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Build Credibility, Value and Trust on a Shoestring

By George Torok

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Setting priorities in your business? Your first job is to sell. Selling is – writing the orders; receiving the cash; feeding the beast. If you don't sell; the beast, (your business), dies. The impact of selling is immediate. You may love it, but it is a beast. You need to feed it and control it.

Your second priority is marketing. Marketing is taming and grooming the beast. Marketing is everything that makes it easier to sell. Marketing is about sending messages – and everything you do or don't do sends a message. You are responsible for these messages because they impact the perception of your credibility, value and trust. The impact of marketing is long term. The best time to start marketing was yesterday. The next best time is today.

Use these low-budget techniques to build credibility, value and trust on a shoestring.

Be a guest speaker for community groups, schools and associations.

You most want to speak in front of prospects. But sometimes you need to take side steps to get there. There are over 8,000 associations in Canada. Check the directories at the library to find associations that may have prospects. Then contact the local chapters to offer a no-charge seminar or speech. Don't tell them you speak for free even though you do. Instead tell them that you normally charge, pick a number, but agree to waive your fee as a first time offer. The presentation must be of value and interest to the audience. It can not be an infomercial. Provide a handout with key points from your talk. Include information about your services along with your contact numbers and website on the handout. Ensure your introducer reads the introduction you prepare that establishes your expertise and what you do. But don't stand up there and sell – instead market by using examples of how you helped previous clients. Ask for a list of all attendees. If they refuse, collect everyone's business card for a draw. Give away a book, one of your products or 30 minutes of your service. It is more important to collect business cards than to give yours away.

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After your presentation ask the organizer to refer you to speak at other associations or other chapters of the same association. Other groups you might speak to are Rotary, chambers of commerce, and various networking clubs. You don't need to be a member to be a guest speaker. Prepare and rehearse your presentation. To become a better speaker read the book, "Secrets of Power Presentations", by Peter Urs Bender and visit Toastmasters, a non-profit association that teaches presentations skills. The book is in most stores and you can find a local Toastmasters club by visiting www.Toastmasters.org

Volunteer for a charity, community cause or association.

Budget your time wisely and volunteer for a cause or group in which you strongly support. If you do, then you will work willingly and passionately. You will feel good about your contribution . Others see you at your best. They have the opportunity to know you and like you. And we would rather do business with people we know and like. By volunteering on a committee or charity you contact others

who share your beliefs. And we like others who are like us. After working together as volunteers it is easier to discuss business opportunities. In this way you may discover new customers, and suppliers. You might also find partners for cross promotion or referrals. The bonus payoff from volunteering is positive media exposure. This might include photos and interviews that could result from your impact. You could join an established cause or you could simply organize your own event. A dentist donated one day of his time to give free fillings to children of single mothers just before Christmas. He received front-page coverage.

Write and publish articles

We grant tremendous respect to those who have published works. Write a book and that is an invaluable credibility tool. Case in point; before I wrote my book with Peter Urs Bender I was a nobody. After, I was an overnight marketing guru. I say 'overnight' because it took two years to write and lots of promotion. Nothing in business happens overnight, neither success nor failure.

You can and should start with something simpler than a book – articles that highlight your expertise. The simplest article to write is a tips list. It could be 'Three steps to prepare for _____'; 'Five questions to ask when buying _____'; 'Seven ways to save money on your _____'; or 'Ten tips for improving your _____'.

The most important step in writing is to start. The second most important step is to edit and rewrite. Forget about writing excellent copy the first time. I would be so disappointed with myself to find out you can write perfect copy the first time.

Where do you publish? You most want to be seen in the publications your prospects read. These might be trade and association magazines. Members tend to read them cover-to-cover. Of course it is wonderful to appear in a national business publication such as the Globe & Mail, Canadian Business, Profit or Small Business Canada. Copy your articles and send them to your clients and prospects. Post them on your web site and on the wall of your office – for visitors to admire and for you to be reminded that you are an expert.

Feed, tame and groom the beast and it will be your friend.

© George Torok is co-author of the national bestseller, "Secrets of Power Marketing", Canada's first guide to personal marketing for the non-marketer. He delivers seminars and keynotes to corporations and associations across North America. He can be reached at 800-304-1861 For more information the training programs and more marketing tips visit the web site

Fear of Selling

By Joann Javons

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When I discuss selling with professionals who want to put their business online, they start to squirm at mention of the very word.

When I ask professionals WHY they want to put their business online, these are their answers:

"I want to build credibility"

"You need to have a web site to be seen as a legitimate business today."

"To get feedback on my product."

"I want to increase my visibility."

"To establish a professional image online."

"To provide information."

True enough. All of these are good reasons but they are really the stepping stones to your end goal. Notice that the words "sell" or "market" aren't even mentioned on this list!

If you want to put your business online 'to build credibility', for example, why exactly do you want to build credibility? Yes, you want to establish credibility and trust in your relationships. But why?

Why Are You In Business?

The reason is that you have a product or service to sell. Aren't you in business to make an honest living doing something you love to do?

But "selling" sounds crass, aggressive, pushy and decidedly unprofessional to many of us. If that's true for you, I suggest you substitute two other words in your thinking: relationship marketing. In the end, the results are the same if you do it right.

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If you do any type of professional consulting, you're doing relationship marketing (or selling) because you want your client to say "yes" to the services or products you offer. When a potential client says "yes" to your product or service, you've just made a sale!

No one said you have to be pushy, arrogant, aggressive or obnoxious. Unless you want to go out of business. But you can also go out of business another way: by getting stuck on any of the stepping stones to your end goal. Credibility, trust, information are all part of relationship marketing but if you make these stepping stones your end goal, you have stopped short of having a successful business.

Getting Stuck On Relationship Building

Many professionals get stuck on the 'relationship' part of relationship marketing at the expense of the marketing. It seems easier to build relationships than to market something to those with whom we've built relationships.

But what is really getting in your way is fear, fear of somehow violating the credibility and trust you've built with your relationships.

Elena Fawkner, lawyer, writer, and online business owner, makes an excellent point in her article "Am I Afraid To Sell?" She says, "In other words, the focus on 'relationship marketing' has been so much on the relationship that the marketing begins to feel crass and a violation of trust. Many new online business owners report that they feel like they're taking advantage of the trust of those with whom they have forged a bond." If you feel like this, I recommend you read Elena's excellent article at: <http://www.ahbbo.com/afraidtosell.html>.

You will need to work through this fear if you want to be successful, online or offline. In many ways, it's even more critical online because the web is an impersonal, anonymous medium unless you focus on your goal: for others to say "yes" to your high value product or service. Building relationships is important but don't stay stuck at the relationship step of the process. You can build relationships and never make one single sale.

Make a decision to stay focused on your end goal. Do the stepping stones because credibility and trust are vital to your success. But they are not sufficient. Your end goal is to offer your visitors something that they want to say "yes" to. That's the reason to put your business online.

Set up your online business so that it achieves your end goal, not merely a stepping stone. For more on how to achieve your goal, see our article "Success Myths" at <http://www.private-practice-marketing.com.myths.htm>.

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