

# **ACCOUNTABLE** **MARKETING**

Do-able Spin Free Marketing  
for Accountants & Financial Advisers



**WENDY BOLD**

## Introduction

*A man is flying in a hot air balloon and realises he's lost. He reduces height and spots a man down below. He lowers the balloon further and shouts, "Excuse me, can you help me? I promised my friend I'd meet him half an hour ago, but I don't know where I am."*

*The man below says, "Yes. You're in a hot air balloon, hovering approximately 30 feet above this field. You're between 40 and 42 degrees north latitude, and between 58 and 60 degrees west longitude."*

*"You must be an engineer," says the balloonist.*

*"I am," replies the man. "How did you know?"*

*"Well," says the balloonist, "Everything you've told me is technically correct, but your information is useless, and the fact is I'm still lost."*

*The man below says, "You must be in marketing."*

*"I am," replies the balloonist, "But how did you know?"*

*"Well," says the man, "You don't know where you are, or where you're going. You've made a promise which you have no idea how to keep, and you expect me to solve your problem. The fact is, you're in the exact same position you were in before we met, but now it's all my fault."*

'Why do engineers hate marketing?' Consultants Online, accessed April 20, 2015, <http://www.consultants-on-line.com/default.asp/contentID=101>

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When I say ‘marketing’, what comes to mind?

Maybe bright yellow posters screaming ‘50% off’ and ‘All stock must go!’ Or maybe a used-car salesman with oiled-back hair and an even oilier smile, trying to convince you that you were made for the car he’s trying to offload. Or perhaps you remember some smooth talker at a networking event, who immediately shoves a business card in your hand as she purrs, ‘Call me’. Then again, it could just be all that jargon – ‘branding’, ‘reputation management’, ‘going viral’, ‘engagement’ ... the list goes on.

You don’t like it. It’s foreign and uncomfortable. You feel pushy and aggressive when you try it. It’s not your field – you’re a numbers person! But in the back of your mind, you know that you have to get on top of this ‘marketing thing’.

I understand how you feel. This is how I feel about numbers. As a wordsmith, numbers certainly aren’t my strong suit. Checking, double-checking and second-guessing the numbers in my life used to consume more time than anything else I did and I tormented myself with this burden for years.

But not anymore. Now I surround myself with professionals who are not only excellent at numbers, but excellent at explaining them in terms that make sense to me. They recognise the limits of my financial knowledge, mostly because they’ve come to recognise the signs. When I glaze over, start to fidget and yawn, they know they’ve gone too far. They realise that when they become too caught up in their world of numbers, I shut down.

## Accountable Marketing

When it comes to matters of marketing, on the other hand, the shoe is on the other foot.

I've helped accountants and financial advisers with their marketing for nearly twenty years and I've experienced the same glazing over and uncomfortable squirming in them when I get too enthusiastic.

I'll admit that at times I've been deeply disappointed when my enthusiasm hasn't been shared. But it's understandable because those are the times when I've become so caught up in my world of marketing that for the accounting or financial advice professional opposite me, none of it made sense.

Just like the engineer gazing up at the hapless balloonist, all they could see was hot air. And they, like you, needed something more concrete before they invested their time and their money in marketing.

It became my mission to give it to them, and it all started with one small realisation...

### **Believe it or not, you're *already* marketing**

What? Yes, you heard me.

Now, you may be thinking that you know very little, if anything, about marketing. Yet here you are, still in business after all these years, so you must have done something right.

In my experience, the financial types who deny their promotional abilities are usually natural marketers who are using something far more potent than persuasion.

To understand this marketing technique though, we need to reframe your idea of marketing. First, let's deal

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with all those sales and marketing terms that get under your grill. Marketing, promotions, advertising, selling and anything else that suggests flogging a product need to be dealt with now. The hard sell approach rarely sits comfortably with professional service providers, so many of these terms simply don't exist in your daily vernacular.

Fortunately, they don't have to because it's customer service that's your marketing tool of choice.

As innocent as it sounds, great customer service is extremely influential. It attracts clients, keeps them loyal for years and it's the main reason you get referrals.

So what is customer service? It's helping people get what they want more often. It's creating regular and meaningful communication with your ideal clients. It's meeting your obligation to do all that you can to genuinely help your clients to be the best they can be financially.

There's no selling required when you educate and inform your clients about the products or services that can help them achieve their financial goals. I can't imagine a client complaining about your suggestions for saving tax, protecting their assets, growing their investments and having more money to spend in their retirement.

When you present the facts, without all that spin, there's no marketing or selling about it. Your clients buy your services because they solve their problem, realise an opportunity or create a convenience, which are all valued outcomes.

The fact of the matter is this: Your business needs to grow and to be profitable, and you should feel comfortable telling others about the worthwhile and valuable services you offer.

### **How do you do it?**

This book describes a model of marketing that I've developed specifically for accounting and financial advice professionals. It responds to issues of time, budget and measurement as well as constant questioning and challenging by my clients who regularly asked why, what happens next, who will do that, how much will it cost, what will I have to do, and how will I know if it's working. These clients are typically practice partners in their forties and fifties with a solid twenty or so years of business and professional experience under their belts. They've had their share of marketing wins and losses. Based on this experience, I've come to the conclusion that accountants and financial advice professionals can market themselves, and very effectively; they just need to do it in a manner that feels right.

As I described earlier, what feels right is what you do naturally every day – provide quality, personalised advice, expressed simply in a manner that resonates with your ideal clients and that fits both your genuine character and that of your firm.

But 'do what feels right' seems a bit too vague and woolly. What you need is a black and white marketing model that fits the needs of your business; a sustainable methodology with a structure that won't steal all your time, is affordable, can be measured and, ultimately, makes sense.

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It's taken twenty years, but I've cracked it. If you read on, it will be my pleasure to explain it.

### **Let's KISS and make out**

You need marketing that's efficient, easy to implement, affordable and that won't steal all your time. Right?

I'll even add a bonus – it should always make sense, and it shouldn't be complicated.

Fortunately it doesn't have to be. I recommend the KISS approach or, as I prefer to call it, 'do-able marketing'. It's a marketing model that's based on simplicity itself. Less is more – you've heard it before – and I happen to think that this is particularly true of marketing for financial services professionals.

Flashy and expensive marketing campaigns are rarely, if ever, appropriate for small businesses yet there are plenty of small business owners who've felt obligated to instigate big and bold marketing activities. I don't really know how this came about. I can only presume that it's a side effect of overzealous marketing people who get on a creative roll and let things get out of hand.

The trouble with making a big splash is that it often doesn't equate to big outcomes, such as viable leads or new business from ideal clients.

It's time to get over the 'bigger is better' mentality and resize your expectations. It's time to implement resources that make sense and use efficient distribution vehicles that not only get your messages out to your ideal clients so that they may benefit from your wisdom, but also tell you what's happened to your marketing

material once it's been sent. You'll not only feel happier, you'll get a whole lot more value out of your budget.

In this book I'll outline the same marketing secrets that have helped my clients build their reputation, attract new business and forge new relationships. And I'll do it in four sections.

### **Section 1 – All about your clients**

While not-so-ideal clients waste your time and eat away your profit margins, ideal clients are motivated, never miss a payment and value your advice. In this section you'll learn how to identify your ideal clients, and I'll help you prove that you're a good fit for what they need.

### **Section 2 – All about you**

Of course, it's all well and good knowing your ideal clients, but they need to be able to learn about you and your services. In this section you'll discover how to convince your prospective clients that you're their ideal match through five 'passive' marketing tools. Yes, I said 'passive' because, once set up, they'll continue promoting your practice and bringing in new business without you having to lift a finger.

### **Section 3 – Make the connection**

This is the 'active' stage. That is, once you've laid the foundations, you need a marketing rollout strategy that both retains your existing clients and attracts new ones. Here you'll learn a simple, four-step strategy that you can delegate if you choose to, so you can spend more time doing what you do best – helping your clients.



## **Section 4 – Measure your marketing**

While marketing does require a commitment of time and money on your part, I'll show you how it can be a very worthwhile, even lucrative investment rather than just an expense. By measuring your marketing, you'll always be clear on your return on investment and, as you use your measurements to improve, you might even want to do more!

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The outcome? A structured marketing program that's do-able. One that delivers regular, consistent communication to your existing and prospective clients who are capable of buying advice and services directly from you, or who can influence others to do so.

Best of all, not only will you fully understand the goals of your marketing and the ease with which it can be implemented, but you'll also be able to explain it easily to your colleagues and professional peers because it simply makes sense.

You can have all the hot air and fluff you want but, in my experience, your marketing simply needs to make you visible in what is an increasingly crowded market place; attract clients who can grow your business and bring you the sort of work that you can really get your teeth into and pay you what you're truly worth. It doesn't need to be complicated or expensive. Just reset your expectations from larger to smaller, and strive for quality over quantity. Then, by working through the four sections of this book, you'll meet more of your ideal clients and within a realistic budget.