



CONSULTANTS
NETWORK

BOSTON SECTION

Consulting News

October Edition

October 2, 2007

CNet Consulting News brings you monthly updates on our chapter events, presentations and highlights of our members' noteworthy accomplishments. In this edition:

☛ *A review of and photos from the September presentation*

☛ *An overview of recent CNet consultant achievements, including patents, awards, speaking engagements and publications*

☛ *A preview of our October 24th meeting with Susan Stambach Sampson, Esq.*

Selling the Invisible

Marketing and Sales Strategies for Professional Services

Our September presentation with Michael C. Slemmer

Any enterprise faces the challenge of devising a marketing and sales strategy that sets them apart from their competitors. Consultants and professional services face the additional difficulty of "selling the invisible", of pitching an intangible service rather than a saleable product. As a consultant, if you serve as the "all-in-one" salesperson and service provider, you are challenged with the obvious conundrum of simultaneously selling your service and delivering on it. Hiring an outside salesperson, however, poses the difficulty



Michael C. Slemmer

of finding someone who has the expertise to understand and represent your business.

On September 26th, Michael C. Slemmer of The Collaborative for Business Development presented his strategies for marketing and selling professional and consulting services. Primary among these is defining your business offering and differentiating yourself from the competition by identifying key components of your business, such as:

- What unique value does

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Consulting Highlights

Fall has arrived and our consultants are in high gear. **Craig Goldman** was issued his ninth patent, #7274997, "Method of measuring discrete, incremental feedback from motion devices" on September 25th. Craig also exhibited at the Texas Instruments conference in Burlington on September 20th. **Michael Steifel** is presenting two

talks on Microsoft Windows Workflow Foundation at the VS Live! conference in Las Vegas October 16th and 17th. **Robin Goldsmith** has a busy month planned, with October presentations at the Software Test & Performance Conference in Cambridge, as well as events in Nashville and Denver. **Norman Daoust** gave a well received presentation entitled

"Business Process Modeling Notation (BPMN): An Overview" at the SD Best Practices Conference & Expo at the Hynes Convention Center on September 20th. To learn more about these and other CNet consultants, visit <http://www.boston-consult.com>.

Selling the Invisible (cont'd)

- your business offer that will compel potential customers to choose you over the competition? An easy way to assess the uniqueness of your business offering is to make a list of possible differentiators, identify what they would mean to a client, and rank in priority order.
- Identify and evaluate the competition. Find out who your competitors are, their value proposition and key differentiators. If possible, talk to some of their clients and identify possible openings to tell your unique professional services story.
- Know who you are as a consultant or professional service, and what you aspire your business to be. This sounds simple, but it's a key precursor to putting a stake in the ground and defining your sales and marketing approach. For example, do you sell a service, but plan to offer a product line? Are you a one-person shop but have ambitions to expand and franchise your business?
- Understand your clients' and prospects' perspective by polling customers to find out what works for them, how they view your business offering, and what you can improve.

Once you've clearly defined your business proposition, it's time to tell your story and spread the word about the uniqueness of your consulting or professional service. Every component of your marketing collateral - your web site, brochures, product glossies, presentations - must consistently underscore why your business offering is unique, and why it should matter to prospective clients. There are numerous and inexpensive ways to market your professional service, including speaking on panels and attending trade shows, writing white papers and case studies. The key is

to spread your message consistently and persuasively.

Selling is often the most intimidating aspect of running a business for consultants, particularly for those offering technical services. Engineers who are accustomed to creating innovative products - not finding and selling to customers - may find the prospect of pitching their offerings to potential clients daunting. The key to becoming a champion and salesperson for your professional service - whatever the discipline - is to know your style and recognize what works best in the niche market you're trying to capture. For example, if you're not comfortable "cold-calling" (and few people are), you may want to focus on attending networking events and selling your service by building personal relationships. Or if you already have established connections in the markets you're selling into, you may do well building your business through referrals by cementing relationships with and getting references from those you've worked with in your industry of expertise. It's always wise to use a variety of sales tools, including sending mailings, writing newsletters and blogs, using telemarketing services and holding events. Figure out which of these you're comfortable with and can do effectively, and consider outsourcing the others.

Above all, once you've established your business model and unique proposition, stick to it, and use all the marketing tools at your disposal to spread the word about your professional service. You don't have to be a born marketer or salesperson to effectively promote and sell your offering; you just need to learn the style and strategy that works for your business.

Learn more about Michael C. Slemmer and The Collaborative at <http://www.the-collaborative.com/>.

Identity Crisis: Contractor, Employee, Both? And Why Do We Care?

Coming in October with Susan Stambach Sampson

Many consultants assume that they qualify as independent contractors rather than employees. However, the legal presumption is the opposite, and changes to the definition of independent contractor under Massachusetts law make it more difficult than ever for businesses to employ consultants as contractors. Join Susan Stambach on October 24th to learn when and how you can overcome the presumption of employee status, including a discussion of the tests and definitions under key state and federal laws, and why these distinctions are important to both you and the hiring entity. Susan will also discuss key terms for written contractor agreements that help rebut the presumption of employee status. This is a must-see presentation for contractors and employers alike. Visit <http://www.boston-consult.com/calendar/74.html> for details and directions to our meeting site at the offices of Foley Hoag LLP in Waltham.