

A Guide to Guerrilla Marketing for Consultants

Tactics for Winning Profitable Clients

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By

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“When you try to be all things to all people, you end up being nothing”

– Al Reis

Guerrilla Marketing Wants You

The old saying, “You can’t get fired for hiring IBM” just isn’t valid anymore. These days, clients choose the best consultants, not the best-known ones. Today’s clients seek talent, not firm names. The competition for new work is not between firms, but between people and their ideas.

Consultants’ marketing efforts haven’t changed in response to this reality. In fact, their marketing hasn’t changed much in decades—except to get slicker, flashier and more expensive.

That’s not working. The competitive battle in consulting is no longer about vying for projects; it’s about competing for relationships with those who award those projects. That’s what *Guerrilla Marketing for Consultants* is about: how to win *profitable* work from a new, more discerning breed of consulting clients.

It’s high time for consultant to adopt guerrilla marketing techniques. This brief Guide will spell out the ABC’s of *Guerrilla Marketing for Consultants* to get you started.

Guer·ril·la Mar·ket·ing: *Everything* you do to promote your practice, from the moment you conceive of it to the point at which clients are doing business with you on a *regular basis*.

Guerrilla Marketing—What’s It to You?

The operative words on the facing page are *everything* and *regular basis* because they define guerrilla marketing. For a guerrilla, marketing begins the moment you decide to become a consultant, and never stops.

Marketing involves more than just trying to sell your services; it affects how you run your practice, bid on projects, perform for clients and build relationships. Simply put, marketing is everything you do. Your firm’s name, its services, methods of serving clients, pricing plan, the location of your office, and how you promote your practice are all part of guerrilla marketing.

And there is much more, including the clients you choose to work with, how you answer the telephone, even how you design your invoices, envelopes and proposals.

Guerrilla marketing bears little resemblance to the traditional me-too marketing used by most consultants in six distinct ways:

| What is Guerrilla Marketing for Consultants? | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Traditional Marketing | Guerrilla Marketing |
| Central to the business | Is the business |
| Consultant-focused | Insight-based |
| Invest money | Invest time, effort and energy |
| Show up and throw up | Listen and serve |
| Grow revenue | Grow profit |
| One size fits all | One size fits none |

Regis McKenna, author and marketing expert, reminds us that “Marketing is everything.” Guerrillas add...“And everything is marketing.”

Guerrilla Marketing Golden Rule: To be successful as a consultant, you must have something to say and someone who is willing to listen to you.

The Seven Easy Pieces of Guerrilla Marketing

Type the term consultant (or any variation) into your favorite search engine and look at the number of consultants within a client's immediate reach. It's enough to make any consultant feel like a small fish in a huge pond.

The consultant's challenge is to find the right client at the right time. You may get lucky and stumble onto a golden client opportunity. But that's the exception, not the rule.

Attracting the right clients precisely when they need your help requires a well-planned marketing strategy. Some consultants run their practices with no marketing plan at all, which is a sure-fire way back to a corporate job or to the unemployment line.

You can find dozens of approaches for creating a marketing plan, but guerrillas keep it simple. They start with a one-page plan that consists of seven sentences:

- Sentence one explains the purpose of your marketing
- Sentence two explains how you achieve that purpose by describing the substantive benefits you provide to clients
- Sentence three describes your target market(s)
- Sentence four describes your niche
- Sentence five outlines the marketing weapons you will use
- Sentence six reveals the identity of your business
- Sentence seven provides your marketing budget.

If you have a marketing plan, take another look at it. Does it address each of these seven pieces? If not, take a crack at drafting these seven sentences for your practice. Once you have that one-page plan, you can develop a marketing roadmap that highlights the guerrilla marketing weapons you'll use, when you'll use them, and how you'll know if each worked.

**“Professional service marketing is certainly among the
“safest” I’ve ever seen. Because it appears to take no risks,
it’s actually quite risky.”**

– Seth Godin

Be Safe and You'll Be Sorry

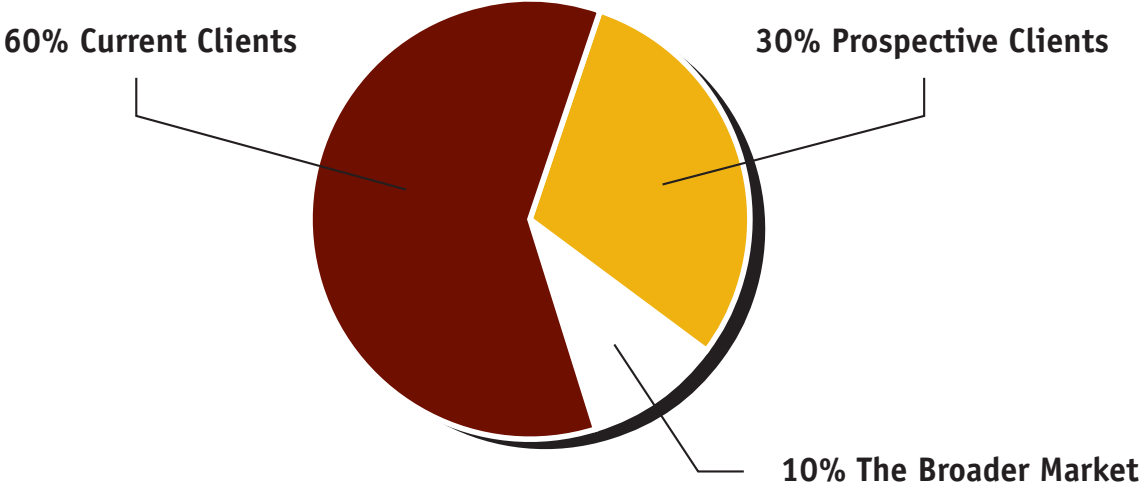
In side-by-side comparisons, consultants look pretty much the same to clients because consultants tend to mimic each other's marketing identities. Differentiating your practice from the competition—even slightly—can bring you more clients, higher fees, and lower cost of sales. Yet too often, consultants attempt to distinguish their practices in ways that have little or no influence on clients' buying decisions. The result? Clients see consulting services as a commodity.

Distinguish your practice by avoiding the use of the so-called “differentiators” below. Clients' eyes glaze over when they read these claims:

1. Quality service
2. Best price
3. Methods, tools, and approaches
4. Service responsiveness
5. Consultants' credentials
6. Importance of the client
7. Testimonials and references

You can bet that one or more of these “differentiators” is included in 90% of consultants' promotional material. Forget about it. Jettison these surefire losers. Instead, let guerrilla marketing help you develop new, creative approaches for standing out in the crowd.

Follow the 60/30/10 Guerrilla Marketing Formula



A Bird in Hand...

By far, your best source for new consulting work is your relationships with existing clients and the referrals they generate. So, as you decide where to place your marketing efforts, focus most of your resources on your existing clients.

Guerrilla marketing is about balance. Allocate your marketing budget to target three groups of clients using the 60/30/10 rule:

Current clients. This is the smallest of the three groups, but existing clients should generate the largest percentage of your profits. Plan to devote 60 percent of your marketing efforts here.

Prospective clients. Your goal is to convert prospective clients into clients—if they fit your targeted client profile and have problems that you can solve. Commit 30 percent of your marketing resources to win work from this group.

The broader market. This includes everybody in the business world not represented in the first two groups. Invest 10 percent of your marketing resources in the broad market. Devoting resources to this group is less efficient, but the effort has the potential to generate important contacts and leads.

The 60/30/10 percentages are rules of thumb, not gospel. If you're just starting a practice, adjust the percentages to attract new clients, and move toward 60/30/10 over time. Every consulting practice is different, so customize your marketing approach to fit your objectives.

“When your work speaks for itself, don’t interrupt.”

- Henry J. Kaiser

Your Most Potent Marketing Weapon

When you buy an appliance, you expect trouble-free performance. If a new dishwasher springs a leak and ruins your oak floor, you're likely to warn others. Research shows that people are far more likely to tell others about bad purchasing experiences than good ones, so everyone you know will likely hear about the dishwasher from hell.

Clients are no different. Your marketing program may get you in the door, and your analytical and selling skills may land the project. But, without question, your top-notch consulting work is the most potent weapon in your guerrilla marketing arsenal. It's the best way to keep clients coming back for more and praising you to others.

Deliver the goods with competence, speed, and minimal disruption. Master every facet of the consulting process, including how to plan and execute a project flawlessly, manage client communications, and create an environment of trust so the client is comfortable with your recommendations.

Clients scrutinize everything you do, from how you communicate with their staff to whether you take the last cup of coffee without making a fresh pot. They observe how you work under the stress of deadlines, how you recover from stumbles, and whether you admit mistakes. If your work is substandard, clients will blame you and pass the word along to others.

By contrast, when your performance is excellent, it speaks louder than any other marketing tool. And your clients will provide you with glowing references, both within and outside their companies.

“The aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous.”

– Peter Drucker

Guerrilla Marketing = Fusion Marketing

Guerrillas use an array of marketing weapons, working in unison, to get their messages through. They launch multiple marketing weapons simultaneously, and they track and respond to results.

For example, if you planned to do three client seminars but the first two bombed, cancel the third one or make adjustments to turn it around. Guerrillas wouldn't have everything riding on one seminar series. Instead, they have multiple marketing weapons in the works at the same time.

Patience is a virtue in marketing. You may not see results from your efforts for several months, but don't give up. When your tactics start to work, you'll build momentum. Your targeted clients will begin to know you, and your telephone will ring.

Create marketing tactics that support, reinforce, and cross-promote each other. Reference your articles prominently in your proposals, feature your Web site in your direct mailings, and publicize your survey results in your email signature line. Your goal is to imprint multiple, positive impressions of your practice in your clients' minds.

Clients equate success and competence with sustained presence, so blanket your target market(s). For a cumulative effect, hit your markets simultaneously on many fronts. When clients repeatedly see your articles, read about your speeches, and see the results of your research, they will accept you as an expert and want to work with you.

**“I don’t know who you are.
I don’t know your company.
I don’t know your company’s product.
I don’t know what your company stands for.
I don’t know your company’s customers.
I don’t know your company’s record.
I don’t know your company’s reputation.
Now—what was it you wanted to sell me?”**

**- Scowling Executive
From *Ogilvy on Advertising***

Sell Yourself First

The role of a consultant is not unlike that of a surgeon. In buying your services, clients may feel they are putting the health of their businesses, their finances, and their careers in your hands. So your first job is to earn their confidence.

You may have reams of relevant case studies and a blue-chip business card. But they won't make an iota of difference if the client doesn't believe that *you* will deliver what you promise. If the client doesn't trust you, your firm will be eliminated from the running.

Personal selling is not a grab bag of manipulative tricks to get clients to like you, but rather a strategy of engaging clients in a substantive discussion of the issues. For guerrillas, personal selling is not selling at all, at least not in the traditional sense. Instead, it's a give-and-take exchange with the client characterized by:

- Intense listening
- Insightful questioning
- Presentation of creative ideas.

If the client perceives that you understand the macro issues and nuances of the discussion, you will advance to the next step. If not, the client will politely show you the door.

Of course, have the stacks of case studies tucked away in your briefcase, just in case you're asked for them. They provide excellent backup. Remember, the key to selling yourself is to focus first on clients and their issues, not on yourself or your firm.

**“People come to your site for one reason: to solve a problem.”
– Vincent Flanders**

The Web Really Matters...a Lot

When customers enter a new store, they notice little things. They quickly size up the store's layout, the quality of the merchandise, the attentiveness of the sales staff, and the overall feel of the place. They form quick impressions and decide whether to shop or move on.

Web site visitors, especially those new to your site, are like those shoppers. They make decisions about the credibility and value of your site, often before the home page finishes loading. If the site appears unprofessional, slow, or out-of-date, your visitors are likely to move on, leaving you with lost opportunities.

Before you release your site to the public, ask five of your clients to review it. Ask them to be brutally honest in their reviews and to answer these questions:

1. What is distinctive about the site?
2. Is the content valuable?
3. Does the site convey a clear understanding of what your practice does?
4. Is the site's content helpful in addressing clients' issues?
5. Is it focused on clients' needs?
6. Would you bookmark the site?
7. Would it encourage you to call?

Use the results of the Five-Client Test to create a site that does more than hawk your services. Give clients what they need. And keep in mind the advice of Steve Krug, author of *Don't Make Me Think*: you "should not do things that force people to think unnecessarily when they're using your site." You want clients to be thinking about how you can solve their problems, not how to navigate your site.

A Final Thought

There is no magic formula for fame and fortune. A consultant must wear many hats—advisor, expert, salesperson, problem solver, coach, referee, banker, publisher, and author. As you juggle the demands of clients, bosses, and your life, toss one more hat into the air—marketer. Your steady focus on marketing, even in the face of client and project distractions, will secure your spot at the top of the heap.

Buzz for Guerrilla Marketing for Consultants

“Wow! If you’re the sort of person who tells someone how to build a watch when they ask you what time it is, this is the book for you. No baloney, essential, useful hands-on advice for anyone who’s serious about being a consultant.” – Seth Godin, author of *Free Prize Inside*

“Great consultants don’t just talk about marketing, they do it—every day. That’s why they win. Follow the marketing advice in this book, and you’ll outsell, outperform, and outlast your competitors.” – Jeffery Fox, marketing consultant and author of *How to Become a Marketing Super Star*

“Mike McLaughlin and Jay Levinson are two of the smartest, street-savvy marketers around. *Guerrilla Marketing for Consultants* distils their collective wisdom into a practical field guide, chock-full of practical tips and tactics.” – Harry Mills, author of *The Rainmaker’s Toolkit* and *Artful Persuasion*

About the Book

From management consultants, accountants, and lawyers to professional speakers, technology consultants, and Web designers, all professional service providers need new and powerful marketing programs to attract and retain clients. *Guerrilla Marketing for Consultants* will show you how.

Whether you're a seasoned veteran of consulting or new to the profession, you'll find hundreds of ideas to jump-start your practice. Packed with information on everything from A(dvertising) to Z(ines), this step-by-step guide covers it all.

The book is available at Amazon and bookstores everywhere.

About the Authors

JAY CONRAD LEVINSON is the chairman of Guerrilla Marketing International, a consulting firm serving large and small businesses worldwide. He is the creator of the *Guerrilla* series, which is the best-selling marketing series ever published. Levinson is a former vice president and creative director at J. Walter Thompson and Leo Burnett Advertising.

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