

THE FIVE MYTHS OF MARKETING SUCCESS



Let us now turn to marketing myths. Service providers are compelled to effectively market their services because the business environment around them has changed dramatically. This shouldn't come as a surprise to you. You live it. You see the changing environment and you know that you should be doing more -- more to be competitive in the marketplace, more to build relationships with past and current clients, and more to maximize referral sources so that you can generate even better referrals. You need to make it a priority to be as effective as you know you can be. Yet, you may still feel held back. That's natural.

There are certain commonly held beliefs or myths under which many service providers labor which present significant obstacles that must be overcome before anyone can even begin to develop a marketing program with impact.

When something is new or when you are inexperienced with

Remember however, that many service businesses and many of your competitors experienced these same fears and may have conquered their doubts long ago.

something, you tend to voice (or at least feel) fears which are not always logical. Many of these "fears" are based, at least in part, on myths, and they will only cause you to lose valuable time. They are guaranteed to cause you untold frustration and discouragement with any marketing efforts which you may wish to initiate. These mis-truths will get in the way of your taking any significant action. Remember however, that many service businesses and many of your competitors experienced these same fears and may have conquered their doubts long ago.

A basic difference between successful service marketers and unsuccessful service marketers is that a disproportionate number of the unsuccessful group still labor under misconceptions about the true nature of marketing. Many service providers are still burdened by too many myths which keep them trapped and cause them to engage in self-destructive behavior. Some of these most frequently cited myths can drag you down, stall your efforts to strengthen your competitive position in the marketplace, and suck away your energy, enthusiasm and drive to succeed.

MYTH #1: *"If we do a good job, we don't have to market."*

This is a tough one. My experience is that those who think this way are so "out of it" that one might as well talk to a wall as talk about marketing to someone who really believes this myth. The chances of their ever modifying or altering

behavior and work habits is minimal.

Why is this a myth? Consider this example. Let's say that you go into a fancy restaurant for a nice dinner. When you call for a reservation the person answering the phone really doesn't seem genuinely interested in servicing you. Maybe you were put on hold for too long, or maybe it was the person's tone of voice. When you get off the phone you now have a slightly sour taste in your mouth. But the restaurant does have a great reputation and you're still looking forward to a great meal. When you arrive, your table's not ready, the waiter doesn't arrive promptly, and the service remains slow. The information you do get is incomplete. The dinner takes forever to arrive, and you're not kept informed as to why. But when the meal does finally arrive, it is heavenly ... the best food you have ever eaten. It is just tremendous! As you finish the last bite, the bill suddenly appears in front of you while you're still chewing.

Walking out, you pass the maitre'd, the hat check person and the cashier at the register. All of them barely acknowledge your existence and certainly don't encourage you to return or even ask if you enjoyed your meal. Now, would you say the restaurant did a great job? The meal was wonderful, wasn't it? So, the client should be happy, right? Wrong! You, the customer, weren't enthusiastic when leaving.

The core product was good, but all the other factors which

customers (and clients) rely on to judge whether or not they are satisfied were poor or missing. The staff was nonchalant and uncaring, timetables weren't met, and you weren't kept informed. The service wasn't great, and, worse still, you got the impression that as soon as you were finished eating they wanted you out of there immediately! As a customer, even though you may have eaten a great tasting meal, maybe the best meal of your life, you still walked away unhappy -- not likely to return -- and certainly not very likely to mention this restaurant favorably to many people.

So how do your clients decide whether you have delivered quality? How do they know whether you've done a good job or not? They don't! Many times, they don't really know whether you are doing a good job or a bad job.

There is, of course, one major difference between that restaurant and selling a service. The restaurant is selling something that is tangible. We can smell that delicious food coming, we can taste that juicy steak, and we can see the steam rising off the potato. Our senses create a perception that this meal will be delicious. Can you see, hear, smell, taste or feel the service you provide? Most of the time you can't. So how do your clients decide whether you have delivered quality? How do they know whether you've done a good job or not? They don't! Many times, they don't really know whether you are doing a good job or a bad job.

Clients will make a decision about whether or not they are satisfied with you based upon all of the other factors we cited in the restaurant example. These include simple things like how they were treated by your staff, whether they were kept

informed, whether things were timely, and whether you seemed to really care. You can produce the best "quality" services in the world, but if the client is dissatisfied, for any reason, you are not perceived as very competent. Just doing a "good job" is not enough.

MYTH #2: *"Marketing or selling is unprofessional."* Some would have you believe that if you "have" to market, that somehow says you have less credibility in the marketplace. First, let's remember that we are all marketing and selling every day of our adult lives. The only question is, "Are we doing it well?"

When a business is first established, the founding partners get off the ground by establishing credibility or "selling" themselves in the marketplace. If you don't "sell" yourself there is no opportunity to even exist. Everyone of us realized that at our first job interview. In fact, those who have been marketing well and consistently, have a better and more professional image than if they did nothing. They have more control over a client's or prospect's perceptions of the value of their service.

MYTH #3: *"We'll lose business because our current clients might not like it."* If your clients like you, they will continue to come back to you and refer others to you as long as they perceive that you are providing them with value for their

You can produce the best "quality" services in the world, but if the client is dissatisfied, for any reason, you are not perceived as very competent. Just doing a "good job" is not enough.

They have more control over a client's or prospect's perceptions of the value of their service.

money. They will perceive this because of your courteous staff, the personal attention they get, the information you provide them on the status of their matter, the fact that you spend time with them, that you are accessible when they need you, and that you genuinely seem to care about them. These are the reasons clients form positive impressions of you. The idea that you can provide this kind of value and have such good relationships with your clients, yet still have them leave you if you do some marketing or advertising, is just not realistic.

It has not been the experience of any of those who are marketing well, and growing larger and more profitable. Businesses which are marketing well, growing and grabbing more market share, didn't lose any appreciable business because they started marketing.

MYTH #4: *"It takes too much time away from billable hours or the time I have to service my existing clients."* Have you ever said to yourself "I have far too much to do, too many crises, catastrophes and disasters to deal with, too many fires on my desk to be extinguished for me to spend any time on marketing?" Everybody has a problem with time. Only one thing is certain: do what you have always done and you will receive what you have always received.

Everybody has a problem with time. Only one thing is certain: do what you have always done and you will receive what you have always received.

You may feel that you are extremely busy, but take some

time to ask yourself if you are busy with the right kind of clients or if you are busy with a class of clients that is less than satisfactory to you? Many service providers are like pebbles on the beach just waiting for the next wave to wash over them and take them wherever it carries them. Without making some time for marketing, planning, and analysis, for looking objectively at your practice or business and considering where it is and where it is capable of going, you will never improve your relative position. You must make time. You don't have a choice. Your competitors are increasingly making time for marketing, planning, and implementation, and they are looking for your best clients. If you are going to remain small, you will never grow nor have the opportunity to improve the overall quality of your business.

MYTH #5: *"I'm not a Rainmaker or I'm just not good at developing new business."* "Rainmakers" are perceived to be everybody's pal or to have great connections. But what really makes them successful in attracting new business is more basic -- they are good at creating and maintaining relationships. It's that simple! Every service provider can be better at that, indeed, everyone **has** to be better at that. Building relationships is the key to all new business and referrals.

Marketing is not about what most people think it is about.

You may feel that you are extremely busy, but take some time to ask yourself if you are busy with the right kind of clients or if you are busy with a class of clients that is less than satisfactory to you?

Marketing is about everything you do which helps mold the client's perception about the quality of services provided.

Marketing is not a thing. It is not just a newsletter, a brochure, a TV commercial or an advertisement. Marketing is about everything you do which helps mold the client's perception about the quality of services provided. It is about how you answer the phone, what your office looks like, whether you return calls promptly, whether you keep clients informed, and whether or not you are accessible to them. These service elements, which may appear to have nothing to do with your product, contribute significantly to the client's perception of the quality of your product and whether or not they are enthusiastic enough about your firm to come back and to refer others to you.

The service elements, and the enthusiasm of the client base are more important to your marketing effort than any newsletter, firm brochure, or advertisement which you may ever produce.

"Rainmaking" and marketing are both about perceptions and relationships. In a mature, healthy business, 70% - 80% of new accounts come from referrals. The service elements, and the enthusiasm of the client base are more important to your marketing effort than any newsletter, firm brochure, or advertisement which you may ever produce. If you get nothing else out of this book, it is hoped that you will adopt and live by a new mindset or attitude about marketing your service business. With this new mindset, you will ignore those age-old "marketing myths" and focus instead on going forward with a pro-active game plan for building and strengthening the relationships you have with current clients, prospective clients, and influential referral sources. As you become intimate with your new mindset and as your

relationships become more solid, the public perception of your true value will begin to change favorably. That's 80% of the battle. Of course, building those relationships and molding those perceptions is easier said than done, so let's take a look at how to get started.