e-mail to existing and old clients. Send a slightly more formal note to prospective clients to let them know what they are missing until they hire you. People like to tag on to success. Your successes make you valuable to know, and from a fee perspective just plain valuable. But a word of warning, make what you publish relevant from the reader point of view. Mere promotional puff does nothing for you or your reputation.
- 28)** If your business needs dictate that you must do some cold calling on prospective clients avoid being seen as "another salesperson".

Try this ploy! Ask for an interview to get information for an article that you are writing. Write the article. Send a pre-publication copy to your prospect and ask for their comments and approval of any quotes. Publish the article yourself on the internet and send the link to your prospect with the suggestion that they send it to their friends and business contacts. You now have an informal partnership that you can return to in the future. You also have an implied referral for services.

- 29)** When you write articles include your contact details and offer your interested readers some additional information if they contact you personally.

- 30)** Develop the habit of using 'Press Releases' and accompany them with a photograph. It is estimated that the attachment of a good photograph increases the chances of publication by up to 30%. Try to use an "executive portrait" style of photo taken with a half decent camera. Avoid the grinning 'selfie' that is prevalent on most LinkedIn profiles.
- 31)** Market your services as highly specialised and 'value added'. Differentiate from your competitors, find a niche where they are weak and fill it.
- 32)** Market yourself to your competitors! Try to become part of their offering. Most successful professionals' sub-contract themselves out, it has been estimated that associate work counts for almost 16% of training and consultancy business.
- 33)** Engage in some research. Run a survey with both past and current clients to assess their future needs. This will help you establish the services that you should be planning to provide. In your survey try to determine the value that they would put on any new service and re-consider your fee structure if they value it particularly highly.
- 34)** Be Innovative! Some while ago Peter Thomson, a sales trainer was stuck with a large number of his "selling tips" recordings. He sent out a survey describing the tips and included the question, "Would you expect to pay £199, £99 or £49 for CDs of this quality?" He then offered, as an incentive for filling in the survey the opportunity to buy the recordings at £19.99. He cleared his stock. Ironically, they had previously been sold at £14.99! Value is a matter of perception.
- 35)** Consider writing a book. Most consultants want to they just never get round to it. Technology has made self-publishing something that is well within our grasp, it's never been easier or more cost effective.
- 36)** Continue to deliver more than you promise.