

## **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PERSONNEL SERVICES**

### **Independent Study Course Number 14**

This independent study course is offered to certificate holders and members of the National Association of Personnel Services (NAPS). By completing this course, individuals can earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs) that can be applied toward the maintenance requirement that NAPS has instituted for individuals receiving the Certified Personnel Consultant (CPC) and Certified Temporary – Staffing Specialist (CTS) designations after January 1, 1995. All individuals will be required to complete the examination section of this independent study course to receive credit. Those achieving a passing score on the examination will receive the .2 CEUs associated with this particular course. In addition, .2 CEUs can be earned by completing the special assignment outlined on the last page of the course. Refer to the registration instructions on the last page of this study course for additional instructions. Future issues of Inside NAPS will include additional independent study courses.

---

## **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT YOUR LIFEBLOOD**

*By Paul Hawkinson, The Fordyce Letter*

Remember the old joke about how to sell a chicken to a deaf guy? You get right in his face and scream as loud as you can, “Wanna buy a chicken?”

As politically incorrect as this joke is, it’s funny when told by the right comedian. Even funnier is the fact that, for many in our business, the “wanna buy a chicken” method is the business development technique of choice. Although condemned by some as crass, crude, and unprofessional, this style of sales approach is used, according to our surveys, by over 90% of practitioners. Why? Because it produces results. It gets you from Point A to Point B and immediately lets people know why you are contacting them.

What has puzzled us for years, however, is the fact that the users call this cold-calling activity “candidate marketing,” when, in fact, it is “applicant selling.” Even the retained (or semi-retained) folds, while not necessarily selling a “bird in hand,” will admit to saying, at various times, something like, “Assuming you were in the market for a chicken, what kind of poultry might you be willing to pay us a fee for finding for you?”

Trolling for job orders and sendouts via the “cold call” is just one factor in the overall equation of business development. Business development is best viewed as an ongoing *process*. It can be *direct* or *indirect*.

We categorize *direct* methods as those in which you are in direct contact with someone who may be in a position to hire your candidate. A cold call is the best example of the direct method. Its primary purpose is to paint a word picture appetizing enough to motivate an employer to interview the candidate. Another element of direct marketing is sending resumes on spec to a company.

However, most techniques of business development are indirect, and more akin to true marketing with the ultimate purposes of (1) gaining positive recognition for your firm and its (2) positioning your firm as a provider of services to your target audience, (3) establishing a cohesive identity and informing potential clients of your firm’s capabilities and performance standards, (4) increasing the

acceptance of your firm to make it easier for your salespeople to operate on a day-to-day basis, and (5) creating, in the minds of potential users, an intrinsic value to be gained by doing business with your firm.

### **“YOUR BEST PROSPECT IS THE HIRER WITH WHOM YOU’VE MADE YOUR MOST RECENT PLACEMENT”**

This statement should be placed prominently on every desk. It always surprises us that so few consultants go back to the well where they’ve just had a sweet and satisfying drink. Who, after all, is a more receptive customer than the one for whom you’ve just solved a problem? Therefore, ask yourself:

*Have you called all the companies in your pump file lately?* No point in reinventing the wheel if you’ve already got the spokes in place.

*Have you contacted placed candidates to see how they were doing?* Besides being a good business practice, maybe they are a hiring authority now. Or maybe their department is understaffed and looking. Could be they have colleagues who are looking for better opportunities. Properly approached, they can provide great leads.

*Have you tried the “I’d like your advice on where an exceptional candidate like mine might fit in” strategy?* People love to give advice when the situation is non-confrontational. And, who knows, they may end up interested in your candidate. If not, recommendations from them about whom and where to call can be much more effective if the follow-up call is at the suggestion of a respected peer.

*Have you done any reference checking lately?* Properly-performed reference checks put you in touch with hiring managers.

*Have you been ignoring companies that are laying off employees?* Layoffs in one department don’t necessarily mean layoffs across the board. A top executive with one firm which regularly makes the news because of massive layoffs told us that a new corporate endeavor would create dozens of unique and highly-paid new positions for which they intended to use search firms. “Can you imagine the PR problems that would result if we advertised for new people when the front pages are full of layoff news for thousands of our employees?” he asked.

*Have you thought about trying to convert your better (but non-exclusive) clients to “preferred provider” agreements?* Becoming a favorite selected search firm can pay big dividends while locking you into a longer-term relationship, eliminating the need to continually stroke clients for new business.

Consider this: few people shop around for an attorney, doctor, or accountant once they’ve found one they like. The optimum results of your marketing efforts should produce the same loyalty from your clients by setting your firm apart from the way your competition is viewed.

However, far too many people think of marketing as a one-time promotional gimmick, a slick ad in a trade publication, or a PR release in a newspaper. While these may be effective for temporarily luring prospects, they won’t serve you well to attract long-term clients. Client development is a process, not an event. It is a system that must be routinely maintained and monitored to determine its effectiveness. In a climate of uncertainty, a well-executed marketing campaign can help us exert some control over the unpredictable elements of our business. The following is a review of other business development methods that can turn the mediocre into masters.

### **Knowing what business you are in**

No one can effectively be all things to all people. Marketing can only succeed when you know what you want to accomplish. This requires focusing your marketing activities and attention on a well-defined target. You need to isolate that market, analyze it, and attack it with a complete and thorough knowledge of which they are, what they need, and how you can provide it for them. If you have several different specialties under your roof, you will need to address each one as a separate marketing problem.

A marketing program should identify and recognize those things which have been roadblocks to you so far. These can be *external* (nature of the selected market focus, the economy, bad experiences with other recruiters, etc.); *organizational* (too little time, too few of the right people, scarce finances, etc.); and *personal* (poor skills, poor reputation, etc.).

All of these roadblocks must be considered and removed if you are to become the number one firm which comes to mind when a potential client has a need for your particular services. A number of methods can help overcome these roadblocks:

### **Public relations**

Someone once said, "You can take out a full-page ad telling everyone how good you are, but it's not a fraction as effective as a two-inch article in the business pages where someone else tells how good you are."

Public relations can be expressed in a very simple formula:  $X+Y=Z$ . The "Z" is our objective – good public relations and the benefits that accrue therefrom. "X" is the performance (doing a good job and getting recognized for it). "Y" is the process of communicating "X" in the right way – telling people what you do, why you do it, and why it is important. More importantly, it is *earned* recognition.

PR blurbs are easy to get but, taken singly, they have very little impact. Collected in a scrapbook form, however, they can be a useful tool cumulatively to persuade potential clients that you are a somebody in the industry.

Get into the habit of sending periodic news releases to the media. Always include a photo, which will increase the odds of your release getting printed. Be sure it is a professionally done photograph. Position yourself with the media as an industry expert. Remember – ours is a business which attracts a lot of attention. Make reporters aware of your availability to comment. Be willing to be their "insider" contact. These contacts can often be the catalyst for feature stories about you and your contribution to the industry.

### **Provide informational services**

Newsletters are a great way to keep on a number of "boiler-plate" newsletter products (pre-written, but with your name on the masthead), or you may wish to publish your own newsletter more specifically directed at your constituency – a more costly and time-consuming proposition. However, if you have your own newsletter, inviting clients to write articles for it can go far towards eliminating any barriers they may have erected to doing business with you.

Another strategy is to clip items of interest to clients and prospects from newspapers and trade journals, keeping them in a file until you have enough to photocopy a few pages. Then fax or send this to prospects with a short note telling them you thought they might find it interesting. This inexpensive approach indicates your thought and concern.

Conducting surveys is another good way to keep in touch. These can be done by mail or phone and the topic of the survey should be of interest to the people you are trying to influence. Survey results should be sent directly to clients and prospects as well as to the major news media and trade publications serving your specialty.

Many have found trade publications and features editors to be receptive to articles concerning the industry. A by-lined article or feature article about your firm is publicity which can't be bought at any price. Preparation for an industry article is the perfect time with the perfect reason to contact influential prospect for their reactions or comments. They'll be flattered you asked. Then make sure you send them a copy of the article containing their name. They'll assume you are also intimately involved with other important people you might quote. Call them later to find out if they've had any feedback from their comments and to subtly pursue your business agenda with them. They'll be far more receptive.

Another great way to become known as an industry star is by writing a regular industry-oriented column for a local general circulation or specialty niche newspaper or magazine. Selling your capability as a search professional is almost synonymous with your ability to make persuasive presentations. Select those business and professional organizations within your sphere of influence or offer your services as a speaker. Executive search and placement is still a somewhat mysterious business for many. Make your willingness to speak known to the chambers of commerce, speakers' bureaus, and other business groups, including the chapter of your local human resources organization. However, when speaking to groups, it is inadvisable to have a stack of brochures available for attendees because, as the audience reads through them, you lose their complete attention. Instead, offer to send something of value (a survey, report, etc.) to those who sign a log sheet or leave a business card.

Invitation-only seminars and symposiums can be useful business-image builders as long as they transmit important information to your invited constituency and are not used as an opportunity to hot box them into giving you an assignment. If handled as a service that is vital to their informational health and well-being, they're not likely to forget who provided this service when time comes to dole out business.

### **Make an indelible impression**

In this era of the word processor, there is absolutely no excuse for sending mail addressed "Dear Prospective Client." The impression left by these mass mail pieces is worse than if none were sent at all. Your correspondence can say reams about your company. Do yourself a favor – invest in a graphic designer's services. Have them create matching letterheads, envelopes, business cards, and other printed materials. Develop a theme of quality.

When writing prospecting letters, personalize your approach with the recipient's name as well as a variable paragraph about the recipient's company. For example, an opener like, "Our firm specializes in mid to upper-level professionals in the glue and resin field..." lets them know you are using a rifle rather than a shotgun.

Be certain you are writing to the right person. Usually, the higher the better. If you end up doing business with human resource people, your reception will be much better if bumped down by the CEO or another senior level hiring authority.

Our industry is obsessed with the use of brochures. Alone, they rarely produce business, but they are a necessary adjunct and "leave behind" for any business wanting to be remembered as a viable player when business does come up. The purpose for the brochure is simple: to tell readers *who* you are, *where* you are, and *what* you do. We recommend that the same designer who creates your letterhead

design your brochure to ensure continuity of your image. Avoid group or individual pictures of staff. Avoid biographies of your staff. Avoid jargon. Avoid hyperbole like “the best” or “the only” because they generally aren’t true and subliminally serve to depreciate your competition.

We recommend against printing fee schedules on your brochure. A recitation of the 1% per \$1,000 formula or a graph showing fees to your top percentage merely labels you as a low-level placer, not a high-level recruiter. Don’t use words like “pre-screened” or “qualified candidates.” These presume you reference check and can come back to haunt you if an impostor slips by. Don’t dwell on techniques or projected timetables. And don’t make promises in your brochure you can’t realistically keep.

Finally, and most importantly, have several people outside your business test your brochure for readability. What is crystal clear to you may not be so clear to a potential client.

### **Personal visits**

Nothing is more potent as a solidifier of relationships than the personal client visit. No matter how you get to this stage, it provides you with an opportunity to turn a faceless telephone relationship into a more meaningful alliance. It is far easier to assess a company’s personality and culture in person than to have a guess at the realities or depend on another person’s perceptions.

One big biller told us that he tries to personally visit with two new firms a week. He normally sets up his visit a week in advance which gives him a chance to research the firm and suggest possible areas where he might be of some assistance. But he does not use these opportunities to push his own cause. Instead, he asks for advice on a topic he thinks they may know about. He knows that, sooner or later, they’ll bring the conversation around to what he wanted in the first place. Because of this approach, he gets more unsolicited business than most practitioners get by design.

Although not as effective as a personal plant site visit, inviting an employer to your office can go a long way towards establishing further rapport, assuming your office is worth visiting.

A word to the wise: most astute managers will escort consultants on a client visit for a very simple reason – employers tend to give their allegiance to the consultant rather than to the firm. Participation by the manager establishes a commitment to the firm, not the consultant who may try to carry that affiliation to his next employer.

### **Be a joiner**

Gerry Roche, the chairman and superstar biller of Heidrick & Struggles, once said that *everything* he did was tax deductible because *everyone* he met was either a client, prospect, or potential candidate.

If marketing is a process rather than an event, part of that process is to become involved through clubs, associations, charitable and civic organizations, etc., with those people whose business attention you need to attract. This doesn’t mean that you become a meeting junkie for the purposes of chasing business. You join to become a part of the group in which you wish to function. Insiders usually get the business; outsiders rarely do.

Just joining, however, isn’t enough. You must become a participant, a worker, and a full-fledged member viewed as one who is advancing the cause for all – not just your own business agenda.

### **Trade Shows**

Most industries are served by one or more associations and those associations’ number one money makers are their annual trade shows. Even if you aren’t a dues-paying member of an association, we

recommend that you attend those functions since they attract the important people within their constituency.

Trade shows are also the focal point for learning about new companies, products, players, and peripheral firms who may have a stake in the industry or an interest in doing business with your firm. Sponsoring cocktail parties, breakfasts, seminars, and other events can get your firm recognition among the pacesetters in an industry.

One of the biggest benefits of attending trade shows is getting your hands on the list of attendees as well as the directory of exhibitors. Some are quite detailed and can provide a valid reason for a follow-up phone call.

### **Devising and executing the business development plan**

Ideally the owner/manager should devise the business development program in some detail. Once the blueprint is in place, with identifiable and reachable goals, the execution can be accomplished with research or administrative assistants. Resist the temptation to get so many letters out as possible in a short period of time. Keep in mind that letters and other marketing stratagems should be followed up with thoughtfully scripted and constructive phone calls designed to take you to the next step in the relationship.

Let us re-emphasize: Never forget that your best prospects are *existing* clients. Never neglect a known quantity to go fishing in uncharted waters.

Almost all long-term client relationships started with just one assignment. Your best shop at continuing business is doing an exemplary job on the first assignment. And keep in mind that business development is not a one-shot affair. If your initial efforts don't bring dramatic results, don't despair or abandon your program.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION UNIT (CEU) REGISTRATION

Complete the registration information below and forward this page, containing the independent study examination and your answers, plus payment to: NAPS, 3133 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22305. The processing fee for the continuing education units for each NAPS independent study course is \$10 for members and \$20 for non-members. Feel free to reproduce the registration and examination page to allow additional individuals to apply for CEUs. Following receipt, each examination will be scored and CEU certificates will be issued to those who successfully pass the examination. Allow 3 to 4 weeks for examination scoring and CEU certificate processing.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_  
Firm Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Current NAPS member \$10  Non-member \$20

### EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

Multiple choice and true/false questions. Circle the letter of the response you believe to be correct. Be certain to answer all of the questions.

1. According to Hawkinson, which of the following would be considered a *direct* business development strategy:
  - a. gaining positive recognition for your firm
  - b. placing a cold call to a client
  - c. positioning your firm as a provider of services to your prospects
  - d. all of the above
  
2. The greatest roadblocks to an effective marketing program are:
  - a. personal
  - b. organizational
  - c. external
  - d. all of the above
  
3. Which of the following is the best and most consistent way of keeping your company name in front of clients and prospects:
  - a. newsletters
  - b. news releases
  - c. marketing brochures
  - d. telephone contact
  
4. The most effective way to influence a prospective client and produce business is through:
  - a. well-written and presented marketing brochures

- b. comprehensive video and slide presentations
  - c. personalized communication identifying the recipient and company
  - d. none of the above
5. Your best prospect is the hirer with whom you've done the greatest amount of business:
- a. true
  - b. false
6. The optimum results of your marketing efforts should be to produce loyalty by setting your firm apart from the way your competition is viewed:
- a. true
  - b. false
7. Client visits are extremely time-consuming and not a cost-effective use of staff time as a marketing strategy:
- a. true
  - b. false
8. A personnel services firm's best shot at continuing business is doing an exemplary job on the first assignment:
- a. true
  - b. false