



The Number One Obstacle Professional Service Firms Must Overcome to Consistently Attract More Business

by Bob Moore, CMC

SPECIAL REPORT AND CASE STUDY

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Have you ever wondered, “What is the number one obstacle to obtaining more business?” This is one of the most frequently asked questions by principals of professional service firms and business development directors. **The short answer is a flawed hiring system that fails to find “good” people who match the requirements of the job.**

I am currently working with a client who is attempting to expand his sales force of consulting engineers. However, he is not clear on whether he wants “hunters” who go find new business or “farmers” who cultivate and grow sales through current clients. The research is very clear that the talent requirements are very different for each of these. The solution is to get clear on the primary purpose of the job and determine the talent required to achieve it.

Many principals of professional service firms believe that experience, education and technical know-how is all that is required. They frequently focus on hiring “the best and brightest” in their field—lawyers, accountants, architects, designers and engineers, for example. However, these factors are only basic qualifications and are not sufficient to assure superior performance. The solution is to shift this attitude to include all the factors that make up talent.

It is not unusual to see the word “talent” used interchangeably with the word “skill.” Talent is best defined as the convergence of a person’s skills and abilities, knowledge and experience with his or her innate aptitude. Talent encompasses many different dimensions of human behavior which determine an individual’s capacity and potential. Unfortunately, most of these dimensions are hidden and rarely discovered so they can be fully utilized. The solution is implementing a process to help individuals and employers to discover these talents and apply them.

Seven Dimensions of Top Talent

Superior performance requires a unique combination of the following seven dimensions

based on the talent requirements of the specific job or role:

1. Experience
2. Education
3. Behavior
4. Motivators
5. Personal Skills
6. Acumen
7. Emotional Intelligence

What about IQ, Intelligence or how smart someone is? Intelligence is a dimension of superior performance. However, there are many indicators of intelligence and it is generally not considered a hidden factor. Also, there is no direct correlation between IQ levels and achievement. How many times has the brightest student gotten lower grades or the smartest person failed on the job?

Turning Your Good People Into Top Talent

The best you can expect is to hire good people who can become top talent. Top talent is specific to the job and requires learning and development on the job. Yes, some assembly is required and there may be a so-called “skills gap,” which must be addressed after someone is hired. The solution is to implement an assessment system that begins by benchmarking the job and identifying the specific talent requirements. Next, assess the personal talents of all candidates and compare them to the job requirements. The final step is to clearly define the talent gaps which become the basis for onboarding and a personalized development plan.

The most effective selection system will provide at least two primary results:

1. Provide input and additional objective data points for selecting good people who can become top talent.
2. Give the manager/team leader information that will assist in onboarding and getting new hires off to a fast, productive start.

Of course, there is the need for training. However, many organizations only provide product-oriented training. In addition to mastering product knowledge, becoming a superior performer also requires mastery of personal strengths and people skills.

A Business Development System

Regardless of the product or service, top performing sales professionals always use a system. One of the most effective selling systems I have discovered is based on the applied research of marketing and sales psychologist, Dr. Donald Moine. Dr. Moine says that there are three keys to growing any business, particularly a professional service firm:

1. Lead Generation
Making contact with people who could become your clients.
2. Appointment Setting
Creating opportunities to engage in fact-finding, information gathering meetings with prospective clients.
3. Lead Conversion
Delivering sales presentations to qualified prospects as determined in step 2.

Marketing Effectiveness

Because of the noisy and crowded marketing channels bombarding prospective clients, effective marketing is more important today than ever. Peter Drucker, the greatest management thinker of the 20th Century had a lot to say about marketing effectiveness. One of my favorite marketing quotes is, *“The aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous. AND . . . to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits him/her and sells itself.”* This brings me to another FAQ.

What is the single most significant marketing strategy that can transform any professional services business or career? My immediate answer is **“The Strategy of Preeminence”** which was invented by marketing guru, Jay Abraham. The **Strategy of Preeminence** is the ability to always put your client’s needs ahead of your own. Jay asserts that this strategy can be implemented by anyone by

simply changing his or her focus from “me” to “you.”

Here are five easy steps you can take immediately:

1. List 10 people who buy your products or services.
2. Focus one at a time on what that person’s real need is by answering the following questions:
 - What results are they really after?
 - What impact does your product or service have on them, their career, future, and well-being?
 - How have you impacted their quality of life; what has it meant in terms of their business or personal success?
 - How much more could you do to improve your impact on those results?
3. With that mind-set, renew your passion and purpose to make a greater difference.
4. Then, connect with them with more compassion, respect and loyalty to earn the right to be their trusted advisor.
5. Finally, become aware of and seek to optimize the dramatic difference in the way they respond to you.

When you have answered these questions, you are on your way to being *preeminent* in the minds of your “clients.” Always remember, a client is a person who is under the protection of another, not simply a “customer” who purchases your commodity or product.

Case Study Software Sales Team Skyrockets From Worst to First

Problem: A new sales manager for a software company inherited a sales team that ranked No. 22 out of 22, or dead last.

Solution: The sales position was benchmarked and individual talent assessments of current salespeople were compared to the benchmark.

Discovery: A massive 75% of the sales force did not match the sales position benchmark.

Results: By replacing the 75% with superior salespeople who fit the job benchmark, the team skyrocketed to No. 1 out of the 22 sales teams—from worst to first.

Summary

The number one obstacle professional service firms must overcome to consistently attract more business is failure to find good people and turn them into top talent.

Here the five solutions to overcoming this obstacle:

1. Benchmark the job by establishing the key accountabilities and primary purpose, and determine the talent required to achieve them.
2. Shift from the attitude that intelligence, experience, and education is all it takes and recognize all seven dimensions of top talent are required for superior performance.

3. Implement an assessment system that identifies the talent requirements of the specific job, assesses the personal talents of all candidates and compares them to those requirements, and includes an onboarding process and a personalized development plan based on the talent gaps.
4. Create a business development system that includes Lead Generation, Appointment Setting and Lead Conversion.
5. Execute an effective marketing process that can “make selling superfluous” and creates “The Strategy of Preeminence.”

Next Steps

Schedule a complimentary strategy session to discuss your unique situation and how to more effectively Turn Your Good People Into Top Talent. Together, let’s determine how to remove all the obstacles to consistently attract more business to your firm. Contact: Bob@Effectiveness.com | Phone: 919-439-5811

About Bob

Bob Moore, CMC®, The Effectiveness Coach (www.theeffectivenesscoach.com) is founder of Effectiveness, Inc. (www.effectiveness.com), a resource to executives and professionals who want to accelerate their progress to sustainable growth) and author of *Turning Good People Into Top Talent* (www.toptalentbook.com). The CMC®, Certified Management Consultant, is the globally recognized certification mark of consulting competency, professionalism and ethics awarded by the Institute of Management Consultants.

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