



## Ian Benjamin' s Consultant Newsletter # 15

**Hello from me, Ian Benjamin**

**Speaker, Trainer and Adviser to the Professions, Consultants and Corporations**

Presenter of the consultancy training workshops for Consultant Training Australia

### 1. Entrée

Communications consultant Steven Noble says newsletters should be like a good dinner. Start with a small appetiser, lead onto the more substantial main, then finish with a brief dessert. Bon appetit!

### 2. Many (*new*) consultants have difficulty with ...

...self promotion. This is the most common objection I hear from people making the transition to consulting. There is widespread distaste for the self-promotion that is required. More accurately, it is their perception of the level of self-promotion that is discomforting.

Such attitudes are unfounded in my view. Why? Read on ...

- a) It is highly improbable that anyone ever wins business by saying how fantastic they are. Not in our Australian culture. Commentators and practitioners agree that consulting is really about getting close to a client, finding out what **the client** wants, what **the client** really needs. It only involves talking about yourself if you are asked. We ask the client what they are focusing on, what issues they are planning to address, if they are happy with things. You get to this position by being **visible**.
- b) **Visibility** comes with being where your clients are – and this requires networking. Ask yourself, how many of your top ten prospects and advocates have you seen in the past three months? It's OK to substitute 'been in contact with' for 'seen' – but not on a permanent basis. Try an instant audit now. List your ten main advocates, clients and prospects, then write the date of your last contact with each one. Are you visible enough?
- c) Visibility also comes from **demonstrating your knowledge and expertise**. Speaking and writing can do this – they are important profile building activities. If you are always the person in the audience and not out in front, then you are letting everyone get ahead of you. We must undertake our own PD but in consulting we also need to build profile. Surely there are organisations that would be keen to have you speak or write.

David Maister in his 'The Trusted Advisor' says don't just be visible, **make an impact on the business of your clients**. Peter Block says successful consulting is having your advice implemented. Either way it's not possible if the client does not know that you're in business.

In short, **be seen, be heard, be read**.<sup>1</sup> If you find self-promotion difficult, you'll find trying to build a consulting business even more difficult. What about old consultants? There probably aren't any old consultants who have trouble with self-promotion. Thanks for that nice little trilogy Jon Manning, pricing consultant – [www.sansprix.com.au](http://www.sansprix.com.au)

### 3. Have you proposed to anyone recently?

The other day I saw three proposals that had been submitted to a client. The client had not used these services before and nor had they used any of the consultants. The task was one that the consultants would often perform, taking from 5 to 7 days to deliver. Of the three proposals:

- a) Only one numbered the sections of the proposal.
- b) One had 3 spelling errors that a 'grammar check' would have highlighted.
- c) Only one submitted a 'total project cost' quote while another put the price in as an 'estimate' and then invited the client to accept his proposal!
- d) One had 3 lists each containing more than ten dot points in support of the proposal. There was no sub-grouping of these points.
- e) Two were in *serif* font and one in *sans serif*.
- f) One was 3 pages in length, the others were two pages.
- g) Two of the consultants bid \$10,000. The third bid \$12,500.

And the winner was ... the one with the numbered sections (much easier for the client to follow the process as it was seen as sequential and as having discrete parts – logical, value added)...it had no mistakes ... it was the one with the 'total cost'... its dot points were in small sub-groups ... it was in serif font, 3 pages and it was the \$12,500 proposal.

It comes down to personal preference however I think that the numbering of the parts of your proposal emphasises its logical development, indicates orderliness and a systematic approach. It signals: 'I've done this before and I know where I am going.' The client could not have done the work themselves as they lacked the expertise. They appreciated the step-by-step approach.

Long lists blur the point being made – too much information. Personally, I think the *serif* proposals (tails on the letters) are easier to read, but *sans-serif* is more modern and elegant!

Another unsatisfactory aspect that I often see is undue emphasis on price with inadequate description of the deliverables.

Proposals are best if they convince the reader that you are the person to do the job or run the project. What do you think about all this? Are yours OK?

4. The details of consultant training workshops are viewable at [http://www.consultantraining.com.au/public\\_training.htm](http://www.consultantraining.com.au/public_training.htm)

## 5. Personally speaking

Recently I've been busy approaching organisations to speak at their forums. The release of my book certainly helps open doors. I used to do a lot of conference speaking but not so in the past few years. I am now back into it and enjoying it.

There have been many engagements recently, most of which are on the forum on my web site. This started with the Canberra Chamber of Women in Business Conference. Robyn Henderson also spoke about Networking. The day led to a number of engagements and it reinforced the value of doing profile building activities.

Writing the book involved a lot of thinking and a lot of reflection. As a result, I have taken a number of decisions involving change and some of that will be communicated to you shortly.

It seems I am always meeting people who attended the consulting courses. The back page of the Courier Mail recently featured a Maleny based B&B resort run by Doug Flockhart and his partner Donna Willett. See more at [www.bambooretreat.com.au](http://www.bambooretreat.com.au). Their consultancy operation OzSolutions is described at [www.ozsolutions.biz](http://www.ozsolutions.biz). They promote very well and their web site is a good example of a 'quality tangible'.

I also met Judy Peppard at a focus group she conducted for the libraries at Bayside council in Melbourne. Judy started her business early last year and now has a strong client base with state and local government. Judy conducts feasibility studies, evaluation activities and strategic planning and also works extensively in the library sector. Her web-site was set up just two months into her business and Judy is now planning to expand it from its one page format to include the names of some of her clients and some new services. You can see more about her at [www.practico.com.au](http://www.practico.com.au)

Tony Ryan and Eric Frangenheim are Brisbane based specialists in learning. Tony has published many books including one called 'The Ripple Effect – how you can make a difference to the world each day' and it really tells you how! I like his suggestions for

breakfast. Instead of hustling children who are running late, say 'Thank you ... for your great effort with your homework last night'. Child goes off to school happy with herself and the world and so it multiplies. An excellent read and gift. Both Tony and Eric have publications and can be visited – Tony at [www.headfirst.com.au](http://www.headfirst.com.au) and Eric at [www.rodineducation.com.au](http://www.rodineducation.com.au)

## 6. End bit

- Three pages is enough. If you want to make any comments, please email them and I can post them on the forthcoming notice board on my web site.
- 'Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.' – Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe (quoted in 'The Ripple Effect' see above, and in 'Don't Send a CV' – Jeffrey J Fox.

Here's to Good Consulting, *best wishes* - Ian Benjamin at Consultant Training Australia Pty Ltd P/L <http://www.consultantraining.com.au> [ian@ianbenjamin.com.au](mailto:ian@ianbenjamin.com.au)

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