

# Chapter

## When It Pays to Advertise

*If you aren't going to make a case for profound, dramatic superiority, NEVER advertise.*

—DAN KENNEDY<sup>1</sup>

When we hear the word *advertising*, we tend to picture glitzy, high-budget television commercials for cars, beer, or movies, or full-color print ads for pharmaceuticals. Such advertising seems extravagant for consultants and questionable at best. While mass media advertising (for example, television ads) can help build brand awareness and may be effective for large, multinational firms, it isn't a good investment for most consultants.

Most consulting practices build their brand identities on the strength of their performance for clients, and referrals for new work follow. If word of mouth and your networks are not enough to sustain your practice, some paid advertising can help. But, instead of throwing around huge sums of money for splashy, expensive ads, consider using an assortment of affordable advertising programs that reach your desired clients, not the universe. Remember, the primary purpose of guerrilla advertising is to generate leads for new consulting work; brand building is a secondary concern.

### ■ GUERRILLA ADVERTISING

When properly executed, advertising is a powerful guerrilla weapon, but it can also be an expensive crapshoot. It's possible to reach your

precise target clients with timely and compelling offers that get prospective clients to pick up the telephone and call. It's just as easy, though, to create ill-timed ads that potential clients ignore.

With most paid advertising, you start at a disadvantage. Most consumers simply don't read or trust advertising because so many claims have proven to be exaggerated or untrue. Consumers have been bombarded with so much advertising that they've become desensitized and instinctively skeptical of ads. So, most skip right over or, at best, scan them.

And ads can be costly to create and run. A one-third page, black and white ad in a national business magazine costs more than \$20,000 each time it runs. And the costs of design firms, production resources, and writers mount up.

Putting together an ad campaign and then measuring its results can be complex, costly, and time consuming. And to work most effectively, your advertising must be integrated with all your other marketing efforts.

But advertising has its place in the guerrilla's marketing arsenal and can draw clients to your practice using the tactics outlined below.

## ■ GOING POSTAL: DIRECT MAIL

Initially, the suggestion that consultants advertise via direct mail might not seem like a great use of money, especially if you're mailing to a large list of unknown prospective clients. Most people don't like to receive junk mail, and response rates for direct mail are usually low.

Consultants have differing opinions on the value of direct mailings: some use it, but others don't. The guerrilla does use direct mail, but only under the right circumstances. For example, when the government issued new patient privacy regulations for health care providers, consultants used direct mail to inform clients of the upcoming changes and offered to help. Recipients read those mailings because the content was relevant, timely, and valuable. When public companies had to comply with the Sarbanes-Oxley rules for financial reporting, many consultants used direct mail to offer assistance with compliance programs.

In both instances, clients had immediate needs that direct mail addressed. In response to a mailing, one firm secured dozens of clients who needed help implementing changes required by new regulations. The mailing wasn't a generic recitation of the firm's qualifications, but addressed an immediate business problem. Unless you target an

immediate and known demand, direct mail is not an effective use of resources.

Here is a case in point. A personnel agency that specializes in providing interim salespeople to companies looking to augment their sales forces sent direct mail to dozens of partners of a large consulting firm. Each mailing arrived in a large, straw-filled box that contained a full-sized dartboard, a set of darts, and a personalized letter. One of the darts was lodged in the bull's-eye of the dartboard with a Post-it note attached promising that the agency would "Hit your sales targets every time."

Not only was this expensive mailing hokey, it was not relevant to the recipients. And the mailing was so large it gummed up the consulting firm's mailroom. The personnel agency's name went on the firm's "do not use" supplier list.

Direct mail doesn't always backfire. It has many advantages: You have total control over the look, content, and distribution. You can make direct-mail pieces personal, friendly, businesslike, humorous, hard hitting, or subtle and give them any look you choose.

Direct mail is ideal for making announcements and keeping relationships alive. It's an easy, inoffensive, and inexpensive way to give clients and prospective clients gentle reminders about you, your recent accomplishments, and what you can do to help them.

Direct mailings can be a cost-effective way to follow up with those you meet at speeches or other events and to build traffic to

#### GUERRILLA TACTIC: USING DIRECT MAIL

- ▶ Mail only to highly targeted lists, preferably a list you have created, not rented.
- ▶ Use caution with rented mailing lists because you have no idea if they will reach your target clients.
- ▶ Focus the subject of the mailing on a timely, specific, and urgent matter, not just your firm's qualifications.
- ▶ Be sure you can quickly follow up with every lead that the mailing produces.
- ▶ Handwrite some part of the mailing.
- ▶ Test the results of a small mailing before committing to a mass-mailing campaign.
- ▶ Send specialty items—like dartboards—with extreme caution.

your Web site by drawing attention to your news reports, articles, white papers, and information on seminars, workshops, or trade shows. Direct mailings can also make effective thank-you notes. With so much e-mail flooding the world, a handwritten note is often greatly appreciated.

## ■ READ ALL ABOUT IT: NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINES

For the big firms, a full-page ad in the *Wall Street Journal* can help build brand awareness, but if you ask 25 people who saw the ad whether they remember the firm or what it stood for, you're likely to get blank stares. Most newspaper and magazine advertising run by consulting firms is unimaginative, dull, and a poor use of money. In one recent full-page ad in a national newspaper, a firm's claim to fame was, "We Get It Done."

If you choose to use magazine or newspaper advertising to build your brand, stick with it consistently. One or two ads, no matter how creative or valuable, will not penetrate the imagination of most readers. One public relations consultant has run a full-page ad in an industry publication for years. She is now well known among a small group of professionals, but it took years and a tidy investment. If you go this route, be prepared to commit to a long-running ad campaign that will help you get through all the advertising clutter.

Unless you have a vault of money, it's wiser to use the print media to publish short articles, position pieces, reports, survey results, and announcements. If you need to promote an upcoming event, like a seminar, a print ad in highly targeted publications can be the best way to go. With some research, you can create professional print ads for relatively little money.

If you decide to use print ads, conduct research to find the publications read by your target market and make sure your ad runs in the right section or issue. Position your ad with other relevant subjects.

### GUERRILLA TACTIC: WHAT DO YOU WANT THEM TO DO?

Ask your ad's readers to take some action in response to your ad. Ask them to call your toll-free number, visit your Web site, or send you e-mail. This simple tactic will help you generate leads, measure the effectiveness of your ad, and suggest ways to improve it in the future.

You don't want your seminar on logistics consulting to run in the garden section.

For newspaper advertising, consider using your own designer instead of one provided by the newspaper. Every element of your ad should be perfect, and hiring your own designer will help you achieve that standard.

## ■ TELEVISION AND RADIO

Some of the large consulting firms can't resist the allure of television advertising. Urged on by their creative agencies, many of these firms ape beer, car, and fast food companies and take to the airwaves to build their brands. However, as soon as the ad appears, many television viewers are either off to the kitchen for a snack or zapping with the remote control.

Guerrillas love the exposure television provides, even if it reaches some who may not be their targeted clients. If you want to use television, work toward being a guest on news panels or targeted talk shows. Contact the producers and inform them of your expertise and your availability to discuss a particular subject. If you're an expert on how businesses can cope with funding company pensions, approach the producers of well-known business news shows with an offer to alert their viewers on the important issues about pensions. Appearing as a program guest eliminates the costs of producing commercials and buying airtime and gives you better exposure. As a guest, you're treated as an expert authority, not a pitchman.

The same rules apply to radio. Bring your expertise to radio listeners, not your latest pitch. If you are a tax consultant, volunteer to be interviewed on tax tips to save people time and money. Your expertise will be appreciated and rewarded because radio producers are always looking for interesting and informative guests.

Television and radio ads are expensive to produce and run. The costs include outlays for talent, crews, production companies, equipment, sets, and airtime, to name just a few. If you've set your sights on being a media star, use your expertise, not fancy ads. You'll go farther and will spend a lot less money.

## ■ TRADE SHOWS AND CONVENTIONS

Most industries have an annual bash (or a series of them) in the form of a trade show, where practitioners, suppliers, and others gather to

learn, sell, buy, and make contacts. At these large get-togethers, consultants can strut their stuff, meet new clients, catch up with old friends, and monitor the competition. Be sure to attend the annual trade show for the industry you serve.

If you're unsure which show is right for you, check [www.tsnn.com](http://www.tsnn.com), one of the largest trade show locators on the Internet. You can search for shows by industry, function, geography, and schedule. You'll get a description of events and instructions for registering.

A consultant's ultimate objective at trade shows is to speak at the general session, a panel, or one of the many seminars offered. Approach the conference organizers several months in advance to secure a spot. If you offer to speak on a compelling topic, it can land you an opportunity. And, if you give a good speech, you'll walk away with at least a few leads.

Decide whether you want to have a display booth at the trade show. It's increasingly common to see consultants with sales booths, so don't rule it out. To decide whether to invest the time and effort in a booth, consider several factors:

- Will the show's attendees include a fair percentage of decision makers?
- Can you get an affordable location that isn't in the northernmost outpost of the hall?
- Can you assemble a booth that adequately represents your firm, its culture, and capabilities?

If you choose to have a booth, you'll have access to thousands of contacts and potential clients in a very short period. Most trade show attendees fly down the aisles, so you need to offer something dynamic that captures their attention. Consultants can feature their current research, offer miniseminars on specific topics, and distribute gifts. You may not have as many visitors as the booth featuring a movie star signing autographs, but you'll attract people with an interest in your business.

A trade show booth can be time consuming and costly, particularly for multiday shows. Here are a few tips for getting the most out of your investment:

- Get training on trade show etiquette. If you haven't hosted a booth, you'll find it valuable to understand how to approach attendees and when to leave them alone.
- Don't be pushy. People will turn off if they think you're giving them the hard sell. Be respectful and courteous.

- Rotate your booth staff frequently. It is tough duty greeting people for hours and hours, so give your staff regular breaks.
- Turn off your cell telephones.
- Make sure visitors take something with them. Whether it's a research report, a key chain, or your business card, make sure they don't leave empty-handed.
- Take criticism lightly. Occasionally, an attendee will give you grief about something. Shake it off with a smile.
- Don't sit down. Attendees will feel as if they're interrupting you and may hesitate to approach the booth.
- Follow up promptly. If you make a promise to an attendee, follow up as fast as possible. Memories of trade shows quickly fade after visitors go back home.
- Conduct a competitive assessment. When you're not working the booth, scour the trade show and collect as much competitive intelligence as possible. You will rarely have a better opportunity to understand exactly what the competition is doing, so make the most of it.

Trade shows can be a rich source of leads for prospective clients, whether you have a booth or simply visit the event. So, go to trade shows, work like crazy to get on the speaking agenda, and consider the costs and trade-offs of sponsoring a booth at the show.

## ■ PRINTED BROCHURES GATHER MOLD

Guerrillas don't invest much in preprinted brochures that sit in a box in the closet. Instead, they develop the capability to create customized brochures. With currently available presentation software, it's easy to prepare and print brochures for specific uses.

If you are headed to a client meeting, create a brochure for that client and print a limited number of copies. Include the client's name on the brochure and align the content with the client's business needs.

Keep a small supply of brochures on hand in your office to send out in response to telephone or mail requests. Constantly revise and update the content of your brochure to reflect current topics. Those that just rehash your qualifications and service descriptions are a waste of money and paper. Brochures should be issue-based and should reinforce your marketing message on how you can solve clients' problems.

## ■ PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORIES

It all began with the Yellow Pages. Traditionally, businesses conveniently placed ads where many people were sure to look when they needed help. Some businesses don't need anything more than a Yellow Pages ad to attract all the business they want. For consultants, though, it's a different story.

Don't neglect the Yellow Pages, or white pages, but add other professional directories to the mix to get wider exposure for your firm and its expertise. Today, both print and online directories list businesses by their specialty areas. The chief virtue of directories is that they keep your name in the public view. Directories are mainly research tools: They give prospective clients convenient places to find your contact information or to gather information about you. It's important to be listed to show that you're a player in the game.

Arranging directory listings is easy: All you have to do is obtain a submission form, complete it, submit it, and your information will be published. Once your listing is published, your work is done. You usually have nothing more to do except update your listing periodically and pay the renewal fee. It's smart to pick a few paid directory listings.

For accessing journalists, talk show producers, and editors, consider a listing in the *Yearbook of Experts*. The publication is sent to leading print and broadcast journalists across the country. The companion Web site, [www.yearbook.com](http://www.yearbook.com), boasts a million hits per month. You can also list yourself in the Radio-TV Interview Report ([www.rtir.com](http://www.rtir.com)), which purports to be the largest database of authors and experts who are available for live and telephone interviews.

Depending on your specialty, you may also consider a listing with HG Experts.com ([www.hgexperts.com](http://www.hgexperts.com)), one of the largest Internet directories of experts, consultants, certified attorneys, expert witnesses, mediators, arbitrators, speakers, and medical and legal specialists.

As a member of other professional associations such as the Institute of Management Consultants, the National Speakers' Association, or the American Society for Training and Development, you can include a current directory listing for your practice. Your investment in directory listings will not be your mainspring for sales leads, but if you land one or two interviews or leads that result in projects, your ROI on those investments will be acceptable.

Some directory listings are free and valuable for consultants. The Open Directory Project, [www.dmoz.org](http://www.dmoz.org), is a Web directory of Internet resources that operates like a huge reference library. DMOZ includes listings for most businesses and is the largest human-maintained, free directory on the Web. The beauty of a listing in the Open Directory

Project is that it serves as a feeder site for large search engines that want to fill in their databases. A listing in DMOZ usually lands in smaller search engines.

A few well-placed directory listings are a cost of doing business for consultants. If you're looking to save money, this isn't the right place to do it.

## ■ START YOUR SEARCH ENGINES

Nearly 90 percent of all Internet traffic begins at search engines such as Google, Yahoo!, America Online, or Microsoft Network. At these sites, users enter search terms and receive a list of Web sites that they can visit. Therefore, consultants' sites must be listed on the most heavily trafficked search engines. The more prominently your site appears on search engine listings, the better the chance that a prospective client will click through to it.

Your site can be listed on Google at no charge. Other search engines also provide free listings, but the process can be time consuming and they don't accept all sites or guarantee when they will be posted.

You can accelerate getting your site listed on the major search engines by paying an annual fee. For example, [www.teoma.com](http://www.teoma.com) will list your site on several major search engines for a moderate fee. Microsoft's [www.bcentral.com](http://www.bcentral.com) has a similar service for submitting your site to the search engines. The fees for these services vary with the number of pages you submit, but generally, you'll renew your submissions annually.

Other services claim to submit your Web site to thousands of search engine sites simultaneously. Their fees are often small and the promised results big. Be careful with these services. If you are using search engine submission services, stick with the big guys.

You'll also find firms that will claim to optimize your site so it is guaranteed to land at the top of the list when a user enters the right keyword. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) consulting is a big business that helps you develop strategies to get top placement on the search engines. These firms can help you select the keywords that will trigger a search engine to display your site in response to a search query from a user. Research these firms carefully before choosing. Look at their clients, call references, and come to a complete understanding of their prices. Some of the SEO firms are quite good, but others are a waste of money. The industry changes rapidly. Be thorough in your analysis and update it at least every year.

### GUERRILLA INTELLIGENCE: KEEP YOUR SITE AT THE TOP OF THE LIST

Once you've submitted your site to the search engines, don't ignore your listings. Check periodically to see where your site shows up when you enter particular keywords. Ensure that your site rises to the top of the search engine list by monitoring and, if needed, changing the keywords you use.

## ■ PAY PER CLICK (PPC)

On most search engines, you can arrange to display a text-based ad when a user enters particular keywords. The keywords you should submit to the search engines are often obvious. For example, insurance consultants would include "insurance consultant" and "business consultant insurance" as keywords for their listings on search engines.

When a user types one of your search terms into the search engine, your ad appears with a description of your services and a link to your site. Each time a user clicks through to your site, you are charged a specified amount. Google, Yahoo!, and many other search engines offer this service, which is called Pay per Click, or PPC.

An auction process often determines the amount you pay for each click. Advertisers compete to have their ads placed at the top of the list that users see. The advertiser willing to pay the most per click will own the top spot. Fees can range from 15 cents to several dollars per click. You can run a campaign for as long as you'd like and change, at any time, how much you're willing to pay for each click.

Using PPC to generate leads is only effective if you can measure the conversion rate of click-through to leads and sales. Try this technique gradually to see if you are paying for semi-interested browsers, real potential buyers, or competitors trying to deplete your budget by clicking through to your site.

## ■ ONLINE MAGAZINES

Most business magazines have companion Web sites that will gladly accept your ads. The prices for these ads can be high, so stick with other alternatives such as trying to get an article published. You'll save money and demonstrate your credibility more effectively.

## ■ LINK STRATEGIES

Some organizations will agree to post links to your site on their sites, particularly those that focus on providing resources and information to their visitors. Frequently, they'll want a link on your site in exchange. If you have a zine, ask other relevant publishers to trade links in an upcoming issue. It's an easy, free way to cross-promote your practices. You can use the link to announce upcoming events, offer a recently released report or just let readers know you have a zine that might interest them.

A large consulting firm recently spent over \$75 million for an advertising and branding campaign that featured ads in the highest circulation newspapers and magazines around the globe. For guerrillas, that kind of investment is sheer folly. The campaign may bring the firm's consultants to the table when a project is up for grabs, but it won't get them any work if their ideas, relationships, and sales processes are flawed.

Invest wisely in an assortment of targeted advertising programs. And remember, your primary intent is to generate leads and, secondarily, to build a brand. That's how to make your advertising investment pay off.

### GUERRILLA INTELLIGENCE: SIX RULES OF ADVERTISING FOR CONSULTANTS

1. Advertise to generate leads. Build your brand through your work with clients.
2. Advertising expense and advertising effectiveness are not related. You can draw profitable clients to your practice on a shoestring advertising budget.
3. Make your ad stand out. Consultants' ads tend to look alike and are jammed with platitudes that don't impress readers.
4. The best ads offer service and encourage readers to take action.
5. Never attack your competitors.
6. Explain the services you offer and the value they provide.

# Chapter

## Write This Way

*There's something I've been trying to say to you/But the words get in the way.*

—GLORIA ESTEFAN<sup>1</sup>

Marketing literature recommends that consultants write and publish reports, articles, and case studies so they can dazzle clients with their brilliance and attract business. But like most conventional marketing wisdom, publishing can backfire and leave consultants with little or no return on their marketing investment.

To benefit from writing and publishing, you must make a long-term commitment to publishing *continuously*. You must also concentrate on your area of expertise and carefully aim your writings at your target audience. Your publishing efforts may improve your writing skills but if they don't bring in new clients, it's not worth the effort.

Publishing one or two pieces may produce short-term results and those shiny reprints look good in brochure folders, but for guerrillas, that's not enough; guerrillas publish to get client leads.

### ■ WHY PUBLISH?

Clients call consultants as the result of referrals, but they also find consultants as a result of materials they read. It only takes one good idea to motivate a potential client to pick up the telephone and ask for help. And your record of thought leadership can make the difference between winning and losing the job.

### GUERRILLA INTELLIGENCE: WHY PUBLISHING MATTERS

Publishing is a great way to *demonstrate* your value to clients in a nonselling manner. Do you wonder if publishing that white paper you've been thinking about will yield results? According to a report by Bitpipe and Forbes.com, 77 percent of corporate and IT executives pass on white papers to colleagues, and 68 percent use them to contact distributors and vendors.\*

#### Six Reasons to Publish

1. Establish your expertise with prospective clients.
2. Enhance your relationships with existing clients.
3. Generate leads for work from new and existing clients.
4. Improve your name recognition.
5. Demonstrate your competence.
6. Build your stockpile of intellectual assets for future use.

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\*Statistics on use of white papers is from "2004 Forbes.com and BitPipe Study: Readership and Usage of White Papers by Corporate and IT Management," p. 2.

Being published gives consultants instant credibility; it automatically qualifies them as authorities. It's natural for clients and prospective clients to be attracted to consultants who are thought leaders in their fields.

Strangely, the flood of information we receive has intensified, not satisfied, the demand for high-value information. Clients are always hunting for objective insights into how their performance and business operations stack up against others and what the future holds for their industry. Publishing your work, though time-consuming, is a cost-effective marketing tactic you can use to give clients the value they seek.

Guerrillas view writings and published pieces as fungible, reusable assets that will provide an ongoing return on their investment. A consultant's writings can be used to support future proposals, press releases, media kits, zines, and Web site content.

Shape your writings for multiple purposes. Write pieces that can be converted into speeches, white papers, books, audios, or videos. Think of your writings as a database that you can reconfigure and tailor to a variety of needs.

## ■ A PUBLISHING STRATEGY

With so much information circulating these days, a one-shot or scattergun approach to publishing won't even register in your targets' minds. Publishing an article in an industry journal once or twice a year won't attract many clients.

Establish an ongoing presence by publishing frequently each year. Make sure that your writings target an audience that will enhance your consulting business; otherwise you'll be spinning your wheels. Don't scatter your pieces all over the place; concentrate on submitting them only to those outlets that reach your target audience.

To build name recognition, visibility, and attract clients, commit to writing a regular column or pieces for a newspaper, magazine, or for a Web site that your clients are likely to frequent. Your objective is twofold: to build a following of readers who will be your advocates; and to amass writings that convey the value of your ideas to clients and become assets for future use.

A systematic and continuous publishing strategy is the best way to both build your base of intellectual assets *and* exhibit them. When properly implemented, a well-planned publishing strategy will give you clear guidelines on what to publish where and for which audience. A systematic approach will also carry you through the sometimes agonizing process of writing and publishing because you'll have your goal firmly in sight.

You should commit at least one-third of your marketing budget to publishing. That may seem high, but your strategy must comprehensively cover every element in the publishing process:

- Finding hot topics
- Researching those topics
- Writing, editing, and rewriting
- Finding the right publisher
- Marketing your work

Publishing has drawbacks. Writing and publishing can detour you from your core business. It's easy to get bogged down with necessary evils like editing, meeting deadlines, and coordinating with sources, editors, printers, agents, and publishers. And it may be a challenge to find time in your already insane schedule.

Most consultants think that the writing experience they have gained from project work is sufficient for writing articles. But their writing may not be in the style or voice appropriate for

most publications. Don't assume you can just transfer your client writing skills into polished prose that will satisfy an editor. It rarely happens.

For example, redundant words creep into consulting prose like vines in rainforests. In his classic book, *On Writing Well*, William Zinsser calls clutter “the disease of American writing” and says that we are “strangling in unnecessary words.”<sup>2</sup>

Consider these bits, drawn from consultants' writings: “a 5 percent positive revenue increase”; “two parallel paths”; “Your satisfaction is our main priority.”

You are writing to draw readers to your practice, so look for help if you need it. By working for even a short period with a writer or editor, you can learn how to eliminate jargon and consultant-speak and to write clear prose that readers can easily grasp.

The fear of writing for publication prevents many consultants from ever getting started. Writing—like most disciplines—can be learned, but it usually takes effort and practice. It doesn't help that having pieces rejected is a standard part of the publishing business. But guerrillas take rejection in stride and eventually break through to become published authors.

## ■ PUTTING FINGERS TO KEYBOARD

You can make writing easier for yourself by mastering the following steps.

### ► **Focus**

Consultants are famous for advising clients to focus on those things they do best and leave the rest to others. The rule of focus applies equally to writing. Before you begin to write, identify a topic that you're truly qualified to write about, focus on exactly what you plan to write, and develop your point of view on that topic.

Don't start writing if you only have a vague or general idea and hope that the central theme will emerge. Start only when your focus is clear and when it's something you're ready to share with the world. Then plan how to go about it.

### ► **Maintain a Clippings File**

Create a clippings file where you can save articles, quotations, reports, and other information that you cut or copy from newspapers, magazines, and newsletters. Also include information that you print

from the Web. Make sure that each clipping has the date and name of the publication. As your collection of clippings grows, organize it by subject matter.

### ► **Outline**

We all cringe at the thought of outlines with Roman numerals, sub-points, and other creativity-sapping techniques. Even so, it's imperative to begin with an outline of some kind. Find a method you're comfortable with, whether it is mind-mapping or writing key words and phrases. Don't stick with Roman numerals just because Mrs. Kelly, your seventh-grade English teacher, said that's how it's done.

Whatever technique you use, make a list, in no particular order, of all the important points you want to cover. Write either key words or complete sentences (whatever helps you identify essential ideas). Then organize the entries you compiled in the order that you plan to address them. If you feel that you have too many items for the article or for your target publication, consolidate or delete.

### ► **Give It a Name**

When you've completed your initial outline, name each section and under each, list in detail the information you want to discuss. Identify all facts, information, or leads that you need to research or check further. Jot down where you would like to include a quote, anecdote, illustration, sidebar, or other device. At this stage, you should be able to create a brief abstract of the piece that potential publishers can review.

### ► **Identify Targeted Publications**

The old saying "all dressed up and nowhere to go" applies to unfocused, nontargeted articles. As you put together your thoughts, identify the publications that might be suitable for your piece. The rules and schedules for submitting articles to publications vary. Some require you to submit a query letter asking if the article is suitable for publication; others don't. Some publications have yearlong lead times for publication; others can get you in their next issue.

If you understand the rules of the publications that you target, it will make your job as an author easier. Contact publications to obtain their requirements for submissions—what type and what subject matter they accept, the style and format required, and their return policies. Determine which publications accept pieces from freelance writers, who owns the rights to published works, and if the staff prefers to communicate by e-mail or postal mail.

Numerous resources can help you identify appropriate publications. One useful reference is *Writer's Market*, which is available in print or online and includes information on thousands of editors.

### ► **Create a Research and Writing Schedule**

A consultant's to-do list is usually overwhelming and your desire to research and write often falls to the bottom of the list. There never seems to be enough time. Consultants often find it difficult to write for publication simply because they don't set aside enough time for this task.

It's usually preferable to complete all your research before you write. With the Internet, however, you may be able to do both simultaneously. For most people, writing goes more smoothly when their research is complete. But proceed according to your own preference and style.

Block out the days and hours that you'll actually write and what you plan to accomplish in those time blocks. Build in sufficient cushion for editing, which invariably takes longer than expected, and the many other delays that always seem to arise. They include postponed interviews, difficulty getting crucial materials, those pesky client commitments, and the unavailability of others on whom you depended. And frequently, you have to go back and do additional research and fact checking.

You can write anywhere, so seize on all opportunities. If you're waiting for a flight, standing in a supermarket line, or attending a meeting, take a few minutes to jot some notes or organize your thoughts. Although it's nice to have multihour blocks of time, you can train yourself to write effectively in short intervals.

### ► **Be Flexible**

As you're writing, you may find that one of your key concepts no longer holds true, that your organizational structure misses the mark, or that a celebrity's quotation, around which you built a major point, is simply too stupid to print. Be prepared to make necessary adjustments that will maintain the integrity of your original idea and the value you're trying to deliver.

## ■ THE WRITING PROCESS

Noted journalist Gene Fowler once commented, "Writing is easy. All you do is stare at a blank piece of paper until drops of blood form on

your forehead.”<sup>3</sup> While we have more writing tools at our disposal today than Fowler could have imagined, writing hasn’t changed all that much. What has changed, though, is how readers actually read.

In your writings, provide practical information in an easy-to-read format: “Five Ways to Lower Group Health Costs,” “A Foolproof Quality Control System,” or “Reasons to Always Promote from Within.”

Compose headlines that will capture readers’ attention and make them want to read further. Don’t try to say everything in the headline, but try to find a clever or interesting way to convey what your article reports. Follow up your headline with a lead sentence that reveals the most important information and then elaborate on those points in subsequent sentences and paragraphs.

Most business readers scan rather than read. Usually, they glance at the headline and lead sentence and race through the remainder in search of key words or phrases. When they spy those keys, they read in more depth, but often only for a sentence or two.

Assist readers by bulleting key points. This device quickly summarizes your important content and signals readers when they should read further or more closely. When you build a reputation as a writer, readers will scan less; they’ll dive right in because they want to learn your views.

Keep your language simple and your sentences short. Try to inject humor and enthusiasm, but above all make your writing clear. Never forget that your goal is to communicate, not to show off how many multisyllable words you know or how poetic, clever, or funny you are.

Freely provide examples that illustrate your points. Examples make lessons come to life. Whenever possible, include case studies

### GUERRILLA ALERT: NO HORN-TOOTING ZONE

In writing for publication, eliminate self-promotion. Many editors won’t publish pieces that they consider commercial. At the end of your feature, include only your name, firm, telephone number, e-mail, and Web addresses. If readers feel that your piece is self-serving, they will stop reading it. Furthermore, blatant self-promotion will diminish you in their eyes and could ultimately prove harmful to your practice.

If you get a byline or are otherwise identified as the author of your work, readers will get the message loud and clear. They will judge you on the quality of your ideas and if they are top rate, you and your practice will be regarded accordingly.

that describe the situations under discussion. Case studies are an excellent device to help readers retain information.

Keep your writing as brief as possible. Eliminate unnecessary repetition; assume that you're writing for intelligent readers who lead busy lives.

Avoid dense pages by including lots of white space. Thin margins and tightly packed pages intimidate readers and don't provide convenient havens where they can stop to comprehend what they just read. Break up your text with headings and subheadings that inform readers what is to come.

When appropriate—and only when it's actually how you feel—be provocative. Controversial writings garner more interest than those that echo collective wisdom. Express a strong point of view and don't be afraid to take a different angle or position. If most recent articles warn about the dangers of debt financing, set forth the advantages. Taking an uncommon or unpopular position will attract the attention of editors, agents, and readers. It will also be of interest to the many independent thinkers in positions of power and influence.

Provide an explicit call to action that tells readers what to do with the information you have provided. If you have proposed a new way to reduce factory overhead costs, be sure to include a three-step program for getting started. If your article extols the virtues of new tools that speed the delivery of customer orders, be sure your readers know how to find them. Calls to action confirm that you understand the problem, especially its practical aspects, and that you have solutions.

#### GUERRILLA INTELLIGENCE: TEN ATTRIBUTES OF A GREAT ARTICLE

1. Informs, educates, and entertains the reader
2. Has a distinct point of view
3. Is jargon-free
4. Is easy to read
5. Solves a problem or saves time
6. Is simple, but not simplistic
7. Can be used for other purposes such as speeches or special reports
8. Contains a call to action
9. Has a way for readers to contact you
10. Creates interest in your other work

**GUERRILLA INTELLIGENCE: EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED**

Consultants are used to being surprised by client requests, scope changes, and client “emergencies.” Writing and publishing will also bring the unexpected. The best-laid plans, the tightest outlines, and schedules must be changed when new information emerges and major changes occur. A publisher may delay your piece, edit it beyond recognition, or even ask for a complete rewrite if there have been changes in your topic since the original submission. When it comes to writing and publishing, *nothing* is written in stone.

Adopt a consistent format for all the writings on your Web site by using similarly designed pages. Design each page to be consistent with your firm’s overall visual identity, business cards, and promotional materials. Create templates so that all your pieces have a uniform format when printed or displayed on the reader’s computer. If all your articles have the same look, they’ll be suitable for binding, which will extend their life. Consistency with your visual identity will help you look professional and promote your brand.

You need to maintain uniformly excellent quality and content in your writings. If your articles are not vastly superior to the usual run-of-the mill stuff, you will be wasting your time. Anything less than first-rate work will damage your reputation and defeat the purpose—growing your business.

**■ MARKETING WHILE WRITING**

Finding time to conduct research and prepare items for publication is always difficult when you must balance those activities with a tough client assignment. Guerrillas take advantage of this apparent dilemma by including clients in the research and development process. Once you’ve worked out a core set of ideas, discuss your emerging concepts with clients and solicit their feedback. They may help solidify your ideas, add a dimension that you missed, or give you quotable examples and statistics.

If your piece is about a new way to organize a sales force, seek opinions from several clients who are involved in that part of their business. Clients usually welcome the opportunity to help, and most

appreciate being quoted. Plus, you get to show clients that you are always thinking of ways to help them, and you have an opportunity to explore any other issues that may arise during the conversation. By involving your clients in the writing process, you remind them once again about you, your firm, and your interest in their company.

## ■ SELLING WHILE YOU SLEEP

Guerrillas are always on the lookout for a return on any investment, including the time and effort it takes to develop intellectual assets. One possibility is to offer your particularly valuable material for sale. Some consultants offer premium content to clients for a fee by permitting special access to in-depth reports, collections of articles, and other tools that clients find helpful. The consulting firm, McKinsey & Company, makes this service available to clients and others with great success.

Other consultants compile articles, speeches, and even videos into a cohesive package on a relevant topic and offer it for sale through their Web sites. One sales consultant offers an advanced sales training package of three videos, a workbook, a three-CD audio program, and an e-book on his site.

The revenue from these sales can be substantial and, assuming the material is of the highest quality, consulting assignments often follow quickly.

## ■ THAT'S THE IDEA

In the past, a well-designed brochure, a good sales pitch, and a respected reputation were all it took for consultants to reel in new clients. Well, those days are gone.

The consulting business is based on ideas and solutions; writing about and publishing your ideas can reinforce your expertise with existing clients and attract new clients. Whatever the size of your consulting practice, publishing great ideas is a competitive equalizer in the market that will help you win projects for your firm.