

CHAIR'S COMMENTS:

SELL YOURSELF!

BY CHARLES J. LORD, P.E.



Once you have built up your knowledge and experience, gotten some clients and consulting projects under your belt – then what? In my talks to consulting networks on, *Where are My Clients?*, I go over a number of ways to grow one's practice. I also talk about getting to the enviable position of having

more potential work than you have time for. However, building up a consultant's practice is not always the easiest thing to accomplish, particularly for someone who is new to consulting. After all, most engineers probably didn't take marketing, or even economics classes, while in engineering school.

Let's look at some aspects of sales and marketing — two distinct, yet related, skills we need to master.

Understanding your market

The market for most consultants can be a combination of their skills and experiences, along with what needs exist for those. You also need to understand who is in a position to hire you for your services (or at least recommend you to those who can). Once you understand these concepts, then you can tackle the selling process.

Selling Yourself

As an engineering consultant, you can employ several strategies to sell yourself and your services. Here are some tips to help you enhance your marketing and communication efforts:

- **Identify your target audience:** Understand the specific industry, or niche you want to serve as an engineering consultant. Identify the pain points, challenges and target client needs to tailor your approach accordingly.
- **Showcase your expertise:** Highlight your relevant qualifications, technical skills and industry

experience. Emphasize your achievements, successful projects, and any specialized knowledge or certifications. Such credentials will build credibility and trust with potential clients.

- **Develop a strong personal brand:** Establish a professional image, and differentiate yourself from competitors. Create a compelling value proposition that clearly communicates the unique benefits clients can gain by working with you. Craft a professional website, portfolio, or LinkedIn profile to showcase your expertise and previous work.
- **Network and build relationships:** Attend industry events, conferences and seminars to meet potential clients and colleagues. Engage in conversations, share insights, and offer valuable advice. Cultivate relationships with key influencers in your field, and leverage referrals and recommendations.
- **Leverage online platforms and social media:** Utilize digital platforms to extend your reach and connect with a broader audience. Share informative content, such as blog posts, case studies, or videos demonstrating your expertise and problem-solving abilities. Engage with your audience, respond to comments, and participate in relevant online communities or forums.
- **Offer tailored solutions:** Listen to your clients' needs and provide customized solutions. Understand their pain points, and offer recommendations that align with their objectives and constraints. Tailor your proposals to demonstrate how your services can add value, increase efficiency, or solve specific challenges they face.
- **Focus on client satisfaction:** Prioritize exceptional client service, and aim for long-term relationships. Ensure timely delivery of projects, maintain open lines of communication, and provide regular updates. Encourage feedback and testimonials from satisfied clients, as positive reviews can significantly boost your reputation.

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- **Stay updated and embrace innovation:** Continuously invest in professional development and stay informed about the latest trends, technologies and methodologies in your field. Demonstrate your adaptability and willingness to embrace new approaches to problem-solving, and provide innovative solutions to clients. Seek opportunities to expand your skill set, stay updated on industry advancements, and consider obtaining additional certifications or licenses to enhance your credibility and marketability.
- **Provide clear and transparent pricing:** Clearly outline your pricing structure, ensuring it reflects the value you bring to clients. Be transparent about what your clients can expect in terms of deliverables, timelines and costs. Avoid any ambiguity or hidden charges. Always use clear work and contract statements to ensure both you and your client know what is expected of both parties.

Any experienced marketing person will tell you who your two best sources of business come from: First and foremost, repeat business from previous clients. A close second is from word-of-mouth, or reputation. Both my best jobs and best consultations came about because somebody already knew me, or knew someone who knew me. But along with all of the items I listed above, you need to find a way to get the word out about yourself — and that you are ready to solve your potential clients' problems.

Get listed!

Many opportunities exist for you to be part of online listings for consultants. Local IEEE Consultant's Networks provide online listings for their members (usually for a fee). IEEE-USA has a Consultants Finder that is a bargain for members at only \$99 a year, with a growing reputation as a definitive source for finding consultants. An ongoing project in my

committee is to improve the IEEE-USA Consultants Finder, to make it even more effective for both consultants and potential clients in need of our services. One part of this project is to look at the results of the searches that clients are making on the site. Are they simply browsing, or are they doing searches for particular skills and locations? Are they clicking on a particular consultant and making contact? We hope to come up with some guidelines for consultants to improve their chances of getting their first contacts, and hopefully getting the new contract. In the meantime, you can help. If you have a listing in the IEEE-USA Consultants Finder, look at your listing: Is it accurate? Does it properly reflect your knowledge, expertise and experience? The IEEE-USA Consultant Finder listings are based on your IEEE profile, so perhaps review and update it often. And while you are at it, look at your other listings and your LinkedIn profile — do they *sell* you?

An Ongoing Process

Remember, effective communication, a strong personal brand, and a client-centric approach are keys to selling yourself as an engineering consultant. Building a reputation as a trusted and reliable expert in your field will contribute to your success in attracting and retaining clients. It is an ongoing process — you should update your listings regularly, not only to keep them current to changes but also to make them more attractive to search engines. Google and other search engines look for dynamic pages and downgrade static pages.

Listings, social media and networking are all tools — and we should always keep current on the best practices of using all the tools at our disposal. Now get out there and sell yourself!

As always, you can reach me at c.j.lord@ieee.org. I'd like to hear from you!

AICNCC WELCOMES NEW AFFINITY GROUP IN EGYPT

The Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) congratulates Islam Abdel Halim, on forming the IEEE Egypt Section Consultants Network Affinity Group. The new Egypt Consultants Network became official on 25 April. To give a personal welcome to any new network, check out the consultants page on IEEE-USA's website for contact information. IEEE-USA also offers step-by-step instructions about how to start a formal network. We encourage new consultants networks to register as Affinity Groups. After a group forms a network, it can take advantage of IEEE's branding and resources, and qualify for funding through IEEE Section rebates. If you don't see your consultants network's contact information listed on the IEEE-USA website, contact Daryll Griffin at d.r.griffin@ieee.org.



NEGOTIATING YOUR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT:

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY



To engineering technologists, contract review and negotiation can be an overwhelming and stressful experience. Most contracts are usually wordy, complex and full of legal jargon. In addition, because the technologist's contract with the client is the most critical document in a project, the importance of negotiating an appropriate professional services contract cannot be overstated.

Whether you have negotiated past contracts; or if you are new (or inexperienced) when it comes to contract review and negotiation, it can be difficult to know where, or how, to start. It is very easy to become lost and confused when evaluating vulnerability in the project. Looming deadlines and client expectations do not make things any easier. What to do?

Presented by Beazley's, Colleen Palmer, Esq., IEEE USA sponsored a free livestream webinar on, [*Negotiating Your Professional Services Agreement: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*](#), on 7 June.

In this webinar, we discussed the importance of a well-drafted professional services agreement. We talked about some of the critical risk management provisions consultants should address in all professional services agreements; and we discussed ways to deal with poorly drafted provisions clients may propose. Some of the highlights included:

- Discussing the importance of contract negotiations; and the insight one can gain from the process
- Identifying important contract provisions frequently the subject of difficult negotiations

- Considering the risk management implications associated with poorly worded provisions; and ways to modify the language
- Learning about the potential advantages associated with favorably drafted provisions.

This webinar was presented in partnership with the [IEEE Member Discounts Program](#).

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For more information, please contact your licensed AMBA representative at 800-375-0775.



CAN A CONSULTANT'S STORYTELLING SPARK A NEW CLIENT'S INTEREST?

BY LAURA BURFORD

Storytelling is a powerful way for a consultant to introduce themselves and connect with someone — a new client or potential partner — they don't know.

Many times, we never think about using a story to introduce ourselves. Instead, we use the standard "I can help (Your Ideal Client) with (What You Do) statement.

What would happen if you started your introduction with a compelling, three-minute short, but simple, story?

I found out by accident, when asked to join a mastermind group of 10, like-minded, business owners — all of whom serviced the same ideal client.

This week's Consulting Insight is about using storytelling to introduce yourself. I explain storytelling with the help of a story; and I include seven storytelling points to keep in mind.

[Use a Consultant's Storytelling to Spark a New Client's Interest. \(Video\)](#)

To connect with Laura please find her at her [website](#).

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM THE FREELANCERS' UNION

Freelancers' Union is a non-profit organization promoting the interests of independent workers through advocacy, education and services. The Union's advocacy update (The Freelancers' Union Blog) provides information on recently passed legislation that may affect independent consultants. Check out their [UPDATE](#).