Simple Things You Can Do to Find Clients

The recent free webinar, Consulting 101, was very successful, with more than 100 participants. I really enjoyed doing it. Many participants contacted me afterward, and asked if we can proceed with Consulting 102. It is in the works.

Various Sections and Networks frequently invite me to come and help with the start-up of a new Consultants Network; to train new consultants; and to help working consultants expand their practices. I do a live six-hour seminar on How to Start a Successful Consulting Practice or How to Expand an Existing One.

One of the subjects I spend a lot of time on is teaching seminar attendees how to find clients. An expert in the field taught me, so I teach his subject matter, and what has worked for me. He taught me that mass or blind resume mailing is a waste of time and money, and emphasized that one should do the unusual — things that others do not do. In the seminar, I teach more than twenty different effective methods of finding clients. Here is one that I would like to share with you:

Having attended and graduated from three different universities, I receive a lot of alumni mail, including solicitations, announcements and newsletters. I used to throw most of them away, until I realized what a powerful resource the alumni newsletters were for finding consulting business. And now that I have used this method successfully many times, I can share it with you.

When I receive a newsletter, I quickly turn to the page where promotions and accomplishments are announced. These announcements are usually grouped by years of graduation, in chronological order. I look for the years close to my years of attendance at the university.

Usually, I do not recognize the names or the pictures of the people there. However, I intensely read about all the promotions and advancements. I circle the ones where the alumnus is possibly in a position to deal with or hire consultants. Then, I prepare a short and simple, hand-written note that reads something like this:

Hi X,

Congratulations on your promotion to the position of Vice-President of Engineering. You are a credit to the university and your promotion is evidence of the high caliber of students from our Alma Mater. We probably took a few classes together and possibly played on the same intramural teams. It would be enjoyable to get together and reminisce about those glorious days.

I have held several challenging positions since graduation, and my career has benefited from all of these experiences. I am currently a full-time consultant. I help companies solve difficult engineering problems, and I really enjoy what I do.

Perhaps our paths will cross before the next class reunion. Contact me, if I can be of service to your company. My card is enclosed.

— Signed

How many similar notes do you think this person will receive? Probably only one — yours. If that company has a need for a consultant, chances are excellent that you will be remembered? It is simple and it works.
Getting Started

Entrepreneur Magazine Provides Excellent Resource for New Consultants

The AICN Steering Committee is always looking to provide our Consultants Networks with leads to good information that will help their members develop successful practices. An article posted on www.entrepreneur.com provides an excellent primer for consultants just starting out.

This article is an excerpted from Entrepreneur Magazine’s Consulting Business start-up guide. It’s a six page overview covering issues consultants should focus on such as:

- Your Target Market
- Location and Employees
- Income and billing
- Marketing
- Resources

Although this article is not specifically directed towards engineering consultants, it provides sage advice all potential consultants should consider. For example, it lists things to consider before you become a consultant:

- What certifications and special licensing will I need? Depending upon your profession, you may need special certification, or a special license, before you can begin operating as a consultant. For example, fund-raising consultants don’t need special certification, although you can become certified through the National Society of Fund-Raising Executives. And in some states, you may need to register as a professional fund-raising consultant before starting your business.

- Am I qualified to become a consultant? Before you hang out your shingle and hope that clients begin beating your door down to hire you, make sure you have the qualifications necessary to get the job done. If you want to be a computer consultant, for example, make sure you are up-to-date in the knowledge department with all the trends and changes in the computer industry.

- Do I have the contacts? CTI纵横认为 networking is critical to the success of any type of consultant today. Begin building your network of contacts immediately.

- Have I set long-term and short-term goals? And do they allow for me to become a consultant? If your goals do not match up with the time and energy it takes to open and successfully build a consulting business, then reconsider before making any move in this direction!

This article can be found at: www.entrepreneur.com/startingabusiness/businessideas/startupkits/article41384.html

Also, don’t forget you can go to www.ieeeusa.org, and check out all the tools we offer our Consultants Networks.

Promoting Your Services

Use Craigslist to Market...Yourself

Leibson’s Law (Blog): Written by Steve Leibson, former Editor in Chief of EDN. You can email me, Mr. Leibson, at steven.leibson@att.net.

This blog is about the disruptive technologies that either have or will win over electronic engineers; some that won’t; and why.

In my continuing quest to return to gainful employment, I’ve been learning about the latest methods for marketing yourself. This week, I attended two sessions on networking (the human kind, not the 802.xx kind), and today I attended a half-day session on using Craigslist as a consultant’s marketing tool. In this blog, I’ll focus on today’s session, which was put on by the local IEEE section’s Consultant’s Network Silicon Valley (CNSV). The instructor was Carl Angotti, a design engineer and long-time consultant who specializes in medical products, project management and product development. Carl’s been consulting for 30 years, so he knows a thing or two about consulting, and how to stay in business, even in tough times. Since 2003, he’s been using Craigslist to market his services effectively, and he shared the secrets of his success with us today.

There were more than 20 people in the audience this Saturday morning, and we met at Cogswell Polytechnical College in Sunnyvale, literally a stone’s throw from my current marketing consulting gig. The name of the college reminds me of Cogswell Cogs from the 1960s animated TV show, The Jetsons. Had there been anyone from the college present this morning, I probably would have heard “Yeah, we get that a lot,” but it was just us consultants, plus a videographer this morning.

I was the only marketing consultant swimming in a sea of engineers. Unsurprisingly, a lot of the attendees had been laid off since the beginning of this year. The range of specialties was pretty quite a variety. All can benefit from Angotti’s self-marketing techniques. Even me.

The first thing to understand is that Craigslist now fills the niche formerly occupied by the local newspaper classifieds. Craigslist listings are faster, cheaper (free), and do not require the reader to buy a subscription or a copy of the newspaper. In essence, Craigslist classified ads have far less market “friction” than newspaper ads. That’s why Craigslist has sucked almost all of the advertising out of the local newspapers’ classified advertising here in the United States.

Angotti’s technique is based on using Craigslist’s “resume” section. Many of the people in this morning’s class didn’t know that Craigslist had a resume section. In truth, I didn’t know it either until I was laid off some weeks ago. I missed

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Professional Liability Coverage Protects Consultants

Professional Liability Coverage for Technology Professionals

Most everyone is aware of liability risks in this litigious society. A better-informed public, aware of clients’ rights and the potential to recover costs and damages and perhaps embittered by the failing economy, is often encouraged to bring suit against professionals. Informed professionals are even more aware of their vulnerability to liability issues every workday. They face increased risk exposure as more become self-employed. Whether claims are frivolous or fact, simply being named in a claim has significant emotional and financial expenses. That’s why, if you own your own business, or are temporarily or permanently self-employed, it is essential to protect against the cost and serious consequences of professional liability claims.

Professional Liability Insurance vs. General Liability Insurance

General Liability insurance provides protection when a business is sued for something it did or did not do that caused bodily or personal injury, including liable and slander, or property damage. Without General Liability insurance, a single accident could create a significant financial strain and potentially drive you out of business.

Professional Liability insurance, commonly known as Errors and Omissions (E&O) insurance, protects professional practitioners, such as technologists, against potential negligence claims made by their clients. This type of policy is increasingly becoming a requirement for all professional service providers.

The primary reason for Professional Liability coverage is that a typical General Liability insurance policy will only respond to a bodily injury, property damage, personal injury or advertising injury claim. However, the sophisticated products and services provided by technology professionals can cause claims without causing bodily injury, property damage, personal injury or advertising injury.

Common reasons alleged in making claims on Professional Liability policies are negligence, misrepresentation, violation of good faith and fair dealing, and inaccurate advice. For example, if a software product fails to perform properly, it may not cause physical damages, personal or advertising injuries, therefore the General Liability policy would not be triggered. It may, however, directly cause financial losses which could potentially be attributed to the developer’s misrepresentation of the product capabilities.

Liability Insurance for Technologists

Professional Liability and General Liability insurance policies are designed to complement one another. Both cover allegations, whether or not actual, the legal costs to defend a suit and compensatory damages awarded to claimants.

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Risk management professionals often recommend technology professionals purchase both General Liability and Professional Liability insurance to ensure your business is adequately protected against liability claims, eliminating the worry and risk associated with gaps and coverage.

Unfortunately, some technology professionals experience difficulty in obtaining General Liability insurance when their business is based out of a home office, leaving their business susceptible to significant risks.

In an effort to fill the protection gaps currently faced by some technologists who are unable to acquire General Liability insurance coverage, IEEE is working with Marsh Affinity Group Services to create a General Liability endorsement to the existing Professional Liability plan. This new General Liability endorsement will be offered to IEEE members whose work concentrates in the fields of computer hardware/software which would include: electronic data processing, systems analysis, software design, programming, computer systems/consulting and computer systems installation and support.

This exciting new product, which will be made available to IEEE members later this year, will provide a comprehensive solution to protect the assets and reputation of your business in the event of a claim.

To learn more, you can contact Marsh Affinity Group Services at 1-800-375-0775 or access information online at www.ieeeinsurance.com.

(Craigslist cont’d)

noticing the resume section before that, because I used Craigslist mostly to buy stuff like old, historic HP desktop computing gear and used IKEA furniture. However, there is such a section and you can post a resume in it for free once every 72 hours. Part of the battle is just posting something. “Envisioning” the act isn’t sufficient. You need to actually do it, of course.

What you post is at least as important. You want to stand out from the crowd. You do that in two ways. First, you need to firmly conform to the “WIIFM” principle, which means “What’s in it for me?” Resume readers want to know what you will do for them and not what you know or what jobs you’ve previously held. You have precious little time and relatively little screen space to make that point so you cannot waste the screen space on the conventional paper-

resume formats. You also can’t exploit the Web’s ability to absorb as many characters as you care to type. Posting a 5000-word resume defies readers to figure out what you can do for them because no one has the time or the patience to wade through that much verbiage any more. We live in an instant-gratification world.

Second, you need to optimize your listing for Craigslist’s search engine. Here, Angotti has a neat trick. He skims the job boards — he favors Dice.com — for related job listings, and he mines long lists of relevant keywords by copying entire job descriptions from these job boards and sluicing them through text analyzers that perform frequency analysis on the words in the descriptions. Delete common words such as a, an, and the and you’ve got good start at a relevant set of keywords. Carl shoots for 500 or so keywords, which he then deposits at the bottom of his resume simply as a search-engine magnet. Now realize that these filtered keywords ought to relate to your resume. Otherwise, you’re just fooling the searcher. Worse, you’re fooling yourself, if you think that you can get a job using a blatantly obvious trick.

Today’s training cost me $47, and I’m tracking those dollars pretty darn carefully these days because there aren’t that many coming in. Nevertheless, I consider the money well spent. Today’s session was videotaped and will end up on the CNSF site for members only. If you’re interested, check out the site. They sponsor many such programs during the course of a month, and I plan to pay more attention to them myself.
EE Unemployment Rate Soars to New Record, Engineering Jobless Rate Up for Second Consecutive Quarter

The unemployment rate for U.S. electrical and electronics engineers (EEs) hit a new record in the second quarter, while the rate for all engineers increased for a second straight quarter, according to data released last week by the Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

“Technology drives our economy, which means engineering unemployment is a bellwether for recovery and job creation,” IEEE-USA President Gordon Day said. “These new data suggest we’ve got a long way to go as the United States attempts to regain its economic footing.”

The news for EEs was particularly bad, as the jobless rate more than doubled from 4.1 percent in the first quarter, to a record-high 8.6 percent in the second. The previous quarterly record was 7 percent, in the first quarter of 2003.

For all engineers, the unemployment rate jumped from 3.9 percent in the first quarter to 5.5 percent in the second quarter. The rate for computer professionals steadied at 5.4 percent, after a significant jump in the first quarter. The second-quarter unemployment rate for all professional workers showed a modest uptick, from 3.7 percent to 4.3 percent.

The BLS reports that 29,000 EEs were unemployed in the second quarter, up from the first-quarter figure of 13,000. On a small positive note, the number of employed EEs seems to have stabilized, actually rising 2.3 percent quarter-to-quarter, but at levels well below those of the past decade.

“Taken together, these data may suggest that engineers laid off last year and early this year are having trouble securing the new engineering jobs being created,” Day said.

IEEE members can find career enhancement resources at www.ieeeusa.org/careers/. Help for unemployed and at-risk members is available at www.ieeeusa.org/careers/help/.