

10 Business Development Strategies for Professional Practitioners

Products are tangible. You can see them, feel them and usually sample or test drive them before you buy. Services, on the other hand, are not.

It's only after a service has been performed for you that you know if you like it, can see how it works, and you're able to decide if it will solve your problem or produce the results you're looking for.

There is an old saying in marketing, 'People do business with people they know, like and trust.'

With this in mind, here are my top 10 business development strategies for professional service providers:

1. **Be Inspiring:** How you come across and relate to a prospective client will often be the difference between an enquiry and a sale. When you're genuine, positive and enthusiastic, and have confidence and belief in yourself and what you have to offer, prospective clients will find you inspiring and an attractive person to do business with.
2. **Maximise your online opportunities:** Having an online presence not only gives you credibility as a business, but it reduces your need to personally address frequently asked questions, over and over again. Although people often still rely on recommendations from family, friends and colleagues when choosing a service provider, a 'Google' or other online search is the most popular way people do their own research to help them choose among service providers. If you'd like to have a stronger online presence, see www.winningbusinessonline.com.au.
3. **Encourage referrals and word-of-mouth business:** Regularly ask for referrals from your existing clients and actively refer your clients to others whenever possible. This will help grow your network and encourage the people you've referred business to, to look out for business to refer to you.
4. **Form strategic alliances:** Create relationships with other business owners with a similar target market and ask them to refer their clients to your business when they notice an opportunity and offer to do the same for them.
5. **Become an expert in something:** When you're an expert in something, even people within your industry will refer business to you when their clients need assistance that's outside their area of expertise. Another benefit is that the media will often seek out your comments for news items.

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6. **Use PR/Media:** Press releases are an effective way to get word out and educate the marketplace about your services or areas of expertise. Learn how to write and distribute your own press releases at www.newsmaker.com.au.
7. **Speak at conferences, events or teach a class:** Sharing your expertise with others through speaking is another way to be more visible and to demonstrate your credibility to potential clients. People are more likely to remember who you are once they've seen you speak at an event.
8. **Network with your target market or potential business referrers:** Choose networking events where you'll either have an opportunity to meet your target clients or potential strategic alliance partners or referral sources and actively connect people whenever you see an opportunity to do so.
9. **Get published:** Write articles, an e-zine or newsletter, a column or even a book! Any of these will increase your credibility and encourage clients to want to do business with you.
10. **Follow up effectively:** After meeting a potential client or referral source, ensure that you follow up by arranging a meeting, lunch or coffee. Stay in contact by inviting them to join your e-zine or newsletter mailing list or ask them to be your guest at an upcoming event.

Whichever strategies you choose to use, design a sales and marketing plan that you action on a daily basis. Remember, the best time to be marketing is when you don't need the business!

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