

# Chapter

## What Is Guerrilla Marketing for Consultants?

*Marketing is everything.*

—REGIS MCKENNA<sup>1</sup>

Although marketing has many definitions, for guerrillas, marketing is a full-time business that includes every aspect of a consulting practice. It begins the moment you decide to become a consultant and never stops. Marketing involves more than just trying to sell your services; it affects how you comport yourself, run your practice, bid on projects, perform for clients, and build relationships.

Guerrilla marketing extends beyond selling and completing projects—it applies to *everything you do*. Your firm's name, its services, methods of delivering services, pricing plan, the location of your office, and how you promote your practice are all part of guerrilla marketing. And there is much more, including the clients with whom you choose to work, how you answer the telephone, even how you design your invoices and envelopes. The object of guerrilla marketing is to build and maintain *profitable relationships*, not merely to get clients.

### ■ YOU ARE THE PRODUCT

As a consultant, you face a vastly different challenge than those who sell cereal or toothpaste. *You* are the product and, unlike a bottle of

mouthwash, your services are expensive, intangible, and sold *before* they are produced. Your success hinges on the relationships you forge and the quality of your work. You must focus all your efforts on those factors: It's your guerrilla mission. Everyone you deal with—especially your clients—must be convinced that you will always deliver what you have promised.

## ■ VALUE, VALUE, VALUE

Consulting begins and ends with results. To succeed, you must offer and deliver results and solutions. You must deliver undisputed value to your clients and everyone else in your network. Value is the foundation on which you must build your marketing.

If your services can't meet those standards, put down this book now and focus on building your consulting skills, not on marketing.

## ■ TRADITIONAL VERSUS GUERRILLA MARKETING

Many consultants have taken to the airwaves to promote their practices. Large firms use mass media advertising, event sponsorships, and public relations to grab attention. The resulting brand wars not

WHAT IS GUERRILLA MARKETING FOR CONSULTANTS?	
<i>Traditional Marketing</i>	<i>Guerrilla Marketing</i>
Central to the business	Is the business
Fuzzy message	Focused message
Consultant-focused	Insight-based
Invest money	Build intellectual assets
Build brand identity	Build client relationships
Enhance revenue	Enhance profit
Create media perception	Reveal reality
Tell and sell	Listen and serve
One size fits all	One size fits none
Take market share	Create markets

only are expensive, but also emphasize the sharp differences between traditional marketing programs and guerrilla marketing.

## ■ SIX PRINCIPLES OF GUERRILLA MARKETING FOR CONSULTANTS

Open any marketing textbook and you are likely to read about the classic *Four Ps* marketing model, which advocates using a mix of product, place, price, and promotion to create customer demand. For decades, marketers have used the Four Ps to decide where they should sell products, at what price, and whether to include buyer incentives. Today, the Four Ps are no longer enough to penetrate the fog of information about products and services. The guerrilla extends marketing to six more principles.

### ► **Principle 1: Insight-Based Marketing Wins**

Al Ries and Jack Trout, in their classic book, *Positioning*, remind us, “Today’s marketplace is no longer responsive to the strategies that worked in the past. There are just too many products, too many companies, and too much marketing noise.”<sup>2</sup>

Modern marketers are busy plastering every available inch of our world with their messages. Bathroom stalls, grocery store floors, and even bunches of bananas are now advertising spaces. Consumers are weary of the onslaught and tune it out. The rising popularity of digital video recorders that let you zap out television commercials proves the point.

#### GUERRILLA INTELLIGENCE: ZERO TOLERANCE FOR FLUFF

Clients and prospects have zero tolerance for marketing fluff, but a deep thirst for ideas that can help them. Selling services is not just about price, qualifications, or your firm’s long string of success stories. First and foremost, it is about the insights and ideas you bring to clients. If you can’t provide great ideas, you might as well stay home.

Clients also ignore jargon-rich and content-free messages. They have become desensitized to such messages and skeptical about whether they reflect reality.

Your insights into an industry, a discipline, or a specific company should be the fuel for your guerrilla marketing plan. Your qualifications may get you that first client meeting, but the ideas you propose will be your strongest selling points.

Consultants are often hesitant to disclose their best insights in their marketing materials. However, insights are the guerrilla's ultimate weapon. They cut through the marketing morass. Frame your marketing to help clients resolve urgent, substantive issues. Give them original, insightful, and valuable ideas at every step of the marketing process.

Don't be afraid that you will give too much away before you are hired. Howard Aiken, co-inventor of one of the world's first computers, advises, "Don't worry about people stealing an idea. If it's original, you'll have to ram it down their throats."<sup>3</sup>

### ► **Principle 2: Guerrilla Marketing Is Cohesive and Coordinated**

Guerrillas employ a wide assortment of marketing tactics to send cohesive messages to targeted clients. They use their Web sites, newsletters or zines, speeches, research and survey reports, presentation materials, proposals, endorsements, testimonials, references, and even their letterhead and business cards. Unless your marketing strategy is well integrated and all elements are coordinated with each other and your overall plan, they won't get the job done.

Each of your marketing approaches must support, reinforce, and cross-promote the others. Your goal is to imprint multiple, positive impressions on clients in your target markets. The right mix of marketing tactics working in unison will create an overall market impact that is more potent than the sum of its parts.

Reference your articles and Web site in your proposals and your research in direct mail and speeches. Design your business card and Yellow Pages ad to promote special features of your practice. If your firm specializes in improving warehouse workers' productivity, highlight that fact; or if strengthening employee attitudes is your forte, showcase it in all your market communications.

Clients equate success and competence with sustained presence, so blanket your targeted industry. For a cumulative effect, hit your target markets simultaneously on many fronts. When clients

repeatedly see your articles, read about your speeches, and see the results of your research, they will accept you as an expert and fight to hire you.

► **Principle 3: Consulting Is a Contact Sport**

Relationships are the lifeblood of a consulting practice. Most consultants spend considerable time in contact with clients but fail to build enduring client relationships. Forging long-term relationships can take months or even years. Guerrillas invest in building those relationships as the core of their marketing strategy.

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GUERRILLA CONSULTING RELATIONSHIPS ARE BASED ON . . .

- Mutual respect and trust
  - Deep knowledge of the client's business
  - Straight talk, honesty, and objective advice
  - Multiple interactions over time
  - Personal chemistry
  - Value for client and consultant
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Strong relationships are essential to successful marketing; they provide the path of least resistance to profits. When you invest in your existing client relationships, your marketing efforts will yield higher dividends and generate larger and more frequent projects with your current clients and their networks.

Try to produce 60 percent of your new business from current clients or referrals from current clients. They will provide you with more business with less effort at a lower cost.

A superb performance record and strong relationships will have a multiplier effect on your marketing efforts. They will position you at the head of the pack for new consulting projects. You will be invited to work on projects before your competitors even hear about them, and you will receive recommendations for other highly prized assignments.

Be selective about relationships. Seek to build long-term relationships instead of those that last for one or two projects. Expect some clients to keep you at arm's length and to maintain a strict

### GUERRILLA INTELLIGENCE: RAISING THE BAR ON EXPECTATIONS

A strong client relationship can be a two-edged sword. The benefits can be enormous, but clients may demand more from you as their expectations grow along with the relationship. It is a paradox of consulting that it can be harder to sell to existing clients than to new ones.

supplier-customer relationship that focuses solely on getting more for less. Those relationships are seldom worth your effort.

Also build supportive nonclient relationships. A public relations consultant may need to join forces with a freelance copywriter to properly serve a client; a technology consultant may need a computer programmer to sort out thorny technical issues.

To meet client needs, rely on a cadre of trusted associates who can fill in project gaps. Nonclient relationships with colleagues, suppliers, past clients, and even your competitors can provide a competitive advantage. Treat them with the same care as clients . . . plus, they may become clients or refer business to you.

#### ► **Principle 4: High Tech Is for High Touch**

Rely on technology. It can provide untapped opportunities to bring new dimensions to your business. Use low-cost software to produce targeted communications for clients, instead of tired old boilerplate that clients routinely pitch in the trash. Stay on top of virtually every detail of your industry, clients, and competitors for just pennies a day. Package and repackage your speeches, research, books, and articles. Publish and sell them through Internet channels to earn money while you sleep.

Create personal connections with clients and prospects. With a few keystrokes, reach out to your prospects, clients, and network with up-to-the-minute information and ideas that encourage dialogues. Use e-mail and your Web site to give clients and prospects a resource that will help them solve problems and establish you as an expert. Technology should *supplement*, not replace, personal contact with your clients and prospects.

Guerrilla clients expect every consultant to be technologically advanced. Clients don't want yesterday, they want tomorrow; and

technology is the gateway to tomorrow. Tip the competitive scales in your favor by integrating powerful, low-cost technology into every aspect of your practice, from gathering business intelligence to marketing, billing, and revenue generation. Use technology to manage and simplify your practice, strengthen client relationships, reduce reliance on high-priced specialists, and promote your practice, guerrilla style.

► **Principle 5: Focus on Profits, Not Fees**

It is not true that any revenue is good revenue. The guerrilla measure of success is not how much money you make, but how much you keep. A long-term, high-fee project that isn't profitable can lock you into a ruinous financial downspin.

Keep a handle on all operating costs and make pricing decisions that will yield high profits down the road. Walk away from projects that can't meet your profitability goals, no matter how large the fee.

► **Principle 6: One Size Fits None**

For decades, Hong Kong's Jimmy Chen's Custom Tailors have delighted customers with finely tailored, custom clothing, despite overwhelming competition from lower priced options. In Jimmy Chen's shop, one size fits none. Each customer order begins with the basics, but after a series of careful fittings, every garment is shaped to fit the customer's precise dimensions and to meet demands for high-quality materials and workmanship.

Tailor your marketing as if you were crafting a custom suit. Start with the basics—a vision for the business, your value proposition, and the markets you will pursue—and then shape the details.

Meet the precise needs of your clients and the market. Strike a balance between building on your existing business and attracting new clients. Adjust this balance as your practice matures.

Create a marketing plan. It will force you to examine each project in detail and confront the tough issues—who are your clients, what do they need, and what can you do for them? As Harry Beckwith notes in *What Clients Love*, "Planning teaches you and your colleagues about your business . . . writing a plan educates you in a way that nothing else can."<sup>4</sup>

Your marketing plan doesn't have to be a book-length volume brimming with colorful charts and graphs. Your plan should be comprehensive, but simple enough to be clear to your colleagues, clients, and suppliers.

Begin with a few well-crafted sentences. Once you sift through your options and make critical marketing decisions, identify and launch the guerrilla marketing weapons that will move your practice in the desired direction. After you get started, you can broaden your plan or embellish it with analyses, charts, and appendixes.

## ■ FOLLOWING YOUR PLAN

Marketing can be a painfully slow process that moves in sudden bursts, instead of in a predictable fashion. The speed of your progress can be surprising and tempt you to pull back on your marketing efforts. On other occasions, what appears to be stagnation may make you want to abandon your plan and begin again.

In either case, take the long view and stick with your plan. It will take time for the market to recognize and trust you as an expert. Sudden changes to your strategy or market identity can create confusion and set back your marketing gains:

- *Adjust your plan, but first give it time to take hold with your clients and prospects.* How long? In some cases, results are evident in the first few months. In others, it can take longer. Make patience and consistency your allies.
- *Market yourself creatively.* Following the pack is a surefire path to oblivion, so blaze new trails. Keep in mind that your goal is to win clients, *not* marketing or advertising awards.
- *Invest your hard-earned cash, time, and energy in marketing.* For the guerrilla, time is not money—it is more valuable than money. To maximize the return on your investments, take the “brains-over-brawn” approach to conserve your resources.
- *Be flexible.* Adaptability is the guerrilla’s strength. Carefully monitor the results of your marketing tactics, realizing that some will hit the mark and others will fall flat. Double up on the winners and drop the losers.
- *Capitalize on your passion.* Helping clients is the core of the consulting business. Your passion for serving clients must drive you to jump out of bed each morning and make you burn the midnight oil. Passion inspires others and makes them want to support your efforts and sing your praises. Without passion for the profession and genuine enthusiasm for solving client problems, the demands of the business will quickly overwhelm your best-laid plans for success.

## ■ WHAT GUERRILLA MARKETING ISN'T

Although guerrilla marketing is low cost, it certainly isn't free. Be prepared to invest time and money. You may need professional help for elements like Web site design, computer programming, copywriting, graphic design, or even marketing; but your goal should be to get the biggest bang for your marketing buck, every time. Your expenditures for guerrilla marketing will usually be far less than the expenses you would incur with traditional marketing.

Guerrilla marketing requires more than planning, strategizing, or navel-gazing. It demands action. Sure, you must create a marketing plan that serves you, but you also must develop a bias for action in the process. Plan, test, act, and measure. And since everything is always changing, continually fine-tune your plan until it is just right.

Whatever the size of your practice and whether you are a novice consultant or a seasoned veteran, you can easily use the tools in this book to master guerrilla marketing. The biggest challenge you face is deciding which combination of tools is right for you. That decision only takes research and thought on your part. Then apply your own brand of creativity to bring your services to the market and knock the socks off your clients and your future clients.