



Overthinking Yourself Out Of Success

Alan Weiss, [Contributing Editor](#)

I get the impression that if you asked five consultants to deal a hand of poker, the game wouldn't begin for about three hours. There would be decisions on the process to use to determine how to choose the first dealer, priority systems for seating, exploration of bathroom break time and duration, the placement characteristics of the coasters for the beer, and so forth.

Don't even get me started on the type of poker.

In other words, you'd be better off with a video poker machine which would take your money, deal a hand, and get on with its mechanical life. I'm not sure the camaraderie would be significantly different, either.

I believe that marketing in this profession is not rocket science. In fact, it's not even as difficult as programming an entertainment center remote control (for which I have to call in a consultant).

Straight Lines Are Meant To Be Followed

The royal road to marketing is to find a buyer who can pay for your value. You then either reach out to that buyer or, preferably, draw the buyer to you. Why complicate that?

Recently, a professional organization I belong to was trying to determine how to better brand and promote the membership. I suggested that those of us who were successful contribute to a fund to use for public relations and outreach, branding ourselves and our colleagues. Before you could say "Let's make this more difficult," a member of leadership suggested that we convene on Saturdays, bring clients, tell war stories, record the results, invite other consultants, and use this in the branding effort. Ciao.

Do you remember when the comics page had a picture and you were asked to find all you could wrong with the picture, such as a bird flying upside down? Well, how many things can you find wrong with the above picture? I'll give you a hint, it's in excess of 400. In fact, you're more probable to be successful getting a bird to fly upside down while quoting Peter Drucker.

A simple promotional campaign is taken and transmogrified into a horrendous logistical nightmare. Why? Because consultants overthink marketing and are immersed in methodology instead of Market Gravity.™ They take a relatively straight line and turn it into spaghetti.

The Road Never Traveled

There seems to be an inverse correlation between business success and complex ideation. In other words, the more unsuccessful the consultant, the more convoluted approaches he or she has to marketing and securing business. Is that an accident or an absolute? I'll leave that to you, but look around you.

The most successful consultants I know go to the market with value and create an aura of expertise through writing, publishing, interviews, leadership positions, networking, products, and so on. They can deal with a

multiplicity of this Market Gravity™ because they take a simple, direct route. But often I'll hear the less successful consultants explain why it takes three weeks to write an article, to assemble the footnotes, to vet it with colleagues, to refine it, and I guess, to allow it to bake at 360-degrees for a few days.

I write an article in about 45 minutes. I've written this one, which is brief for me, in 20. Perhaps I have no content or cohesion, but I've published over 600 articles and 25 books. I must be going for volume over accuracy, right?

Or, perhaps, I'm simply not making that big a deal over it.

Cut To The Chase

With my major clients, I've found myself repeatedly intoning: "Then don't do that," "Fire him," "Transfer her," "Create a backup," "Validate your assumptions," and so on. Those types of advisories have been worth millions, being at the heart of whatever I do.

With my coaching and mentoring clients, I do exactly the same: "Why not just call him?" "Don't deal with a non-buyer," "Create a next step," "Don't use your technology, just talk," and so forth. This is a relationship business. What's the big deal?

Using brokers, for example, on the Internet or at large is silly, because true buyers don't purchase consulting services from middlemen (although training departments do, since they hire vendors and buy commodities). Buyers rely on referrals and public expertise. Why confuse your marketing by inserting people between you and the real relationship, in this case, both a broker and a low-level gatekeeper, between you and a true buyer?

Just as so many consultants are overly labor-intensive in delivery because they employ too much methodology (rather than common sense), so, too, are they inefficient in marketing because they make it overly complex. The more curves in the road, the more dangerous the journey.

Identify your value. Identify who can pay for the value. Meet them. If you do that consistently, you will create and sustain and grow a valuable practice. The more you complicate that basic process, the more you'll be frustrated and unsuccessful.

Think about it, but not too much.

Alan Weiss, Ph.D., is a contributing editor to RainToday.com and has been cited by the *New York Post* as "one of the most highly respected independent consultants in the country." His clients include The Federal Reserve Bank, Hewlett-Packard, Mercedes, JP Morgan Chase and over 200 similar world-class organizations. He has written 25 books which appear in 7 languages and conducts a global mentoring program. You can reach him via his web site: <http://www.summitconsulting.com>.

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