

# Professional Promotion: Building a "Reputational Foundation" for Visibility – Without Cringing

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- Download the latest version of Acrobat <sup>®</sup>Reader [here](#).
- Navigate pages with the up/down arrows on the top toolbar or right side slider.
- Increase/decrease the size of content using the plus/minus buttons on the toolbar.
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- The audio control window for each slide will close when you advance pages within the presentation and may also be closed manually by clicking in the upper right hand corner of the control window.

## Ulla de Stricker MA, MLS



With experience since the late 70's in the information industry and in information related operations, Ulla de Stricker focuses in her engagements on strategic planning for an organization's information and knowledge management policies, practices, and delivery mechanisms including special libraries.

With a strong track record executing information audits and needs assessment studies and recommending approaches for dealing with information services and knowledge management challenges, she is a sought-after consultant and coach for library staff.

Prior to 1992, she held senior positions in the information industry in customer facing and product development roles.

Ulla de Stricker is known for her special attention to the impact of corporate culture and extrinsic pressures on the actual day to day practices of knowledge workers and frequently conducts strategic planning studies based on such practices.

Typical projects have focused on assessments of knowledge worker requirements, determination of priorities in terms of information support content and services, and structuring of underlying operations to deliver such content and services in effective ways.



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"If I'd known how  
much *selling* ... "



- Few of us ever thought "Yay, let's go selling!"
- We are more comfortable working than we are selling the work
- Hm, how many of us have sales agents?
- But in fact, we ought all consider ourselves to "owners of an independent business"



# What we will cover



1. Facts of life for providers of services
2. The giving plan
3. Handling the "sales" process

# 1. Facts of Life



- We are in a nebulous business because we **do not have an obvious role as some other professionals do**
- Think insurance brokers, real estate agents, physical therapists, mechanics, accountants, roofers, and many like them:
- All potential clients are fully aware of their functions, offerings, and potential benefits!
- Thus the "buying" decision is not *whether* ... it is *who*
  - Client applies criteria such as referrals, location, value for money, convenience, etc etc in the selection -- when the need arises





# Client Awareness of Need



- If we don't get the car serviced properly, we could be in big trouble & a danger to others
- My knee is in agonizing pain, I can't walk
- Do my own tax filing? Ah, no ...
- Money is no object when the family pet is suffering
- A new roof will prevent water damage that would be costly to repair
- The neighbor's yard looks fantastic and easy-maintenance ... who is the landscaper?





# Awareness of Need is Key!



- Regardless of the degree of urgency, potential clients aware of a need at least go looking
- Our clients may not have awareness of a need driving them to go looking
- But it gets even trickier:
- Recognizing need may be uncomfortable for clients

# *You're Saying We Need Help?*



- Experienced specialists "know their sources"
- Organizational culture may not require knowledge workers to engage with the information centre
- Examples of thoughts:
  - *Can the librarians really help? Our team's activity is quite specialized ...*
  - *The internet sources I use seem satisfactory ...*

# And We are a Long Way Away



- So even if the client recognizes some difficulty ...
- He or she may not know where to turn
- And we have no way to know who they are
- Which means ...

# Many Solitudes



- They labor not knowing what they could have
- We have the answer
- They may seek retail solutions (e.g. software)
- We could steer them in the right direction



# Who Else Shares Our Dilemma?



- Is there inspiration? What can we learn?
- Style consultant at monthly meeting of administrative professionals illustrates the outreach approach
- Home stagers may similarly look for properties not selling quickly
- Do you have examples?

# Aha, Market Segmentation!



- Indeed, our first order of business is to identify target groups most likely to need our services ...
- ... through a needs assessment (information audit) or similar exercise ...
- Before we formulate the "products & services" and benefits to be promoted



# Our Promotional Scenarios



- Are we promoting a brand new lineup of e-content?
- Do we want to expand into new types of services or more in-depth projects?
- Do we want to reach new client groups?
- Are we spending too much time on day to day work so as to neglect outreach? - Could be a nice problem to be too busy with projects ... but is the demand coming from *strategic* clients? (If not, volume of work is no assurance of continued employment.)

# In Summary, we have a "double charge"



- We must market a concept as well as ourselves and our services
- We must promote awareness of need before we sell
- As a means of putting down a "reputational foundation" for those activities, let's look at activities we could undertake without the "cringe factor"

# 3. The Giving Plan



- Range of channels and vehicles not generally thought of as advertising
- "Let me give" as the theme to establish confidence
- Potential clients may feel more motivated to approach a known "public" quantity
- Our offerings can gently suggest the challenges potential clients have (example: writing about common corporate situations)
- So they recognize themselves in a non-sales setting

# Demonstration vs. Claim



- So we look for ways to GIVE in ways to demonstrate ...
- ... that it is worth consulting with us because we have something substantive to offer
- The Giving Plan requires effort and time ... but see it as a worthwhile method for gaining visibility and reputations

# The Giving Plan Includes:



- Writing / Offering Website Content
- Speaking
- Mentoring / Teaching
- Serving on boards, committees, etc
- Assisting charities

# Writing



- Beyond publishing articles in standard journals, look for newsletters and websites seen by the target market:
- Offer to provide practical "how-to" articles or columns, "tip-of-the-month" entries, reviews of websites and tools
  - Example: Topical article in monthly newsletter from my real estate agent: mold
- Or publish a personal newsletter or blog with substantive content for your audience or intermediary audience

# Web Delivered Content



- Could intranet pages contain a "users like you" section to relate how services benefited a team?
- Could employee news portion of the intranet include brief articles, reviews of popular business books, what you always wanted to know about social media ... ?
- Would a blog work, dealing with matters of interest to the organization - e.g. a modified version of media monitoring?
- What about pioneering wikis for collaboration if they aren't in place already?

# Speaking: Never Know Who's in the Audience!



- Speaking opportunities inside organizations are few, so beyond standard conference speaking (may involve travel and expense), find free local venues:
- Research what events are held locally and offer to be the (free) "dinner speaker" - example: Intl. Assoc. of Administrative Professionals, Toronto Chapter monthly events
- Examine offerings of local courses and offer instructors a guest lecture on relevant aspects - e.g. "Staying on top of developments in your field - the top 10 information resources in ..."





# Mentoring / Teaching



- Offer services to students going beyond academic offerings - example: Job search seminars
- May require prior relationship building with the faculty
- If appropriate local or web based continuing education activities exist, develop and teach a course

# Boards / Committees



- Be active in relevant industry associations or local organizations to expand the personal referral network
- Here's a promise: It won't be hard to find a committee or two wanting fresh hands!
- Trade association meetings are good sources of intelligence about what is going on in the field
- Service to associations or local groups leads naturally to opportunities for publishing in the related journal(s) or newsletter(s)

# Charities / Initiatives



- If the organization runs a United Way Campaign ... be sure to be visible!
- Support local charities or public institutions, ideally working in our expertise - examples: Researching donors, doing PR for public library. Payback: Referrals, References, Story on Intranet
- If no group exists to deal with something we care about, establish one?
- Look for opportunities to be "written up" in local or specialty publications in connection with such activities



# Yes But ... Can We Afford Such Free Work?



- Unless we are already fully booked for years to come, free work is an essential investment in building credibility
- Free work leads to people ... who can be asked for introductions to individuals potentially in need of our services or new employers
- Consider it an ongoing reputation builder ... the work is never done because our "fans" retire!

## 4. Handling the "Sales" Process



- Say our visibility efforts have paid off, we have been asked to discuss a project, and a meeting is arranged ...
- Keep the client convinced we are the right choice
- Client may need reassurance in areas we take for granted
- → Send the competence message in person, with a focus on the project





# Sending the Message in Person

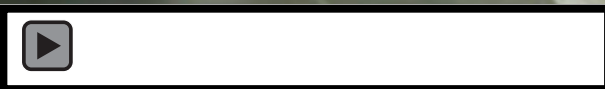


- We start at the beginning: When we walk into the meeting, we look *sharp*: "The care I take of my appearance is an indication of the care I take of my clients"
- (Ladies: Jackets!)
- We act from a position of *strength* - as in: "Yes you need me - it's just a matter of how."

# Assuring the Potential Client



- We reference: "In a previous project, the result was ..."
- We are flexible: The timeline can be adjusted, with ramifications
- We provide realistic caveats: Beyond what we may easily predict, here is what could be encountered
- We are calm and confident
- We point to value add: "You no doubt have already checked X; I offer Y and Z"



# Mantras



- *I do this for me*
- *Visibility efforts are my investment in my "business"*





Thank You ...



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