



The Lukaszewski Group

Management Consultants
In Communications

FINDING AND KEEPING CLIENTS:

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR BUILDING YOUR CONSULTING PRACTICE[©]

- *The Super Sales Kit*
- *Verbal Secrets to Successfully Sell Your Services*
- *Structuring the Successful Selling Presentation*
- *Moments of Truth*
- *The Perfect Consultant*
- *Finding and Keeping Clients*

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INTRODUCTION: WHY BELIEVE ME?

This monograph focuses on finding and keeping clients. Among the topics we cover are: how to get ready, qualifying prospects, marketing programs, and consultant checklists. We especially focus on what happens during that precious 45 minutes or so when you are actually making a presentation to the prospective client.

“So what?” you ask. “What qualifies you, Jim Lukaszewski?” My qualifications for proving this information stem from the fact that unlike most, our firm hires professional services of all kinds to assist in the execution of our work. We hire public affairs firms, advertising agencies, law firms, television production companies, special events coordinators, private security firms, and a host of other service providers, all of whom survive competitive presentations before being hired by us. Our standards are extremely high. We work at the highest levels in our client companies. There is virtually no margin for error.

The typical professional service business – whether it be an advertising or public relations agency, law firm, accounting firm, or computer hardware or software company – may never have the opportunity to

see a competitive presentation. Unlike most company executives responsible for sales, in our business (management consultants in communications) we have the luxury of frequently being both client and consultant. That means we frequently see presentations made by others and hire services based on selling presentations directed to us.

We have distilled here for you some of the things we've learned from our work and from our clients. The material is arranged in six sections:

- *The Super Sales Kit*
- *Verbal Secrets to Successfully Sell Your Services*
- *Structuring the Successful Selling Presentation*
- *Moments of Truth*
- *The Perfect Consultant*
- *Finding and Keeping Clients*

But first, Lukaszewski's *Golden Rule of Consulting*.

The Golden Rule of Consulting:

Do for your clients only what you would need or buy if you were the client.

PART I: THE SUPER SALES KIT

There is a powerful set of strategies recognized as key to building a vital consulting practice. These strategies have proven capability to reduce selling time and strengthen client retention. In order of priority, these strategies are:

1. Presentations: The public exhibition by you of your knowledge and skill.
2. Client referrals: The unsolicited action by an existing client, which brings prospects to you.
3. Collaboration: Work with others that enables them to recommend you.
4. Targeted visibility: Prospects produced through focused, continuous selling efforts directed at them.
5. The "in case we need you file": Materials about you and your product or service the prospect can collect and save for future reference.
6. The promotion plan: A structured month-by-month checklist and schedule of promotion and marketing actions.
7. Web site: A comprehensive, growing collection of critical information about you that clients and prospects can access at their convenience.

If you could design a toolbox and include the most critically important tools and techniques a consultant might use to implement these strategies, you would have a *Super Sales Kit*. It would have drawers, each containing a unique set of tools designed to build your practice:

First Drawer: Self-Packaging Tools (package yourself)

- Build a Web site that teaches others at their convenience.
- Develop and self-publish monographs on topics important to your clients and prospects.
- Partner with others better known than you are.
- Produce a highly focused newsletter carefully targeted (one page, one side).
- Provide audio and video demos of you.
- Publish short insightful, technically oriented articles.
- Transcribe and reprint meaningful presentations.

Second Drawer: Personal Showcase Tools (showcase yourself and what you know)

- Always provide unsolicited important suggestions as a part of any presentation.
- Be a guest editor or significant publication advisor.
- Contribute to someone else's newsletter.
- Convince appropriate major trade and professional associations to offer your seminars.
- Offer to do seminars inside your target companies.
- Seek presentation opportunities before trade and professional association special interest groups or sections.

Third Drawer: Audience Generating Tools (invent useful, simple ways to get before important audiences of all sizes)

- Help your prospects develop audiences to see and hear you.
- Keep most presentations to an hour or less.
- Structure presentations to generate questions whose answers showcase what you know.
- Stage previews on topics of interest to prospects and current clients.
- Use teleconferencing to reach geographically remote prospects.
- Use teleconferencing to reach large audiences within an organization simultaneously.
- Work the venue where you want to be – local, regional, national, or global.

Fourth Drawer: Sales Planning Tools (organize your selling plan, and work the plan)

- Ask every current client to suggest possible new clients.
- Call five-to-ten prospects each day.
- Make follow-up calls to five prospects each day.
- Sell constantly, relentlessly, incrementally.
- Target individuals and contacts.
- Target key businesses.
- Target key industries.
- Target key markets.
- Target potential partners.
- Work within industries to leverage your experience.
- Work within different industries to cross-leverage your experience.
- Work within existing client organizations to build your consulting base.

Fifth Drawer: Time Saving/Protection Tools (it's easy to be drawn into time-wasting tactics)

- Appear on panels with other experts only if you are the moderator or featured panelist.
- Do direct mail campaigns only when they are clearly in the interest of the recipient without them ever having to contact you.
- Join trade associations only where there is an opportunity to play a significant or visible role, which will lead to sales.
- Avoid spending too much time with small businesses or organizations that can't afford to buy anything now.
- Participate in non-profit activities only where there is sales potential, or for truly altruistic reasons.
- Don't provide unlimited "spec" work to clients in the hope of selling future business.
- Attend "how to sell" seminars only when someone you respect assures you that you can actually learn something.

Sixth Drawer: Re-energizing Personal Focus Tools (the *BE-ATTITUDES* for success)

- Be constructive: Make and solicit positive, constructive suggestions every day.
- Be helpful: If the other person can get what he/she wants with your help, that person will help you get what you want.
- Be outcome focused: Find positive lessons in every adverse situation; focus on the future and what you can achieve.
- Be positive: Teach others to use positive language and positive approaches.
- Be prompt: Do it now; ask it now; fix it now; answer it now.
- Be reflective: Examine the past only for positive, important lessons.
- Be relentless in seeking positive incremental improvement every day.

PART II: VERBAL SECRETS TO SUCCESSFULLY SELL YOUR SERVICES

The selling presentation, those precious few minutes when you are face-to-face with the prospect to get the business, is an exercise in excellent verbal skills. We begin at a point that may seem a little unusual, but our focus is always on how you get business, sometimes with important detours into related areas. We'll cover the topic in three areas:

- Seven verbal secrets.
- The most common mistakes in the selling presentation.
- The ideal presentation structure.

The seven elements of the ideal presentation – the presentation that most often wins the business – are included to ensure perspective. If you use these secrets, you will be more successful because your sales presentations will focus on the real concerns of your prospect.

Imagine that you are about to make your selling presentation. You've been through the beauty contest; you survived that. You've been through the subsequent process of developing a proposal and trying to determine what the client is really after, whether you have the resources and know how to do the work, and what you would do if you actually do win the business. But you are about to make your presentation and as you review your outline some very important verbal techniques come to mind, which you know will help you get the business.

Seven Verbal Secrets

1. **Structure and update.** Before you begin, find out if there is any new information that might affect your presentation. The specific questions you ask are, "Has anything changed since we last spoke?" "Are your goals the same?" "Have any new goals or objectives surfaced?"

The reason you go through this process is because often there are changes of a critical nature in the time that elapses between your invitation to present, receipt of the proposal request, and the selling presentation itself. Perhaps the most significant changes relate to where you fall in the list of presenters. You are at a distinct *disadvantage* if you are the first consultant to make a presentation. Each succeeding company has more information upon which to base their presentation as the prospect begins to more clearly perceive their real need.

If a great deal of time elapses between your presentation and the last presentation, you might ask the prospect if you can come back to present again, especially if there have been important changes in specifications or the prospect's needs and goals.

2. **Recommend** real ideas, concepts, goals, and tactics. Deal as quickly as possible with the administrative ways in which your company would handle the assignment (preferably forget these details altogether). Prospects are not interested in learning how your company runs or the names on your client list – unless this information is very relevant to their particular goals.

There are two reasons consultants waste prospect's time with administrative information. First, they fear having their project ideas stolen, so they don't give many away. Providing operating information becomes a way to fill the allotted presentation time. Or second, they don't have substantive ideas to offer and are hopeful that one or two will surface from the prospect during the presentation upon which they can expand and add concepts.

Bring your own ideas, but be ready to be responsive as well.

3. **Organize** your proposal with your prospect's goals in mind. Your sales presentation should address first the most critical need your prospect sees. Often, presentations bog down in discussions of rudimentary tactics to be assigned to junior staff. The presentation never gets to the big idea or the strategies the prospect wants to hear immediately.

Start with the most important issue facing the prospective client and how you would address it. If your ideas are appropriate, the technical detail will take care of itself in a side conversation later, *after* you've been hired.

4. **Leverage** off the prospect's existing experience and resources. Recognize just how much energy and talent the prospective client can provide in executing the project. Clients generally want ideas, concepts, and criticism they are unable to generate internally in a timely manner, not an army to take over their entire operation. This means you must clearly communicate that you'll be providing the most valuable services and advice.
5. **Focus** on closing the sale. Go for the "*Magic Two Minutes*." The *Magic Two Minutes* is that time in every selling situation in which the stars are in alignment, your gut feels good, the prospect seems to be opening up, and you feel the real rush to the completion of the deal. Even if you have been selling the prospect for two or three years, all selling situations are focused toward getting to this *Magic Two Minutes* when the deal is really made and the sale occurs. Here are four tips to moving to the *Magic Two Minutes*:
 - Be enthusiastic about doing the work.
 - Talk in terms of positive, specific, meaningful project outcomes.
 - Ask for the order by asking the prospect to hire you.
 - Persuade through action getting solutions.
6. **Reveal** key parts of your approach early in the presentation. Share your strategy. If your idea isn't good enough, holding it until the end of your presentation or not sharing much of it will not help you win. From the prospect's point of view most presentations are lost on the basis of chemistry between individuals and the ideas they share. Although it is possible to sell an idea that's not successful or workable from the prospect's perspective, the relationship will not last, and we are, after all, in the relationship building business.

Be forthcoming and ask for the prospect's reaction to your approaches *as the presentation proceeds*.

7. **Sell** your unique capability to do the job. Too often consultants spend most of their time talking about their list of capabilities – the entire list. This is a subject that will bore even you.

The truth is the prospect cares only about how you can bring credible help to the problem at hand. Helping the prospect understand your full range of capabilities is a job for your ongoing marketing and selling program once the prospect becomes your client.

If you go into a hardware store to buy a pair of pliers, it doesn't matter how exciting the color television demonstration is, a color TV will not help fix your leaky sink. Trust the client. Clients know whether they need pliers or a color TV. Put yourself in the prospect's shoes. If you don't, you'll lose.

The question most often asked when the issue of capabilities arises is, "How will the president of the prospective organization know our capabilities if we don't talk about them?" The answer is that the president doesn't give one whit about your capabilities. That's what the vice president of marketing, or advertising, or MIS, or finance was hired for – to find you and get the job done.

If the president wants to thoroughly understand marketing or advertising or computer science or accounting, he or she probably wouldn't be hiring you in the first place. Focus on the prospect's primary needs. The truth is the prospect will never know about all the services you could possibly provide. If you try to sell each and every service, you will only lose.

Presumably you have unique individuals, unique talents, and unique resources to achieve the objective the prospect is seeking. If you focus on matching them, you will be successful a reasonable percentage of the time.

The Most Common Mistakes in the Selling Presentation

There are a variety of selling and presentational mistakes that cause confusion and frustration and kill the chemistry so critical to successfully getting to the winning two minutes. You will lose when you:

1. ***Sell capabilities rather than solutions.*** If you spend time talking about all of the things you can do, the talents of your people, or your reputation in the marketplace rather than focusing on the specific needs of the prospect, you will not be successful often.

Clients care about solving their problems, not about all of your capabilities. The assumption is that you made it to the presentation stage because the client had a sense that you had the capability to do the job. Talking about capabilities simply wastes their time and yours. Leave the capability brochures behind and focus on a very brief and highly focused presentation.

2. ***Sell people who aren't there.*** All clients know that the principals show up to do the selling and that the underlings show up on Monday to do the work. Even if you use principals to sell, bring the workers along. Introduce them and give them a meaningful part in the presentation. Let the client question them as a part of the presentation process. If you're selling bait and switch, it will not be a good basis for a long-term relationship.
3. ***Are dull and unenthusiastic.*** Nine out of 10 presentations we view are lifeless, boring recitations of capabilities and the dropping of irrelevant names. If you're not interested in doing my work, I'm not interested in hiring you to do it.
4. ***Talk in generalities.*** This may be the most grievous problem of all. It appears to the client that you are unwilling to be specific about the kinds of things you would do to solve the problem at hand. Sales presentations often dance around the central issues, wasting time and disillusioning the prospect. Speaking in generalities causes the prospect to doubt that you can

focus on the work, or worse, to assume that you don't know what the problem is or how to do the work. You may get the question, "Is this the first time you'll be doing this?" – not exactly a confidence builder, either when it gets asked or has to be answered.

5. **Lecture.** Even though prospects have problems that need help and assistance, that doesn't mean that we're the world's experts on all of their problems and issues. Stay lively, confident, specific, and enthusiastic, and assume that the prospect has some basic intelligence to manage its own life and affairs.
6. **Sweat** (especially when fees and costs are mentioned). Prospects do notice that those making sales presentations sweat when asked about project costs. Every company should not only be prepared to talk about fees and charges, but be prepared to bring up the subject in the presentation. A very destructive tension develops quickly when it's clear that fees are not being addressed candidly.
7. **Ad-lib.** We've witnessed many presentations, some from firms in the business for many years, where the principals appear to have had virtually nothing in the way of conversation about the prospect's problem and seem to be inventing their presentation on the spot. If you can't get it together as a company and new business presenter, how can the prospect be sure that you can organize, manage, and resolve its problem without a lot of sloppy and expensive work?

The Ideal Presentation Structure

If we could recast the selling presentations we routinely see with the attributes that would make them winners, more enjoyable, and more beneficial to both the presenter and the prospect, these are the elements we would build in.

1. **A good pace.** Keep the ideas moving. If you've been given 45 minutes, finish in 35 and allow 10 minutes for questions and answers. You'll surprise everyone. If the prospect doesn't have good questions, bring at least three of your own . . . and don't forget to bring the answers along too.
2. **Cover the prospect's needs first.** While it may seem redundant, you are there to solve the prospect's problems, not to demonstrate your prowess and abilities to be all things to all potential clients. Focus on the prospect's needs.
3. **Foster spontaneous chemistry between the prospect and those who will do the work.** Work at interaction between the prospective organization and the members of your staff. Set up situations and questions that force interaction. The spontaneity of your presentation team will increase in direct proportion to your ability to rehearse your selling stories, anecdotes, specific points, and topics.

It's often observed that spontaneous interaction between members of the presentation team gives the prospect confidence in the team's ability to be effective. True. The problem with most spontaneity between sales presenters is that it's done on the spot without rehearsal. Everyone is hearing ideas and concepts for the very first time – the presenters and the prospects – and embarrassing situations and disagreements can occur. We believe in extraordinary and effective spontaneity . . . provided it is intensively rehearsed ahead of time.

4. **Follow a focused outline.** We also recommend listing times next to the topics – 10 minutes for the introduction of your team and company description, five minutes for your key idea, 15 minutes for strategy development and client options, 10 minutes for Q&A. Put the actual

times down so that everyone can watch and stick to it. Nothing is more impressive than a well-organized presentation that follows a focused outline . . . and stays on time.

5. **Use relevant and timely examples.** It's best to use examples that are closely related to the company's possible or real experience. If you have an example that is more than a year old, unless it's exceptionally good, use a hypothetical example. The same holds true if you don't have any direct prior experience in the kind of work you're being asked to pitch. Use a hypothetical situation and talk in specific terms about the strategies and decision-making techniques you will use to solve the prospect's real problem.
6. **Visualize success and forecast vulnerabilities.** All relationships and projects have problems from time-to-time. The time to talk about those problems is during the presentation. Forecast the rough spots and determine how they will be handled. That way no one is surprised and your relationship will grow, not be destroyed.
7. **Lead the prospect to the only natural conclusion . . . hiring you.** Focus on moving toward the *Magic Two Minutes*. Ask for the order. Talk in terms that reflect that you're already working together on the project. Use terms of ownership such as "we" and "our work together."

Once you have made it through the preliminaries to the finals to make your pitch, there is one overriding lesson we can offer from our years of making and evaluating sales presentations: The organization that can present ideas that truly reflect the prospect's point of view, issues, needs, and concerns will win more than its share of the sales presentations in which it participates.

PART III: STRUCTURING THE SUCCESSFUL SELLING PRESENTATION

How do you plan your selling approach? The process involves the first five steps listed below. These steps address the issues we all wrestle with and try to resolve before the selling presentation is made. It's also an excellent rehearsal outline for some of the most difficult parts of the interview.

1. Conquering the grand delusions of selling.
2. Five great realities of successful selling.
3. Surviving the seven killer questions, which can be asked during selling presentations.
4. Fast tracking to the *Magic Two Minutes* needed to close the sale.
5. Teaching clients how to buy your services.
6. 27 questions consultants ought to ask themselves before planning a presentation

The sixth step is a key part of the process, but one that many selling teams find they address only after they discover they are not finalists or did not get the business.

Conquering the Grand Delusions

There is a lot of foolishness out there about how to sell services successfully. Much of it arises from inexperience at selling, lack of comparison with other sales presentations, and unwillingness to put ourselves in the customer's shoes. We arrive at the presentation fully intent on spending most of the time talking about ourselves – a topic about which the prospective client cares nothing.

The consultants we advise consistently tell me that when they restructure their presentations to focus on the prospect's point of view, almost totally eliminating talk about their own capabilities, they win more

business. Doesn't this make extraordinarily good sense? After all, if you have been asked to make a selling presentation, you have to assume that the prospect has accepted your capabilities and believes you can do the job. Now it's up to you to sell the prospect on what it is you are going to do, how you are going to do it, and why they should select you to get their tasks accomplished. Talk from the prospect's point of view.

The analysis below contrasts the most flagrant misperceptions about how prospects make buying decisions during sales presentations. I call them the *Grand Delusions of Selling Creative Services*.

Grand Delusions of Selling Creative Services

<i>Delusion:</i>	<i>Reality:</i>
1. If we don't present a total picture of our capabilities, the prospect may not know we can do other things or them.	1. Prospects don't care beyond what they need to solve their current problems.
2. When we don't present a total picture of our capabilities, if they don't hire us for this job they may not think of us for job number two.	2. Prospects buy today what they need today. They virtually never buy for the future, and they buy for only one problem at a time. You may do great special events, but if problem number one is toxic dumping, that's the only expertise the client cares about and will hire.
3. We really know better than the prospect what they need to do.	3. Prove it! Communicate what you know so that the prospect can recognize the benefit, or you won't be hired.
4. If we're too specific about our ideas, the prospect may steal them, and we will lose the business.	4. Prospects don't know your business. That's why they ask you to present. If they could do the work they are asking you to do, they wouldn't invite you to talk with them about it. They can steal an idea and use it without your help.
5. If we offer an idea that the prospect likes and can do themselves, they will probably not hire us to do it for them. So we won't offer too many ideas during the presentation.	5. Again, if they can already do what you suggest themselves, it's unlikely they will hire you to do it. And if you choose to be fairly general and non-specific during your presentation, they probably won't hire you because they won't think you can do much of anything.
6. We need to be cautious about fees because we could lose the business based on cost comparisons.	6. Prospects rarely make decisions based on cost alone. Instead, hiring decisions are based on chemistry, creativity, compatibility, and enthusiastic interest by the individuals who will ultimately do the work.

Five Great Realities of Successful Selling

Over the years as I've made purchasing decisions for professional services, I've attempted to analyze what I feel are the real reasons that these decisions get made. The result is what I call *The Great Realities of Successful Selling*. My notion here is that if consultants recognize why prospects really buy and what prospects really expect, they can be more successful, on the average, in their selling efforts.

1. Prospects know what they need. Let's say your family needs a refrigerator. You begin looking in the newspaper for refrigerator ads in April or May. Although you're likely to see lots of ads for lawnmowers and other spring-related garden products, you'll skip over those ads (no matter how many ads and bargains there are) because you have focused on searching for a refrigerator. The same is true for prospects. They will shop and shop until they find the product or service they want, no matter how good the price or how numerous the deals on other products and services.

Put another way, prospective clients will not buy what they do not need. Put yet another way, prospects only notice those capabilities that have a direct bearing on solving their current problem. They buy for today. They'll shop again for tomorrow.

2. Prospects expect consultants to provide:
 - Perspective based on a true understanding of their business and business problems.
 - Insight, the ability to compare the consultant's experience and apply it directly to the problems the prospect wishes solved now.
 - Options, the ability to provide more than one plan, more than one idea, more than one set of strategies from which the prospect can then select the most appropriate course of action, all of which you have a hand in developing.
 - Doable recommendations, but not recommendations and solutions that are either so simple that the prospect doesn't need a consultant to accomplish them or so unrealistic that they don't fit the prospect's corporate culture, capabilities, or current concerns.
3. Prospective clients appreciate top level commitment but also want to get to know and trust those who will do the work on a day-to-day basis. The lesson is that principals are welcome at presentations provided the troops who will actually do the work are there and play a valuable role as well. Consultants who bait and switch may win the business but don't retain clients.
4. Prospects will never truly know what you can do for them. It's a fact of life; get used to it. Most large companies use more than one consultant – sometimes many. It is unrealistic and probably foolish to attempt to lock up all the business from a very large concern. Find the chunk you do best, get your foot in the door, and start doing that work well. Then educate the new client on those processes and skills you have that might be of use in other areas.
5. Prospects expect unsolicited proposals and ideas because they expect that you will be learning their business as you work with them. If you ask for information, genuinely have an interest in the client's goals, objectives, problems, and concerns, your best new business will come from the unsolicited recommendations, suggestions, and programs you spot in the course of doing other work.

Surviving the Seven Killer Questions

The greatest fear during selling presentations is the *killer question*. There are very few killer questions, yet it's astounding to see consultants unprepared to answer them. Killer questions don't surprise you. They irritate, humiliate, or make you angry. When you hear them, you get a “clung” – that shot of

adrenaline that rips through your body and melts your guts like cream cheese down into your shoes. Be ready. Bring these questions up yourself and answer them. Save the prospect the potential embarrassment of having to ask them, hurt your feelings, or seem impolite. Prospective clients have a right to the answers; you have the obligation to be prepared.

1. ***Have you ever done this before?***

More prospective clients than ever before are asking this question directly. They assume that ethically you would not allow yourself to make a presentation without disclosing this up front. The prospect has the right to know. There are times, however, when the prospect will deliberately invite a presentation knowing that the consultant does not have the experience or background for the work.

2. ***Who else have you done it for?***

Logically, if your answer to #1 is yes the prospect is going to want to know who, how, when, and, most importantly, the results. This is the time when consultants like to waffle and say something like, "Well . . . not exactly, but back in 1993 we worked for XYZ Corporation doing something somewhat similar." Obviously, this answer is not a prospect confidence builder. Remember the secret of relevant, timely examples. If you don't have any relevant examples, develop scenarios you can achieve.

3. ***What if it doesn't work?***

So what? This is a problem if you have only one idea. This is like the fear of being asked a question about a narrow idea that the prospect may already have rejected. The answer is to always have a "Plan B," even a "Plan C" or "Plan D." Be prepared for the unanticipated consequence of an unsuccessful effort. You'll be able to better talk about that in the presentation.

4. ***Why should we select you?***

Well, why should they? Why do you want this particular work? There must be some unique reason why your consultancy is particularly appropriate for the work being pitched. Be prepared to discuss the two or three most important reasons the prospective client should hire you – from the prospect's perspective.

Here's a bonus secret – prospective clients want to hear:

- Specific experience;
- Unusually direct experience;
- Creative approaches; and
- Clear and direct solutions.

5. ***Why should we hire you rather than another consultant?***

It isn't, in my judgment, necessary to know your competition thoroughly. However, you ought to look around your marketplace and perhaps pick a very large consulting firm, a medium size one, and a very small one and determine why you should be hired instead of them. There is no reason for being unprepared to respond to this kind of comparative question. Your answer should reflect the insight, perception, and doability the prospect is looking for. If you can't answer the question, you may not have the other skills the prospect needs either.

A special warning: Stick to the positives. Prospects are reluctant to purchase on negative sales points. If you cut apart another consultant's talents or track record, it is likely that neither you nor the consultant you criticized will win the business. Clients want creativity without conflict.

6. *What are your weaknesses?*

Prospects ask it because they have been burned. They are accustomed to having consultants say they can do just about anything. Surely your company does not do everything. It may be an important credibility builder for you to talk about the two or three things that your consultancy does not do.

Caution: While it's true that prospects will never really know what you do, they will clearly and very directly remember what you do not do once you have told them. While disclaiming certain skills and abilities will build your credibility, it may also permanently foreclose you from ever doing that work for the client unless you very carefully go about the process of re-educating them once you have achieved these new capabilities.

The solution to the credibility dilemma is to have prearranged relationships with experts or other firms in those areas in which you are weak. Then you can say to the prospect, "Whenever we are called upon to work in an unfamiliar area such as _____, we call in XYZ Consulting Company or Mr. Super Prize Winning Expert." If you do that, you'll win.

7. *Will you teach our people what you know?*

Your answer should always be an absolute and enthusiastic, "Yes!" Why? Because clients are not consultants. Sure, you can share knowledge, you can share experience, you can share techniques, you can share attitudes, and you can share philosophies. But prospects hire consultants because consultants have unique and unusual skills that most corporate and other organizations simply are never able to capture or build. Never be threatened by teaching your clients what you know. After all, if you can teach a client what you know and they can turn around and do it, you don't deserve to continue the relationship unless you find another way to build value into your services beyond the level at which the client was able to take over. It is the right thing to do.

Fast Tracking the Magic Two Minutes Needed to Close the Sale

The real challenge is getting to the *Magic Two Minutes*. You have to get there! If you don't, you will never sell your services. Once there, you can close the sale. Survey after survey demonstrates that the prospect makes the final decision during your presentation, rarely afterwards.

The *Magic Two Minutes* is that very special time when you can feel that you and the prospect are mentally, emotionally, and ideologically melding, coming together in a wonderful rush of decision-making, in your favor.

The ingredients I find necessary to get to the *Magic Two Minutes* are these:

- **Enthusiasm.** If you haven't got it, you're not going to sell a thing. You have to genuinely like the prospect, like the product or service, hunger to solve the problem, and show it, feel it, express it.

- **Talk in terms of positive results.** The prospect wants to know what you can accomplish, how you are going to accomplish it, when you're going to accomplish it, and, most importantly, how you'll both recognize the results when achieved. If you can't talk about what the results are going to be, your prospect won't know that you know what they are trying to accomplish.
- **Ask them to hire you.** Raise the seven killer questions and answer them. Draw comparisons. Focus on your unique capabilities to get the work done and forget the rest. Focus your presentation on how you can accomplish the task at hand, and keep the prospect focused on hiring you.
- **Make the prospect write it down.** You do this through an interesting technique called packaging and bundling. Talk in terms of threes and fours and fives. For example: Talk about the three keys to successfully achieving their results, the four key strategies, the five most important tactics. When you package and bundle, the prospect will write down what you say. That means the prospect is focusing on your ideas, your concepts, and on you.
- **Help the prospect recognize that they need you to get the job done.** The combination of your unique ideas, can-do attitude, and relevant experience or innovative solutions will make it evident to the prospect that you must either be hired or be a finalist when it gets down to making the most important decision of all. The fact is you can feel when your presentation is this good. If it's a humdrum presentation, you probably will neither show, place, nor win.

Make it impossible for the prospect to say anything but yes to you.

Teaching Prospects How to Buy Your Services

I believe you can prepare prospects to buy from you. Here are some tips that can help achieve that objective:

1. **Offer to help the prospect make the decision** by sharing with them the consultant's expectations of a client.

Too often we assume that the prospective client knows our business enough to understand how we work best with clients and what the consultant/client relationship will be. Before the presentation, state in two or three key, simple, and positive ways how you build and maintain relationships with your clients.

2. **Give the prospect a checklist** to use for comparing consultant capabilities.

Even those prospective clients skilled at hiring consultants are looking for ways to make the process simpler, fairer, and successful. A simple, unbiased checklist may help. Naturally, they'll remember who prepared the checklist.

3. **Share with the prospect the mistakes that clients often make** when hiring consultants.

Remember to stay positive, phrasing your comments in terms of "things to avoid." It isn't hard to think about the kinds of mistakes clients make. Here, again, pick just three or four. You'd be surprised how helpful that is to the prospect's thinking process.

4. **Talk to the prospect about how to get the most** out of a consultant's work.

Show your prospect how to best utilize the capabilities, talents, and energy within your consultancy. Make a checklist. Give it to the prospective client. Show how you monitor the quality of the consultant/client relationship as well as the product.

5. *Offer to train the prospect's people.*

Some consultants dread this thought, yet this is one of the most important things I can offer the prospect. Why? Because I know that clients cannot do what I do as well as I do it. Nor do I believe they can do things as well as you can do them. And, the fact is, if they can, why do they want to hire you anyway? Once they find out that they don't need you, they won't hire you. Sell the real value you bring to the relationship, not those things that any technically competent client can do.

6. *Ask what it will take to close the deal.*

Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is to tell you the story of one of my first really big sale, well over \$100,000.

Some years ago after nearly three years of selling, Minnesota-based 3M Company decided to purchase a major consulting and coaching program from me. After all that time and effort in building the relationship I was curious about why 3M finally made the decision to buy. So, on the day we got together to sign the deal I asked, "Why us and why now?"

The answer is a classic illustration of one of the most important points in selling: clients *always know why they buy*. In this situation, without batting an eyelash, 3M's Will Sullivan said, "There are seven reasons why we're hiring you for this long-term project."

- Persistence: You called on us consistently – virtually every month – for more than three years, even when you knew we had no budget.
- Perspective: Instead of simply imposing something that would neither fit the company culture nor mesh with company goals, you came to understand our business and its needs.
- Top Level Commitment: Your principals and certain key account people were committed to working directly with 3M, hands-on. You created good relationships.
- Adaptability: Over time, as we got to know you and you got to know 3M *via* the selling process. You were able to develop a variety of technical and intellectual approaches that were appropriate to 3M's needs and culture.
- Entrepreneurship: You took some risk to get the business by committing to demonstrations and a trial coaching session, which allowed our toughest internal critics to sample the product and cast their vote. In one instance, you were willing to gamble three years of sales work on a single day's tryout.
- Directness: Your proposals, nearly a dozen over the three years, seemed to increasingly reflect and be designed to fit 3M's needs and objectives. The proposals were far more than slightly customized versions of the standard jargon suitable for any prospective client.
- People: Those delivering the services, not your company, were the focus of your proposals. 3M buys people and their skills. Yes, the structure and strength of your organization played into our decision, but the people working with us were the powerful deciding factor.

Clients always purchase consultant services intentionally. They know why they purchase from one consultant over another. Often the reasons are surprisingly simple. Most of the time it boils down to liking you because the distinct impression they get is that you like them and will invest time, effort, and energy in their problems.

27 Questions Consultants Ought to Ask Before Planning a Presentation

There are some all too obvious but never anticipated questions and issues that nag at us, especially while we are making a selling presentation – the questions we wish we had thought through as we put the presentation together and rehearsed it, if indeed we did any rehearsal at all.

The 27 questions that follow were taken from those asked of me during and following the seminars I do primarily for public relations firms, advertising agencies, and law firms about successfully selling professional services. You'll find that many are extremely practical while some seem so obvious that you might ask why someone would even ask them. But, they are the questions the selling team always ponders *after* they find out that they were not a finalist or did not get the business.

My suggestion is that you write down other questions that occur to you as you read the 27 below. Then make your new questions a part of your presentation planning checklist. Be sure that you address and answer them.

By the way, I find this exercise helpful for another reason. Once a presentation is made, if there are points you should have made but didn't, questions you answered poorly but can now improve, or if better examples have now come to mind (which your brain refused to release to you during the presentation), instead of sending a wasted thank you note it's often very helpful to send the prospect a business-like document that shares questions that weren't asked but should have been along with your answers together with the questions you answered poorly but can now answer better. It's surprising how this small extra effort can make a powerfully positive impression on a prospective client.

1. *How can we keep from being considered just another consultant?*

Remember, prospects want to hear:

- Specific experience;
- Unusually direct experience;
- Creative approaches; and
- Clear and direct solutions.

If you can deliver these, you're setting yourself apart from others.

2. *How do we keep from giving too much information?*

If you're being specific to the prospect's needs and goals, you won't be giving too much information. You'll be giving just enough for the prospect to say yes to you. Besides, if the prospective client discovers that they can do the work, they're not going to hire an outside consultant to do it.

3. *How much should we spend on presentation graphics and technology?*

A tough call. Most smaller consultancies spend virtually nothing on graphics and do it on talent alone. It may be that in environments where the really big consulting firms are going head-to-head, they will pull out all the stops and spend a great deal on their presentation. But

time and time again we've seen terrific graphics defeated by a good idea presented extremely well verbally.

Sometimes prospects will invest in creative approaches . . . ask first.

4. *How do you find out what the prospect really wants?*

Call the prospect and request a pre-presentation meeting. Directly ask what they are looking for and what they hope to accomplish. Also ask the prospect what they may be looking for that was not included in the request for proposal process. Finally, just before making your presentation, remember that one of the first things you want to do is to ask the prospect whether or not there have been any changes in direction or assumptions between the time of the request for proposal and your presentation. Be ready to adapt and shift.

5. *How much should we invest in the presentation?*

The greatest investment you need to make in a presentation is time for presenter rehearsal and other "get-ready" techniques. Invest in a presentation technique that involves the prospect. Invest time up front to get a better idea of what it will take to close the business. Invest in trying to find out what the prospect is trying to accomplish. You have to ask yourself, "How much do I really want to work for this prospect?" The more it is, the more time, effort, energy, and perhaps money you need to be willing to invest in making the best possible presentation. If it's an extremely important presentation to your consultancy, you may wish to obtain the services of a knowledgeable presentational coach who sees many different kinds of sales presentations to get an outside opinion and suggestions for improvement.

6. *How do we ask for the order?*

Simple, ask to do the work each time you've demonstrated an idea, example, or solution that you know fits the goals and objectives the prospect has in mind. Ask, using open-ended questions, for feedback. Use questions like: "How would this track in your division?" "Can this make sense within your operating structure?" "When could this work best for you?"

Also talk in terms of already working for them. Use words like "we" and "ours." Language of ownership is important.

7. *How much do we talk about ourselves?*

Very little. The more you talk about yourself, the less you're talking about the prospect's interests. The less you talk about what the prospect is interested in, the less the prospect will be able to recognize if you can do their work. You'll not be hired.

8. *How do we position ourselves against other consultants?*

Forget the other consultants. It's my experience that you are never competing against other consultants. Rather, you're always competing against other better ideas. Position yourself to have the best, most achievable, creative, enthusiastic ideas and your chances of winning go up dramatically – even against the big guys.

9. *How do we keep from getting trapped in a corner by giving away our best idea?*

If you have a *Plan B*, *Plan C*, and *Plan D*, it's difficult to be trapped. *It may turn out that your prospect likes their own idea better than your best idea anyway.* A consultant with only one idea isn't worth hiring anyway, unless the idea is spectacular. Telephone directory ads still use the slogan, "Let your fingers do the walking." Prospects recognize really good ideas and are willing to pay for them.

10. How do we find out who the competition is?

Trying to discover who the competition is may be interesting, but frankly is largely a waste of time. Focus on how you're going to creatively solve the prospect's problem. You're competing against ideas and concepts rather than other organizations.

11. How do we find out how much the client is going to spend?

Ask. Ideally, if a prospect isn't forthcoming on a budget, take a hike. Why should you make a serious presentation? It is pure and simple game playing, and they may be hiring on a low bid basis. Prospects that play games with budgets will play games with your ideas and with you. No one is happy as a result and you won't keep the business long.

Realistically, when you can't get the budget and you still want to make a presentation, divide your proposals into two or three tiers at different bulk budget levels. Then ask open-ended questions to get a better sense from the prospect's review team of what their budget sensitivities happen to be. Show a range.

12. Should the people who do the presentation do the client's work?

Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. The people who are going to do the work should do the lion's share of the presentation to the prospect. Besides, how else are you going to teach junior people in your organization to sell effectively unless they can make presentations before a prospect – risking real business in the process . . . and winning!

13. How many should there be in the presentation?

Bring only the number necessary to win the business. If that is one person, do a solo presentation. If you outnumber the prospect, during the presentation everyone you bring better have a specific, concrete job to do and something creative to contribute to the conversation. But what's really important is appropriate rehearsal.

For every person you add to your presentation team, you need at least another hour of rehearsal to make sure that everyone on the presentation team knows what they will say, when they will say it, how they will say it, and how the presentation will be orchestrated. The more people you bring, the less likely it is that the prospect will be able to keep track of your activities, your creativity, and make a decision in your favor.

14. Do you talk to the prospect's other consultants?

If you know them well, give it a shot. Research about the prospect is important. Other consultants may be able to give you good intelligence. However, in my experience, consultants do not share insights about clients with other consultants. The vantage point is different, the experience is different, and it may not be ethical.

15. What about conflicts of interest?

The principal conflict of interest in new business presentations is presenting to a competitor without letting your existing client know you're doing it. This is a conflict and a problem only your current client can resolve by giving you permission to make such a presentation. If you are approached to make a presentation by a competing interest, you have the obligation to disclose that to your present client and to get their permission to continue the conversation.

16. How do you handle compensation issues?

Directly and in a way that does not burden the client with unnecessary detail. Talk in terms of daily rates and total cost for elements of the project. Combine the numbers. Individual hourly rates are not really important to the client unless you make them important.

17. What about the one-person shop?

Being a one-person shop is often more advantageous in new business presentations. Why? Because the sole practitioner has total flexibility. He or she can bring in outside experts, call upon other consultants, and work at the highest levels of an organization with total confidence and confidentiality. He or she has the ultimate in proposal opportunity. Keep it simple, direct, positive, and in the prospect's interest and you can beat everything from the two-person shop to the mega-consultancy with worldwide offices.

18. How much audiovisual in the presentation?

Preferably none. You are the most important visual. Keep other A/V to a minimum unless you can demonstrate your idea or concept dramatically with ultimate convinceability to win the business. Visuals do tend to over-promise. Better make sure you're not setting up false expectations that you can't possibly deliver on later.

But for most of us, visuals well produced generally outshine the presenter. That makes your visuals more memorable than you. Prospects know they can't purchase visuals. They have to purchase individuals to do the work. Show the prospect what you can do and how you can think.

19. How do we handle underbidding and price competition?

Bid your prices and your people and let the chips fall where they may. Consultants who cut prices do not believe in the quality of their work and will be unable to raise prices easily.

20. How do you sell effectively against the "big guys?"

See #17.

21. What if you don't have specific experience for the task to be accomplished?

Be as specific as you can be about solving the prospect's problems. Make certain your prospect knows of your lack of specific experience before you go into the presentation. The prospect should also be prepared to hear specific examples of timely and relevant related work as well as one or two scenarios related to their issue or problem and how you would handle those scenarios.

22. How do you keep from competing with the prospect's internal staff?

Train. Train. Train. Share information. Be open. Be committed to building client staff skills, knowledge, and abilities. The staff will fight for you because they really do need you.

23. How do you sell the inexperienced prospect?

See "Teaching Prospects How to Buy Your Services" on page 15 of this monograph.

24. How do you sell the cynical prospect?

Do you really want to? Sell the positives. Sell reality. Sell solutions. But, be ready for disappointment. If they are a cynical prospect, believe me, they will only become a cynical client. You may want to skip this kind of presentation altogether.

25. How much work should we do on speculation?

We all do some. Minimize it. Prospects don't care and don't notice. It doesn't govern their actions or obligate them to anything. Still, this is an individual decision made on a prospect-by-prospect, issue-by-issue basis.

26. What do you do when the competition is unfair?

It only hurts if they win. Unless you can point out the unfairness in a way that will show damage to the prospect should they hire based on the unfair presentation or action, stick to your own goals and objectives and rise or fall on those results. There are some aspects of life that are simply and inexplicably unfair. Selling just happens to be one of them.

27. Why can't we win them all?

If you figure out how to win every piece of new business, call me.

PART IV: MOMENTS OF TRUTH – DEFINING INSTANCES THAT CREATE SUCCESSFUL SELLING PRESENTATIONS

The actual sale of a product or service takes place during an extremely brief period – probably less than two minutes long – when the customer and the sales representative seem to move into a "perfect alignment" of chemistry, information, and mutual mission, no matter how much time is spent talking, confronting, interacting, and counseling with customers. It is the ultimate "*Moment of Truth*" when the client knows there is only one decision, and that is to say "yes."

The more complex and less easily quantified the product or service or the larger the prospect organization or sale, the longer it will take to reach this "*Magic Two Minutes*" and for ultimate *Moment of Truth* to occur. Sometimes years of patient, useful, and purposeful contact are required (remember the 3M story).

- Why does it sometimes take years for this *Magic Two Minutes* to occur?
- Can we speed up the process, and if so, how?
- Can we make the two minutes happen every time? Why not?

As I analyze the selling presentations of service businesses (accountants, architects, law firms, advertising, and public relations as well as independent consultants), the most powerful way to increase the sales batting average is to solve the communication problems caused by sales presentations. Study of the anatomy of successful and failed sales presentations reveals "success elements" that enhance communication and accelerate both the acceptance process and the buying decision. I have come to call these success elements in selling presentations *Moments of Truth*.

The goal of the successful sales presentation is to force the seller and the buyer to experience as many *Moments of Truth* as are necessary for both to come to the only conclusion possible – that each must work with the other.

Before we look at the most important *Moment of Truth*, there is one big selling reality to be addressed – "selling block syndrome." The fact is most people do not like to sell, can't sell, and won't sell. They have a selling block. In my experience, these people cannot be made to sell. If you try to make them sell, they become unproductive or simply quit. More than likely, they'll do both. Let's digress for just a moment.

Yes, I know, it's surprising. People who can't seem to sell in your organization leave, go out on their own, and make a living or go to work and sell for someone else. It is a mystery. I have yet to hear a satisfactory explanation for why this happens. Maybe my mother-in-law Ruth Beckman's observation is the best explanation. She said, "Necessity . . . is often a great mother." Successful sales are made primarily by people who want to sell or who must sell. So, focus on those in your organization who can and want to sell. Build their skills. Continue to improve your own sales presentation skills too. It's a

tough, competitive world and getting tougher. There is always someone else out there who does what you do, often times better.

Successful salespeople boost their batting averages by building power and unique *Moments of Truth* into their sales presentations. Once you learn how to recognize these *Moments of Truth*, use them, and plan them into your sales presentation, you'll see why they are a powerful force in getting the business. As you watch them work you can feel each *Moment of Truth* as it happens. That's when the mention of specific facts, tactics, or ideas causes the prospective client to react verbally or emotionally or both. You can see it, hear it, and feel it.

Moments of Truth happen on purpose. You plan them throughout your preparation process. They most often occur during moments when you exhibit great feeling and enthusiasm for the customer, the issue, or the problem. When your care about the prospect shows, they notice. Wanting the work isn't enough. Sounding hungry only makes you look unsuccessful and desperate. Desperate people only get desperate work.

Moments of Truth happen only when you put yourself in the customer's shoes and look at their issues with fresh insight through their eyes. The more *Moments of Truth* your sales presentation has the more likely it is that the *Magic Two Minutes* will happen, and the time to get to those *Magic Two Minutes* will be reduced substantially.

Here are 15 *Moments of Truth* you can build into your sales presentations. It is possible to build every single one. But, remember, the goal is to build into the sales presentation only as many as you need to get to the *Magic Two Minutes* quickly.

1. **Communications Objectives:** The language you use to communicate with the prospect. Each objective is made up of two important parts: Plain language statements that describe exactly what it is you're trying to accomplish for the prospect, usually in 75 to 150 words (30 to 60 seconds speaking time); and two or three specific messages for each plain language statement, which are key points, issues, or topics you use to illustrate and explain your goals (30-60 seconds speaking time, too).

Communications objectives keep you scripted and focused on your goal – getting to the next *Moment of Truth*.

2. **Bundled Information:** Important selling points grouped in numbered clumps. "The three important reasons why your product should be launched before next September are . . . , " or "It takes just seven quick steps to purchase this product . . . , " or "This issue can be broken down into its two major components"

The technique of bundling information forces listeners to clear their minds of distractions and count each of the points you are trying to make. It's a powerful concentration builder and aid for helping the customer focus on your proposition and remember important selling and usage information. If you use this technique, be prepared to watch your prospects write down what you say! (If you're smart you'll provide them with an outline of your presentation with space to take notes.)

If you can get prospective clients to write down what you say, you are training them to buy from you. When they write it down, it is a *Moment of Truth*.

3. **No Negative Words:** Salespeople can be negative. Transcripts of sales presentations demonstrate that more than half of each sales encounter is consumed in explanations using

negative words. The most common negative messages relate to denying a competitor's claim, defending negative information about our own product, or the customer's negative notions about what we are trying to sell, or just being defensive.

When sales presentations are negative, they are defensive. Eliminating negative words eliminates defensiveness. Translating negative issues, ideas, and problems into creative opportunities can create *Moments of Truth*. Besides, it is impossible to be positive and defensive at the same time. Defensive people do not show enthusiasm and energy. All of which is to say that one of the oldest lessons in selling is still true, the positive person is the most powerful and persuasive salesperson.

4. **Construct Your Sales Message in a Pyramid:** Simply stated, always put your communications objective, message, or *Moment of Truth* first. Then, support the communications objective with an appropriate amount of additional information and detailed messages. Most of us, out of ignorance, fear, poor training, or arrogance begin our presentations with elaborate detail and those issues and tactics we like best or that have our interest. Want to win? Succinctly state your communications objective or message up front, and stay on track.

If part of your presentation begins, ". . . back in 1924 when we first began selling this product . . . ," or "Let's talk in some detail about the project we're about to undertake . . . ," double check to make sure that you're not just wasting time talking either around the points you want to make or providing information that is important only to you and your organization. Few clients live history. It's their future they want you to change.

Good selling presentations are brief, specific, to the point, and generate good questions for you to answer as a result of your presentation. If your sales presentation looks like an inverted pyramid with lots of unnecessary "educational" information first, the customer will have difficulty following the direction of your presentation and you may well fail.

You can feel when your presentation is hitting home. There is a positive reaction, good non-verbal signals, and mutual *Moments of Truth*.

Corollary: Always use the *Concept of Complete Communication*.

If your presentation is effectively reaching the customer or prospective client, they are spending substantial time thinking about how they are going to work with you, how you are going to solve their problems, or how they're going to implement what you suggest. This means that frequently during the successful presentation, the customer is really not listening. The *Concept of Complete Communication* stated another way means to make certain that your major messages and major communications objectives are mentioned two-to-three times during each selling presentation. In other words, tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them again. The repetition is important because the more successful the presentation, the more likely it is that the customer is only listening selectively. Although it seems obvious, the prospect who is not listening may not know exactly what is being sold. That could mean trouble later.

Moments of Truth can be repeated to reinforce the selling objective.

5. **Tell Stories:** Good salespeople are good storytellers. Why? Because stories are perhaps the single most powerful method people use to communicate and understand each other. Stories facilitate understanding, acceptance, and, most importantly, recognition from the customer's perspective of what it is you're trying to get across.

Stories always lead to *Moments of Truth*.

Stories are effective communications tools because they:

- Have beginnings, middles, and endings, which everyone can easily recognize.
- Present information in logical order (we don't tell a joke's punch line first for a very good reason).
- Contain only essential information, that which is needed to clearly understand circumstances and focus on the ultimate goal of the story.
- Use non-technical positive language.
- Are about people or are people oriented.
- Create many excellent mental pictures.
- Rarely contain negative language.
- Put people at ease and reduce confrontation.
- Most important of all, have a point, a moral, a message, a lesson, or objective for being told – a *Moment of Truth*, which the listener recognizes.

It's often said that one picture is worth 1,000 words. Stories create many mental pictures. Stories are powerful because a good story is worth 10,000 pictures – vast amounts of information conveyed in very brief periods of time. Stories can create *Moments of Truth*. Successful salespeople tell stories constantly because they understand how people learn and that good stories hyper-communicate.

6. ***Build Your Sales Presentation Around People:*** Describe how people use your service or product and how it helps people. Talk about successful applications and the rewards for its use by using as examples the actions and reactions of people who will benefit or change.

"This product will work for your employees because . . . ," or "Let's talk about how your engineers can easily do this because" Talk like you are a member of the organization. The *Moment of Truth* comes when the prospective client says, "I like this person; I can work with this person; I want to work with this person." Sold.

7. ***Talk Benefits Rather than Features:*** A feature is something you and your company care about. A benefit is something your customer or the ultimate user of your product or service cares about.

- Sixty-seven years in business is a feature.
- Winning an award is a feature.
- A home office in all 50 states is a feature.
- Two people each with 15 years experience in solving the client's problem is a benefit.
- Recognition by the federal EPA for competent handling of a similar situation for another client is a benefit.
- Putting qualified people in key offices is a benefit.

Salespeople, by focusing on features, show they don't care about their customers. Customers notice, and they don't buy.

The simplest way to force yourself to talk in terms of customer benefits is to constantly put yourself in the customer's shoes. Stop making foolish and unreasonable assumptions about how the customer's business operates or could be changed by the product or service you're offering. Be realistic. Look at yourself and what you propose through your customer's eyes

and working environment. You'll make a much more realistic and successful selling presentation.

8. **Use Power Words Rather than Color Words:** Power words add value without distortion to the product you are selling. Effective power words are "new," "unique," "different," "interesting," "powerful," "unusual," "energized," "useful," "value," "critical," and "urgent." When you use these words during sales presentations you notice immediate, positive reactions from your prospect. When you say something is important – the customer listens more carefully. If you say something is urgent – the customer pays attention. You can use these words over and over provided you present information that is urgent, or unusual, or interesting, etc. The more you use power words, the more closely the customer pays attention to your sales presentation.

Every *Moment of Truth* you create for the prospect, product, service, or problem creates one for yourself.

Color words, on the other hand, are words like "angry," "blame," "dangerous," "explosive," "ugly," "irritating," words that create mental images in your audience. The difficulty with color words is that you never quite control the perception of the person hearing them. Often, these words have a much different effect than you anticipate. Because they create mental pictures, the customer is distracted for a time and not listening to you. This distraction is not productive. Stick to power words. They add value to what you're talking about without adding uncontrollable images and distractions.

Power words force *Moments of Truth*. If you have a sense of urgency, recognize the importance, value, uniqueness, and power of the client's needs and ideas, you are going to sell that prospect. Besides, who wants to talk to somebody who bad-mouths, blames, angers, or irritates?

9. **Use Non-technical Language:** The use of professional jargon is one of the greatest contributors to selling failure. If you are an accountant, lawyer, physician, engineer, or individual in a technical field, the feeling is that you must use the jargon of your business especially when you sell. Every business or industry does have its insider language. But when you are selling, be careful about using the prospect's unfamiliar vocabulary and your own jargon, too. It's a recipe for confusion.

My experience is that the truly successful salesperson is the individual who can translate the most technical of subjects into non-technical, everyday language.

Salespeople sometimes use jargon because they think it will impress their audience. What they fail to realize is that often the audience doesn't necessarily understand what the jargon means. Jargon is used for three reasons, none of which, if you care about your prospects, is justified:

- Peer pressure – the need to use technical jargon, usually among your peers and associates, to sound as though you know something about their business;
- Pure pressure – the retreat to familiar technical language due to the pressure caused by the sales confrontation;
- Pure arrogance – the need to show off or to make it appear as though you are as knowledgeable as the professional upon whom you are calling is.

Studies of sales failures show that in 80 percent of the circumstances where a customer didn't buy, the negative buying decision was primarily the result of misunderstanding. Interestingly, other studies have shown that in up to 75 percent of the sales confrontations studied, the customer was never, at any time, asked to buy anything – using jargon, plain language, stories, benefits, or a direct question!

The client's basic question when listening to you is, "What are you going to do for me to solve the problem we're here to address?" Even if you are selling the most sophisticated equipment to the most sophisticated buyer, at some point when communication is critical you've got to get to plain language. Anytime you have to say "in other words . . ." skip the first part and go directly to the new plain language translation. Better yet, start with plain language. *Moments of Truth* occur in plain language.

10. **Use Examples:** Two of the most powerful words in any language are, "For example." No matter how dull, pedantic, unimaginative, or unimportant your sales presentation, I guarantee that your prospect will wake up for a few seconds whenever you say, "For example." They will pay attention, trust you in the hope that you will try to make it interesting. Examples have many of the same attributes as good stories, but they may be more specific to the customer's needs or situation. Use of examples forces you to talk in beneficial terms to the customer and keeps you from talking about yourself – a subject about which no one cares except you, least of all the customer.

Examples lay the groundwork for *Moments of Truth*.

11. **Summarize:** This is a lesson learned from the *Concept of Complete Communication*. Frequently review the important benefits of your product or service throughout the presentation. After all, if you are communicating effectively, every time you mention something of importance to the customer, that customer is mentally leaving you for a few seconds to retreat into their own mind to absorb, apply, and agree with the benefit posed. Therefore, they are not listening to you. This can happen during the most important part of your presentation. Therefore summarize, repeat, restate. Let previous *Moments of Truth* echo again in your presentation.
12. **Use Bridges:** Good selling presentations generate good questions. Often though, in responding we must translate the question to one that provides information the prospect needs to hear. The technique is called bridging. There is specific bridging language that will help you do this. Bridge to *Moments of Truth*. Here's how bridging works.

When the customer asks a question, absorb the question mentally and perhaps restate it in a way that moves your answer toward your sales and communications objectives and messages. Or, use bridging language like, ". . . that's one way to put it, I'd restate it this way," or ". . . yes, but . . .," or "I've heard that same opinion, but let's look at it from this perspective . . .,"

Always answer the question you wish they had asked first. Then respond to their question, provided it is still important to do so.

Here are some additional bridging phrases you might consider using:

- . . . What concerns me even more . . .
- . . . The critical issue is . . .
- . . . Opinions can differ, but I believe . . .
- . . . That's one view, mine is . . .
- . . . I would describe it differently . . .
- . . . There's an even tougher question we need to address . . .

The prospective client doesn't want to hear how much you know; just that you know enough to solve the problem in terms they can understand.

A bridge is a shortcut to a *Moment of Truth*.

13. ***Never Disparage Anything:*** Selling can be a gossipy, negative business. Often, unwittingly, we agree with the negative comments of our customers or compatriots about competitors or competitive products or tactics. Those comments live to haunt and kill sales. Remember, most companies buy from a variety of vendors at different times. Aside from just plain wasting time, disparaging comments take on a life of their own and distract energy from the goal.

If you want to realize the power of positive selling, it means saying useful, powerful, interesting, positive, nice things all the time. When you can't, say nothing.

Negative language and disparagement kill *Moments of Truth*.

14. ***Rehearse Your Presentation:*** Perhaps the most discouraging part of listening to selling presentations is the amateurish and unrehearsed nature with which they are inflicted on customers and prospects. Everybody notices. Everybody knows you're not prepared. Everybody hears and sees the mistakes.

If you choose not to rehearse, you may lose. People purchase perceptions. They want to like you. They want to understand what you are selling. They want to buy if it's humanly possible to do so . . . from everyone. But lack of rehearsal focuses customer attention on mistakes and reasons not to buy. For most buyers, the selling presentations they see are clumsy, ineffective, unrehearsed, and, therefore, unconvincing. I've been in situations where after hearing from more than a dozen consultancies I felt that I was choosing from the best of the worst. A consultant was needed so one had to be selected. They probably would be let go as soon as possible or whenever an opportunity arose.

Here's another key tip to reach *Moments of Truth* earlier. Keep the number of presenters small. That makes rehearsals go easier, and you'll be a tougher act to follow. Every person you bring to a selling presentation should have a speaking part that is rehearsed and fits in with everyone else's.

It's the good act that gets the business, because to sell well you have to be good yourself.

15. ***Ask for the Order:*** This is the ultimate *Moment of Truth*. So often there is great fear of asking because it means that there will be an answer, maybe a "no." If it's going to be no, why not find out quickly. That way no one needs to worry about it and you can move on to the next presentation. How does the prospective client really know you want the job? Ask for it.

There is a curious myth that customers wander off into the woods or onto the Tundra to do a great deal of deep contemplation before they make their decision. Is this what you do when you buy? Is this how you make your important decisions? Believe me; it rarely happens that way to the buyers of professional services either. The choice may be tough, but that's because none of the consultants asked to make presentations provided a good sense of their understanding of the task, project, or goal to be accomplished. The customer may be deliberating more on choosing the pick of a poor litter. But their decision is made very quickly – no matter how long it takes for them to tell you.

If you reach a *Moment of Truth* with your prospective client – and they're ready to say "yes" – they'll say "yes." Just ask them.

Besides, why be afraid of a "no"? If you're analyzing your selling presentations and understanding what you did and did not do, coupled perhaps with a question or two of the prospect once a negative decision has been reached, you're ready to learn, to improve your performance, and to go out and win the next one.

Improve consistently. Analyze both your rehearsal and the selling presentation you made to the prospect. To help you do that I have designed a *Moment of Truth Evaluator*.

It's really quite simple. Use the *Evaluator* as the analytical checklist during both the rehearsal process and the presentation itself as a way of continuously improving your performance. Score yourself and your sales team with respect to the frequency with which you achieve *Moments of Truth*. I believe that if done consistently, for both successful and unsuccessful presentations, you're going to improve your odds of selling successfully by recognizing how you can improve individually and as a selling team.

THE MOMENTS OF TRUTH EVALUATOR

Moments of Truth	Point Value (Across)	Used Once X 1	Used Twice X 2	Used Three Times X3	Totals
Communicated Objectives	4	_____	_____	_____	_____ (24)
Bundled Information	3	_____	_____	_____	_____ (18)
Negative Words	2	_____	_____	_____	_____ (12)
Pyramids	2	_____	_____	_____	_____ (12)
Stories	4	_____	_____	_____	_____ (24)
Participation	2	_____	_____	_____	_____ (12)
Benefits	2	_____	_____	_____	_____ (12)
Power Words	2	_____	_____	_____	_____ (12)
Plain language	3	_____	_____	_____	_____ (18)
Examples	2	_____	_____	_____	_____ (12)
Summaries	3	_____	_____	_____	_____ (18)
Bridges	2	_____	_____	_____	_____ (12)
Nondisparagement	2	_____	_____	_____	_____ (12)
Rehearsal	2	_____	_____	_____	_____ (12)
Asking for the Order	4	_____	_____	_____	_____ (24)
					_____ (234)
Totals (down)		_____ (39)	_____ (78)	_____ (147)	_____ (264)

To score the *Evaluator*:

1. Add all lines across.
2. Add each column across.
3. Maximum scores shown on each total line: _____ (498)

PART V: THE PERFECT CONSULTANT

Let's review a situation that happens far too often. Two people are about to have an uncomfortable conversation. Here's what they're thinking.

The Client:

- If there's one call I hate to make, it's the one to resolve a situation that we should never have been in: working with a consultant who never quite gets it right.
- Even though it wasn't the consultancy most highly recommended to us, the firm seemed lean and hungry and the people committed our work. But we simply have not been communicating; we've had a very difficult relationship this past year.
- I've got to get this resolved quickly so we can move forward.

The Consultant:

- When the secretary announced the caller, I thought my guts were going to ooze out on the floor. It was our toughest corporate client; they were never satisfied with our performance.
- We were selected nearly a year ago. It didn't matter that we fit their profile perfectly; it didn't matter that we had one of the best records in the business. What did matter was that the client felt they were not being well served. They wanted the situation rectified and were after a piece of someone's hide for 11 "wasted months."
- I picked up the phone with great trepidation.

Sound familiar? Clients are not always satisfied customers. Most express feelings ranging from irritation to anger, from skeptical resignation to outright abhorrence of client-consultant interaction. Clients are always on the lookout for that perfect consultant – the consultant who can finally answer their needs and expectations.

Could you be a perfect consultant? Most consultants try hard to meet the expectations they believe their clients have. All too often, however, neither the client nor the consultant fully address performance issues directly and in terms each can understand. The last call is frequently the first time they really talk to each other.

Get that conversation going earlier. We'll explore some key areas:

- Client concerns;
- The consultant to-do list;
- The perfect consultant mindset; and the
- Relationship analysis profile.

Client Concerns . . . The Consultant To-Do List

We'll start by asking what the client has to say to the consultant – and what the consultant can do in response:

The Client Speaks Up:***Consultant To Do's:***

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Don't make us pay for knowledge you should already have. | 1. Learn the client's business. |
| 2. Anticipate the audiences we have and the questions your messages will create. | 2. Think in terms of the business rather than solely in terms of your area of expertise. |
| 3. Big ideas are exciting, but they can be costly and the results are often immeasurable. Please don't do it for the first time on our nickel. | 3. Be pragmatic. Promise only what you can deliver. |
| 4. Give us ideas even in areas for which you aren't being paid. | 4. Show real intellectual curiosity, interest, and excitement about the product, problem, or organization. |
| 5. If you pitch us with your principals, have them work on the account. Leave the rookies at home. | 5. Use professional staff who can handle client issues in depth. |
| 6. What we really want is creativity and execution. Save the rest. | 6. Think creatively rather than waiting for assignments from the client. |
| 7. Invest some of your human and financial capital in education and development. | 7. Use training and research to create some concepts on your own nickel, not the client's. |
| 8. Sometimes we feel as though there are only a limited number of ways to approach problems. | 8. Try different approaches to different projects. Throw away the cookie cutter. |
| 9. It would be great if creative people could tie their ideas and plans to our strategy. | 9. Understand, appreciate, and even utilize strategic planning techniques and tools. |
| 10. We'd like a strategy that will help us win quickly. | 10. Analyze trends so that your responses and actions seize the advantage in a situation. |
| 11. Just when we get to know your account people, they leave or get promoted, and we get new rookies. | 11. Maintain close personal contacts. Make a people commitment to the account. |
| 12. We must find a way to have our internal people feel less threatened by our outside consultants. | 12. Talk to, share with, and coach the people in the trenches, too. It's lack of personal chemistry that kills accounts. |
| 13. What happens if it doesn't work? | 13. Have a plan B and plan C ready, which the client knows about and has approved. |
| 14. How do the consultant's plans fit into our big picture? Can top management talk to them and actually communicate? | 14. Develop the ability to be generalists on business issues and topics. Ask to see and work with the strategic plan. |

- | | |
|---|--|
| 15. Every activity like this has to affect the bottom line in terms management will understand. | 15. Add value to relationships and tasks. Build in effective measurability, reliability, and believability. |
| 16. Too often, when we really need some quick advice, we can't reach you. | 16. Be available, even after 5:00 p.m. |
| 17. We'd like to know you're concerned about our business. | 17. Check back frequently with clients, in good times and bad. |
| 18. If we can't reach key people, no one else seems to be able to help us. | 18. Build people depth into your relationship with the client. |
| 19. We have great meetings. Too bad it takes weeks to get the ideas in a form for the rest of our management to review. | 19. Create and follow up on projects quickly, and in writing. Anticipate client management needs. |
| 20. When we hold a press conference, the consultant's name comes up as often as ours does. | 20. Promote the client, not the consultant. |
| 21. Yeah, we've got ideas. But we're paying for your talent and experience. | 21. Be creative. Don't just playback all the facts and ideas the client gives you. |
| 22. When we're not sure if you really understand our situation, we're also not certain about what you think is our best course of action. | 22. Address issues using the <i>Concept of Completed Action</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the problem effectively. • Analyze it carefully. • Develop appropriate options. • Make at least one strong recommendation. |
| 23. We like a positive, upbeat style, but cheeriness is not always appropriate! | 23. Have more than one style. Some situations may require different people, experience, or people-to-people chemistry |

The Perfect Consultant Mindset

Clients obviously have a lot on their minds. To encourage a growing, long-term relationship, you must create mutually agreed upon, workable objectives from the very outset of your relationship. There are certain organizational attitudes or mindsets fundamental to such goals. Again, listening to the client's concerns will help you develop an appropriate orientation:

The Client Speaks Up:

1. Don't bring me your troubles. It's my work that is of concern to me.

The Consultant Mindset:

1. The consultant-client relationship exists only from the client's perspective. (Forget your overhead costs, personnel problems, etc., and focus on the client.)

2. We know that you, too, have created profit centers, but don't expect us to support the success of your management concept when it clearly duplicates services we can provide – probably better than you do.
2. Provide only those services that have real value. Let the client do the rest.

We expect just four things of this consultant: perception, insight, options, and doable recommendations.

3. When does the clock start running? If this person takes a subordinate or me to lunch, do we get charged the maximum rate? Do they ever invest any of their own time and energy?
3. Build personal relationships throughout the client organization. Be clear when lunch or other contact time is on you.

The Relationship Analysis Profile: How Perfect Are You?

Becoming the perfect consultant involves asking yourself – and your people – the tough, quality-oriented questions that you would ask any consultant serving you. The secret is to put yourself in the client's shoes. When you can truly look at your work, ideas, and recommendations and evaluate them from the client's vantage point, you will be the perfect consultant, and they will be the perfect client for you.

The R.A.P. Sheet

1. How many client requests for additional work have there been?
2. How often does the client actually use your ideas?
3. How often does the client refer you to another potential client?
4. How much repeat business from the same client have you received?
5. How frequently are you involved in major client activities?
6. How long has the client stayed with you?
7. How many budget forecasts have you made and met?
8. How many deadlines have you met?
9. What does your gut tell you about the effectiveness of consultant-client meetings?
10. How many complaints does the client file with your consultancy?
11. How much contact do you have with client senior management?
12. How frequently does the client complain about your billings?
13. Do you do cost-benefit analyses to determine your contribution to the client's effort?

14. How frequently are you invited to join internal client meetings?
15. How many meetings do you conduct with preplanned agendas?
16. What is your average number of re-works on any given project?
17. Do you initiate annual client-consultant performance reviews?

PART VI: FINDING AND KEEPING CLIENTS

All marketers know that the most inexpensive customers for new or additional products and services are the ones you've previously gone to the trouble of making selling presentations to and those for whom you are already working. The purpose of the ideas below is two-fold. Some deal with how you sell, that is how you find clients, and some deal again with how you keep them. While we've discussed the actual selling process in some detail, these are additional useful tips and food for thought.

Seven Secrets to Building New Business

1. Define yourself. (Who are you? What do you want to do? Where do you want to be?)
2. Identify your prime targets.
3. Conduct prime target communication.
4. Broaden your approach.
5. Be productively visible.
6. Build your referral base.
7. Make the calls – every day.

Seven Secrets to Expanding Your Marketplace

1. Attack target groups within an industry or sector.
2. Build your visibility in positive, targeted directions.
3. Focus your energy on the most likely targets.
4. Make certain those you want to work for are aware of the work you do (that is of interest to them).
5. Target individuals who make decisions.
6. Recontact past customers with a new approach.
7. Sell more to those who are already buying.

Professionalize Your Marketing Efforts

1. Aggressively approach:
 - Target industries;
 - Target issues;
 - Target people; and
 - Target positions.
2. Lead building:
 - Pick the companies you want to work for.
3. Phases:
 - Segregate job levels for three-tiered strategy;
 - Target five-to-ten top positions in each company; and
 - Target industries.
4. Develop strategies to target top ten companies within each industry:
 - General reputation-building contact.

- Give them a preview of what you can do:
 - Simulation;
 - High-profile subject;
 - Career defining problem; and/or
 - Bring in outside experts.
- Invite suspects, prospects, clients, staff, and referrals.
- Provide specifics to their areas of interest.
- Involve them in issues and questions they care about, when you can help.

Teach Clients How to Buy Your Services

1. Give the client a checklist to use for analyzing or evaluating.
2. Share with the client mistakes that are often made and how to avoid them.
3. Show the client how to get the most out of you.
4. Do what it takes to build the relationship:
 - Persist;
 - Target top levels;
 - Adapt; and
 - Show unconditional commitment.

Avoid These Five Errors

1. Writing too much:
 - Equate weight and quantity with quality.
 - Long on history and characterization; short on insight, real knowledge, or useful recommendations.
2. Ego Overload:
 - Show obvious problems listening to and hearing the client.
 - Talk about yourself a lot.
3. Focusing on "stuff:"
 - Make immediate recommendations to change documents, forms, and processes.
 - Suggest training or coaching before real issues are understood.
 - Insist on working directly with the CEO or very senior people without purpose or plan.
4. Holding Back:
 - Fail to make recommendations of real substance.
 - Place people on the account who don't seem to do meaningful work.
 - Fail to foresee problems and issues.
5. Guessing:
 - Fail to substantiate recommendations based on experience, acceptable practices, standards, or data.
 - Obviously appear to match recommendations with what is believed to be the client expectations.

The Concept of Completed Action: The Platinum Rule for Consulting

One of the best ways to keep clients is to do a thorough job on every assignment – completed action. Some time ago, we were given a concise summary of that concept. The author of the material that follows in the box is unknown. The concept is thought to originate with the military. Wherever it came from, we are grateful. It is good advice for any consultant or team to consider ways to make the work more complete, more ready for the client to take action.

Applying Completed Action

The concept of “Completed Action” is an aggressive, positive approach to problem solving and presentation of solution options to decision makers – usually either a client or a supervisor. The problem is outlined, its impact assessed, and solutions are presented so that all that remains to be done by the decision maker is to indicate approval or disapproval of a proposed “Completed Action” option.

CONCEPT OF COMPLETED ACTION

The concept of "Completed Action" is the study of a problem and presentation of a solution to a decision maker – usually either a client or a supervisor. The problem is outlined and solutions are presented in such a form that all that remains to be done by the decision maker is to indicate approval or disapproval of the proposed "Completed Action." Completed Action is emphasized because the more difficult the problem is, the more the tendency to present it in piece-meal fashion.

The concept applies when (1) a decision maker has assigned a specific problem to you for study, or (2) you need a decision on a problem that you have encountered. The concept requires that you recommend a proposed course of action, and that it represents the result of your own best thinking and possibly that of others involved.

When faced with a difficult problem, the inexperienced person often feels impelled to ask the supervisor or client what to do. It seems so much easier to present the problem to someone else, and often it appears easy for him or her to decide upon a solution. Resist that impulse! Writing a memorandum does not constitute "Completed Action." Writing a memorandum for your supervisor or client to send to someone else does. You have been hired for the very reason that your supervisor alone cannot solve all the problems. Each time you bring that person a solution instead of a problem you are demonstrating that you are an asset.

The "Completed Action" may be presented prior to the final draft, but the "rough draft" must not be used as a device for shifting responsibility for formulating the action. Do not burden the decision maker with long explanations, either written or oral. It is your duty to study, think, restudy, and rethink until you are convinced you have selected the correct of action – the best finished form, so that he or she can take action simply by approving it. Usually the person will see the logic of your proposal or will trust your judgment without having to second guess your line of reasoning. He or she will ask for explanation when it is necessary.

When you have finished preparing your "Completed Action" proposal, the final test is this: If you were the decision maker, would you be willing to approve the action you propose and stake your professional reputation on this being right? If the answer is no, it is not yet "Completed Action."

The concept of "Completed Action" does demand more work of you, but you will find that your proposals and ideas are more readily accepted and that you can obtain action faster by practicing it. Furthermore, it will enable you to develop and demonstrate the ability to make sound decisions.

Completed action is emphasized because the more difficult the problem is, the more the tendency to present it in piece-meal fashion, or seek only one possible solution. There are always at least two options for action in every situation. Doing nothing, for example, is always an option.

Apply the concept when (1) a decision maker has assigned a specific problem for you to study, or (2) you need a decision on a problem that you have encountered. The concept also requires that you recommend a course of action that represents the result of your own best thinking.

Here are some tips:

1. ***Think it through. It's basically a five-step process:***

- Describe the situation in plain, declarative, positive language;
- Interpret the situation;
- Develop at least three options;
- Make a recommendation; and
- Identify unintended consequences, especially negative ones.

2. ***Follow the process:***

When faced with a difficult problem, the inexperienced consultant often feels impelled to ask the supervisor or client what to do. It seems so much easier to present the problem to someone else, and often it appears easy for him or her to decide upon a solution. *Resist that impulse!* Writing a memorandum does not constitute “Completed Action.” Writing a memorandum for your client to send to someone else does. You have been hired for the very reason that your client alone cannot solve all the problems. Each time you bring that person a *solution* instead of a *problem* you are demonstrating that you are an asset.

3. ***"Run it by":***

The “Completed Action” may be presented prior to final form, but the 'rough draft' must not be used as a device for shifting responsibility for formulating the action. Do not burden the decision maker with long explanations, either written or oral. It is your duty to study, think, restudy, and rethink until you are convinced you have selected the correct plan of action – in the best *finished* form, so that he or she can take action simply by approving it. Usually the person will see the logic of your proposal or will trust your judgment without being conducted through your line of reasoning. He or she will ask for explanation when it is necessary.

4. ***Test it:***

When you have finished preparing your “Completed Action” proposal, the final test is this: If *you* were in the decision maker's shoes and it was up to you, would *you* be willing to approve the action you proposed and stake your professional reputation on its being right? If the answer is no or you are not comfortable with your decision, it is not yet “Completed Action.”

Using the concept of “Completed Action” takes more work, but you will find yourself becoming a better thinker and your proposals and ideas more readily accepted, and you'll get faster action. Furthermore, it will enable you to develop and demonstrate the ability to make sound decisions.

Those who become accustomed to using the *Concept of Completed Action* carry its principles into other aspects of their work. They:

- Look for better ways of doing things.
- Try to think ahead and go the extra mile.
- Make suggestions on improving and enjoying their work more.
- Look for and suggest doable alternatives.
- Recommend achievable actions.
- Look for things that need to be done and do them.
- Communicate frequently regarding the status of assigned projects.
- Complete projects when due or promised.
- Anticipate problems and unanticipated consequences.

The *Concept of Completed Action* is taking the initiative to learn and understand the client's business. It's a mindset of structured thinking ahead, anticipating, and following up – a can-do approach that is always focused on solutions. Solutions are what clients pay consultants to produce.

Other Valuable Resources

Rather than providing a bibliography, let me just share with you the names of those who have inspired me over the years whose work is readily available. The individuals listed below have written or developed material I believe you will also find extremely motivating and personally helpful:

- Kenneth Blanchard, in care of Simon and Schuster in New York City.
- Leil Lowndes, Verbal Advantage, San Clemente, California.
- David H. Maister, Maister Associates, Boston, Massachusetts.
- Anthony Robbins, in care of Guthy-Renker Corporation, Irwindale, California.
- Brian Tracey, in care of Nightingale Conant, Niles, Illinois.
- Zig Ziglar, Nashville Tennessee.

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He is a prolific author (several books, hundreds of articles), lecturer (corporate, college and university), coach, and counselor. He is quoted in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Miami Herald*, the *Harvard Business Review*, and industry trade journals. He is a columnist, advisor, or editor for almost every major public relations periodical. His 1992 book, *Influencing Public Attitudes: Strategies that Reduce the Media's Power*, remains a classic work in the field of direct communication. He is the author of the four-volume *Executive Action[®] Crisis Communication Management System* and has published 26 unabridged monographs on critical communication subjects since 1994. His newest book, *Why Should the Boss Listen to You?*, was published by Jossey-Bass in 2008.

He is an internationally recognized speaker on crisis management, ethics, media relations, public affairs, and reputation preservation and restoration. Visiting his Web site, www.e911.com, is like attending the University of Crisis Management.

An accredited member of the International Association of Business Communicators (ABC) and the Public Relations Society of America (APR), Mr. Lukaszewski is a member of the PRSA's College of Fellows (Fellow PRSA) and Board of Ethics & Professional Standards. He served as a crisis communications advisor to the International Disaster Advisory Committee, Agency for International Development, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance from 1989 to 1992, and is a civilian advisor to several other federal agencies. He lectures annually at the U.S. Marine Corp's East Coast Commander's Media Training Symposium and was the second recipient of its Drew Middleton Award. He is the recipient of both Ball State University's 2004 National Public Relations Achievement Award and the 2004 Patrick Jackson Award for Distinguished Service to PRSA, and is among the winners of the 2005 *PR News* Lifetime Achievement Award. His name appeared in *Corporate Legal Times* as one of "28 Experts to Call When All Hell Breaks Loose," and in *PR Week* as one of 22 "crunch-time counselors who should be on the speed dial in a crisis."