Taligo, LLC and Strong Engineering, LLC

The Professional Consultant

Recommendations for Best Practices in Silicon Valley

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“The great professional helps you eliminate issues that are not a problem, and then he focuses you in on the really critical dimensions of the situation. You are permitted to be a bit confused and general. And at the right moment, the good ones ask the right questions. It's an iterative process; you don't want someone peddling a solution, who comes with an agenda—which many do. The good adviser excels at the integration process, but he doesn't necessarily arrive at the solution for you. He knows my industry, but is broader than that. Finally, he can bring you comfort as well. Empathy, not sympathy.”

RAY SMITH, *former chairman and CEO, Bell Atlantic*[1]

Introduction

Consultants want to be successful. In many cases, a professional image is a prerequisite for success. Unfortunately, many consultants struggle, without knowledge of how to be a professional and how to project a professional image. This is an especially important issue for smaller consulting firms and can be a distinguishing characteristic. This White Paper provides guidelines for *Best Practices* for Professional Consultants in Silicon Valley. It is based on the experience of the authors with the benefit of interactive discussions with the members of the Editorial Review Board.[2] It is written for the various participants who will be involved in:

Many Consultants do not know how to be a professional and how to project a professional image.

- **A Consulting Practice**
  Topics in this White Paper may impact a robust subset of the issues that are important to prospects and to Clients. So, the Consultant may want to consider changes to several aspects of his/her consulting practice.
- **Purchasing Services from other Consultants who will act as Sub-Contractors**
  The (prime contractor) Consultant may want to consider many of these issues in retaining subcontractors. Proper consideration should help the Consultant to feel more comfortable about the likelihood of success in utilizing a specific sub-contractor
- **Acting as a Sub-Contractor to a Consultant**
  The subcontractor may want to consider the topics in this White Paper in understanding how a prime contractor will likely evaluate him/her. This will also help the potential sub-contractor in his/her own evaluation of the potential prime contractor.

This White Paper addresses several aspects of executing a Consulting practice in a Professional manner. These aspects include:

- Business Plan
- Marketing
- Sales

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1 **Clients for Life, Evolving from An Expert For Hire to an Extraordinary Advisor** by Jagdish Sheth and Andrew Sobel, Simon and Schuster, 2002, page 21.

2 This White Paper May Be Downloaded at No Cost At www.Taligo.com and www.strongenging.com

- Managing Client Relationships
- Professional Development
- Basic topics, mostly infrastructure, are addressed in the Appendix.[3]

The Authors assume that the Consultant operates or works for a consulting firm based in Silicon Valley that is focused on technology centric industries as the basis of its professional services offering. In some ways Silicon Valley is a provincial community and therefore, some consideration may be necessary to apply the concepts in this White Paper to communities outside Silicon Valley. In fact, each reader will have to determine which parts of this White Paper are relevant to his/her Consulting practice.

The Editorial Review Board has contributed actively. The Authors share with them the hope that this White Paper will lead to better consulting engagement experiences and more effective use of time from both the Consultant's and the Client's perspective.

Professional Image

One of a Consultant's objectives should be to have all stakeholders perceive him/her as being a professional. These stakeholders fit into the following groups; Clients (decision-makers, key influencers, peers, stakeholders {from the client's perspective}, others); prior clients; prospects; industry leaders and other industry participants; industry press and analysts; other members of professional and trade associations; and other members of his/her social networks.

Professionalism and Professional Level

The Authors chose the following as important criteria for defining Professional. These were adapted from Wikipedia.[4, 5]

- Academic qualifications - A university degree
- Expert and specialized knowledge in the field which one is practicing professionally
- Excellent manual/practical and literary skills in relation to the business
- High quality work in relevant work endeavors such as creations, design, management, services, presentations, consulting, and research
- A high standard of professional ethics, behavior, and work activities while carrying out one's profession. The professional owes a higher duty to a client, almost always a privilege of confidentiality
- Reasonable work motivation. Having interest and desire to do a job well as well as holding positive attitude towards the profession are important elements in attaining a high level of professionalism

Other indications of professionalism will be provided throughout this White Paper.

3 Resources and texts are suggested via footnotes.

4 Adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional as of October 28, 2009. The **Wikipedia** Section referenced, in turn references **Merriam-Webster** and **Dictionary.Reference.com**

5 The reader may be interested that the definition of Professional is somewhat controversial at least within the **Wikipedia** editorial community. That lengthy discussion was at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Professional on October 28, 2009.

There are also ways to classify the professional level of a Consultant. One way is to contrast Experts and Advisors as in the table below. Professionals strive to be Advisors.

"Experts versus Advisers"[6]	
Experts	Advisers
Have depth	Have depth and breadth
Tell	Listen
Provide answers	Ask great questions
Develop professional trust	Develop professional and personal trust
Control	Collaborate
Supply expertise	Supply insight
Analyze	Synthesize

In this section we will compare and contrast Consultants, Contractors, Temporary Employees, and Interim Executives.

Consultants

Consultants have specifically describable knowledge that is essentially their intellectual property. Consultants sell true professional services with a very high level of professionalism. Further, their expertise is recognized at some level; the higher the level, the broader the recognition, the better their business. Consultants are unlikely to do work for extended periods at a Client site. Consultant fee structures may be project based or time unit based. Consultants interact with a broader range of levels of Client management than Contractors and receive direction primarily at the conceptual level. Consultants may at times, subcontract their work to other organizations or professional consultants. Please note that a successful professional Consultant is an independent business person and thus is operating an independent business. Consultants may receive more respect and higher compensation than Contractors. Consultants market their services differently than contractors.

Contractors

The term Contractors has very broad application.[7,8] It includes those with skills ranging from the lowest pay scales up through Acting Executives (although. interim CFOs, interim Vice Presidents, and interim CEOs are usually referred to as interim executives).

Contractors have knowledge such that they can provide valuable services to a Client. As one looks from the CEO level towards the lower pay scales, there is also a trend towards a somewhat lower level of knowledge and professionalism than for Consultants. Another possibility is that a Contractor may have considerable professional experience, but does not want to perform the additional (business centric) work required to run an independent professional consulting business.

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6 **Clients for Life, Evolving from An Expert For Hire to an Extraordinary Advisor** by Jagdish Sheth and Andrew Sobel, Simon and Schuster, 2002, page 32.

7 This discussion does not address **IRS** definitions of Contractors versus employees

8 Due to the **IRS** rules, some companies are reluctant to hire (recently) former employees as Consultants.

Contractors generally understand one or more technologies or functional areas well. Contractors typically work at a client site. Contractors may be considered to be interim employees in some cases. Contractors are usually selling a less differentiated service. Contractors usually charge by the hour, by the day, or by some other unit of time. They may be paid directly by the Client company; but are sometimes paid by and work through an intermediary company; sometimes known as a broker. Most Contractors interact with lower levels of Client management. Contractors generally receive much less direction than an employee.

If a Contractor builds his/her expertise and practice to justify it, and if the Contractor is comfortable running an independent business, the Contractor may evolve to become a Consultant and be treated as a Consultant.

Temporary Employees

Some refer to temporary employees as Contractors or Consultants. But, titles are "cheap", especially for marketing purposes. Brokers or agencies may say they are looking for Consultants, but they may really be placing a candidate as a temporary employee in an arrangement that diminishes the professionalism of the candidate. Some Clients may refer to external staff as Consultants, but, perceive them as Contractors or Temporary Employees with less stature and professionalism than their full time employees.

Interim Executives

Interim executives are typically "C" level executives. Interim CEOs and interim CFOs are examples. They operate at the highest levels of corporate responsibility.

Other Ways to Group Consultants

Other ways to categorize Consultants include; service offerings, business models, expertise and skill sets (management, technical, functional, public speaking, languages spoken, written, etc.), sales channels, fee structures, and annual earnings.

Characteristics of a Professional Consultant

A Consultant strives to execute his/her Consulting practice in a way that includes activities similar to the following:

- Positions himself/herself to be a "Trusted Advisor"
- Provides thoughtful advice to Clients and intermediaries
- Focuses on "Core" issues
- Creates, updates, and executes strategic and tactical plans within his/her own business
- Is involved in industry activities
- Earns the respect of his/her peers
- Understands how trends are impacting his/her target market and evolves service offerings to address shifting in needs
- Keeps in regular contact with those who are qualified prospects or highly valued from other business perspectives
- Dresses appropriately. Some Consultants suggest dressing at the same level as the CEO of each Client organization. Others say dress like a key

Professional Consultants dress appropriately.

Client of that organization. Being slightly over-dressed is good.[9]

Other Characteristics

Successful Consultants tend to have the following character traits[10]

- “Know that new business is the lifeblood of the firm”
- “Positive and optimistic with existing and prospective clients and with referral sources”
- “People feel comfortable around them”
- “They laugh at themselves”
- “They are very good listeners”
- “They’re givers, not takers”
- “They are righteous believers in their ability to perform and the value of their services”
- ”They enjoy what they do and the people they work with”

In **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,** Stephen R. Covey suggests that a person should have a suite of habits that includes both private habits and publicly perceivable habits.[11]

Business Plan

Each Consultant and each Consulting firm should have a written Business Plan that outlines the high level objectives for their business. At the very least it should be a one page plan with sections for a Five Year Plan and One Year Plan. Separate monthly and weekly tactical plans should include marketing and sales metrics and support achievement of One Year Plan goals.

It is better if the Business Plan is a ten to twelve page PowerPoint addressing the following:[12]

Executive Summary	Management	Technology and IP
Mission	Board of Advisors	Business Model
Strategy	Achievements and Assets	Financial Projections
Market Pain and Solution	Clients and/or Partners	Sources of Funds
Market Opportunity	Competition	Other Information

It is even better if the Business Plan is a written (not PowerPoint), ten to thirty page document; as writing PowerPoint documents allows the author to avoid thinking about important details.

9 During the Internet “Bubble”, some in Silicon Valley said it was “pretentious” to wear a suit. Since the “Bubble” burst, dress in Silicon Valley has become somewhat more formal.

10 Adapted from **The “I Hate Selling” Book** by Allan S. Boress, published by the American Management Association, 1995, pp 10-14

11 **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People** by Stephen R. Covey

12 Adapted from **Startup Presentations To Angel/Seed Stage Investors and Partners; Recommendations for Best Practices, a White Paper**, by John Gale, 2007, page 14

Planning Process

After a Consultant gets his/her written one page business plan in place; then the Consultant should set aside two to four hours per month, to review, update, and expand that plan. He/she also translates it into tactical goals for the coming weeks. Of course the tactical plans also need to be reviewed in shorter weekly sessions; and the daily plans on a daily basis.

Within two years, the Business Plan should evolve into a real plan with numerous sections including all of the main topics addressed in this White Paper.[13]

Business Model

A Consultant needs to understand and plan how to monetize his/her services. To accomplish this, the Consultant needs to plan how to help Clients and prospects to understand his/her business model and how it provides answers to their concerns and needs.

Here are several examples of Consultant business models:

- Sell solutions which are priced on a project basis
- Write market or technical reports that are sold for a fee
- Sell design services by the hour
- When an engagement, contract, project or "deal" is closed with a Client, the Consultant is the prime contractor and has sub-contractors. Alternatively, the Consultant might be one of several subcontractors. The specific arrangements may vary from one engagement to another.
- Work for all or part of the Consulting compensation as a commission, for future royalties, or for stock options (in startups). This form of compensation, especially the equity compensation form is higher risk for the Consultant, but can offer the potential for a much higher return for the effort. It may be best to first understand the startup genre, then to evolve to a compensation form that includes a mix of cash and equity.[14]

Some Consultants offer a focused group or suite of services. For example, one offers consulting services, management services, conferences, and publications (reports and newsletters). Another offers interim COO services and executive coaching.

The Consultant's business model must be aligned with the Consultant's market strategy. A business model is a part of the overall business plan.

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13 There are numerous books and software tools that support the creation and update of business plans. If the reader is a member of the **Marketing Committee** of the **Consultants' Network of Silicon Valley**, a White Paper on business plans for startups can be accessed at the Committee web location.

14 The well informed Consultant will understand the tax issues and vesting issues of cash vs. options vs. shares of stock before negotiating the compensation.

Marketing

In general, marketing is what a Consultant does to create an opportunity for a sales call. The Professional small Consulting firm strives to understand enough about marketing to know what it needs to do to maintain a sales pipeline that is "full enough" for the current situation.

For the small Consulting firm, the marketing process is made up of:

- Market research
- A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis
- Developing a Market Strategy
- Thinking through the Marketing Mix
- Implementing and managing marketing activities
- Post-sales promotional activities

Market Research

Periodic market research is performed to understand relative market size, growth rate, profitability, cost structure, distribution channels, relevant trends, relevant government regulations and legislation, industry requirements, and key success factors.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is merely an analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for a Consultant. For example a Consultant might do a SWOT analysis for a specific service he/she offers to a specific target market. This might be project management seminars for nano-bio product developers, antenna design for cell phones, executive coaching for startup CEOs, etc.

Market Strategy

The ongoing effort to understand and better define the needs of each Client while defining and refining Consulting practice business focus to match those needs, has enormous value to the professional image and market strategy of the Consultant. A Consultant's market strategy is a part of their overall Business Plan.

The process of developing a Market Strategy can be described as the application of market research to enable:

- Market segmentation; this includes understanding the requirements of each relevant segment. Segments may be based on groupings by geographic location, Client category, Client behavior, or company size.
- Target market selection based on the relative desirability of doing business with each segment. This is based on some combination of relative size, growth rate, competition, relative loyalty of Clients to existing Consultants, revenue potential, and anticipated margins. Further, the Consultant considers; how well he/she can address the Client needs from their perspectives; can value delivered be better than that by the competition, how will serving this segment effect the Consultant's image in the eyes of prospects, are there distribution channels or partners than can be helpful in a significant way, and can

he/she afford to enter this target market? Clients will not believe that all markets can be served by a small firm.

- A determination as to the desirable complexity of the marketing. Most individual Consultants use only one Marketing Mix to address one or more target market segments. However, some customize their offering to each of several different target markets.
- Each offering must be positioned for each target market segment. A key part of this strategy is to create a plan to be recognized as an expert in a field with definable business opportunities for a Consultant.[15]
- A value proposition is then developed by the Consultant for each offering in each target market segment. Each value proposition describes the set of unique benefits that a Client in a specific Target Market receives when he purchases that service from that Consultant. Clients will not believe that a small firm can offer too many different value propositions.

If a Consultant does not have a good Marketing Strategy in place, or if it is not being executed professionally, then the sales and overall business plans will suffer and will be considerably more difficult to execute.

Marketing Mix

Some Consultants base their "Marketing Mix", on the "4Ps" [16] or the "5 Ps"; product, promotion, positioning,[17] place, and price. Others perceive that for expert technical consulting it is more appropriate to use the so-called "Marketing Re-Mix"; product, personalization, persuasion, preference, presence, and price. The Marketing Strategy and Marketing Mix are developed and interconnected based on an understanding of the business as it is perceived through one of these prisms. As a part of this, the Consultant thinks through:

- Service offering development issues including offering name (brand name), what the service provides, quality, packaging, warranties, and related offerings.
- Where his/her service offering is in its product life cycle; development, introduction, growth, maturity, or decline in each target market
- His/her brand equity from various perspectives; including brand building, managing, and protection strategies.
- Pricing objectives and strategies including pricing strategy, "list price", discount plans based on size of engagements, discounts related to payments, bundling of offerings, and planned flexibility or inflexibility in pricing.
- Distribution channels (partners), exclusivity by channel, specific channel players, and order processing. Brokers and recruiters are one form of channel partner. They can be

15 If a Consultant is an authority on a subject, and, others understand that, then he/she will "be invited" to bid on projects, speak and moderate at conferences, attend invitation only meetings, and to participate in other interesting events.

16 The Consultant who is new to marketing should not worry about the differences between the 4 Ps, 5 Ps, 3 Cs, 7 Cs, etc. But instead focus on developing a working knowledge of basic marketing and a basic Market Strategy; and then work to evolve that understanding in a practical way.

17 **Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind**, by Al Ries and Jack Trout, McGraw-Hill, 1982, broke new ground when published in 1982. As of this writing, the used paperback is $.01 from Amazon.com.

utilized for referrals. For many established Consultants, this is the lowest priority activity unless the need for sales leads is urgent.

- Pre-sales promotion issues focusing on strategy, advertising, selling by the Consultant, promotions, public relations, and budget.

Implementing and Managing Marketing Activities

Marketing campaigns

- To Targeted Individuals - Frequency Marketing
  This is periodically (i.e. perhaps quarterly) sending useful material that is essentially promotional to a targeted mail/email list. The Consultant must send only information that is valuable in the eyes of the recipient. Otherwise the recipient will perceive that the Consultant is spamming him/her.
- Web site Based Marketing

Alliances

Some Consultants are interested in partner engagements or alliances to launch or to continue to grow the consulting firm's business as a normal part of the company life cycle. Well managed alliances can contribute to both revenue and market perceptions of a Consultant's level of professionalism.

In considering a partner or team relationship, the Consultant may want to think through both:

> "Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare."[18]

and the following list of potential dysfunctions of a team:[19]

- Absence of trust (will the team members communicate openly about mistakes and weaknesses)
- Fear of conflict (will there be constructive debate)
- Lack of commitment (have opinions been discussed, respected, and incorporated into a plan that has real support)
- Avoidance of accountability (is there enough commitment to support a concept of accountability)
- Inattention to results (will team members pay attention to team goals and their achievement)

A Consultant's Alliance Strategy is a part of their Market Strategy which is part of their overall Business Plan.

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18 **The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable** by Patrick Lencioni, page vii

19 Adapted from **The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable** by Patrick Lencioni

Marketing Collateral

A Consultant's marketing collateral is his/her "sales kit". A Consultant uses it as part of what he/she does to establish and maintain his/her brand, to market, and to sell his/her services.

Marketing collateral helps a Consultant to "look" professional. It includes business cards, flyers, letterhead, photograph, white papers, etc. Please see the Appendix for more information on these.

Marketing Communications

Another of the tasks is Marketing Communications. These are vital activities that must be pursued professionally and methodically. This takes time and effort. A specific Consultant will execute a selected set of these methods based on his/her market strategy. One specific Consultant will not execute "full bore" on all possible methods. On the other hand, a successful Consultant will typically utilize a set of methods with prioritization unique to his/her practice.

Industry Associations and Professional Societies

- Membership in Professional and Industry Associations and Societies
  The objective is to develop a broader group of colleagues to extend the "Networking with Colleagues" process noted below. The opportunity to post a profile[20] is valuable. So, when possible and appropriate, create and maintain online profiles/ads/postings at relevant web sites where qualified Prospects are known to search actively for relevant skill sets.
- Join groups ***synergistic*** with marketing efforts on association and social networking sites.
- Project presence in and do participate in activities in relevant social networking areas or events provided by these organizations.

Networking Events

- Networking with Colleagues[21]
  Personal relationships are a key asset that can lead to positive referrals
- Networking with strangers is one way to expand your "sphere" of activities.

Social Network Strategy and Online Profiles

For social networking sites; develop an understanding of the various strategies that can be used. For example, will a Consultant accept connections from recruiters on LinkedIn? Will the Consultant accept connections from anyone? Will he/she only accept connections from people who he/she has known for three years? Consider, if a Consultant requests/accepts connections only from people he/she knows, how fast will he/she move into new geographic or market sector spaces?

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20 Such an opportunity is available at www.CaliforniaConsultants.org.

21 Some successful Silicon Valley Consultants say that networking is their "most important activity." If this is true for the relevant target market, then do it regularly and professionally. This is one way that a Consultant can accomplish "first contact" and make good "first impressions". When a Consultant meets new people that he/she wishes to add to their network, it is useful to first be a good listener. Determine what they do and what kind of issues they have. If it is appropriate, offer to help them or to refer them to someone who can assist them. This type of mutual assistance can be the beginning of and basis for a lasting business relationship. It is desirable to learn from (or offer help to) someone even if you do not get immediate business from them. Some will respond by returning the favor in useful ways in the future.

A Consultant needs to have a specific social network strategy for a social network before he/she joins a specific social network. Thus, if he/she would only ever have a few connections on a major site, do not bother to start on that social network. In other words, do not create a weak position without understanding that in advance. So, pick one or two relevant social networking sites and develop a very useful presence on each. Small, more exclusive sites should be considered based on a site specific strategy. Social network site connections can be robust advantages when moving into new markets or new geographies.

Create and maintain online profiles at relevant social networking sites.[22] Spend time fleshing out these profiles.

- Get testimonials, endorsements, and recommendations. LinkedIn facilitates this process and focuses on business usage.
- Do not mix personal information with business information on one site. This is another reason to have at least a business name and business phone number, if not also a business address.
- Keep a list of web sites where profiles have been created. At least quarterly, review each to ensure that they are current and accurate.

Resources[23, 24]

Trade Shows and Conferences

- Attending trade shows and conferences and meeting business people that can be added to the sales pipeline or one of the Consultant's networks
- Public speaking
  Either learn to be good (professional) at this, or use other methods

Publications

- Writing articles, White Papers, books, and blogs
  Either learn to be good (professional) at this, or use other methods

Advertising

- Advertising is usually done only in very targeted ways, and by larger firms.

A Consultant strives to create a network of contacts who want to be associated with him/her, provide referrals to him/her, do projects with him/her, advise him/her of issues and possibilities, and come to him/her for advice and recommendations.

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22 Understand which sites are relevant to your consulting practice. Maybe for you Ecademy or Ning is more useful than Linked In, Facebook, or twitter.

23 www.LinkedIn.com is important in that it is a professionally oriented social networking site that can help project a Consultant's business image. It is also useful for sales prospecting, finding connections, and achieving introduction to prospective Clients.

24 Some experts say that a person should evolve a social network strategy that includes use of multiple social networking sites. Other experts say focus on one social networking site. Other social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. have been successfully used by business people to make contacts and get business. The culture of a site should feel comfortable to the user.

Contact Management

During all of these activities a Consultant should exchange business cards with every relevant person that he/she meets. A Consultant should consider purchasing a card scanning product such as CardScan[25]. Digitize the contact information of everyone you meet. The associated software facilitates synchronized connections between information and email lists and through them with portable devices such as smart phones and PDAs. By developing the discipline to collect, scan, and sync contacts, a Consultant can build an impressive Contact Database. Within a few years the Consultant can be accessing information, emailing, sending holiday cards, and otherwise interacting with these contacts on a regular basis.

A Professional Consultant needs more than an email client, contact management software is required. This facilitates timely follow-up with Prospects including the one who said "call me in six months" or "Call me just after CES". Please see the section Computer System.

Metrics

Some say that measuring the number and quality of sales leads is the true metric for measuring the usefulness of a Consultant's Market Strategy.

Post-Sales Promotional Activities

Post-sales promotion focuses on closed Clients and supports increases in project size, ongoing business and referrals through, strategy, advertising, selling by the Consultant, promotion, and public relations. Budget is a constraint.

But, for current Clients and satisfied past Clients, routine contacts can solicit engagements. These Prospects will likely being open about needs, opportunities, and budget realities.

Sales

"**Selling** is trying to make sales by persuading someone to buy one's product or service. From a management viewpoint it is thought of as a part of marketing, although the skills required are different."[26]

The Sales Process is defined by how opportunities are identified & moved through a series of steps, which are generally defined by either the nature of the relationship or the activity. The objective is to have "Targets" become "Suspects", then become "Prospects", then become "Opportunities", then become "Leads", and finally become "Clients." The sales process defines how the seller (Consultant) makes the movement work. Each step involves identifying objections and overcoming them; each step requires a "close" before moving on to the next step. Without a good marketing activity in place "underneath", sales is a lot harder.

25 Please see www.cardscan.com as one vendor

26 From "Selling" in **Wikipedia** at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selling as of October 21, 2009.. It references Philip Kotler, **Principles of Marketing**, Prentice -Hall, 1980

An actual Sales Process might include prospecting, qualifying, account planning, proposing, negotiating, identifying and overcoming objections, and closing. At the end of a successful engagement, ask the Client for referrals.[27]

Some aspects of the sales process where a Consultant can appear to be more professional are:

- A Professional Consultant speaks respectfully of others, particularly competitors. The rule; "If you can't say something nice, say nothing at all" definitely applies.
- Appropriate interpersonal relationship skills
- Building a pipeline of prospects in a professional way.
- Cold Call
  This approach is used after research or tentative referral by others. The use of social network connections and/or profiles and/or strong marketing collateral such as White Papers can turn a Cold Call into a "Warm Call" with higher probabilities of success. Research Targets by using online tools like LinkedIn and their own web site.
- As a part of qualifying prospects; understand if they know what they want. One set of questions can help the Consultant determine if he/she needs to help the prospect decide what he/she needs.
- The Agreement or contract
  - Understand what the Client plans to do after the Consultant's work products are delivered. Will the work products be relevant?
  - Never work without a signed contract. Part of the sales process is the mutual signing of a well written contract that both parties understand. Invest in an attorney to at least review a "standard" contract. Not only does a contract protect the Consultant, it protects the Client, forces both to consider the scope of the project and contingencies up front, and projects a professional image.
  - Before a Consultant signs a contract; he/she should understand what a successful result at the end of the engagement will look like from the Client's perspective. That definition of success is built into the proposal.
  - Include inclusion/exclusion of liability, warranty, and intellectual property ownership.
  - Include a clear definition of deliverables and a reasonable schedule
  - Include cancellation and change order terms that protect the Consultant, but, are reasonable.
- A Consultant should always be professional during the sales process. Professional Consultants listen[28] carefully and respond thoughtfully. Address the Client's concerns, even if they are not well stated. Observe other Consultants. Model processes and behaviors on those used by ethical, successful Consultants. Be observant of the methods of those from large firms.
- Understand the unique aspects of closing this particular deal. For example, if

A Professional Consultant speaks respectfully of others, particularly competitors.

Professional Consultants listen carefully and respond thoughtfully.

27 The Consultant who is new to the Sales Process should not worry about understanding all of the definitions, but instead focus on developing a working knowledge of basic sales processes and selling; and then work to evolve that understanding in a practical way.

28 It's considered "Professional" to listen attentively to your Client. Be thoughtful and well informed when you disagree with a Client concerning knowledge areas in which they are expert.

the prospect is a startup, the Consultant should understand the current tax issues of receiving shares of stock vs. stock options before negotiating the deal.

- Follow up in a timely manner.
- A Consultant is known by the company he/she keeps. Divest those prospects and clients who are unethical or otherwise unsuitable.
- A Consultant treats his/her Clients the way the Consultant would like to be treated. He/she must understand that different people may respond to the same thing in very different ways. Cultural issues can be incredibly important factors and can make clear communications complex to achieve. If the Consultant can listen, observe, and learn what motivates each Client, then he/she will better understand his/her needs. As a result, a higher percentage of prospects will close. The Consultant will have more business and have happier clients.

The Professional Consultant understands that once an engagement is closed, the marketing effort for that Client does not stop.

Managing Client Relationships

A Consultant should manage his/her Client accounts with the professionalism that he/she sees demonstrated by those Consultants who are admired by experienced Consultants.[29] Seek out a mentor and one or more role models. Be aware of how the larger consulting firms nurture Client relationships.

- Manage the scope of each engagement so that everyone agrees on the scope, on an ongoing basis, throughout the engagement.
- Almost every Client wishes to see a steady, high level of productivity and quality of work products. If he/she perceives it as varying, he/she will be confused. Projecting this consistency of productivity can be very difficult for some types of consulting services (such as monitoring industry trends) and perhaps less complex in others (a situation where a Client expects the Consultant to produce “X” lines of code per day). Strive to make output appear to be consistently high by keeping the Client informed of progress on a regular basis.
- Whenever possible, include the usage of efficient personal time management and project management methods with each Client engagement. This improves professionalism and may lead to longer term engagements.
- As a Consultant finds Clients who treats their Consultants exceptionally well, the Consultant will be more inclined to do additional work for such Clients as well as refer other Consultants to help that Client in areas that are outside their field of interest. Over time such Clients will attract the best Consultants. The Consultant (and the Consultant’s colleagues) will likely evolve his/her market strategy to include targeting such Clients as prospects. One such strategy is to strive to become the “Trusted Advisor” for such Clients.

29 **Flawless Consulting** by Peter Block is one reference

Communications

Optimize communication effectiveness by identifying the most appropriate communications style; phone, email, written communications, fax, conference calls, video conferencing, one-on-one meetings, group meetings; that match the Client and his/her desired tempo of engagement. All communications should be appropriately focused.

Professional Consultants return Client calls promptly, usually within one business day.

- Professional Consultants return client calls promptly, usually within one business day, and identify themselves clearly and succinctly when leaving a message.
- A Consultant informs Clients regularly of the current progress of their project[30] as well as his/her schedule, especially if the Consultant is going to be unavailable (due to other projects, vacation, out-of-country travel, etc.) as this may impact ability to perform at the desired service level.
- Be informed. Know when an engagement is coming to an end before the Client says so. This can be very difficult in some types of engagements, and, very obvious in others. Be very professional when a termination message is received from a Client. The Consultant remembers that he/she wants the Client to give referrals now and more business next year.
- On an ongoing basis, a Consultant communicates the value being provided to decision-makers and key influencers in a way that matches the cultural norms for the client organization. Some organizations "know" that successful individuals frequently "state their value" or brag. Other organizations "know" that successful individuals are very low key. Non-sales professionals tend to err on the side of being too "low key."
- Communicate informally with all appropriate client-site people without appearing to waste a client's time.
- Be available by phone! A Consultant makes himself/herself easily available by (cell) phone and email. Make it a point to return calls and emails within 24 hours or less. A Consultant is judged by the time it takes him/her to respond, and people often expect response in an hour or two. Make sure staff answering phones (never children) and voice mail answering messages convey a business context and not a personal context. Some will consider using Instant Messaging if immediacy of response during working hours is extremely important. Other Consultants are greatly opposed to tethering themselves to Clients via IM.
- Be available by email! For many Clients email has replaced snail mail and even the telephone as a means of communication. It is essential that email be answered promptly and professionally, including while you are out of the office. Some Consultants perceive it as essential to have a cell phone that handles email.
- Stick to the facts!
- Do not blame others except when it is clearly true, clearly relevant, and is done during a carefully planned one-on-one meeting with appropriate client management. Just state the facts. Do not criticize others. This is very unprofessional. In most cases, if a Client wants the Consultant's opinion they will ask for it. However, in some cases, depending on the Consultant's role, if he/she says nothing, the Client will say "Where were you?" If trapped in such a situation, tread carefully.

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30 For example, "We are on time, on budget." Or, "We need to discuss how to better control X, or soon we will start pushing budget constraints."

- When in doubt, communicate calmly, succinctly, and clearly. It is especially important when there is a problem. Alerting the Client to a problem early, even when it is the Client's fault; minimizes impact and builds trust. Most engagements that are less than successful are caused by failures in communication. Make it easy for Clients to communicate. Often there are external stresses that contribute to miscommunication. However, adverse impacts can be avoided with careful communications. Speak in person when possible. Telephone is a second choice. Email is a distant third choice as a communications tool when addressing critical problems.

Work Products

A Consultant's work products (deliverables) are what his/her Clients use to describe the Consultant when the Consultant is not present. Professional Consultants say what they will do and then they do it. Work products are delivered on time and within budget. More value is delivered than is contractually required.

Professional Consultants say what they will do and then they do it.

A Consultant's work products (deliverables) are professionally organized, documented, and packaged. They comply with industry standards. They provide what a Client needs to easily demonstrate to stakeholders that they are valuable. Before writing the proposal, a Consultant asks the Client for his/her perception of a successful set of work products for that specific engagement.

Managing Clients Between Engagements

Many successful Silicon Valley Consultants believe that Clients and Prospects have higher respect for Consultants, who, between engagements, periodically send them information that they perceive as valuable. To accomplish this, some Consultants write newsletters, others write customized emails, others make phone calls, others buy coffees or lunches, others write White Papers, others, give seminars.

Team Management

If a Consultant is leading a team that is serving the needs of a Client, he/she must realize that the Client's employees and team members are all noticing how the team leader:

- Provides leadership and direction with/without micro-management
- Handles prioritization and decision-making
- Protects his/her team
- Shares information, responsibility, "getting hands dirty", and credit
- Is aware of the impact of his/her actions
- Projects relaxed self confidence (or not)

Difficult Situations

Sooner or later, every Consultant encounters a "Difficult Situation." For example, if a Consultant closes a contract with a corporation that was recently his/her employer, it can be difficult to manage interpersonal relationships in a professional way with those who are close friends. Or, an employee may have issues that are problematic. Consultants who are senior, professional advisors become attuned to sensing these issues.

If other individuals involved start to “flail” or become “flaky”, it is even more important that a Consultant be calm, cool, and collected. That Consultant will be remembered as one of those who can be relied on in a crisis.

If an employee is out of control, or if there is a personality conflict between an employee and a Consultant, it can seriously interfere with the probability of a successful outcome. In such a situation, a Consultant has to decide whether to:

- Look for ways to connect with the problem individual and search for middle ground where the both can agree that the good solution is achieving the defined goal
- “Gut it out” and perhaps be unreasonably blamed
- Go to management and perhaps not be received well
- “Bail” from the contract and perhaps be vilified

It is the Consultant’s responsibility to quietly and professionally discuss these situations with the appropriate executive(s). Be sure to avoid inserting emotion into the situation.[31] Good communications with everyone involved, almost always improves the outcome.

Professional Development

Being on a path which includes frequent professional learning experiences is one mark of a professional Consultant. The professional development seminars/webinars available from the Consultant Practices Program of the Consultants’ Network of Silicon Valley are one source of learning.[32]

Reading books which extend knowledge or challenge anecdotal beliefs is another approach to learning.[33]

Presentations

Be a professional during presentations, sales meetings, and all other Client/prospect contacts. Imitate the consultants who are most admired by other Consultants.

If a Consultant uses PowerPoint slides, they must look professional. The typeface is large enough to read from the back row. The slides are not densely packed with too much text.[34] The presentation itself does not have too much or too little material for the allocated time. All presentations are rehearsed.

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31 The reader may want to read **Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss what Matters Most** by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen.

32 Email Seminars@CaliforniaConsultants.org for more information. Some of these are open to the public.

33 **Fooled by Randomness: The Hidden Role of Chance in Life and in the Markets** by Nassim Nicholas Taleb is one such interesting book. Survivorship bias is one of the interesting topics discussed.

34 Please see **The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs: How to Be Insanely Great in Front of Any Audience** by Carmine Gallo, 2009.

Public Speaking

A Consultant enhances his/her professional market image by participating as a presenter at respected and well attended events. A Consultant should seek to speak at both market sector specific and functional specific (i.e. Internet) events such as webcasts, podcasts, etc. Speaking to larger groups leverages the benefits. A Consultant can also seek other ways to get public notice and visibility such as moderating sessions at conferences.

Having an association or professional society designate a Consultant as a "Distinguished Lecturer" on a topic relevant to the target market(s) is helpful. Being an active volunteer on a local professional society's or sector association's local program committee and even an officer can give a Consultant good exposure and also create opportunities for public speaking as well as showing and developing leadership skills. Professional organizations such as the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the American Marketing Association (AMA), and other industry associations offer many opportunities for public exposure and leadership training.

For those who are not good public speakers, join a group such as Toastmasters to practice and increase self-confidence.[35] Their "tag line" is "Become the speaker and leader you want to be." If the Consultant decides that he/she can not perform as well as market norms, then do not speak and create a bad impression. One solution is to partner with others.

Focus

A Consultant should demonstrate to Clients that he/she is aware of, focused on, and capable of addressing what is "core"; that is, what is really important.

Invest In Yourself

A Professional Consultant is an expert in those fields for which he/she claims to be an expert.

Ongoing investment in professional development enhances reputation and morale. A Professional Consultant is an expert in those fields for which he/she claims to be an expert.

- Attend continuing education classes and lectures/webinars. Make contacts, network at these events. Always be networking.
- Go to relevant conferences; pay for the classes and tutorials not just the exhibits. Make contacts and network at these events. Always be networking, and take advantage of each opportunity.
- Read White Papers and books in relevant subject areas. Stay on top of key events and trends in relevant functional areas, technical areas, and industry sectors. Follow the relevant online publications and the blogs.
- Write articles, White Papers, or books or teach to foster your learning experiences.

Certifications

Some Consultants decide to become certified in some way. For some consulting practices certifications become an important asset in establishing the Consultant as an expert.

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35 Please see http://www.toastmasters.org/. There are numerous **Toastmasters** groups in the San Francisco Bay Area and in many other cities

Resources[36, 37, 38, 39]

Ethics

A Consultant performs his/her business as if he/she wanted the officers in the most conservative large companies to respect him/her (because this is your objective).[40]

- It is a lot easier to avoid real conflicts of interest, than to avoid slipping into a situation that bears the appearance of a conflict of interest. However, even the appearance of a conflict of interest or impropriety must be avoided.
- Become knowledgeable about the codes of ethics of relevant professional associations[41]
- Respect the spirit (not just the contract) of the Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) that have been signed
- When using equipment on loan from a Client make the arrangements for its use as explicit as possible. Send an email documenting in detail what has been received on loan. Update this with another email when there is a change. Try to establish a date when it will be returned. Get a receipt when it is returned.
- Be willing to, and able to, say "No" when asked to do something that is illegal, unethical, or more likely, just bad business.
- A Professional Consultant must divest his/her Practice of inappropriate Clients.

When in doubt, communicate!

A Professional Consultant must divest his/her Practice of inappropriate Clients.

36 State governments in a number of states are exploring licensing requirements for software developers

37 Technology specific certifications include; **Microsoft Certified Architect** MCA, **Cisco CCDP**, and many others. For IEEE, see IEEE CSDP www2.computer.org/portal/web/getcertified

38 Please see the **Project Management Institute** (PMI)

39 To explore interest in becoming a licensed **Professional Engineer** in a field such as Chemical, Civil, Electrical, Mechanical, review www.nspe.org and www.cspe.com

40 Professional ethics is a larger issue than some Consultants choose to admit. An ongoing attitude to improve understanding in this area is valuable

41 As one example, the IEEE Code of Ethics can be found at http://www.ieee.org/portal/pages/iportals/aboutus/ethics/code.html

Appendix - Infrastructure

This section describes the basic things a Consultant needs behind the scenes to support the practice of a Professional Consultant.

Accounting and Invoicing

A Consultant can not expect a Client to pay him/her until the Consultant sends an invoice. Further, if the Consultant is ever audited by the IRS, he/she does not want to have to explain to the IRS, why someone sent a payment when the Consultant had not sent an invoice.

A Consultant needs to talk with a CPA or bookkeeper to know how to keep records for business purposes and tax purposes.[42, 43] This is not difficult unless one starts just before tax returns must be filed.

Resources[44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49]

Advisors

A Consultant needs to have both legal (lawyers) and financial (CPA) advisors. Some small Consulting firms have their own Board of Advisors that focus on business and market issues. Advisors can be a source of sales leads.

Alternatives to Renting an Office

Depending on the nature of a Consultant's business, a Consultant may never actually require anything beyond a home office. Executive suites and co-working spaces are stepping stones between working out of a home and renting an office. In addition, some executive suite organizations will rent conference rooms to non-tenants for $20 per hour.

Resources[50, 51]

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42 Keep business records separate from personal records. Open separate accounts for the business in the business name. Show movements of funds between business and personal accounts as distinct transactions.

43 Have terms such as net 30 built into your proposals and contracts. Include them on your invoices.

44 It is easy to print invoices from MS Word, Excel, or accounting software. Spend some time to make these look professional; or modify a template.

45 **Quicken Home and Business** www.quicken.intuit.com is recommended by many. The cost is approximately $80.

46 **QuickBooks**, also from **Intuit**, is more capable and more expensive. Some say that unless a business has payroll it is probably over-kill. But, it has more features that some users really appreciate. If needed, obtain training from a QuickBooks professional.

47 Either **Quicken** or **QuickBooks** will electronically pass business information to **Intuit's** tax software to ease tax preparation.

48 There are other online and SAAS accounting and tax tools. Some are free. Ask your CPA.

49 Printer paper stock for checks is available from www.compuchecks.com and others. Printer checks save time when used with **Quicken**, **QuickBooks**, or etc. and convey a professional image.

50 For Executive suites, see www.pbcoffices.com/lp/sanjose.html and http://www.regus.com

51 For Co-working, see http://www.semanticseed.com/coworking.html and http://nextspace.us/

Association Memberships

The company a Consultant keeps conveys a part of the Consultant's market image and can add legitimacy to the Consultant's own business. The authors recommend that Consultants get involved in relevant trade, professional, and technical associations and societies. A Consultant will benefit by getting involved with local, national, or international leadership to develop contacts, experience, and professionalism. A Consultant should volunteer to chair a committee, be an officer, and work up to be invited to be on the Board of Directors.

The authors encourage Consultants to join relevant associations and societies[52, 53, 54, 55, 56]

Before You Attend A Conference

Before a Consultant attends a conference or similar event, he/she must prepare. The following list provides a basis for action.[57]

Research

- Be up-to-date on the important issues for this gathering, relevant industry trends, news, and rumors.
- Research the presenters and (relevant) others that will attend. Understand what they do now and what they have done.
- Think through the business value of meeting with each relevant individual. Schedule meetings ahead of time. Be prepared to say something interesting. Prepare questions that are important to each of them.

Content Preparation

- Update relevant social networking site profiles.
- Is it feasible to pre-prepare at least one robust blog posting for that key day? Is it appropriate to "live blog" certain events?
- Plan conversation topics

Other Preparation

- Take enough (current) business cards
- Update and practice the elevator pitch.

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52 Join relevant groups within functional areas such as the **American Marketing Association** (http://svama.org/), the **Financial Executives International** (http://www.financialexecutives.org), the **Association for Corporate Growth** (http://chapters.acg.org/sv/), etc.

53 Join technical societies such as IEEE (www.ieee.org), ASME (www.ASME.org), SME (www.sme.org), etc.

54 Join industry and trade groups such as the **Electronic Industries Alliance** (http://eia.org/), **Precision Metal Forming Association** (http://pma.org/), **Asia American Manufacturers Association** (www.aamasv.com), **Chinese American Semiconductor Professional Association** (http://caspa.com/), **Monte Jade** (www.montejade.org), **The Indus Entrepreneurs** (TIE**,** www.tie.org**),** etc.

55 Join startup centric organizations such as the **Silicon Valley Association of Startup Entrepreneurs** (www.svase.org)

56 Join Consultants groups such as the **IEEE Consultants' Network of Silicon Valley** (www.CaliforniaConsultants.org) IEEE-CNSV is an Affinity Group within the Santa Clara Valley Section of the **Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers**,. The Web Site is at www.CaliforniaConsultants.org

57 Adapted and extracted from **20 Things To Do Before A Conference**, Filed under: reblogworld, posted on August 17th, 2009 at http://reblogworld.com/reblogworld/20-things-to-do-before-a-conference/

- "Practice being confident. To some people, networking comes easy. For others it's difficult. Either way, WE CAN ALL GET BETTER. We just have to practice being confident. Finding our motivating factors, and practicing our delivery" [58]
- "Put forth the effort to connect with folks. This means open invitations to lunches, coffee and drinks as opposed to private invites." [59]

Biography ("Bio") and Related Documents

A Consultant should have several versions of his/her professional Biography. This is usually referred to as a bio. They should vary in length from one paragraph to two pages. Each version needs to summarize the Consultant's career in a way that a Prospect will be comfortable and confident that this is the expert he/she needs. Thus he/she will be comfortable in thinking about retaining this particular Consultant's services. Focus on what is important from the last ten years (elsewhere in the world a prospect may want to see a longer view).

Related documents are:

- Bio
  Written to help sell consulting services. A Bio is less detailed and focuses on highlights. It is written to impress Prospects that here is an expert at solving problems in a Consulting role. It includes a link to the Consultant's web site for more detail.
- Team Bios
  If a Consultant sells team based solutions based on employees or contractors, then bios play a different role. That Consultant will need marketing collateral describing his/her offering(s). In many cases, he/she will need to supply Bios for some or all of the team members involved in a specific proposal.
- Resume
  Written to get a job as an employee. A resume sounds like the subject is a person moving from one employee role to another employee role. Most such roles are very specific.
- Curriculum Vita
  A CV is a well written description of work experience, educational background, and skills. It may include a list of professional publications, prior work (such as expert witness projects), patents, etc. This is generally much more detailed than a resume and is more commonly used outside the United States or for legal or academic work to establish credentials.

For Added Differentiation:

A Consultant's Bio and marketing collateral should be well reviewed and re-written by a marketing professional. Ideally, the marketing professional is a person with "MarCom" skills, experienced in writing collateral for selling intangibles.

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58 Extracted from **20 Things To Do Before A Conference**, Filed under: reblogworld, posted on August 17th, 2009 at http://reblogworld.com/reblogworld/20-things-to-do-before-a-conference/

59 Extracted from **20 Things To Do Before A Conference**, Filed under: reblogworld, posted on August 17th, 2009 at http://reblogworld.com/reblogworld/20-things-to-do-before-a-conference/

Business Cards

A Consultant should always have business cards with him/her (Always means Always). The business card for a Consultant includes his/her name, business entity, business address, business phone number, email address, and web site address.

Resist the urge to use flashy graphics and logos on the business cards. Keep the design simple, otherwise it will probably diminish the professional aspects of the marketing message. Use light color cards with dark color ink so that the card will scan easily with a business card scanner such as CardScan. Consultants can develop a logo; but, investing significantly in logo development can be postponed until the Consultant has adequate financial resources.

Purchase business cards printed by a real printing business, not business cards printed on an inexpensive printer attached to a PC. Stores and copy shops that offer "in an hour" type service will print on inexpensive printers and the cards will be warped, not flat. A Consultant who desires a good professional image will not purchase them. Raised lettering on heavy card stock looks good, feels good, and is inexpensive.

Resources[60, 61, 62]

Computer System

A Consultant's practice needs to be supported by:

- A computer. This probably means a notebook for use "on the road" and a desktop or another notebook computer back at the office. Redundancy is very helpful.
- An ink jet or laser printer
- Broadband access to the Internet
- A UPS with battery that can help finish printing a report when the power fails.
- A business card scanner such as CardScan as mentioned elsewhere in this White Paper. Please see Business Cards
- Microsoft Office compatibility upgrades installed so that the Consultant can interact with the latest version Microsoft Office documents.
- Please see the section Contact Management.

Domain Name

A Consultant's domain name and the associated web site are one of the main pillars supporting his/her brand. When a Consultant is developing a domain name, aim for something simple and easy to remember and spell. This can be a challenge with so many domains already taken. Ask

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60 WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) business card design on web sites is available from www.123print.com (As of this writing, heavy paper cards will cost $10 per 100. Matching address labels will cost $5 per 100.); www.BusinessCards.com; www.VistaPrint.com; and http://cardconnection.com/ (One consultant has used this service for years, purchasing 1,000 heavy stock cards for about $60 including shipping and handling.)

61 Please note that 123Print, VistaPrint, cardconnection, and other low cost card vendors may include simple graphics at no cost.

62 Please note that when you purchase printed products such as business cards or flyers, that as you purchase more, the incremental cost decreases.. For example, if 100 business cards cost $10.00, 1,000 business cards might cost only $45.00 (plus shipping and handling).

an attorney and a marketing consultant. An attorney may suggest that the Consultant Trademark his/her domain name.

Save money by purchasing a domain bundled with web hosting and email.

Email Address

A Consultant's email address is part of his/her identity from a prospect's perspective. It should be from the same domain as the Consultant's web site; thus further establishing his/her brand. Keep the email address short and simple and easy to spell.

A Consultant needs a permanent email address that can be forwarded as needed. Do not use Yahoo, Gmail, Comcast, SBCGlobal, etc. for a business email address. If a Consultant does this, how can prospects tell the difference between that Consultant and someone who is not in business? If a Consultant's email address is tied to a cable or telephone Internet service provider, what will happen if the Consultant moves?

Do not mix personal email with business email. Keep separate accounts. Both accounts can then be forwarded to a single email client (like gmail) for convenience. Many use filter tools to organize and categorize messages and keep them in different folders.

Email "Signature" File

Consider adding an email "signature" file to all outgoing business emails. This includes the Consultant's name, title, business name, business phone, web site URL, email address, Skype address (for international work), important social network profile addresses such as Linked In, and a one line description of what the Consultant does. Some also include organizational affiliations. The Consultant must be careful to be culturally appropriate in the eyes of his/her target market.

Purchase email service from the web host for cost savings.

Fax to Email Services

A fax number is still a requirement to do business today.

- Ask an attorney. Some say that a faxed signature is considered a legal signature, while a scanned and e-mailed document is not considered legal. The law is sometimes illogical from a technology perspective.
- Hosted fax solutions are cheaper and more convenient than having a dedicated phone line and fax machine. Faxes arrive with the rest of normal email correspondence.
- A Consultant can still send faxes using a computer and scanner. Take the time to prepare a fax cover sheet that is unified with the Consultant's business card/letter head and promotes his/her brand.

Resources[63]

63 Vendors include www.packetel.com; as of this writing, it costs $4/month; including a number with a local area code in most cases and www.efax.com as of this writing, it is $8.95 per month

Flyers

Some Consultants find it useful to create flyers to advertise their services. They take these to events, conferences, and etc. and give them to prospective Clients. Depending on the number of flyers needed, and the available time, there are many local printers available. For the best prices, plan ahead and check online sites. Remember that the unit cost decreases dramatically as the quantity ordered increases.

Incorporation vs. Fictitious Names

Being incorporated engenders more respect than the use of a "Fictitious Name". The prospect knows that the Consultant is in business, not just between jobs. Many Silicon Valley Clients will only engage a consultant on a "Corp. to Corp." basis due to IRS concerns. This requires that the Consultant be organized as a business entity rather than as (an unincorporated) simple sole proprietor. Please ask an attorney for legal advice and a CPA[64] for tax advice. They can help the Consultant understand whether he/she wants to incorporate as an S Corp, an LLC, or less frequently as a C Corp.

If operating without an incorporated business entity, a business entity should be using a properly registered "Fictitious name." If a Consultant has not registered a "Fictitious Name" for his/her business, contact an attorney about how to do it. In some counties, surname based business names do not require a Fictitious Name registration.

Resources[65], [66]

Intellectual Property

A Consultant is knowledgeable about Patent and Trademark,[67, 68] Copyright[69, 70, 71, 72, 73] and Fair Use[74, 75]aspects of intellectual property[76] as it applies to his/her consulting practice.

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64 Certified Public Accountant, the person who advises business people and individuals about financial record keeping and taxes and helps with tax filings.

65 For books on incorporating, please review www.nolo.com and www.wethepeopleusa.com

66 Check the CNSV database at www.CaliforniaConsultants.org for listings of attorneys. Also, ask other Consultants for recommendations.

67 The **United States Patent and Trademark Office** has its web site at http://uspto.gov/.

68 See also http://chillingeffects.org/trademark for information about trademarks

69 The **United States Copyright Office** has its web page at http://www.copyright.gov/ Fair Use is addressed at http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html

70 The **Stanford University Libraries** have a web page on Copyright and Fair Use at http://fairuse.stanford.edu/Copyright_and_Fair_Use_Overview/ It says that "The content for the Copyright and Fair Use Overview section is from Nolo, with much of it taken from the book Getting Permission, October 2007) by Richard Stim. Thanks!"

71 http://copyrightwebsite.com/ describes itself as "the ultimate copyright portal. Endeavoring to provide real world, practical copyright information for over a decade"

72 In particular, please see http://chillingeffects.org/fairuse/ for information about Fair Use.

73 The **European Commission** has a web page addressing "Copyright and Neighbouring Rights" at http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/copyright/index_en.htm

74 Fair Use is addressed at http://fairuse.stanford.edu/Copyright_and_Fair_Use_Overview/chapter9/

75 Fair Use is discussed at http://copyrightwebsite.com/Info/FairUse/FairUse.aspx

Letterhead

Keep letterhead simple, dignified, and unified with business cards and address labels.

Licenses

A Consultant should check with relevant state, county, and municipal governments to see if he/she needs any type of license. Business licenses are one example.

Resources[77]

Meetings With Clients

There are several questions to ask in planning for successful meetings with Clients. Who requested this meeting? What do the decision-makers and key influencers anticipate as events during and outcomes from this meeting? Remember to anticipate reactions and outcomes and be prepared to foster or address them. Rehearse in advance and keep the meeting (or, at least yourself) focused on core topics.

Meeting Places

Whether a Consultant works out of his/her home, or an office, sometimes he/she needs to meet a client somewhere other than at the client's site. In that event, try to pick a location that projects a professional image.

- Appropriate locations are quiet restaurants, quiet coffee shops (probably not those co-located with car washes), quiet hotel lobbies, and rented conference rooms.
- Inappropriate locations are noisy bars, a noisy café, or a fast food restaurant.

Organization

The Professional Consultant strives to be organized:

- He/she plans. Please see the section Planning Process and Business Plan
- He/she sorts new objects, mostly paper, before they are allowed into his/her office. Thus reducing clutter.
- He/she uses tools such as Contact Management Software and the Circa notebook from Levenger[78] (to better manage papers and notes that must be carried to Client sites).

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76 http://chillingeffects.org/ is a "joint project of the **Electronic Frontier Foundation** and **Harvard**, **Stanford**, **Berkeley**, **University of San Francisco**, **University of Maine**, **George Washington School of Law**, and **Santa Clara University School of Law** clinics." … "**Chilling Effects** aims to help you understand the protections that the First Amendment and intellectual property laws give to your online activities."

77 Check with relevant state, county, and municipal governments; many cities require business licenses for those working from a home office. In California check www.CalGold.ca.gov.

78 Please see http://www.levenger.com/PAGETEMPLATES/PRODUCT/Product.asp?Params=Category=326-339|Level=2-3|PageID=5997 Or, search for Circa at www.levenger.com

Photograph

A Consultant should have a head shot (a.k.a. "mug shot") on hand in popular formats[79] to provide to others. For some target markets a Consultant needs to be wearing a suit. For others, casual is best. Have on hand both:

Have the JPEG files ready, others will ask for them from time to time. Do not send photographs in proprietary file formats unless specifically requested to do so.

Publications

Write articles and White Papers in areas of strong expertise. This will help the Consultant to learn and establish him/her as a thought leader.

As one example, one of the authors of this White Paper obtained a business appointment with a new contact in Europe. He introduced himself and presented a well written, well designed White Paper with more than a dozen Editorial Review Board members' names and affiliations listed on the cover sheet. The other person read the front cover carefully; and immediately said; "This gives you instant credibility".

Having written a book is an even stronger "badge" of professionalism. Of course, this will require a significant time investment and a Consultant should seek advice from authors, books, and publishers before committing to write and publish a book.

Web Site

A Consultant's web site represents his/her business to the world and deserves considerable effort. It is often the first place that a prospective Client will learn about a Consultant and his/her services. A Consultant plans to spend significant time, over time, on the website. Do not put it off and do not even think about having a one page web site or displaying "Under Construction."

Web site development not only requires technical ability but also an aptitude for design. These may not be core competencies for a specific Consultant. A Consultant needs to be honest with himself/herself in many ways. This is one of the cases where professional assistance may be a wise investment. A Consultant must seek to understand himself/herself and his/her abilities. Just because a Consultant can edit HTML does not mean he/she should design the web site. In this case, hire a professional if they can do it better than the Consultant can (and if the Consultant can afford it). After all, this is what a Consultant asks his/her own clients to do with the Consultant's services. Look at other Consultant's Web sites and ask them who designed the web site for them. Even if a Consultant is fully capable of developing his/her own web site, the Consultant should think through if he/she really wants to be responsible for web site design and maintenance. The Consultant might do some updates, but leave overall design to a professional web designer.

Plan to revise and update the web site frequently. As the Consultant evolves and becomes more experienced and professional, the Consultant will want his/her web site to reflect that. A web site that has new information added regularly is ranked higher by search engines.

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79 Have very small JPEG files (20-50 Kbit) for use (for example) within webinar services when you are a presenter and also higher resolution (1-5 MB) files for more typical uses.

A Consultant wants to know who visits the web site and what they do after they arrive. So, be sure to enable analytics on all web pages and use this information to make the web site more valuable to Clients and Prospects.

For added differentiation, a Consultant's web site should look unique, professional, and useful from a prospect's or Client's perspective.

Resources[80, 81, 82] See also Web Hosting immediately below.

Web Hosting/Domain Names/Email

A Consultant's web site needs to be hosted somewhere. Fortunately, this is a highly competitive business with many providers, options, low prices, and an abundance of features.

Some Consultants may desire to maintain their own servers. Given the competitive low costs and uptime guarantees available from many vendors this becomes a difficult decision to justify. If a Consultant's Web site goes down, and the Consultant loses key email to/from key clients; will his/her Clients think it was professional that the Consultant was maintaining his/her own servers?

Resources[83, 84] See also Web Site

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80 If a Consultant is going to develop his/her own site, then he/she has the following options; simple tool kits; "canned" web site builder applications provided by your hosting service or others; or, one of the sophisticated tool kits; perhaps Drupal (www.Drupal.org). Drupal is very powerful, open source, and with open source type documentation and support. This is a new form of installation experience for those who are used to using commercial products. http://learnbythedrop.com is one free source of information to help someone getting started with Drupal. You can search for videos on the web and at YouTube. Or one can write from scratch, by programming in raw HTML, PHP, Javascript, etc.

81 Use www.CaliforniaConsultants.org as a source and follow the links to appropriate web sites.

82 Google is one source of free analytics to monitor visitor behavior on a web site; however, most web hosting services offer free analytics services.

83 Web hosting services include www.hostmonster.com (as of this writing, a domain name, web host, and email forward cost about $60/year), http:///and www.1and1.com

84 www.hosting-review.com and also http://webhostinggeeks.com/ provide comparisons/ratings of web hosting alternatives. You may want to read the actual user reviews carefully as a part of considering these rankings

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