

MODULE 8 - Advocate Advanced Topics  
MORE MARKETING LESSONS  
M8C L3 - No Two Companies Are Alike

As the premier educators of disability advocates, we often receive questions related to competition in this field. We have traditionally handled this inquiry by assuring our students that this field is far from being saturated. However, there is another competitive issue that is much more important to the bottom line than market saturation. That issue is the profound understanding that no two consulting services are alike!

Every consulting service is different! This is true even if you and your competitors are in the same

business, located in the same town, on the exact same street. It is impossible for two different services to be identical because each is headed by a different individual. Each individual brings a unique perspective to a business that is based on that person's personality, attitudes, creativity and experiences just to name a few!

Most business owners believe that capital is the key to beating the competition. Nothing could be further from the truth! The key to successfully competing is your ability to communicate your personal differences to your customer base. This is not as difficult as it sounds!

When starting your consulting service, don't look to your competition. Look inward! Ask yourself what is it about me that will allow me to build a business that reflects my special virtues. Asking yourself this simple question will open up a whole new world of creative possibilities that will take your business to new heights of success.

I am honest, sincere, hardworking, educated, experienced, determined, creative, friendly, focused, etc. Each of these and a thousand other virtues can and should be reflected in how you approach your business. Never mind the competition! If you cannot see the difference between your service and that of a competitor, you are failing to look inward. You are too busy worrying about what others are doing and totally ignoring those special virtues about yourself that will set your service apart from all others. Utilize this sacred approach to marketing your new consulting service and I guarantee that your competitors won't stand a chance!

How then do you project your individuality in a marketing campaign?

First, ask yourself, what are my personal virtues? Then, list and project your virtues.

Marketing a service is like being in a personality contest! You must project your personality in a positive manner or risk losing to the competition! Identify your points of contact. That is, look closely at each point in your business where your business comes in contact with a customer. Try to improve and project your virtues at each of these points. Be consistent!

Start with the surface! Since it is impossible for your potential customers to judge your capabilities as a consultant, the quality of your first contact materials become that much more important. This first contact is your initial and perhaps only opportunity to impress your customers. Use a high quality presentation brochure, letter, etc.

You also want to project a professional image without being stuffy. In your materials, project an image of friendliness and convenience. Let the customer know that you are not just seeking customers you are seeking relationships that will provide mutual benefit. This friendliness theme should carry throughout your ads, phone messages, etc. Offer multiple customer conveniences such as call backs, mail outs, free info lines, courtesy talks and free case assessments just to name a few.

Specialize by solving a problem! Pick a problem that many clients seem to be having and make solving that problem your specialty. For example, most applicants who use attorneys complain bitterly about the length of time it takes to complete a case. Create an in-house solution for this problem and make that solution part of your marketing presentation. You do not need to actually change your service. You simply mention in your marketing materials "a problem" and the fact that you have a solution.

Examples:

"Is it taking too long to receive your SSA disability benefits? Call us for fast results!"  
Looking for a more responsive representative that won't leave you wondering about your case? Come to us!" "Worried about your financial future now that you can't work? Give us a call."

Show yourself! Another way of personalizing your marketing presentation is by showing yourself or an appropriate staff member. Most companies insist on showing their building. In the age of computers, the size of a company's building means nothing. Yahoo for example is housed in a tiny space and yet has a market capitalization that exceeds 400 billion dollars. Showing a building is ridiculous and does not impress anyone. A customer wants to see a face as a means of indirectly assessing a service that he cannot directly evaluate.

Use technology! If you are using technical tools that can improve customer service, tell the customer about these tools. Customers feel reassured when the company they are dealing with at least claims to be on the cutting edge! Mention technology where appropriate and point out the fact that you are committed to any and all innovations that improve the experience of the customer.

Create a market through education! Most service providers believe that they are in direct competition with someone else offering a similar service. This is not the case! In most cases, you are creating a market, not sharing one. Therefore, it is wiser to approach the market as an innovator and problem solver. If you point out a problem and then claim to have the solution, the customer will almost always pick you.

Use creativity! Avoid doing what everyone else in the industry is doing. In your mind, pretend that there is no market. Then set out to create a market by educating your potential customers in ways that reflect your personality and style. The more you educate the customer, the more likely that customer will gravitate to the source that provided the education.

