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# Marketing Your Consulting and Professional Services

by Dick Connor and Jeff Davidson.  
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MANY PROFESSIONAL SERVICE firms operate in an environment that changes so frequently that standing still requires all their energies. With the speed of technological advance and the constant flux of regulatory frameworks, time for marketing can be woefully limited. In consequence, many opt for the tried and tested on the assumption that the firm's survival is evidence that it must have worked. Dick Connor and Jeff Davidson define the traditional marketing approach as "telling you about my company so you can figure out how and where to use our services". This is the passive stance of indiscriminate advertising and corporate brochures: hang a sign on the door and wait for clients to come through it. The alternative they offer is the systematic client-centred marketing approach.

This book is not for the busy professional looking for quick answers. There are no startling insights, no speedy fixes, no flashes of brilliance which will transform your marketing effort overnight. Indeed, as you delve further into this book you get the impression that you know it all already. The advice is often good old common sense, so obvious as to be trivial ... and so it would be, without

concrete proposals to put it into effect.

The book's strength is that it takes you by the hand and leads you through the necessary steps to making your marketing effort part of your business, part of the way you service your clients, rather than a separate function that you can bolt on and off when required. Instead of casting your net outward to the sea of clients you do not have, the authors suggest you begin by examining your own pond first. The bad news, then, is that this actually involves a bit of extra work on your part, painstakingly elaborated with suggested data formats and software for the task of analysis.

Analysing and evaluating your current business is the key to making sure your marketing is effective and "leveraged" – delivering maximum benefits for minimum effort. Targeting is the key to good "leveraging". You need to distinguish good clients from bad, clients with potential for further business or referral from dead-ends, niche industries from the marketplace as a whole. "You don't get rich trying to be everything to everyone," say the authors. So, the good news is that you will probably only need to apply the client-centred marketing approach to 20 per cent of your clients.



The book is, for the most part, of universal relevance to professional service providers. Occasionally, the authors refer the reader to information sources or institutions of use only to those operating in the US. The rest of us may have to do a little extra homework to find the equivalent organisations in our own countries. The encouraging message however, is that most of the information we need is under our noses, in our client files and the memories of those who deal with them.

Perhaps it is inevitable, given the subject-matter of the book, that the temptation to use buzz-words is not very strongly resisted. Perhaps less defensible, however, is the tendency to define in rather turgid prose a number of fairly basic ideas that probably do not warrant the reader's attention. The glossary is certainly guilty of this, but the body of the text also oversteps the mark on more than one occasion. The plain-speaker's plea to call a spade a spade came to the reviewer's mind on being told that a book is a "linear information vehicle". Nevertheless, if you are looking to inject new life into your firm, this could be the linear information vehicle for you. – William Waterman □