

## Looking for Clients?

The need to win new clients raises the age old debate about “How far should we go?” Do we advertise? What about low balling? Should we pick on clients of specific firms? How about direct mail? or even, emailing (or spamming)? What do the ethical guidelines allow? And finally, should we be stooping to the depths of telemarketing . . .

Well, here’s the deal. It depends on how serious you are in treating your accounting practice like a professional business. Many accountants seem more concerned with finding an excuse not to get involved with marketing but they need to ensure that it is very much a part of the practice.

The first step is accepting that marketing and selling are incredible business tools, and concepts will apply to accounting firms just as much as any other business. It will be up to you as to how far you are willing to push the boundaries. We do not need to over complicate matters but, in essence, here is the marketing plan:

1. Build a database of potential clients you would like to act for – do this by industry.
2. Write to these companies on issues that they care about.
3. Phone and speak to them about what is important to them right now.
4. Get appointments and talk with them about their concerns.

If you fail to undertake these simple tasks, someone else will! It may be that in doing so, they will take a client from you and they will certainly win a client that you would never have given yourself the chance to win.

So, what is important to your clients and potential clients right now? It certainly is not having an audit or preparing accounts or their tax return. Disappointing I know, but so true. No, all the research I have come across points the same way and has done for years. This is what people typically care about when dealing with their accountant:

1. Minimising their tax.
2. Protecting their assets (cash, spouse, children, key directors, school fees, insurance, retirement funding etc).
3. Improving their profits and reducing their involvement.
4. Strategic planning.

Many firms have developed a simple enough direct marketing plan by adding a few names to a database, sending out letters, newsletters and seminar invites and occasionally getting some new business. It certainly pays its way BUT the real trick is to get on the phone and speak with these potential clients.

You must talk to them about what they care about. By all means, send out a few letters and newsletters every six weeks, occasional mailings etc, but when you send out a seminar invite, for example "How to reduce your tax bill without costing you a fortune!" ensure that you phone everybody and register all interest received.

The number of appointments you generate by using the phone increases by a factor of five so it really is, as the Americans would say, a "no brainer". Don't think about it anymore, just do it!

Another important point is that "the early bird catches the worm" so start your marketing plan now before everyone else. This will lead to a greater impact for your firm and you can start reaping the benefits of your advertising now.

By carrying out these simple tasks, you will be able to watch your business prosper with new clients and new assignments from existing clients. You will retain the staff who enjoy a challenge and love closing the deal and they will get out of the office more to see clients and friends of the firm.

Running an accountancy firm can be very rewarding if we make the right choices.

I hope that this provides some focus for your marketing plan.