

The Expert Advantage - How to Be Recognized as an Expert in Your Field

By Caterina Rando

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If you want to increase your business success, you must establish yourself as an expert. When your potential clients are deciding who they will do business with, they are more concerned about finding the person who can do the best job than they are with the price. As an entrepreneurial success coach working with small business owners, I tell my clients over and over, 'Everybody wants to do business with an expert. People will give their business to you if they know you have the expertise to do a good job for them.'

There are several things you can do to position yourself as an expert. The first thing you have to do is...

• See yourself as an expert -- If you do not consider yourself as an expert then you have two choices: become an expert fast or find a new profession. I would guess you know a lot more than you think you know. You may take your skills for granted- why not - what you do is easy for you. Some industries have specific designations that signify expertise in that field. For example a CFP designation is used to acknowledge expertise in the financial planning industry, a CLU in the insurance industry. An M.A. or a Ph.D. always signify expertise even if the degree is in a different field. What is considered expertise is different for each industry. If you are not sure find out if there is a professional designation in your industry. If there is -get it. If this will take years recognize you can begin to create your expertise now even without 10 years experience, a wall full of degrees or a ValueStar on your brochure. Try some of these methods:

• Public Speaking is a very important way to gain exposure and potential clients -- When you are in business remember it is always better to be in the front of the room with your mouth open than in the back of the room with your mouth shut. There are several groups meeting in your geographic area that are always looking for speakers. Put together a list of topics you can discuss and send it out to the program chair of different organizations you identify as groups filled with your potential clients. Whenever you are speaking you can invite potential clients who you would like to hear you speak. Speaking gives people an opportunity to meet you and get to know you before they meet with you individually to consider becoming your client.

• Do public seminars -- Do not think that you will make money on these seminars in fact you may spend a good amount to put one together, however there are benefits to creating your own forum for presenting your work. You determine how long you will speak and what the format will be. You can target participation to people you know are potential clients for you. You can do press releases and event listings in publications that lots of people will read even if they do not come. This results in people saying to you the ever popular phrase I see your name everywhere." Establishing name recognition is a big part of positioning yourself as an expert.

• Join the Chamber of Commerce -- When you are a member of your local chamber you are recognized as a legitimate business person and you are acknowledged as someone who understands the importance of supporting the business community you are a part of. Also your chamber can provide you with many opportunities to position yourself as an expert like being on a panel, writing an article for the newsletter, volunteering your expertise for the organization.

• Be active in your industry association -- Anybody who is an expert is a member of their local and or national industry group. I am a member of The International Association of Personal and Professional Coaches as well as a member of the National Speakers Association. These groups like other industry specific groups offer monthly or quarterly meetings that allow you to keep current on changes in your industry as well as offering you a place to meet other members of your profession. Also consider doing presentations at industry conferences this will allow you to be considered an expert by your peers.

• Become involved in the leadership of your industry association. Leadership in your industry professional association automatically gives the impression that you are a local expert. This role also allows you to keep your hand on the pulse of what is happening in your industry in your area.

• Write articles -- Get articles published where ever you can. Any publication, from your alumni newsletter to your local daily paper can be a good venue for you to get your message across. When writing articles always ask for a byline and a photo. Reprint all articles you have written. Send them to current clients and potential clients. Your name in print spells expertise.

• Publish your own newsletter -- If you can not easily get others to print your articles, print them yourself. A newsletter can be no more than a single side of an 8' 1/2 by 11' sheet of paper. In addition to information on a topic related to your business you can also print a list of services, an announcement about a special event or any other self promoting information you see fit. Also, electronic newsletters are an effective way to stay in touch and are almost no cost to produce.

• Write a book -- Being the author of any book adds credibility to your message. If you can not get a publisher to take it consider self publishing. There are a lot of resources out there to assist people with self publishing. Also there is a lot of software on the market that makes the formatting of your book easy.

• Print a booklet -- If a book is overwhelming then consider the simple and easy alternative. A booklet can be nothing more than four pages folded over with information and tips to consumers to consider when working with your industry. You can use this as a leave behind marketing piece that will continue to state your expertise.

• Get some media coverage -- Produce a press kit discussing the topics you would like to speak to. Send out news releases to your local papers radio stations and TV shows when you are doing something news worthy. When you are a guest on a show always ask for a video or a tape so you can use it for other opportunities later.

• Get professional endorsements -- to use in your brochure and other marketing materials. Endorsements from someone recognized as an expert in a related field or from someone recognized as an expert in your field will say that even the experts think you are an expert.

• Create photo recognition -- Have a professional quality photograph on hand so you can seize any opportunity to use it. People that will not remember your name will remember your face. Then you will hear when they recognize you as an expert " I see your picture everywhere".

• Teach -- If you are teaching others what you know you must surely know a lot. Community colleges, universities and community organizations are always looking for adjunct instructors and special guests speakers to share their expertise with students.

• Learn -- Whatever you decide to do to establish yourself as an expert, recognize that you must regularly continue your professional development. Go to seminars, read industry publications, consult with colleagues, and keep current on the use of new technologies in your industry.

To establish yourself as an expert, remember the most important part is to first be the expert you are capable of being. Someone is going to be highly recognized as an expert in your industry. Have that expert be you.

Caterina Rando, MA, MCC, is the author of "Learn to Power Think," and a keynote speaker and success coach. She helps people invigorate their professional and personal lives and create the results they want. To find out more, visit <http://www.caterinar.com> . Caterina can be reached at 800-966-3603 or <mailto:cpr@caterinar.com>.

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