Helping smarter professional service firms grow

10½ ways to create content that showcases your expertise in the best light

How can you do BD when you can't do BD?

Pt 2: Creating better content

1. Case studies

When someone new is deciding whether you're the right person for them, what they're really doing is evaluating the potential risk of instructing you. One of the best ways to help them do that is to explain how you have helped clients in the same position achieve the outcome they wanted.

Effective case studies have a clear structure –

Context - What was the situation you were presented with?
Action - What did you do to solve the clients' problem?
Result - What was the final outcome?

2. Stories

Stories are a much more informal version of the case study presented with more personality.

Stories work best in presentations, pitches and coffee meetings but they can also make good blogs as they're a good way to explain how you do what you do rather than simply what you do.

And as with all things in life, a little exaggeration to make a point (and make the story a bit more interesting) never hurts …

3. Client testimonials

Like case studies testimonials work because people are more likely to believe the words if they come from someone they can relate to (i.e. someone in the same or a similar position or sector).

The most effective client testimonials focus on how your expertise addressed/tackled/resolved a particular problem and how your client benefitted from you being involved.

4. LinkedIn recommendations

Have the confidence to ask your clients to write a 2- or 3-line recommendation on LinkedIn.

Recommendations add a much needed third dimension to your profile. And don't get hung up about asking; in our experience most clients are more than willing.

One word of caution: if you do use this feature, keep it fresh by asking for new recommendations every 6 months or so or it may look like you're out of date and your best days are behind you.

5. Capability statements

During the early stages of a new conversation you may be asked to provide a capability statement that highlights the work you've done in a particular sector, which clients you've provided those services for and what they thought of your work.

With this type of document, design matters so it's worth getting professional help to make it as visually appealing as possible.

6. Show your face

Research tells us that people are more likely to trust when they can a face so include your photograph in your marketing communications.

Even if the prospect knows what you look like already, it's important to remember your materials may be shared with others that don't.

And don't be intimidated by this. It's not a beauty pageant, the professional shot from your website profile will be perfect.

7. Repetition, repetition, repetition

If only one piece of content could make the phone ring. Unfortunately, influencing people requires more than one blog or a newsletter, it requires persistence.

Many messages are lost because the recipient is not giving you their full (if any) attention.

To get a response each piece of content you produce needs to be one in a series of well-crafted communications over a reasonable period.

8. Make it personal and relevant

Would you hire someone who approached you and just said 'I want a job'? Of course not! You'd need evidence that they want the job, can do the job and understand the job.

This is why generic content is not effective.

You need to make your content personal and relevant to the reader and the easy way to do that is to produce generic content then change the language, reference points and examples for your different audiences.

9. Mind your language!

Jargon is a massive turn off! Avoid jargon/acronyms/management-speak/technical terms and instead focus on clarity in a conversational tone.

10. Detail matters

Your content must be believable. Including details will add credibility to your case study, story or testimonial and credibility makes it easier for readers/ prospects to trust what you're telling them.

10½. You not we

Your readers are only really interested in themselves and what you can do for them so talk to them, address them personally.

The easy way to do this is by substituting 'we' for 'you' then rejigging the sentence so it makes sense.

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