

Dental Consultant Master Academy

evolve ■ emerge ■ influence

Transcript - Week 18 **The Art and Science of a Consultant**

This week I want to dive deep into what it means to be a consultant. After all, this is why you signed up for this program.

So far we have been talking about how to develop a business with multiple streams of income and now let's dive into the clear definition of the professional consultant.

Today I will take you through what it really means to say you are a consultant. I will talk about six categories of value that you can bring as a consultant. I will talk about various ways you may acquire consulting clients – and maybe these are things you are doing already but hopefully I can bring to light other ways to do this. And then I will also talk about what it means to be an excellent consultant.

So let's get started with today's video.

We know that a teacher needs a specific educational background and they are required to have formal certifications with enforceable limitations.

Anyone, at any time, and virtually anywhere can be a consultant. There is only one other calling that I know of that has as much influence over the public that requires a few formal qualifications and that is astrology. In fact I found that to be a palm reader requires more licensing structure at least on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City than is needed to be a consultant.

This is one good aspect of being a part of this dental consultant master academy. The hope is to set you apart from others who call themselves a consultant.

The value that you will bring will fall into one of these six categories:

Number one is content. This is the most common consulting value because most people enter a consulting profession based on a field they know well. These consultants did not go to school to become a consultant nor did they begin their career as a consultant. If you are an expert witness for a legal case in the court of law, you are in essence acting in the capacity of a consultant.

Number two is expertise. Many consultants who break out on their own in their specific industry do so because they have been intimately exposed to this specific area during their course of work. And no this is not illegal, unethical or even uncomfortable.

Number three is knowledge and in my definition, knowledge is largely experiential. People who have knowledge are the ones who have "Been there before." Knowledge includes an understanding of process as opposed to content. This means the content or process of the decision making regardless of environment, This is referred to as process consultation.

Number four is behavior and the value added in this case meaning interpersonal behavior. There are the consultants who facilitate groups to achieve conflict resolution or teach others how to make presentation and interact with an audience. They are virtually never behind the scenes, as the other consultants may be, but they are hired to be onstage. These consultants possess a set of interpersonal competencies that enable them to resolve conflict, enhance brainstorming and creativity, focus on critical issues, listen to customer/employee feedback, etc. Many times an objective third party is required and sometimes specific behaviors must be applied. Many people who specialize in these areas have found themselves naturally drawn to them because of previous successes in dealing with such issues.

Number five is special skills and these are people who have highly developed, well-developed skills that can be in great demand. These are often people who have talents and innate abilities. For example: Image consultants, who are able to improve one's appearance in the personal and professional life. An image consultant may know nothing about the clients industry and may not have precise expertise or knowledge of the clients industry but this professional –a consultant - has a talent for creating a certain look. Consultants in this area have a gift, or specialized talent that the client usually can't acquire on their own.

There is one certain dental consultant I am thinking about. About 13 yrs ago she was a dental consultant but now specializes as an image consultant for dental professionals.

Number six is a contact consultant. These are consultants who do so on the basis of being able to introduce clients to key contacts for the clients business. Yes, I know it may be hard to believe but there are dentists who are making six-figures annually by working with dentists to introduce them to the latest products and services.

You may think of former presidents or high-end executives who end up in these positions and there are dentists who now provide this type of consulting service.

These consultants are hired for their name value and they are paid for appearances at important meetings, conferences and they are on various boards possibly because they were a former president of the organization. Calling them consultants is a courtesy, not necessarily an accuracy.

Coaching, of late, has become its own entity in itself. Consultants have always had to coach their clients and they still do so today. I believe that coaching is a subset of consulting. A true consultant understands organizational dynamics and change management. This is what will make the consultant a better coach than someone who merely focuses on changing a client's behavior.

There is one point I want to make from the perspective of the consultant which I know to be true for many years now. There are three paths that must converge for you to be a successful consultant and they are: Market need which means that you must have an existing need to be able to create a market for consulting in your industry.

The next point is that you must have skills to meet the need of your industry. You must have or be able to develop the skills necessary to be the expert in your industry as a consultant. Fortunately, we can be life long learners, although I am not about to learn quantum mechanics nor matter what my market's need may be.

The important point here is that you must have passion. Have you noticed that passion is like a smile? It is contagious. You have to love what you do and be perceptibly enthusiastic.

Please note that having two of the above three is not enough to be a successful consultant. The greatest competency and passion will fail if the market need is not there and the most compelling need and highest passion will succumb to poor skills. You must develop all three of these. Be aware that you can not learn passion - -this is something you must feel!

Now I want to discuss with you what a consultant must have to present a professional image and confidence of a solid, successful firm of clients. At this point in this video I want to say that it is extremely difficult to acquire clients and it is extremely lucrative to maintain long-standing client relationships. It is also very difficult to lose a happy client.

I doubt that as members of this dental consultant academy you are not CEO's of large consulting companies so I will stress that it is useful to remember that the acquisition of clients is the bedrock of success and that such an acquisition will originate from a list I have up together for you in the weekly bonus.

Here are some examples of how I have acquired consulting contracts:

In the beginning I worked a few days each week as a dental hygienist through a temp agency. When I worked in these various offices I enrolled patients into periodontal therapy and the dentists would ask me how I was able to easily enroll patients into periodontal therapy. I was many times, invited back to work as a consultant in those dental offices. At this point in time I only came back for one or two days and that would be the end of the consult process for that office.

I also received client contracts from other sales reps in the areas where I have lived. This has worked very well. Get to know your dental sales reps as they will be your raving fans. It is a win-win to have you work with their clients when you are increasing their client's profits.

I now belong to the Academy of Dental Management Consultants and there are over 125 members and we are consultants in various areas of the dental industry.

Webinars and teleconferences have also worked well to retain clients as well as speaking at dental conferences. The sales funnel at the end of a webinar, teleconference or speaking at a conference is not only a power point slide with a call to action but I have a special form that everyone completes. I offer a no-charge strategy session with me, I get them on my list and I also have a raffle where the people complete the form, I collect the forms and then I give away a few of my products (usually products under \$200.00) to one or more in the audience.

There have been many times when the contacts I acquired seem very solid and well intentioned but they have gone absolutely nowhere despite my attempts to prospect and guarantee my sustainability. There have been many more times when a call out of the blue has resulted in a long-term client. These calls have been the result of having sown the seeds of my work in the three phases I have previously mentioned.

If our values are congruent, we can establish a relationship, which means that I trust you and you trust me. We are honest with each other both in sharing information and in our candor. Only then can we establish conceptual agreement (objectives, measures, and value to the client). The relationship with a potential client must be comfortable.

You will not be able to obtain a “YES” from a conceptual agreement without a relationship, nor can you obtain acceptance of a project without a proposal. You must understand the objective of working with a client before you can understand the next goal and then orient your conversation with supporting materials.

The average consultant tends to categorize their involvement with the client by describing the tasks to be performed. What you want to do which will be different is describe what the results are that they can expect.

Your conversations should be based on results and outcomes not on activities and tasks. The more you can emphasize results the more you will be worth. The more results focused you can be, the less you will be scrutinized for your time to accomplish tasks.

Both client and consultant must base their first meeting on the objectives of the consulting project. Both consultant and client are in agreement with the end results and the consultant is free to employ a variety of techniques and use his time to the client's best advantage. The more the engagement is based on alternatives, the more you - -the consultant -- will just become another hired hand.

The important piece here is when beginning a project you must gain a “conceptual agreement” which means you have an agreement on the objectives to be met. Measure these objectives to gauge the progress and talk about the value this will all offer their dental practice.

In some situations your client may not have a need to master any skills or techniques but the client simply requires situational, one-time expertise. This is that occasion as the “consultant and expert” only. This may mean that you bring a project such as a website or social media posts, images, etc and then once you turn this information over to the client you are gone from the project. The client is responsible for what happens after you leave. Some consultants may be selling dental practices and they are not responsible for what happens after the dental office has transitioned.

The other extreme is that a client needs your skills transferred as the end result itself. There is no large issue that requires reconciliation, or if there is, it is also useful as the means to help transfer the skills. This type of consultant shows the client (arbitrarily speaking) how to hold the fishing rod, how to cast, where to stand, and so on and so forth and demands practice and performance improvement before any fish are caught. This example may be a consultant who may do training on computer software in the dental office. The client is then responsible for using these skills on an ongoing basis, although the consultant may be called on for further comment, feedback, and analysis of progress.

Another type of consulting project may be one where there is a pragmatic range of interventions because they are based on the clients need and the combination of doing for the clients and helping the client to become self-sufficient. Both of these are legitimate goals.

Unfortunately, consulting will continue to be a profession that readily grows in quantity but not as readily in quality. The good news is that those of us who are providing professional, high-quality services will continue to grow rich. However, just as the average attorney earns far less than the Headline Defense Teams that you hear about in the public eye and this is the same for most consultants. The average consultant will not achieve great wealth nor establish a sound enough business to survive the gloomy economic crisis this world faces today.

Many consultants are retired dentists or dental professionals who are seeking to use their specific expertise or contacts to remain active and many more consultants are holding down part-time and even full-time jobs. Their consulting positions are only there offering them extra income in addition their primary occupation. I call this white collar moonlighting.

For most of time, consulting has been more reactive than proactive. Consulting responds to trends, fads and whims of our marketplace. Sometimes those who merely respond fastest are seen as the innovators when in reality there are very few people who provide new approaches proactively.

Excellent consultants will explore with clients their results which actually constitute improvements in performance, service, and quality and how well business goals are being met.

What I want to be understood here is that consultants worth their weight in gold will establish the objectives to be attained. They will measure results and share with their clients.

The very best client relationships you will discover are those that are based on conceptual agreement of what is to be accomplished. The “How” is inferior to the “What” – the end result. Talk with prospective clients about what their results will be not the how you do the work.

Think about these areas of consulting. Where do you fall? How will you communicate with a prospective client? What does your initial questionnaire look like? What questions will you ask to understand your client needs and how will your questions direct your goals for the client?

Please review your action sheet and the bonus section for this week to dive deeper into this process as a consultant. This is Debbie signing off. I wish you a great week and I will see you next week. Bye for now.

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