Make Money Online NOW

A Step By Step Guide

To Earning Your First Dollars Online By Offering A Service

(Even If You Have No Prior Experience)

by *Vic Dorfman*

***Note from Vic:** Before you dive into this book, please take a second to visit http://www.vicdorfman.com/case-study to get a free video case study, in which I show you how I followed the exact process detailed in this book to start my very first successful service online.

Of course, you're under no obligation to do so. But I guarantee that watching a real example and hearing me explain it in video format will make it far easier for you to repeat the process when you're doing it yourself. :-)

To your success!

Vic Dorfman

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Chapter 1 - Overview

Why Offer a Service?

The most obvious upside of doing “consulting” work online (i.e. offering some kind of service) is that you can work from just about anywhere with a decent wifi connection: a coffee shop, a co-working space, a hotel, or even your apartment in a foreign country.

Being able to earn your living online allows you to weave travel and adventure into the very fabric of your day-to-day life. Most people fight a miserable commute, work all year in a cramped office, get two measly weeks of vacation, and then single-handedly blow those two weeks (and a couple thousand dollars) on a short trip to Mexico, Hawaii, or some other cliché vacation spot.

If travel is something you want to incorporate into your life, you'd have to agree that this makes for a poor work/life balance. Not to mention how anticlimactic such a short-lived vacation is after working like a dog all year.

The freedom to work from literally anywhere is popularly known as *location independence.* Realistically though, most online consultants aren't totally location independent. That's because some places are drastically more expensive to live in than others.

For example, one of the most popular destinations for online workers in the world is Thailand. It's warm, safe, and gorgeous. It has great infrastructure and delicious food. It's also quite cheap. If you're earning in a strong currency such as the Euro, Dollar, or Pound and spending your earnings in Thai Baht, you can live well on a modest income.

“Working Hard” in Koh Lanta, Thailand

You can live a modest but comfortable lifestyle on $1000 USDper month. Whereas in a country like Sweden, $1000 would barely cover your cold lozenges.

If you'd like to do online consulting work, you're by no means required to drop everything and hop on the next plane to South America or Southeast Asia. But if it's an enticing notion to you and practically possible, there are tremendous *business* benefits to doing so. To say nothing of the way in which travel enriches your life.

The most obvious reasons we work at all are to pay the bills and to increase our quality of life. But when you earn and spend in the same currency, it can take a lot of income to make a substantial leap in quality of life. Earning in dollars and spending in dollars, for example, can often feel like you're just treading water. And since business requires a certain forward momentum, this isn't the ideal situation to be in.

On the other hand, if you earn in a strong currency and spend in a relatively weak currency, you can upgrade your living situation to a level that you simply wouldn't be able to do on the same amount of money back home.

By decreasing your costs relative to your income, you're also in a much better position to save money, invest money back into your business (this is crucial!), pay off debts, and treat yourself to nice things once in a while, instead of struggling just to break even back home.

Finally, by leveraging currency differences in your favor, you can work on your business at a more organic, dare I say – human – pace! This “work to live” ethos reflects positively on your health, relationships, personal happiness and, believe it or not, your business as well.

A Worldwide Customer Base

Whether or not you choose to live and work abroad, you still get to find clients from all over the world. So your opportunities to earn more money and pick your projects more carefully are greatly multiplied compared with offline work. (You can work with folks from the U.S., U.K., Greece, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Russia, France, the Philippines, and many others.)

Consequently, your income potential is virtually unlimited. Whereas in a local market you can literally run out of clients and come up against ceilings for how much you can charge. So depending on the niche you choose and how hard you're willing to work, you can earn as little or as much you'd like.

Marketable, Useful Skills

Consulting online teaches you priceless business skills, many of which I've learned the hard way. My hope is that as you read this book, you take to heart the lessons I've learned through painful/expensive trial and error and profit from them without repeating them yourself!

All of the skills you acquire as an online worker will transfer to your future business ventures. Unlike a typical corporate employee who gets a “reliable” paycheck and often feels little incentive to push past his comfort zone at work, the fundamental unpredictability of online work forces you to stay on your toes.

You are responsible for managing your time, reputation, work, and results. *You* must market *yourself* and build your personal brand because there is no company name to invoke. You *are* the company!

You must learn to negotiate, brand, position, manage expectations, write copy to some extent, outsource, build and nurture relationships, and pull together various moving parts and web technologies to make your business run smoothly. And you must continually educate yourself on developments in your niche, and about business as a whole.

Knowing this, it's no wonder that many people actually prefer working for a company where they don't have to worry about extending themselves in these ways. Because it certainly is challenging. Whether the freedom it brings is worth more than the challenges and responsibilities it presents is, of course, up to you.

As an online worker, you develop and actually use real, marketable skills that can help you as you grow in your career, whether that happens to be with a great company or on your own.

Online consulting is an exceedingly practical, applied business and future potential employers, JVs (Joint Venture Partners), investors, etc., will recognize you as an individual who gets things done. Because if you weren't, you would have washed out of this line of work long ago. Online, it's sink or swim.

Let me put it this way: if I'm looking to hire a web developer and I'm torn between two equally skilled candidates – one who worked for 3 years at a corporate gig, and one who has kept himself afloat by freelancing for 2 years – I'll take the freelancer with one year less experience any day.

That's because I know that in order to have worked that long, the freelancer would have <u>had</u> to have delivered results, results, and more results to his clients. In a big enough company, however, results start to take a back seat to maintaining one's job security. So delays, excuses, sloth, politics, and other crap are par for the course.

The brilliant author and thinker Nassim Taleb said it best when he wrote: *“The 3 most* *harmful addictions are heroin, carbohydrates and a salary."*

Some of the Cons

It's not all rainbows and butterflies when you're your own boss. On the one hand, you'll be very careful about biting the hand that feeds you. Since you deal with clients directly and they give you money, you tend to treat them with respect and professionalism. On the other hand, sometimes clients treat *you* badly. To put it crudely, every so often a client will make you his bitch!

When that happens, you may or may not be in a position to politely tell him to get lost. Or, you may have mismanaged expectations and now you're stuck working for a tyrant for the rest of the project.

But don't worry, this is something I'll cover in some detail in the chapters on managing expectations and firing clients.

If you can build a powerful reputation and position yourself as an expert, clients will actually be cautious about pissing *you* off because it could reflect poorly on *them.* This is the position of strength and choice which I'm going to help you achieve with the advice in this book (aided, of course, by a liberal injection of your own elbow grease.)

Unlike a 'wage slave', you get paid for every hour you work, so your income isn't capped by a fixed salary. So the good thing is that you trade your time for money. But the bad thing is...you trade your time for money! If you don't work, you don't get paid. And your income grows only linearly with the hours you put in.

That's why you can't really call consulting a business. A proper business makes use of processes, systems, employees, and *scale* in order to produce larger revenues than is possible to a contractor. In short, a business, set up correctly, allows you to oversee operations but work less while earning more.

It's fine if you're content with being a contractor. I know many successful contractors who absolutely love their work and make a lot of money. But I personally view contracting as an education of sorts that teaches you the skills and patience you'll need to eventually build a profitable "lifestyle business", which has greater income potential than consulting <u>and</u> frees up more of your time. I want to call you to this higher standard as well and I want you to keep this idea percolating in the back of your head as you navigate the pages of this text.

With the skills you learn in the online consulting world, you'll have everything you need to eventually set up an automated lifestyle business that runs remotely and requires minimal maintenance on your part.

That's the long term goal I propose for the simple reason that it brings in money and frees up time, thus allowing you to live the kind of lifestyle you want. Of course, you're equally free to stick with consulting. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that and it can be very profitable, engaging, and rewarding. It really comes down to what floats your boat.

<u>Another Con:</u> At first, and for the first 6 months to 2 years, you're going to be working your ass off. This is a hustle. And while I'll give you my best productivity tips, there's no getting around the hard work involved. It's important to have this expectation from the start. If you're expecting a "Four Hour Workweek" a few months from now, please reset your expectations to something less magical.

Don't get me wrong, a four hour workweek is certainly possible and I do know a small handful of people whose businesses run largely on autopilot while they take it easy. But–and this is a big but–*all* of those people worked killingly hard for many, many years to achieve that level of business success. And you can too. But it *won't* come overnight.

Low Barrier to Entry

Let's wrap this first chapter up on an encouraging note. Here's the beauty of online work as I see it: there's a low barrier to entry and people could care less about your credentials.

Remember: this is a results business. People don't want to see your college degree; they want to see your portfolio. They don't need a letter of recommendation; they want a page filled with glowing reviews from clients you've verifiably helped.

People will generally hire you and refer business to you on the basis of your professional reputation, i.e. the results you get for clients and how well they speak of you. So you need not worry about your *personal, private* life preventing your success. Being a convicted felon, an incorrigible womanizer, a gambler, or a boozehound doesn't make your work any less legitimate. It's your business. If you can work and deliver great results, the internet will welcome you with open arms. In a sense, it's the new America–the way America once was: people minding their own damn business and working hard for a good life!

In other words, you're free to be yourself and there's no social juggernaut or HR department to deny you work on any basis but your skill. That being said, it's certainly a very good idea to keep your private life private and stay out of public, political, and otherwise polarizing debates that can alienate potential clients if you become associated with these negativities.

This is a profession where you can reinvent yourself, use a different name, and be a different person if you want. The beautiful irony of it is that it really leaves you more and more free to be yourself. So, enough appetizers. Let's find out how to make this life your reality!

Chapter 2 – Picking a Line of Work

Leveraging Your Existing Skills & Knowledge

Are you technically minded or computer illiterate? Are you a great writer or totally useless with the written word? Do you know how to design, develop, or program **or** do you have no apparent marketable skills to speak of...?

These are some of the questions you should ask yourself as you begin thinking about your entry point into selling a service online. It's important to not only honestly assess your strengths and weaknesses, but it's equally vital that you honestly consider what you enjoy doing.

If you hate writing, for instance, then diving headlong into freelance writing might not be the best idea. Even if you love writing, or graphics design, or whatever it may be, keep in mind that the kind of work you'll often have to do will be dull and uninspiring.

I actually started my online consulting journey several years ago with freelance writing. I was optimistic and excited about the prospect of earning money to write, a passion of mine since childhood.

But I quickly found myself reluctant to get behind the desk and type because I was getting assignments to write about dry, technical, or flat-out boring topics that simply didn't interest me. Before long, I dreaded taking on another client and began to actually hate writing! So for this and other reasons, I began searching to see what else was out there in online consulting land.

This is definitely something to keep in mind: what seems interesting to do on the surface may in fact make you want to tear your hair out. And the truth is, you'll only find that out once you try it. There's a Russian expression that applies: “The appetite comes with the food.”

But just as most college graduates wind up working in fields unrelated to their area of study, your first consulting gig won't necessarily be the line of work you end up in. In fact, it's fairly common to shift around and experiment with various niches. And online, that's fairly easy to do.

This is both good and bad. It's good because it allows you to discover what you actually enjoy doing enough to make a lucrative consulting business doing it. It's bad because many people chronically ditch what they're currently doing to explore a new opportunity. And a new one, and a new one...

In the online marketing world this is commonly known as “shiny object syndrome”, and it's a serious problem. Any kind of business needs a certain, minimum amount of momentum in order for you to start getting clients consistently, building a great reputation, and charging what you're worth. And because of the constant attraction to start work on something more interesting, many people wind up spinning their wheels for *years* before any one thing becomes reasonably profitable.

I know this because I was the poster child for shiny object syndrome. Had I stayed more focused on just one thing that people were willing to pay me for, I would have been more successful, earlier. But instead I bounced from one thing to the next like an ADHD kid with an iPhone hopped up on Mountain Dew.

Everybody experiences “Shiny Object Syndrome” (SOS) to some degree. The main point to keep in mind is that the human brain is hard-wired to seek out novelty. Just look at how addicting the iPhone is. Or Facebook. Or YouTube. It seems like all of us are totally transfixed like zombies, hypnotized by the onslaught of novel stimuli!

As long as you cultivate an awareness of your own gravitation towards novelty, you'll at least be able to respond to these temptations from a position of intelligent consideration, rather than knee-jerk reaction. This isn't a trivial point, by the way. These technologies are verifiably addictive and reining them in is crucial to functioning productively in a business context and staying focused long enough to make that sweet, sweet cash money.

Choose Your Adventure

You may already have an idea of which area, or “niche” you'd like to enter. If so, that's great. Either way, I recommend you at least skim through the following list of gig ideas and service marketplaces to better know your options.

Elance.com

Elance is one of the most popular online marketplaces on which to find work as a contractor. There are thousands of potential clients on this site looking to hire consultants to do a large array of different jobs, from simple data entry to complex, full time gigs with lots of responsibility.

Sometimes you'll hear people knock Elance because it can be hard to land decent paying jobs. And there's definitely some truth to that.

When an employer posts a job, there are often dozens, if not hundreds of contractors who bid on that job. And many of the applicants are from developing nations like India or the Philippines. Yet many of them are quite educated, skilled, competent, and ambitious. More importantly, they're willing to work for a lot less than a contractor from a developed country.

Yeah...I'd say that competition willing to work for a few bucks an hour can definitely pose an obstacle to getting hired! The second major obstacle is that, initially, your Elance profile won't have feedback from any clients since you won't have completed any jobs yet. And most employers would rather hire somebody who *already* has a proven track record than to take a chance on an unknown contractor who may or may not deliver the goodies.

Now this all may *sound* very intimidating. But in truth, if you can sit down and bid on jobs for a day following the guidelines I'm about to share with you, you will probably get your first job that very day. And if you do a good job on the work, you'll have your first 5-star feedback shortly thereafter!

Guidelines:

1. Write a personalized, juicy application message.

I have personally hired consultants from Elance, oDesk, freelancer.com and similar sites, and most of the application messages I received were either spam ("Dear Sir, We have reviewed your job requirements and can surely do the job for you! Awaiting your reply...") or a bland one liner ("Hey, I can do this job.")

Most employers also ask applicants to include a random word, say "giraffe", at the start of their application message, to prove they've actually read the job posting and aren't just blanket-spamming a bunch of employers with copy & paste messages.

In the end, out of dozens of applicants, an employer might get two applications that actually appeal to him. They are usually short, personalized, demonstrate an understanding of the job requirements, and are cordial.

2. Use the client's first name. Twice.

Use their first name once in the opening --- "Hi Bill", "Hi Maria", "Hi Dave", etc. --- and once towards the end, e.g. "Thanks Bill, talk soon."

This adds a personal touch without assuming an unbusinesslike level of familiarity. This leads to the next guideline.

3. Use professional yet human language

DO say “Hi”, “Hello”, “Thanks for getting in touch”, etc.

Do NOT use “Hey”, “What's up?”, “What's happening?”, “Yo!”, etc.

DO keep it short and to the point.

Do NOT ramble or go off on a tangent.

DO rephrase the client's requirements and ask for confirmation that you've understood them correctly.

Do NOT refer to the job generically, e.g. “I've done this kind of job before.”

DO be specific, e.g. “I've written several articles for the Huffington Post on relationships.”

Do NOT rattle off unrelated professional information to “fluff” your application.

DO calmly and confidently state if you've done similar work and that you can bring the project to a satisfactory completion within “x” amount of time.

Years ago I bid on a job to ghostwrite an eBook for a client on oDesk. Out of almost 100 applicants, the client chose me to do the job. And it certainly wasn't because of my experience; I had logged exactly zero hours as on oDesk contractor! But he was impressed with my well-thought-out, personalized message (and even told me so). So he took a chance on me. All it takes is just *a little* more effort than the next person is willing to put in.

oDesk.com

oDesk is much the same as Elance. In fact, both Elance and oDesk are now owned by the same company (but they still operate as two separate services.) I personally prefer oDesk over Elance. It's easier to work with whether you are a contractor or employer. The interface is clean and intuitive. And it seems to be a livelier marketplace than Elance.

Content Shops

If you're considering freelance writing, it's fairly easy to get hired to write for a content shop like iWriter.com. Simply go on their website and apply. Another good one is http://thecontentauthority.com.

Fiverr (http://www.fiverr.com/)

Fiverr.com is a popular website that allows you to post gigs offering just about any kind of service. It costs the person ordering $5 and you receive $4. Just like any marketplace, you'll need to have great feedback to really do well on this site. You'll also probably need to post several gigs before one really takes off and does well. A few ideas for Fiverr are:

Article Writing

Voiceovers

SEO services

Testimonial videos

Data Entry

Proofreading

...and many more. If you look at the featured gigs on the front page, you'll see that some people are doing really well because they've thought of unique gig ideas. That should help you brainstorm your own gig.

ACX (http://www.acx.com/) – Voiceover Work

ACX doesn't get nearly enough attention as an awesome avenue to make money online. If you have a good voice and think you'd like to do some voiceover work, you can apply to become a narrator at ACX. This is actually a step above contract work because you get paid royalties on any books you narrate as long as they continue to sell copies. So in a sense, it's “passive” income.

I've worked with a narrator on a few audiobooks of mine (including this one) and the audiobooks outperform my kindle and print books profit-wise. And my narrator is getting half of it! Again, this is a more professional gig, so you'll need good recording equipment and a good voice.

If you have some capital, you can even approach authors and offer to purchase the rights to their audiobooks and handle the narration for them. If their kindle and print books sell well, the investment could pay for itself within a few months.

The Warrior Forum

I got my start online on the Warrior Forum and I still get a good chunk of my business from it. At over 700,000 members, the Warrior Forum is the biggest internet marketing forum online, and also one of the biggest marketplaces to buy and sell services.

The services you can sell on the Warrior Forum mostly relate to the Internet Marketing world: article writing, SEO, website creation, research, virtual assistants, copywriting, etc.

As I mentioned earlier, my first gig online was writing articles for "Warriors". I went from giving articles away for free to charging perhaps the highest rates on the entire forum; rates my clients gladly paid. You can still see my original writing thread on the Warrior Forum here:

http://www.warriorforum.com/warriors-hire/422975-affordable-native-english-articles-researched-written-published-author-fast-turnover.html

There are several unique features of the Warrior Forum that make it an ideal place to start your consulting business and to eventually position yourself as a premium provider who charges premium rates.

1. **Thread Copy** – The way it works on WaFo (Warrior Forum) is that you set up a thread for each service that you offer. Unlike Elance or oDesk, this gives you the opportunity to write compelling sales copy and actually market yourself properly rather than trying to win bidding wars with countless, undercutting competitors.

However, every freedom can also be viewed as a daunting responsibility. Writing your own sales copy to sell your service, for instance, is both opportunity and challenge.

If you rise to the challenge and write a compelling sales piece, you'll sell yourself more effectively than the majority of your lazier competitors, who would rather do what Internet Marketing guru Jeff Walker calls "hope marketing"–i.e. setting up a product or service and *hoping* people will just arrive and buy it.

2. **Review Copies** – Most new service providers offer what are known as "review copies", which are discounted (or free) copies of their service. Why...?

Well, if for example, you're writing articles, your thread will start out lacking any positive feedback from your clients. A potential buyer has no assurance of the quality of your work because nobody has endorsed it yet.

By offering, say, 5 free articles to the first 5 takers, you get to solicit reviews in exchange for a freebie. If you do a good job, you'll get good reviews. If you do a poor job, they'll let you know about that too.

This leads us to the next awesome feature of WaFo.

3. **Ability To Add Reviews Directly Into Your Service Thread –** After you post your sales thread, you can return to it and edit it as many times as you want. In this case, you can copy and paste the favorable reviews people have left you right into your actual sales copy.

You can even take screenshots of the reviews and paste them as images into your thread.

This is probably one of the most important features of the Warrior Forum. Review copies just get you some initial momentum. As your thread accumulates positive feedback from clients, you can raise your price higher and higher until you hit a ceiling.

New visitors to your thread won't know that you used to charge less and it will appear to them that others have not only paid for your services at these rates but have even come back to publicly endorse you!

While that may sound manipulative, the fact of the matter is that a product or service is worth exactly what somebody is willing to pay for it. The market will always tell you if you're charging too much, but will rarely tell you that you're charging too little. So err on the side of making more money!

Internet marketing rockstar Eben Pagan defines marketing, and I paraphrase here, as "communication with leads and customers <u>that drives business.</u>" If it isn't bringing in new business or improving current business, it isn't marketing.

That's why marketing yourself properly and positioning yourself as a premium service provider can't be neglected. It's the difference between getting paid peanuts while scrounging for work, and getting paid handsomely while receiving more inquiries than you could possibly reply to, *<u>all for doing the same exact work.</u>*

It's unlikely that whatever service you provide is so unique, so technical, or so particular that a contractor in India or the Philippines couldn't do it for a quarter of the cost. But if you market yourself properly, you'll still get paid well for it. While the people who don't bother marketing themselves will continue working for a pittance.

<u>*A Note:</u> When you do paid work, always ask your clients to come back and leave a review on your thread after you finish working with them. Politely bug them, if need be. It's important.

4. **Signatures –** On the Warrior Forum (and other internet marketing forums like

BlackHatWorld and Digital Point), you can add a signature to your profile, which will show up below every post you make. Like so:

As you can see, I have two links and a branding element in my signature. (You can visit my current business thread HERE (http://www.warriorforum.com/warriors-hire/743888-i-set-up-optimizepress-affiliate-programs-clickbank-more-membership-sites-aweber-dap-etc.html) to see the full size version of my sig).

Your profile links back to your thread, website or wherever else you'd like to link to. Simply by posting on the forum and contributing something of value, you can get a lot of clicks through to your thread.

When business is slow, it's a good opportunity to read, write, add value to the forum, and increase your post count. This increases your perceived authority within your niche.

Albeit tempting, one thing you should **not** do is to post threads devoid of any value in an attempt to get click-throughs to the links in your signature. When I see a Warrior doing this, it actually deters me from clicking his sig. If he's willing to sacrifice value in his posts to drive cheap clicks to his service, might he be willing to sacrifice quality in his service as well...?

People aren't stupid. They can tell when you're posting bullcrap just to drive cheap clicks. It insults an intelligent community of people and does the exact opposite of what you think it'll do. Real “stars” provide massive value in everything they're involved with (even if it's a short post on a forum), and they choose to work with folks who share the same ethos. Be a star. Accept no less of yourself and others.

Factoring in Average Project Time

Let's say you have a “9 to 5” job. You may or may not like it but at least you can come in every day, work your shift, go home and get paid on a predictable schedule.

Now imagine that you lose your job and you wind up taking part-time positions at four different companies. You work two hours a day at each company, which amounts to the same number of total hours per day that you worked at your one, previous job.

To get from job to job you have to zoom all over town. You have to answer to four different bosses and remember four sets of coworkers. You have to juggle four different websites, four sets of project specs, four groups of contractors, four deadlines...You get the picture.

Even if these four gigs combined pay slightly more than your previous engagement, which situation do you think results in more stress, less focus, lower productivity, and quicker burn out? Yep, you guessed it: the four smaller jobs.

As I'll discuss in the productivity section, the most productive (and least stressful) approach to work is to do as few things at a time as possible: ideally, just one.

Therefore, an important factor to consider when choosing your line of consulting work is ***what is the average project length?*** If the average consulting engagement in your niche runs you 20 hours at $30/hr, you *will* need to take on additional projects in order to make a livable wage in most developed countries.

Also be aware that you can't always just work for three days straight and simply knock out each 20-hour gig just like that. Often times you'll have to stop to email your client, get approval from the client and wait on 3rd party contractors (graphic designers, etc.)

In other words, even if you're willing to work 10-hour days, a 20-hour project can still easily take a week once you factor in all of the waiting around you'll do for various reasons beyond your control.

Obviously, if you're charging $50/hr or more for your time, then even a 20-hour project can turn out pretty profitably. However, it's unlikely that you'll be commanding this kind of rate for at least half a year, probably longer.

So if it's possible, try to pick a service where each project can keep you engaged for 30, 40, 50 hours at a time. This will allow you to focus more intensely on <u>one</u> thing, do better work, and enjoy a lower stress level.

Of course...this is the *ideal* scenario. Realistically, you'll probably wind up juggling several project simultaneously at various points along the way. It just works out that way sometimes. So be prepared for it!

Before you proceed to the next chapter, write down a few services that you think you might enjoy selling online. Once you have a little list, proceed to the next chapter.

Chapter 3 – Low Cost Marketing Testing

Setting Up Your Thread

Now that you've picked a niche (or several) to potentially work in, it's time to do some low-cost market testing. No matter how amazing your idea sounds on paper, the only criterion that matters is whether or not people are willing to give you money for your service. And we find this out by setting up a sales thread where we offer this service.

This topic deserves a long conversation in its own right, but I'll give you the abridged version: **you can't force people to buy something they don't want to buy.** And *trying* to force what you think is an awesome product or service onto a fundamentally unreceptive market is an exercise in futility. Yet no matter how many times I repeat this to people, the great majority of them learn it the hard way. Instead of trying to create demand out of thin air, simply find where demand exists and fill it!

And this is the beauty of low-cost market testing. You put your service out there. If people buy, you've got a winner. If they don't, you've got a dud. It may be a truly beautiful-sounding dud. A dud you've already invested a great deal of hope into. The dud that was going to make you a million dollars while you sipped tropical fruit shakes on a beach in Bali. But if people don't buy it, it belongs on the junk pile of history.

Business can be a real wake-up call because it proves to you beyond the shadow of a doubt that the only thing that matters is what *other* people want. And what you think is a great idea is only a great idea to the extent that people fork over their hard-earned bucks for it. Meaning, unless it's profitable, it stinks!

Ok, now that I've thoroughly strained your unbridled enthusiasm, let's get into making money in the real world.

For the sake of simplicity, and because it's the best platform for building a real service business online, hands down, we'll use the Warrior Forum as our testing platform. Many of the same principles will apply to other marketplaces as well but I **highly** recommend you start with the Warrior Forum.

So first things first. Click here (http://www.warriorforum.com/index.php?referrerid=254615) to sign up for the Warrior Forum. Once you've signed up, go to the 'Warriors For Hire' section. Click “Start New Thread”. Once you post your thread, you'll have to wait until it's approved. Then you'll get an email with a payment link. Once you pay the $20 posting fee, your thread will go live.

Over time, your thread drops lower and lower from the top of the first page of listings but you have the option to renew or “bump” your thread for $20, which will send it back to the top of the listings.

Your thread consists of essentially two components:

Sales Copy

Payment Link

Sales copy is incredibly important so let's look at it first.

Sales Copy

This is your opportunity to convince others that they need your particular service and that you are the best person to provide it. This is assuming, of course, that people actually **do** need your service, i.e. there's demand for it.

A quick preface: if you put whipped cream on a pile of doo-doo, it's still doo-doo. So don't pick some kind of totally useless service and then try to convince people they need it (uh...like I've done several times). Look around the forum (and online in general) and see what people *say* they need. What problems do they, themselves, say they need solved? Forget about what you think is cool. Listen to the market. To quote one of my favorite Jim Carrey movies, “unless you put your ear to the ground, you'll never hear the buffalo coming!” This should be your fundamental approach.

Writing effective sales copy is equal parts proper technique, mad science, and psychological artistry. It's no wonder that professional copywriters charge thousands, if not tens of thousands of dollars for a single sales letter!

(By the way, there's another gig idea for you: copywriting! You have all of the resources to learn effective copywriting available to you for free online, including innumerable examples of great copy that's brought the vendors hundreds of thousands of dollars in sales. It takes a little while to get established as a copywriter but once you do, you've got it made in the shade!)

However, if you just learn a few of the most important aspects of effective copywriting, you'll be light years ahead of most service providers (i.e. your competition!)

Good copy does the following:

1. It clearly states what, exactly, you're offering.

2. It's short, concise, and to the point.

3. It answers the reader's question of “what's in it for me?”

4. It uses psychological persuasion triggers (more on this later).

5. It establishes your expertise and ability to get real results.

6. It features a call to action (or several).

Alright, let's dig into each of these elements one by one.

Clearly states what, exactly, you're offering.

It's common sense that your potential customers would want to know exactly what it is that they're paying for. But in the online marketing landscape, it's depressingly common to read a dozen pages of sales copy full of big talk, and *still* not know what the heck the person is selling.

Good marketing uses an element of mystery judiciously, but it's just seasoning; the main course is like a good piece of meat, cooked just right. A bunch of pepper and mushroom sauce on a crappy piece of factory-issue beef does not a good meal make.

So make your offer crystal clear. If you're writing articles at $20 per 1000 words, say so. If you're offering virtual assistance services at $15/hr but there are certain tasks you don't do or are only available to work a limited quantity of hours per week, state these things clearly as well.

If your service is somewhat personalized, you can replace the price with a “contact me for a quote” link, as I've done on my membership site setup thread, which is my most successful service to date.

Is short, concise, to the point.

There is plenty of copy out there that is written in a deliberately protracted, long-winded fashion and that sells very well. However, this style of copywriting is generally most appropriate for digital products like eBooks, online courses, and other types of offers whose inherent value is fundamentally difficult to communicate.

You could sell an eBook for $17 or $97 and there would be people who find either price reasonable, based on the perceived value that the information brought to their lives.

A service has a much more definite value. And so, rather than writing drawn-out copy in an attempt to communicate *perceived* value, you want to succinctly highlight the value that's ostensibly there, and undergird it with psychological triggers.

For example, there's probably no way I could convince you to pay me $50 for a 500 word article, no matter how sexy my sales copy is. There's a price ceiling for any service beyond which people simply won't pay. The whole idea of setting up a thread, getting reviews, tweaking copy and experimenting with price is to find that ceiling and only accept jobs at that upper limit.

So by keeping your copy short, concise, and to the point, you quickly answer the ultimate customer questions of “what am I getting and how much will it cost me?” The buyers of services online are generally business-savvy folks who appreciate straight talk. And in my experience, “straight” is the best way to do business.

Address “What's in it for me?”

Business requires an uncommon degree of empathy. This isn't necessarily inherent to human nature. We are basically self-concerned creatures. When writing copy or negotiating rates or chatting with a business friend in any way, you should always seek to answer the other party's primary question: “What's in it for me?”

Put another way, you want to argue in *their* favor. Your sales copy should do the same. Not only should you state what your service is, you should make it clear what <u>benefit</u> (not *feature*) the buyer of this service will derive.

For instance, say you're selling a meticulously written, 1000-word article, penned by a native English speaker with a degree in classical literature. Great, but what's in it for me? These are all ***features.*** But they aren't benefits.

Benefits answer the question “What is the thing I get?” So benefits for your service could read “1000 words your readers will love, share, and comment on! Not to mention, Google will reward you with better search engine rankings for your high quality content, which equals more money in your pocket!” *...See the difference?*

Features tell you that you're getting a nice bottle of wine. Benefits tell you that you'll have an orgasmic taste experience, cop a pleasant buzz, and possibly go home with the cute girl at the end of the bar. Now *that's* a bottle of wine I'd buy!

Make it a habit to walk in your business friends' shoes, to argue in their self-interest, and to always answer their selfish concerns. The reality is that they don't care about you. They care about what you can do for them. Although it's counterintuitive, make it a habit to think this way. I guarantee you that this approach will carry you through your entire business life.

Uses Psychological Triggers

'Psychological triggers', 'persuasion triggers', 'buying triggers', 'social triggers,' and so on are roughly equivalent terms that came into regular use in the online marketing world shortly after the release of Robert Cialdini's classic book “Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion”. (http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/006124189X/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=006124189X&linkCode=as2&tag=vicdor-20)

This book, which is absolutely required reading for anyone aspiring to the title of “businessman,” presents and describes certain 'triggers' present in human psychology that can be predictably exploited to persuade people to do any number of things: to buy, to mindlessly follow along with the group, and to otherwise act irrationally.

An example of a psychological trigger is 'social proof.’ Social proof states that if enough other people are doing something, you are many times more likely to do it as well, whether you're consciously aware of it or not.

Even self-proclaimed staunch individualists are not immune to the power of social proof. This trigger is really a survival mechanism left over from our ancestors' rather recent savannah-dwelling days. A couple thousand years of civilization haven't taken away the defenses we've evolved to protect ourselves as a species over the course of tens of millions of years. It simply isn't enough time for a substantial evolutionary change.

In marketing, **social proof reveals itself in the form of reviews, testimonials, and positive feedback.** Hence the reason it's so crucial to show potential business friends that *other* people have worked with you, paid you your asking rate, were satisfied with your work, and so on. Without the assurance that others have already vetted and benefitted from your service, a new client will be reluctant to take a chance with an unproven contractor.

There are several psychological triggers. Arguably the two most important ones for your needs are social proof and scarcity. We've already discussed social proof. So what about scarcity?

Scarcity states that if something is scarce, whether in quantity, window of availability, or otherwise, we tend to want it more. Marketing manifestations of scarcity include “limited time offer!”, “sale ends at midnight!”, “only 50 copies left!”, “only 5 spots available!”, “this offer expires in 30 minutes!”, and so on.

You can also see these economics at play in the dating world. A woman or man who is desired by many potential suitors (social proof), and whose time and availability is very limited (scarcity) is seen as significantly more desirable than somebody who eagerly makes themselves available to you; or God fuhbid – throws themselves at you.

This dual combination of social proof and scarcity is perhaps the most common (and potent) use of psychological triggers in the world of sales and marketing.

In practice, you simply want to make it clear to all interested parties that people like and endorse your services *and* that access to your excellent services is quite limited. This prompts people to avail themselves of your services more readily, even if they don't need them all that much. And this is simply because they fear missing out on a fleeting opportunity (scarcity) that enough other people have deemed to be good (social proof).

See how it works? It's a potent combo. Just don't go jumping off any bridges...

Establishes your expertise

If you have excellent reviews in place on your sales thread, people will generally assume that you're an expert in your line of work. After all, if you were a nincompoop, there's probably no way this many people would have spoken so well of your service. So in a way, good reviews cover many bases for you at once.

However, it certainly helps to <u>explicitly</u> highlight your expertise. You can do this with a portfolio, or endorsements from authoritative sources, or a display of your impressive credentials, or the combination of any and all of these. In fact, this brings us to yet another powerful psychological trigger you'd be wise to employ: **authority**.

Authority states that we give more weight to opinions and suggestions if they come from sources we perceive as authoritative. An example of this is the use of “As seen on T.V.”, “As featured on N.B.C., CNN, and Fox News.” Likewise, a complimentary blurb from a celebrity or famous authority or well-known guru in your market has the same effect of portraying you as an expert in your niche.

Calls to Action

Once you've *persuasively* presented your service and why somebody should purchase it, you must tell them (politely) to hit that “add to cart” or “buy now” button.

This is called a **Call to Action** (or **CTA**).

In fact, you'll want to have several **CTA**s in your sales thread. The reasoning here is this: if you prepare a prospect to make a buying decision but you don't tell him to take the action you want him to take, he probably won't take it. If you aren't used to marketing yourself, this may feel like a “hard sell.”

Maybe all of this marketing stuff feels overly 'salesy' to you. But I assure you that good marketing is classy, not pushy. It gives your brand a good image and has profound positive implications for your business. Positive implications that your less savvy competitors won't enjoy because they can't be bothered to learn “that marketing stuff.”

In your sales thread, the call to action (**CTA**) will be something like “click the 'add to cart' button now” or “email me for a quote at MyEmail@gmail.com.”

Here's a great trick for you: I like to compound CTAs with a restatement of the main benefit my client is going to derive by purchasing my service. For instance, if I'm selling virtual assistant services, I might write:

*“Let me handle the small stuff. Click 'add to cart' now and **reclaim your precious time** to focus on the business tasks that matter.”*

This kind of CTA reminds your potential clients of what, exactly, the direct benefits of your services to his life are (as opposed to what the features are.) This strikes on an emotional level, which is the level on which buying decisions are most typically made.

Insert a Payment Button

You'll need a way to accept payments online. The most common way to do this is with a Paypal account. You can get a basic Paypal account for free at www.paypal.com. Another excellent option is Stripe (www.stripe.com).

I recommend at least getting a Paypal account. You can transfer money directly to your bank account from Paypal. There is also a Paypal debit card you can get which allows you to essentially use your Paypal account as an international checking account. And the fees for withdrawing money internationally are way lower than what most big banks charge.

Once you've signed up for a Paypal account, you'll need to create a payment link for your service. Here's how:

1. Go here: https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_singleitem-intro-outside

2. Scroll down and click “create your button now”

3. Fill in the fields (button type: buy now)

4. On step 3, deselect the requirement that buyers fill out their shipping info as you won't be shipping anything.

5. On step 3, there's a field called “Take customers to this URL when they finish checkout.” This will probably point to a page on your website with a contact form. Or you could simply leave this field blank and instruct the buyers within your sales copy to email you after making payment.

6. Click “create button”

7. Click on the “email” tab

8. Copy the link. This is your payment link. You can create as many of these buttons as you want.

Now you'll need a button image. Here's a good one for you: http://www.vicdorfman.com/button

Or, search Google for “add to cart button” and pick one you like.

Once you find an image you like, copy the image URL and insert it into your sales thread like so:

[URL="http://www.paypal.com/your-payment-link"]
[IMG]http://www.website.com/your-add-to-cart-button.jpg[/IMG][/URL]

Make sure to replace the URLs with your payment link and image link, respectively. And voilá! You are now accepting payments on your sales thread.

Review Copies

Before you post your thread and pay for it, make sure to clearly offer some review copies. You'll essentially be giving your service away for free or at a significant discount in exchange for some honest reviews. As you give out the reviews, keep a running count on your thread to invoke some scarcity, e.g. “**Only 5 review copies left!**”

Once the review copies are gone and delivered, make sure to politely remind your customers to come leave an honest review for you. Also leave a reply to each of them individually to inflate your reply count (legitimately, of course).

Review copies all gone? Now you can begin to charge. It's imperative that after each completed job you email your clients and ask them to come take a second to leave some honest feedback for you. If you don't, 99% of your clients *won't* bother doing this on their own.

As you accumulate reviews, continue repasting them into your thread and keep raising your prices, little by little. You may reach a ceiling on just how high you can price your service. But if you continue to accrue reviews and position yourself as an expert in your area, you'll be able to charge your higher prices and still consistently get clients.

Many potential clients will balk at your rates, even saying indignant things to you, essentially suggesting "how dare you charge that?!" But you can politely tell them "I understand," while collecting your payday from another client who's actually *eager* to send you money at your asking rate.

Forum Signature

To help secure some more business when you're first starting out, one strategy is to participate a lot on the Warrior Forum. Specifically, look for threads covering the topic that you're positioning yourself as an expert in.

For example, I'm a membership site expert, so I browse through the first 5 pages of threads or so on the main forum and look to see where I can contribute some real value (as I demonstrate in the free case study which you can access at http://www.vicdorfman.com/case-study). If somebody is asking a question in my niche that I don't immediately know the answer to, I'll often take the time to research it and post a thoughtful reply.

You can see how, done enough times, this strategy will make you look very knowledgeable in your field. And not just "look" knowledgeable, but actually *become* knowledgeable. And indeed, you always have to stay on top of developments in your industry. You're getting a free education while simultaneously building your brand. How cool is that?

When people see your value-adding replies and they see the forum signature that goes to your thread, they could click on it and become your next client.

It goes without saying that you should only start threads and post replies that provide value. Bland, uninformative posts help nobody and skew the signal-to-noise ratio in a way that hurts the forum (your place of business!) My rule of thumb is if you're not 100% sure whether a post you're about to make is valuable or not–it isn't.

Here's how to add your signature:

1. Go to the Warrior Forum and log in

2. In the upper left hand menu click on “User CP” => “Edit Signature

3. Write a sexy signature!

You can also pay a one-time fee for the ability to add images to your signature but I've found that it isn't really necessary. You'll still attract plenty of clicks with a text-only sig.

Your signature is basically a headline designed to get people to click, without making them feel like they've been misled once they click over. So treat your signature like a miniature piece of copy and an exercise in good expectation management.

You can have several links in your signature, which is fine. But it's best to keep it to 3 links or fewer and all related to your service. This is an aspect of strong positioning. If your signature contains a link to your writing service, a link to your finance blog, and a link to your kindle book about picking up chicks, people are less likely to perceive you as **the** expert in one thing. It's best to keep your online business endeavors separated, even if it means using different names.

Chapter 4 - Doing Work, Getting Paid

Getting paid: undoubtedly the best part of this thing. If you want to get paid, get paid well, get paid on time, and get paid consistently, then there are a few important mechanics to keep in mind.

Expectation Management

Properly managing expectations is the art of giving your client what he wants and getting what *you* want, all with the ideal (but not guaranteed) result that both parties walk away happy with the transaction.

I really can't overstate the importance of learning to manage expectations enough. Not only is it a vital business skill, it transfers over into literally every other kind of relationship in your life, be it friendships, romantic, mentor/mentored, teacher/student, etc.

Expectation management (let's call it **ExMan)** is a big topic that can be encapsulated in a single phrase: “under-promise, over-deliver.” What does that look like?

Let's say you're running a writing service. You take on a client who gives you a deadline of one week from now. You don't think you can make the deadline but out of eagerness (or naïveté) you agree.

One week passes and you still haven't finished the job. No matter what you do now, the client will feel that you're unreliable. You promised to deliver by a certain date but you didn't.

Even if you have a perfectly legitimate excuse, like an internet outage, and even if your client seems to be understanding of the situation, the grim psychological reality is that an expectation was set (deliver by a certain date) then the expectation was violated (the date came but you didn't deliver the job).

Never mind that a situation beyond your control came up. In the client's mind, you are now associated with a violated expectation, even if the client isn't consciously aware of the fact. Brutal, I know.

This leads us to a core principle you'd be wise to follow: **always estimate budgets and timelines very conservatively.** In fact, you want to estimate as conservatively as possible without scaring a client off. Here's what I mean:

In our example, if you had promised a turnaround time of 10 days rather than one week, you probably could have made the deadline. The client would then have felt that you are a contractor who meets his deadlines (and generally does as he says he'll do). And this client will be that much more likely to hire you again and confidently refer business to you.

This leads us to another principle of ExMan: never let a client bully you into a ludicrously tight deadline. Clients may not realize it, but by demanding an unrealistic deadline, they invest themselves emotionally in getting the project delivered by that time, and may even predicate other business decisions based on the expectation that you'll deliver by then.

When you inevitably run into some delays and miss the deadline, the client will be pissed off to the degree that he was emotionally invested in that outcome.

So it is <u>our</u> job as consultants to clearly and unequivocally set expectations for our clients that we can realistically deliver on. Similarly, it is our job to **<u>not</u>** allow clients to demand, develop, and emotionally invest themselves in absurd deadlines, budgets, and expectations.

The other reason for estimating project parameters conservatively is that it gives you space to ***exceed*** expectations. This, my friend, is the sweet spot and the optimal way to operate your service.

<u>For example:</u> you order a logo design from a graphics guy. In his sales copy, he promises 3 design concepts with a turnaround time of 4 days. 2 days after you order, he sends you 4 design concepts. You feel pleasantly surprised. Not only did he deliver what he *s*aid when he said, he actually delivered *more* than he said he would, and earlier than he said he would!

Assuming the quality of his work was good, do you reckon you'd want to hire this guy again and maybe even recommend him to others...? What your clients perceive as being 'blown away' by your awesome work is really the skillful management of expectations on your end, combined of course with a good service. The good service alone isn't going to get you that glowing review. Nor will just the expectation management. You need both.

First impressions are very important in business and they go hand in hand with properly managing expectations.

You could argue that the phrase “under-promise, over-deliver” is redundant. After all, if you promise to finish a project without exceeding a client's budget of $5k and you know perfectly well that you won't exceed $3k, when you deliver the project and bill the client for $3k, he'll be thrilled that he “saved” $2k.

Whereas if you had made a more objectively accurate estimate of $3k and billed for that same amount, the client wouldn't feel any positive emotional pang. In fact, he might even be annoyed that you went **all** the way to the limit of the allotted budget.

Of course, it's absurd. Whether you estimate a budget of $3k or $5k, the client still gets the same exact deliverable and pays the same $3k. Yet if he expects to pay $5k but only has to pay $3k, he'll feel relieved and grateful to you for doing the job for $2k less.

So like it or not, managing expectations means managing perceptions. And long term success requires at least a basic practical understanding of these skills and concepts.

Charging For Your Time

When you're starting out, you won't be able to charge premium rates. Unlike a proper business, in which you can profit by leveraging processes, “scale”, and outsourced labor to do a high volume of business (even with low margins), this is **not** the way to go with consulting.

The *ideal* with consulting is “work as little as possible, charge as much as possible, and only work on the projects that interest you.” For an idea of what to charge initially, take a look at what your competitors are charging. If you can find a unique angle for your service, you can justify charging a little more than your competition, even if you're just starting out.

For instance, say your service is setting up Wordpress websites. And, on average, your competitors charge $20/hr to set up Wordpress sites. Now, let's say you set up a *particular kind* of Wordpress website built to do eCommerce. Now you're providing a unique service and can charge $25/hr or more. Congratulations, you've now become the go-to Wordpress eCommerce set-up guy!

Additionally (and this is a great little trick I've learned), you may wind up purchasing various themes, plugins, and services over the course of your career. For example, I purchased 2 premium Wordpress plugins for my own websites. However, I bought the developer's licenses for each, which gives me permission to install them on client websites. Now when I work with clients, I offer to install the plugins on their websites at no cost.

Collectively, your clients might pay hundreds, even thousands of dollars for various plugins and themes. And if you can install these on their sites as a “bonus” (which doesn't cost you anything extra), you can bet they'll appreciate it!

Getting Paid Up Front

Bear in mind that the level of demands you can make depends largely upon your reputation as an awesome provider and the economics of your niche. By 'economics' I mean that even if your reputation (as, for example, a writer) is absolutely sterling, there are hundreds of other writers with great credentials who are willing to accept the job from a client.

So even though writing is in high demand, it's also in abundant supply. This is why it's so valuable to your business to 'niche down'. There are thousands of decent writers and to compete with them is useless, I don't care if you're O. Henry incarnate.

If, however, you're “the technical writing guy,” or “the health writing gal,” or “the business article guru,” you'll potentially be able to corner a sub-niche and become the 'go to' guy whenever somebody needs an article in that specific area, *assuming that your market testing showed sufficient demand for that sub-niche*. This process is called **nicheing down**.

Naturally, you can also charge more and you won't have to compete with an entire army of pretty much interchangeable (from a client's perspective) service providers.

So keeping that in mind, it's always best to collect at least some payment up front.

How much should you ask for up front? That depends on the nature of your service and whether you're charging per project, per deliverable (as in, say, an article) or per hour.

If you're charging per project or per deliverable, it's best to get either 50% up front or the full fee. Many copywriters, for instance, charge thousands of dollars to write sales copy, and ask for their entire fee up front; others ask only 50%.

Even for small orders like articles or graphics, it's standard practice to provide clients with a payment button and work on their orders only *after* they've paid in full.

There are plenty of unscrupulous clients out there who will take and use your work and then refuse to pay you. Collecting some or all of your fees first insures you against this “deadbeatery”.

Per Project vs. Per Hour Pricing (aka Limiting Client Abuse)

If you're providing a service like article writing, charge per word, **not** per article. If you're creating graphics, charge for X amount of concepts with Y amount of revisions, **not** for “a logo”. If you're doing web design, charge per hour and make it clear that you're charging for your time, **not** for completion, which is a concept a client can endlessly redefine at his whim.

This strategy is all about hedging yourself against a client who keeps asking for revisions, rewrites, redesigns, etc., but isn't paying you for all your extra work. That's the problem with working on a per-project basis: you essentially agree to keep working until a client is satisfied. The problem, of course, is that some people are never satisfied.

Many clients will happily take advantage of your kindness. So forget kindness and embrace smart business processes instead. Clients often don't know what they want. And even more often, they have no realistic notion of what your job entails. They think it just magically gets done.

Every now and then, you'll work with truly empathetic, understanding, reasonable, and honest clients. Cherish them, treat them with the utmost respect, and cultivate a great relationship with them because these are the kinds of folks you want to work with on a long-term basis.

To give you an example, I once agreed to set up a membership site for a client for a fixed fee. I did the work and then the client asked for a few minor changes and add-ons. Then a few more, then a few more...

Because I implicitly agreed to this arrangement and never specified any limitations on “extras”, the client took advantage of me. In fact, he felt entitled to my time *ad infinitum* because he had ‘paid’ for it. And from the perspective of expectation management, he was absolutely right. It was *I* who set myself up for this situation, and rather than fume about it, I decided to change my policies.

After a few such incidences, I began to charge an hourly fee. This goes against standard-issue business advice, which dictates that you should charge based on *value* rather than per hour. This is a point I fundamentally disagree with in the context of solo contract work, and I'll explain why in the following section.

Charge High Rates

As your reputation and the number of inquiries you get grow, you want to charge more and more for your time until you hit a ceiling (and then you want to seek out bigger clients with bigger budgets to pay your premium rates). You may think that this amounts to 'overcharging' and will hurt your business. But I assure you that exactly the opposite is the case.

Many consultants, who have been in business for years, have observed that charging a hefty fee carries some counterintuitive and mutual benefits. Such as:

Better clientele – In general, clients who are willing to pay your higher rates are better behaved, more professional, more punctual, and more reasonable to deal with.

A natural filter – Many potential clients send inquiries expressing their eagerness to get started on such and such a project. Once you quote them your rate, their eagerness often evaporates, and you never hear from them again. Yet other clients will instantly send you a down payment and a full list of details so you can get started ASAP. Which kind of client do you reckon takes business more seriously and respects your time more...?

3. **The rate is everything** – Doing one 20-hour project at $50/hr isn't the same as doing two 10-hour projects at $25 an hour. In a word, it's much better!

   My dad, a very successful IT consultant, beat it into me that rate is crucially important. Quoth he: “the rate is everything”. It's hard to explain if you haven't started low and worked up to healthy rates, but a higher rate has a very different psychological and financial impact on you than a lower rate *even if the net profits are the same.*

   Charging more means you can work less, choose your clients more selectively and still make good money.

4. **One thing at a time** – the fewer things you have to focus on at once, the more productive and creative you will be. Ideally, you want to focus on no more than a single thing (or a single project) at a time.

   A high rate makes this possible while a low rate does not. When working at a low rate, you will be forced to work on several projects in parallel to make a decent buck. The stress of multiple commitments is **superadditive** (i.e. the stress from project 1 + stress from project 2 + stress from project 3 = ***more*** than the sum of the component stresses).

   So not only are you getting paid less money and working more hours, you're also stressing yourself out, diluting your focus and creativity, and bringing down the quality of the work you deliver to a client. *No bueno*.

5. **Changes self-perception –** Finally, charging more convinces you that you're worth it. It also holds you to a high standard because if word gets out that you charge tons of money but provide crap service, then you may be in some difficulty.

   Conversely, if you charge high rates and you get positive feedback, it proves that you're worth the money. This premium positioning makes your life much easier. Positioning yourself as a premium provider takes no more work than positioning yourself as one of a million budget providers. Yet the rewards are much greater.

Chapter 5 – Project Management

We've already casually touched upon several aspects of project management. Now let's take a more detailed look at the all-important <u>**how**</u> of doing online consulting work.

Managing/Filtering Incoming Offers

If you systematically apply the advice in this book (and work hard, of course!), you'll eventually find yourself in a position where you get many new inquiries from potential clients every week–every day, even.

You're only one person so unless you plan to expand into a consulting firm with employees, you'll need to pick and choose among your incoming offers. (And, in fact, this situation is precisely what propels many lone wolf consultants into bringing on board additional people and starting their own firms, a topic which is beyond the scope of this book.)

The first thing to keep in mind is that **inquiries are not offers.** Many inquiries will never result in paid work. It's important to go in with this expectation (or rather, the lack of an expectation) so that you don't see inquiries and get yourself all excited about the money a potential project could bring. In fact, there is no such thing as a potential project.

It's tempting to get giddy about "future money" but, believe me, the only money worth getting excited about is the money sitting in your account or in your hands right this very moment. Otherwise, it doesn't exist. And even then, the taxman has yet to take his cut.

Your first filter, assuming you have enough incoming inquiries to be able to pick and choose, is a dual combination of 1) whether or not the potential client is willing to pay your rate and 2) the ballpark project length. After all, if a client is willing to pay your rate but his project will only span 3 hours, those are 3 hours that you could potentially invest in one, longer-term project. (Recall that working on several smaller projects in parallel is much more stressful and difficult to deal with than one, longer project that has your full focus.)

If you get a particularly promising inquiry but you are already engaged in another project, it's perfectly fine to respond with interest but also inform the potential client that it would be another week or so before you could get started (or whatever the case happens to be). In fact, this often has the effect of a client wanting to engage you even more because you're hard to hire (this psychological trigger is known as 'scarcity': we want that which is hard to get).

The next filter is *ease*. If you've done a certain kind of project before and receive an inquiry to do it again for another client, it makes for easy work and thus, easy money. And because even superficially similar projects always differ in the nitty-gritty, you'll still be challenging yourself, growing in your niche, and keeping your mind sharp.

If your work is so mechanical that you could hire somebody to do it for you at half your rate, then that's what you may as well do (and pocket the difference as the unofficial project manager). After all, a client only cares that the work gets done and gets done well. *How* it's done and what's involved is on you.

There are a few other things to consider when screening potential clients.

If a potential client is a well-known figure (always Google a potential client's name!) and if you do even a small project for him well, you can ask for a testimonial that will carry a lot of influence when other potential clients who know who he is see it.

In addition to flipping the psychological switch of social proof ("others like his work so it must be good"), it also hits another powerful trigger–authority ("an authoritative individual endorses his work, so it must be good").

So in this kind of situation, it's often wise to accept a less-than-ideal project for the opportunity to get this person's endorsement. Not to mention, influencers usually know other influencers and often do much of their business on a direct referral basis. ("Oh, I used Vic, he's great. Here's his email: victor.dorfman@gmail.com.")

If you're an influential person, it actually makes **you** look better when you refer an excellent consultant to somebody in your network. So it's really win/win.

Overbooking

As I mentioned, you'll probably find yourself juggling several projects at once at several points in your career. It isn't an ideal situation but it makes you a smarter, more tenacious worker.

The first thing to keep in mind when you confront an overbooking situation is that you will get through it and it will be OK. The cumulative effects of stress, shrinking deadlines, client updates, and implementation can make it seem like you're going through hell. Add in a pinch of sleep deprivation and you're ready to quit and run back to your 9 to 5 job...

Except...if you think back on anything you've done in your life that required a prolonged, consistent effort, you can probably recall several moments when you felt like you'd never make it out alive. And then somehow...you did! So go in with the expectation that things will be difficult at times, particularly when you're juggling several balls in the air.

And as you're experiencing these emotions, acknowledge them, recognize them, and keep working, trusting deeply that all things in life come and go, even when they feel as though they'll remain forever...

Managing overbooking situations is all about expectation management (as usual). Let's say you have 3 clients simultaneously. One expects the deadline to be met in a week. Another expects it done in 2 weeks. And the other wants it finished in 3 weeks. The priority of your time has to go to the closest coming deadline.

The best thing to do in this situation is to work, say, four hours a day on project #1 and one hour a day on the other two projects. This way, you can “chunk” your updates for the low-priority projects and keep your clients aware of the fact that you're doing work.

If you just focus on project #1 and don't send any updates to #2 and #3, your clients will get antsy and ask you for an update. But if you send them each an update, even a small one, they'll feel that the work is moving along.

Some clients are more chilled out than others and it can be good to ask them directly what kind of timeline they have in mind for the completion of their project.

For example, in this scenario, I'd email the client with the 3 week deadline and let him know I've started work and will update him in a week. This gives me time to complete the first project and most of the second project without making the third client wonder what's going on and whether or not I'm doing the agreed upon work.

This brings us to the fine art of the update.

Updating Clients

Every client is unique. Some clients are fine with a weekly update, others need a fair bit more communication. In general, you want to update clients only when you’ve made some significant progress. And you want to update every 2-4 days. This is the frequency I've found to keep the majority of clients relaxed in the assurance that you're taking care of them (without bugging them about every little thing).

Here's the email template I use for virtually all client updates. Feel free to use it:

Hi [client],

Update:

1. Update item #1

2. Update item #2

3. Update item #3

Some questions/comments for you:

1. Question/comment #1

2. Question/comment #2

3. Question/comment #3

Thanks [client], talk soon.

Best Wishes,

Vic

This is exactly the kind of email clients want to see. Why? It is succinct, professional, and broken down into digestible, numbered points so the client can simply copy and paste the points and respond directly underneath them. This keeps the lines of communication nice and clear and makes your clients' lives easier (clients love that).

I've also found that this format encourages clients to clarify their own thinking and present action items to you in the same systematic way you've done for them. This, in turn, makes **your** job way more pleasant.

Tracking Time

If you're working through a 3rd party freelancing platform like oDesk or eLance, you'll be required to use their time tracking software. I feel the software has both a desirable element and an undesirable element.

The good thing about it is that it takes photos of your computer screen at random, which means you probably won't want to have anything unrelated to work on your screen, i.e. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc. This keeps you focused on work by taking away the option to distract yourself with entertaining but unproductive activities. In short, you get more uninterrupted, quality work done using the time tracker.

One downside, on the psychological level, is that you might feel “watched”. At times you might forget to start the time tracker when you're answering your client's emails or on a Skype call with a client. Yet this is time you have to charge for.

So then when you go to add this time to your timesheet manually, it looks “extra”.

Whereas if you're tracking time on your own, it will be part of your itemized timesheet, right there along with the other items you did that day.

I personally prefer to track time manually. For one, it's cheaper for you and the client since these 3rd party platforms charge a percentage fee on your transactions. But perhaps the best reason to track time yourself is that it's simple.

I've had several problems with time tracking software that sometimes required going back and forth with support to resolve. Is this time you're getting paid for? No.

On the other hand, if you send an itemized invoice directly to a client, you simply write your “time in” and “time out” in a text file and list each item you're working on as you're doing it. **It's very important to list the items you're working on right when you go to work on them, not “later”.**

In the first place, you will forget what you'd done. Second, you will feel a psychological reward for completing a task and writing it down. Think: “mouse pushes lever; dispenser gives mouse a tasty pellet; mouse learns to push lever for reward.” We humans aren't so different from mice after all. The difference is that you're aware of the fact that you're conditioning yourself to perform a beneficial business action and turning it slowly into a habit.

Here's an actual itemized timesheet I tracked for a client (name and identifying details changed). Feel free to use it as a template:

John White Timesheet

1/22/14

0750-0820

- skype consultation

- creating a similar nav on each page

- get your free eBook

- blog feed on the home page

- About, start here, toolkit --- consistent in their style

- look into OptimizeMember content dripping

- send along visual examples

1/26/14

1720-1730

- quick review of email, skype conversation and requirements

- itemized email reply

- checked optimizehub for templates for John

2/24/14

1615-1735

- email review

- updated OP2 to newest version

- took a peek at FoodTruckr, SPI, Ducker's blog, IWT eBook landing page

- playing with header, navigation, fonts and colors

- screencast videos for John

-- http://screencast.com/t/xxxxxxx

- logged into optimizehub to find some templates for eBook landing page

- email to John

3/1/14

1755-1810

2005-2200

0055-0205

- quick email review

- downloaded all OP2 templates

- uploaded all OP2 templates to site

- screencast video for John

- created template pages:

-- ebook 1 landing page

-- ebook 1 thank you & download page

-- prelaunch landing page

-- ebook 2 squeeze

- tweaked blog settings, typography, menus, etc

- worked on home page

- email reply

total time = 5:20

rate = $50

subtotal = $266

already paid = $100

total = $166

paypal = victor.dorfman@gmail.com

PENDING! [This indicates that I'm waiting on the client to send payment. Once the payment has cleared I change this to 'PAID!']

As you can see I list anything that takes up time. This lets a client know exactly what I'm doing, when I'm doing it, and how long it takes. It also makes your timesheet look ‘full,’ although that's not the goal, but rather the consequence.

While it may seem trivial to track, say, 10 minutes of time while reading, researching, and responding to your client's emails, I propose that it's actually a very prudent habit. Look at this way, if your hourly rate is $60, then 10 minutes of your time costs $10. You can pay for a nutritious meal with that $10! Your time is something you'll never get back so if you spend it doing work for a client, always track and charge for it.

Finally, sending a client their itemized timesheet/invoice directly encourages them to actually look at it! I think this is a good thing. If a client reads through a list of the work you've done for him, he'll be more likely to feel that you've earned your fees.

On the other hand, if some third party like Elance merely sends him a sterile notification that his account has been charged and money got sent to you on his behalf, he may not appreciate your labor for the simple reason that he hasn't *seen* the house you've built for him brick by brick.

He'll just see the final product and think “well, that's not so great.” So, in a way, the itemized timesheet gives him a mental slideshow of the project in its various stages and connects the work to the person who did it – you!

One thing I do to help keep things organized that you may wish to do as well, is I keep a folder on my laptop called “Clients”. For each new client I take on, I create a subfolder named with the client's name, e.g. “John Smith.” Any files, images, documents, etc., related to that client and our work together go in his folder. Then I add the “clients” folder to the “favorites” section of my Finder toolbar. This makes things infinitely easier to find and manage.

Recently, however, I moved all of my client folders to Google Drive. This allows me to access client files and timesheets from anywhere, and keeps my files safe in the event that my computer decides to melt down.

End of Project

After you've completed a project for a client, **always ask him for a review**. Preferably, a video review. And if you can get *one* video review, then you can tell other clients about it to help convince them to do one for you too (there's that social proof again!) To illustrate, here's an actual email I sent to a client:

> *“Hi Client,*
>
> *Since you're very good on video, would you mind please taking a minute to speak about our work together?*
>
> *I would then post it on my Warrior Forum thread, as I did when Kelly Carr left me a review:*
>
> http://www.warriorforum.com/warriors-hire/743888-i-set-up-optimizepress-affiliate-programs-clickbank-more-membership-sites-aweber-dap-etc.html
>
> *If you're not comfortable with that, no worries.*
>
> *Thanks and please let me know if any other issues arise, I'll be happy to help.”*

You can then post the review on your thread, profile, or website. You can even include reviews in messages to potential clients, particularly when the review is from a client for whom you did similar work as the prospective client.

A nice, subtle way to add it would be with a “P.S.” E.g.

“p.s. I just finished a project very similar to yours. Thought you might like to hear what my client thought of the work. :-)

==> Video Link"

Extending Deadlines/Budgets

Despite your honest attempt to estimate project length and budgets accurately, sometimes even you, yourself, aren't aware of everything a project involves ahead of time.

Sometimes as you're working on a project, it suddenly dawns on you that the deadline and/or budget you planned on with your client was too ambitious, and an extension of time and/or budget is needed.

Good expectation management dictates that you should always make your budget and timeline estimates generous. This gives you a buffer in case your estimate turns out to be too tight. Fine. But what about when it's *already* too late and you have to let a client know?

There's really only one way to extend a budget and or deadline: politely, professionally, and straightforwardly. Deadlines are generally more flexible, but many clients huff and puff over an exceeded budget. The exceptions would be large businesses, corporations, and high-dollar consulting firms (lawyers, doctors, CPAs, etc.) But even then it's still your duty to stay within the budget specified.

Best case scenario: your client will be understanding and authorize you to move forward with a budget extension. Second best case scenario: your client will be understanding but lacking in funds and will kindly ask you to pause as he gathers more monies and/or figures out his next step.

These scenarios are simple to deal with. The problem arises when a client is *not* understanding but rather indignant about the request for further time/money. This situation requires more tact.

Unfortunately, I can't give you a template to use because each situation is unique. But a few guidelines can be given:

1. Don't over-apologize.

In truth, I don't recommend apologizing at all. If you initially made it crystal clear that your estimate was just that – an estimate – then you have nothing to apologize for. You honestly made an estimate and it turned out to be off base. This is to be expected in business. Indeed, in virtually anything! Things always take as long as they take, despite our best attempts at forecasting.

Apologizing in this case is an implicit concession that you've done something wrong.

You haven't. A client will gladly use your apology as leverage to get more mileage out of your labor because he thinks you feel sorry and worried; the perfect storm for him to get you to “do stuff” you won't be paid for. In a word: it's weak. Never apologize to somebody when no apology is truly warranted. It will just open you up to exploitation.

2. It was an estimate –

Remind your client, if need be, that your estimate was just an estimate and that he even agreed to these terms in initial correspondences.

Remember that I said that you should first make your initial estimate, then reiterate that it's only an estimate, and then get your client to confirm that he understands this...?

Well, your client might be pissed off that you'll need to go out of bounds, but he agreed explicitly that this was a possibility. So he can't be angry at you because you laid all your cards on the table before you got started.

I mean, he *can* be angry at you, of course. But if that's the case, there's really nothing more you can do. A client who understands it's an estimate, agrees to it, and then flies into a rage when the estimate turns out wrong is beyond persuasion and is the kind of client you want to avoid.

One thing you should never, ever do, is go over the budget, allotted hours, or deadline without <u>first</u> informing the client of the situation and getting his explicit permission to continue, pause, etc. Don't ever assume it's cool to bill for more hours.

3. A quick story for you:

I once did work for a client and sent him itemized timesheets to update him on time and budget. At one point, I started to exceed the agreed upon budget but he never said anything about the overages and just kept answering my questions and giving me more instructions.

When I sent him the final bill, he blew a gasket out and refused to pay. Apparently, he didn't even bother to look at the timesheets I'd been sending over. He just assumed we were within budget. And ***I*** assumed that he would have seen plainly that we weren’t. My mistake was first in assuming anything, and second, in not sending him a message explicitly stating something to the effect of:

“We are *here* progress wise, we are *here* budget wise, and I'm on the verge of exceeding the allotted hours. If you want to move forward, please explicitly say so. If you'd like me to pause for the time being, please let me know either way.”

Do **not** allow your client to reply ambiguously to direct questions. This is business and things must be clear and well defined. Force him (politely) into a clear decision. Ambiguity is not your friend in business matters. In fact, it's often used as a license to cheat people out of their honest efforts.

Initial Consultations

By the time you're in the position where potential clients are regularly sending you inquiries and you have more work than you can handle, you'll be able to start charging for your initial consultations as well.

On the surface, this may seem greedy and shortsighted. But this is one of those counterintuitive things you learn through experience: **always charge for your time!**

Granted, if you're chatting with a potentially **huge** client, you might make an exception. But even then, if you're giving away consulting hours *pro bono,* your potential clients are bound to wonder just how valuable your time really is...

I've found that some people will seek out your professional opinions under the pretext (whether legitimate or phony) that they want to hire you but just need a bit more information first. Then, once you've given your expert opinion, perhaps even researched a few things on this person's behalf, and spent "x" amount of unpaid time filling him in, he will use your advice and hire somebody cheaper (or simply do it himself.)

So the potential client decides not to hire you after all, thanks you for your free consultation, and you walk away with, as the New Zealanders are fond of saying, fuck all. It's much smarter and more beneficial to both you *and* a potential client to charge for your consulting time.

This goes for interminable email exchanges with potential clients as well. If you're answering a bunch of questions that this person doesn't know the answer to but you do thanks to a lot of work, research, and experience, you are cheating yourself and your client. I'll often say something like "Ok Mr. Client, I'll be happy to answer these questions and more. But at this point I have to start charging for my time as we've moved into consulting territory."

Look at it this way: when you go to see a doctor for a physical examination and he recommends changing your diet and getting more sleep, you don't just tell him "Well, thanks for the checkup doc, but I don't think I'll be starting that exercise program or fixing my sleep at the moment..." and then not pay him on the basis that you won't be taking his good advice. The doc's advice is good and he gave it. So he deserves to be paid. What the recipient does with it is his business.

Your time is irretrievable and your expertise has cost you a lot of time, struggle, and hard work to come by. Charge for it and don't back down from this position. Professionals value their time and other professionals understand this. So deal with the pros and ignore the deadbeats.

It's also beneficial to the client because we humans value what we invest in. The higher the investment, the more we value the return. ("Investment," by the way, is another psychological 'trigger', which states that the more time/energy you put into something, the more invested you become in getting the desired outcome.). If you pay somebody a pretty penny for advice, you will value it more and be more likely to actually consider it and implement it than if you had received it for free.

So charging people for your time and expertise isn't just prudence; it's an act of compassion. Otherwise, you can give out amazing, expert advice for free all day and people won't listen to a word of it as if you were some nobody.

I recommend charging a bit more for initial consultations than your hourly fee and setting at least a one hour minimum. It's a good idea to collect the fee up front as well. Why, why, and why?

When you're busy, you already have many thing occupying your headspace. Every new thing you have to think about has a mental 'setup cost.' You're switching gears from one task to another. From one 'domain' to a completely different 'domain.' And then when you finish *this* task, you'll have to switch gears yet again to get back on track with the first task.

The more things you are doing and thinking about in parallel, the more diluted your focus becomes and the less effective your output. So while some potential clients erroneously hold the idea that you owe them a free consultation for the mere prospect of working with them, the reality is that nobody is entitled to your time unless they're compensating you for it on mutually satisfactory terms.

In fact, you are doing the other person a favor as well by tearing yourself away from your already-paying clients to enlighten him about what he needs to do to move his business forward and make more money. This is especially the case in many situations where the client doesn't even know what he doesn't know. And quite often, they only have a vague idea of what they want until you help to clarify their vision and mold it with your expertise and understanding of what's actually involved.

Now let me pause at this point and make something abundantly clear. I know it may sound like I'm really beating up on the folks who pay our bills. Or that I'm promoting an "us" vs. "them" mentality. But let me assure you that nothing could be further from the truth. I feel nothing but gratitude towards my clients and I act with courtesy and professionalism at all times.

Instead, what I'm desperately trying to communicate to you is **how to sucker-proof your consulting business.** I guaran-damn-tee you that if you write off my advice and learn it all the hard way, you will inevitably arrive at the same understanding that I'm presenting to you here.

The fact is, people will rip you off, exploit you, use you, and abuse you *to the degree that you let them*. We all want to get as much as possible and pay as little as possible for it. By utilizing smart and tested business processes, mental frameworks, and procedures like those laid out in this book, you minimize your exposure to these risks and avoid becoming a sucker.

I heard a true story from a friend about a consultant he knew who worked for a year on a high level programming project. When he finished, the client refused to pay, and he was ripped off to the tune of $100,000. Ouch.

Clients are neither the bad guys nor the good guys. People simply are as they are. And it's important to come to an unclouded appraisal of the nature of people in life and business as they truly are, not as we might wish them to be. From this vantage point, you can make decisions with clarity, honesty, objectivity, and good ol' common sense.

Chapter 6 – Communication Mechanics

How can you communicate with your business contacts in a way that leaves them with the feeling that you're a top-quality, professional consultant well worth the rate he charges? *Enter communication mechanics...*

It pays to be mindful of every last bit of communication you have with any of your business contacts, whether they're current clients, prospective clients, acquaintances, colleagues in your field, etc. In fact, every word you type or speak and every action you take reflects upon you and either advances your business or doesn't.

First, some logistical concerns. Then we'll drill down into the finer points.

Email as a Primary Point of Contact

Ideally you want to keep all of your communications with a given client in one place. I recommend your email inbox be this place. These days I even push my clients off of Skype and insist that they email me with all of their concerns. This, again, is *mutually* beneficial.

Some clients love to chat on Skype because they can fool themselves into thinking they're doing work, when more often than not they're simply putting it off. If you as a consultant can keep your clients gently accountable to make real progress on their business goals by refusing to allow them self-indulgent behavior on the clock, you will quickly earn the reputation of a star consultant.

In the typical scheme of things, consultants are seen as those guys you “give work to.” Many clients unconsciously subscribe to this model of one-way accountability. While it's true of course that they *do* give work to you and you *are* accountable, most clients don't feel themselves to be, in turn, accountable to *you*.

Having been both a consultant and an employer of many consultants, I can say that this is a major error in thinking. Even though a client is paying you, his input, cooperation, and investment in your project (it's his project, really) is crucial. And it goes beyond merely paying you.

Imagine a client sends you a payment and some vague directions about what to do. Then he disappears for a week and resurfaces demanding the completion of X, Y, and Z. These kinds of clients think that their accountability begins and ends with the payment. Little do they realize, if they want to make the most of their investment, they have to work *with* the consultant. Keeping your communications business-oriented and in one convenient place helps accomplish this.

A major benefit of email is that all of your conversations are stored in your inbox and in one email. Some clients love to write **new** emails. It's better to ask them at the very outset to simply reply to the same email over and over. Otherwise, your communications will get lost in the clutter of your inbox.

If a client insists on a Skype conversation, schedule a specific time and get straight to business. It's fine to be friendly and exchange a few pleasantries. However, you want to keep the roles clear. If you allow a business relationship to drift into friendship, you can expect your client to start asking for 'favors' of you on the basis of that friendship. And you can't very well charge for conversations that aren't purely business oriented.

I've met some of my long-term clients for dinner. And I absolutely do think that building a deeper relationship is certainly worth the while. But it's a *business* relationship. People want to do business with people they like and will give those folks priority. But the primary thread running through everything should be a mutual commitment to improving each other's businesses and offering one another value.

And indeed, what could be more “friendly” than helping somebody grow his livelihood and elevate his lifestyle?

Regarding Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and other avenues of communication: they are all great if used **judiciously**. Just remember to funnel correspondences back to your email inbox where you can filter and sort them in bulk.

Unfortunately, if you're using oDesk/Elance, you'll be forced to write your correspondences on the site. The same is the case with Project Management platforms like Basecamp and Asana. I say “unfortunately” because these platforms also send email notifications when your client updates the conversation, which clutter up your inbox (yet another reason to track time yourself if your client is willing to let you do so).

Answering Email Inquiries

It's best to explain good form in answering inquiries by going through a real example. Here's an inquiry I received from a prospective client. We didn't wind up working together, but answering inquiry emails, even if they don't result in paid work, is an awesome (and very practical) exercise in professionalism, succinct communication, expectation management, and people skills.

Example Email:

> Hi, Victor.
>
> I saw your thread in Warrior Forums and also your thread in DAP forums. I'm thinking about using DAP to my website. I hope you can give me some opinion

about it, coz I'm still not sure if DAP is the best for my need.

So here is my questions:

1. My website is xxxxxxx

Now it's using PHP script made by local programmer here in Indonesia. The problem is that the script is getting more errors nowadays (I think because it's using old kinda coding or something). So I need to move to something fresh and powerful.

But since it's been running since 2011 and already have many members and affiliate, I'm afraid that migration to another software/script will cause database damage in the process. Would you please explain about the risk? And could you help me move to another software/script without leaving database errors in the future?

2. This is my website work system:

Customer come to my site --> They (not me) fill order form (name, address, email and phone number) --> I get email about the order including the customer details --> I text the customer via SMS tell them my bank account --> They SMS me back that they already transfer the money --> I check my bank account and I login to admin area to activate them --> The affiliate bonus is recorded instantly as I activate the customer.

Do you think DAP is the best for me?

Thanks, Victor. I really appreciate your time.

Best regards,

Client #1

Hi Client #1,

Thanks for getting in touch.

Let me answer you point-by-point:

3. My website is xxxxx

Now it's using PHP script made by local programmer here in Indonesia. The problem is that the script is getting more errors nowadays (I think because it's using old kinda coding or something). So I need to move to something fresh and powerful.

What, exactly, does the script do? Please be as specific as possible.

But since it's been running since 2011 and already have many members and affiliate, I'm afraid that migration to another software/script will cause database damage in the process. Would you please explain about the risk?

As long as we make copies of your database it shouldn't be a problem.

Also, your current site is HMTL. DAP and most other membership scripts require Wordpress.

So a safe solution would be to simply install wordpress (which uses its own database), copy all the users over to the new database, test access, and then when everything is working, simply switch over the URLs.

So to answer your question, there is a risk (as with anything), but if you have somebody competent do it, it can be largely avoided.

And could you help me move to another software/script without leaving database errors in the future?

Certainly.

4. This is my website work system:

Customer come to my site --> They (not me) fill order form (name, address, email and phone number) --> I get email about the order including the customer details --> I text the customer via SMS tell them my bank account --> They SMS me back that they already transfer the money --> I check my bank account and I login to admin area to activate them --> The affiliate bonus is recorded instantly as I activate the customer.

Do you think DAP is the best for me?

How many members do you have?

I think DAP would be a good solution because it allows you to bulk-import members and is very flexible.

You could do the same thing in DAP that you've been doing with your current solution.

That is, manually activate users once you've confirmed they sent you the money.

Could I take a look at your admin area? You can make a short video if you don't want to give me access.

Even if some of that reads like Greek to you, take notice of a few important things about this email exchange. First of all, I say a courteous “hello,” a “thanks for getting in touch,” and then get right to business. This is good form. The potential client has problems and wants solutions *yesterday*. Anything more would be irrelevant small talk.

Next, I reply using numbered points. I initially started doing this for my own benefit because it made it much easier for me to read, respond to, and revisit an email. But I found that clients often tend to adopt this style and reply to me in numbered points as well. This keeps communication very clear and organized. As Steve Jobs would enthusiastically tell you, design matters, even if it's the design of a lowly email.

The third thing I do is ask pointed questions. I never agree to help a prospective client with a project unless I know everything it involves and that I can do it (and do it well). Of course, if you're offering a simpler service that doesn't require quite so much reconnaissance, then you can simply give the potential client a yay or nay response. But you never know when you may wind up doing something more involved!

Fourth, I answer my prospective client's questions as comprehensively *yet as succinctly* as possible. It's always in your client's best interest if you can educate him and make him aware of his options to the extent that it will serve his business purposes. He doesn't need to know the ins and outs of every last bit of software you use or what computer you do your typing on. But he does need to know the relevant bits so he can make a smart decision.

Fifth, when applicable, I anticipate problems and issues and communicate them. The reason a potential client reaches out to you is because of the rare expertise you possess. If your understanding and experience lead you to believe that it may be in your client's best interest to do X, Y, and Z instead of A, B, and C, then don't be shy about conveying your suggestions. If you can help a client anticipate potential snags, if you can help him future-proof a project (to the extent that future-proofing is even possible with technology), he will love you forever! And he (or she, in this case) will leave you reviews like this:


06-19-2013, 01:02 AM #14

ToraC
Warrior Member
Registered Member

Join Date: Jun 2013
Posts: 1
Thanks: 0
Thanked 1 Time in 1 Post

Re: I Set Up: OptimizePress, Affiliate Programs (Clickbank & more), Membership Sites, AWeber, DAP, E

It was such a pleasure working with Vic. I really felt in safe hands. He set up our membership site in the quoted time and with a really fast turnaround. He communicated all the way through and was available for all my Ask Vic questions afterwards! He thought of things I wouldn't have thought of - such a refreshing change! He is my new Go-To Guy for all things tech related like this!

QUOTE MULTIQUOTE QUICK REPLY

How to Communicate with Clients (General Comm-Mech)

First a disclaimer: there will always be room to improve upon and refine your communication skills. Every situation–every single one–is unique and should be treated as new (as opposed to a repeat of a previous, seemingly similar situation). That said, I've developed some general guidelines over the years, mostly through trial and error, that have served me well in my consulting business.

Professionalism

First, let's define professionalism: professionalism is the art of properly managing expectations, delivering results, and giving your clients a truly wonderful experience of working with you.

Mind you, this definition depends on your client to some degree. You can do everything perfectly on your end, but if your client is a curmudgeon, he'll put an objectively professional business experience through his own misanthropic mental filter and see it how he wants. But let's worry about what we can control and leave the rest of the universe to do as it will!

I necessarily define professionalism vaguely. While some kind of definition is useful, in a complex domain, rigid definitions lead to ignoring the uniqueness of situations, subtle details, and the overarching principle to use your own awareness and best judgment at all times. Because truly, only ***you*** are fully aware of everything a given situation entails.

My rule of thumb is simply asking myself "Does this feel totally professional?" While this may seem somewhat hokey, consider that your emotions have evolved over tens of millions of years to inform you, with mind-boggling precision, what a situation means, and how to deal with it effectively. After all, the psychological triggers are still with us...

When answering an email, for instance, writing a letter, doing work, or any other business related activity, simply ask yourself "Is this consummately professional on my part?" If the answer is anything but a resounding "yes," call yourself to a higher standard. Don't let laziness win. Always go the more professional, thorough route.

While there may not be such a thing as universal karma in the Buddhist sense, what comes around in business certainly goes around one way or another.

Pithiness

Pithy (*adj.*) - short, concise, to the point.

The more efficiently you communicate with clients, the better. This is why I insist on editing and re-editing even short, seemingly inconsequential emails to clients. If you can say something in 10 words instead of 20, always opt for 10.

There is, however, one notable exception. If the thing you're explaining to your client has the potential for misinterpretation due to ambiguity or lack of information, then provide as much information as is needed to make sure your client understands the communication fully, in all its dimensions.

This is especially the case when a client simply doesn't know all the available options. Hence the need to ask the right questions (a skill you develop with time and experience). In short, keep it as short as necessary to communicate what you need to communicate fully. No less, no more.

Edit and Re-edit Emails

I briefly mentioned earlier that I edit and re-edit all client communications until they feel right. If, for example, an email doesn't feel 'just right', doesn't address all points, and doesn't do so professionally and in a pithy fashion, I don't send it out. I go back and edit it until my gut and brain agree that this email is “right”. Only then do I hit send.

The beauty of email compared to other forms of communication is that you can take your sweet time in responding. You can think through your answers, research points of which you're unsure, consider the implications of x, y, and z and approach your business with more forethought and strategy.

Other forms of communication like Skype, Google chat, phone calls, etc., demand a more or less instant reply. And so it's easy to say things that come to mind quickly to fill the space, thus making hasty promises and speaking too extemporaneously.

And on the basis of these hasty replies, your client is building his expectations. So from an expectation management perspective, conversations outside of the realm of email are dangerous (unless you specifically schedules a session to resolve and clarify various issues).

Promptness

It pays to be prompt. Clients who invest in your services are often anxious about every little step of the process. Unresponsiveness and long periods between updates exacerbates this anxiety. So reply promptly if you can. But remember not to allow a client to yak endlessly about nothing because it doesn't move things along for either of you.

If a client sends me an erroneous communication, I typically ignore it. This 'trains' your clients to talk business, not fluff, and conveys to him that you're **not** ok with wasting your time (nor his) on unproductive matters. If it don't make dollars, it don't make sense.

To be prompt does not mean that you are at your client's every beck and call, nor that you make yourself perpetually available to them on Skype, email, etc. Some clients have a habit of over-communicating, which sabotages your productivity in actually helping *them* in the first place!

Yes, you want to communicate promptly. But only when you have something of substance to communicate. Otherwise, keep your clients focused by barring *ad hoc* access to your time and energy. They may feel initially that you're uncommunicative. But in the end, they will thank you for keeping them accountable to stay on task when they couldn't master the discipline themselves.

Be prompt but be prompt about important matters.

Terms

Your terms are the way you do business, the ways in which you refuse to do business, and an unwavering commitment to stick by your preferences no matter what.

For instance, you refuse to take on projects that span fewer than 10 hours. You refuse to work with clients who give you the feeling that they're unscrupulous. You refuse to lower your hourly rate. You insist on collecting payment up front. You refuse to be 'flexible' on payment. You “fire” clients who misbehave, etc.

While flexibility is important in any business, there are certain things which it makes to good business sense to be ***in***flexible about. And clients generally respect you for sticking to your guns if it's done professionally.

Check out this email I got from a client when we were negotiating terms:

[redacted]@gmail.com> 12/21/13

to me

Hello Vic

Thanks for the fast response. I am accustomed to hiring developers by the project, typically from elance or odesk. I have a few questions for you.

- Would it be possible to get a total project price if I give you a list of everything that I would like setup?
- How do you typically accept payment, do you have an elance or odesk account?
- Do you have any references that I can check on?

And my reply:

- Would it be possible to get a total project price if I give you a list of everything that I would like setup?

I could give you an estimate of approximate project length but I charge hourly, not by the project.

(See bottom of email).

- How do you typically accept payment, do you have an elance or odesk account?

I have both an oDesk and eLance account.

Of the two, I prefer oDesk.

I can also track time manually, if you'd rather save the oDesk/eLance fees, and pay via Paypal.

But if you're not cool with that, I understand, and I'm fine using oDesk or eLance. :-)

I do, however, ask for the first 3 hours up front.

- Do you have any references that I can check on?

Certainly!

http://www.warriorforum.com/warriors-hire/743888-i-set-up-optimizepress-affiliate-programs-clickbank-more-membership-sites-aweber-dap-etc.html

Let me know if you'd like the contact info of some of the folks I've done business with most recently.

As you can see, one of my terms is that I don't work on a per-project basis. I learned the hard way that this gives a client *carte blanche* to demand a million things of you, only vaguely related to the original items, without any compensation. Charging hourly, on the other hand, forces the client to prioritize his business needs and get specific with what he needs you to do.

Hence, I never budge on this term because it would be mutually disadvantageous to do so (and some clients are perfectly aware that per project pricing gets them more of your labor with the plausible deniability that all this extra stuff they'll demand is “part of the project.”)

You can see in this next point that my client wanted me to be 'flexible' on my billing because the software I was going to have to work with was new, and so I'd have to spend time figuring it out (time that I'd be charging for, of course).

Client: *“Since the credit store plug in is brand new, can you be flexible on time spent figuring how to use it versus time spent implementing it for us when you tally up* *those hours?"*

Me: *"I charge my full rate for my time and expertise, whether a piece of software is new or not. And in fact, there's new software being released in the Membership Site arena all the time."*

Again, I politely refused to budge. New software is released all the time in every industry. If I were to give away free consulting time on the basis of new software being released, my business would implode in a matter of weeks. You must charge for your **time;** that is a term to be absolutely rigid about.

In the end, the client agreed to work on my terms and we had a great working relationship. Yet it doesn't stop a client from pushing your boundaries and seeing what he can get away with.

It's natural for all of us to try and get the best possible deal. Business people can be especially brazen in this regard. But it's your prerogative as a consultant to discover your terms and defend them politely, for both your and your clients' sakes.

Use Screencast Videos

Jing (http://www.techsmith.com/jing.html) is a free service (at the time of this writing) that allows you to take screenshots and make screen capture videos. This is an immensely valuable tool. Jing allows you to visually explain things to your clients. I even recently had a client ask me to explain how Jing works because he so much loves the style of communication.

For example, if you've set up a website for your client with some new software that you need to show him how to use, you can simply make a series of Jing videos explaining it in detail.

In fact, I incorporate this activity of making explanatory videos as part of my value proposition to a potential client. You see, clients are often anxious that once you've done your work and collected your fees, they'll be left trying to figure out how to use what you've put together for them.

If you can anticipate this anxiety and assure your potential client that he'll have reference screenshots and videos that will allow him to function without constantly having to call you (and pay you more money), do you reckon he might feel that your service is a step above your competitors? Damn skippy!

Not only that but these videos are easy and fun to create, and of course, you log the time you spend creating them. The free version of Jing only lets you create videos 5 minutes long. And there's also a storage limit on your account. Once you hit the storage limit, you'll have to delete old videos to make room for new ones.

If you get to this point, it might be worthwhile to invest in a premium account. Otherwise, you may have past clients emailing you asking why they can't access the reference vids you'd made for them (you deleted them!)

Another free service whose limit is 15 minutes rather than 5 minutes is screencast-o-matic (http://www.screencast-o-matic.com/). What I like about this service over Jing is that you can upload the videos to your youtube channel, giving you virtually unlimited storage space. This is the service I prefer.

Restate Clients' Thoughts to Them

Let's start with an illustration. A potential client emailed me the following:

Raphael Feb 4

to me

Hello,

I'm developping a wordpress webbsite using member mouse.

I want to integrate Facebook Connect and I use the nextend facebook connect plugin but when an user registered via facebook connect, even if the member is created in the wordpress backend, he is not assign to free membership level. The user is not created in the Member Mouse DB.

Did you think that you can do something for me ?

Thanks,

Raphael

I responded with the following:

Vic Dorfman <victor.dorfman@gmail.com> Feb 4

to Raphael

Hi Raphael,

Thanks for getting in touch.

Let me make sure I understand what you'd like to do:

Take the users who register through Nextend Facebook Connect plugin and automatically add them to the free membership level in the MemberMouse database. Is that correct?

This is a custom job. I think my lead developer has a few hours free next week so he should be able to do this.

If you'd like, I can get a time quote from him and send you a price quote.

Thanks Raphael, talk soon.

Best,
Vic

This is a trick I learned from marketing mad scientist Eben Pagan. Once I feel that I understand everything the client wants to achieve, I essentially rephrase the client's requirements, ask whether I've understood them correctly, address any issues of which the client may be unaware from his vantage point, and ask a few follow up questions that would better enable me to assess timelines, budgets, feasibility of x, y, and z, etc.

This technique makes a person feel heard, understood, and respected professionally. And 97% of consultants won't do this. Not only is it good for your client, it also helps you to clarify your own thinking on the matter, formulate follow-up questions and crystalize a preliminary idea of what to do, when to do it, how much time it'll take, etc.

To really benefit from this, or any of the suggestions in this book, you must apply these principles ***systematically***. That is, don't *sometimes* reply in this format and other times reply in another format–no. Do it the right way every single time.

Use Your Client's Name

In the classic business/self-improvement book How To Win Friends and Influence People (http://amzn.to/RLPiwy) by Dale Carnegie, the author writes “Remember that a person's name is, to that person, the sweetest and most important sound in any language.” ...and it's true!

Use your clients' and potential clients' names every now and then. I typically use it at least once per email. Slip it in conversation every so often but don't overdo it. It gives your communications a bit more of a personal touch without detracting from your professionalism.

Chapter 7 – Dealing With Deadbeats

When a Client Won't Pay

Sometimes, and it's a rare situation (thankfully), a client won't pay you on time or won't pay you in full. I call these clients **deadbeats.** This problem is *somewhat* avoidable with good expectation management. But the problem is completely ***un***avoidable at some point in your career.

Certain clients, who don't really feel like paying to begin with, will use a poorly managed expectation as a legitimate (to them) excuse to weasel out of paying. The deadbeat client is not a businessperson in the sense that he is childish. He will refuse to pay simply on the basis of *"I don't wanna!"* It can be infuriating to deal with these kinds of people but they exist and there's nothing you can do about them. Thankfully, there's plenty you can do about *you* and the way *you* deal with them.

Let's look at how you can protect against this kind of situation to begin with:

Get 'x' hours up front.

If your estimated project time will run 10 hours, ask for the first 3 hours up front. Thanks to a psychological trigger known as **commitment and consistency**, once somebody pays you a first time, they're more likely to follow through on future payments.

In layman's terms, you're asking your client to get some skin in the game. It's only reasonable. After all, it's *their* project. You're clearing your schedule for them and foregoing other opportunities and you're devoting mental real estate to helping them get something sorted.

By asking them to pay a 3 or 4 hour retainer up front, they make an investment that signals they value your time and expertise and won't likely treat your compensation as an annoying afterthought.

Get current on payments every 3 hours or so.

Again, this depends on your average project length, but you want to keep your clients current on all payments to you. If you receive a 3-hour retainer up front, and then do 20 hours of work for which the client then refuses to pay, you're screwed out of 20 hours of your life. If, however, you're billing them more granularly, say every 4 hours, then a refusal to pay is significantly less painful financially and psychologically. You lose 'only' 4 hours.

Overestimate project length; revise estimates.

A situation I've been in several time is when I've quoted a client 10-15 hours for project completion and went on to work about 20 hours before letting him know I'd gone over. This angers clients, and understandably so. So I started to revise my business processes to avoid this situation in the first place.

Now, I always make it crystal clear that my estimate is just an estimate. I even ask a client to acknowledge and agree to this stipulation before I begin work. And if I'm running up to the final hours, I send an email with a revised estimate stating that I've done such and such so far, such and such remains, and it will take another 5, or 10 hours to finish.

Sometimes a client will actually reply with frustration, saying that you quoted him 15 hours and now it's going to be 20(!?) It's at this point that you can calmly and politely remind him to look at your initial correspondence, in which you'd made it crystal clear that the hours estimate was, after all, just an estimate and that this is a condition he agreed to.

A client can't be (justifiably) angry at you when you've made the terms clear, asked him to agree to those terms and then proceeded to stay within the scope of that agreement.

This brings us to the next point.

Overshoot initial estimates.

If a project will take 10 hours but you quote 20, the client will budget (both financially and emotionally) for 20 hours. If you deliver the completed project in “just” 15 hours, he'll feel that you over-delivered relative to his expectations. Whereas if you ran 25 hours, he was only mentally prepared for a 20-hour bill.

So always estimate at least 20% more time/money/energy to get a project done. This also filters out clients with little to no budget who want to box your work into the amount of hours *they* feel a project should take, with perhaps zero understanding of what the completion of such a project actually entails.

Not all clients take this approach, of course, but in general, it's a smart policy to make your estimates very conservative and to make sure the client understands and agrees to your terms.

I'll often ask “OK on the estimated hours? Also please note this is an estimate and i'll keep you updated every few hours.” And insist that they “OK” it so you have it on record.

Talking to a Wall

Some clients are so emotionally invested in their auto-generated, pie-in-the-sky expectations and commitment to **not** pay people for their hard work at a rate that they, themselves, agreed to, that no amount of patient persuasion and calm explanation will reach them.

Again, these are the clients I call 'deadbeats' and yet again, they're not common. But the sooner you can identify them, the sooner you can amicably end your working relationship with them, and devote your time to helping the people who will happily compensate you with no ifs, ands, or buts.

One tip I can give you is to always argue in the *other* person's self-interest. Read that again. If this approach doesn't sway somebody, then there's probably not much more you can do. Just stay professional, learn from the experience, and try to build processes and procedures that avoid future unpleasantries.

If It's Your Fault...

If a client refuses to pay you because you're asking for money he didn't agree to fund or because the stipulations of your work together weren't completed on your end, then it's a bad situation where you simply have to take responsibility. I'll be honest, this situation is probably unavoidable at some point in your career. It's an unpleasant but necessary part of the learning process. If you messed up, own up to it, face the music, learn from it and move on.

Chapter 8 – Productivity

Countless volumes have been written on productivity. Everybody has their own thoughts on this subject. However, some universal suggestions for being productive seem to surface across many different works and are corroborated by real world experience.

Time Management vs. Energy Management

If you've ever worked a 9-5 job (and even if you haven't), you know full well that being fully engaged, focused, and productive for 6, 7, 8 near-consecutive hours is a bunch of B.S.

Any process is limited by the scarcest resource needed for that process. In this case, you may have 8 hours in which to do work, but that doesn't at all mean that you have 8 hours of productive energy within you. In fact, it's unlikely that you can be genuinely productive more than a few hours at a time, or even more than a few hours a day.

The definitive work on productivity and energy management, in my opinion, is Tony Schwarz's *"*The Power of Full Engagement (http://amzn.to/Qyp9Bn)". Order this book ASAP, it is absolutely required reading.

One central tenet of *The Power of Full Engagement,* as well as my own approach to productivity, is that **energy requires renewal.** If you're fully focused and engaged in something and you start to sense your focus and clarity fizzling out, you must stop and renew energy by ***dis***engaging completely.

What most people do, and you're probably no stranger to this situation, is to stay partially engaged in work long after you've ceased being productive, thus accomplishing pitifully little for all the extra time you've put in and all the stress it's causing you.

In fact, it's crucial to stay aware and to recognize when your productive energy has waned. Once you sense that you're being useless, you must **force** yourself to stop and disengage. Go for a walk, meditate, do a workout, go for a swim, etc. This is a pretty common sense approach that many "primitive" cultures know intuitively. (The difference is that they aren't arbitrarily expected to sit in an office and crank out work like an assembly line for 8 hours a day!)

Rather than listen to our bodies, most of us tend to stay partially engaged pretty much all the time. This "continuous partial engagement" is exacerbated by parasitic entities like Facebook, Twitter, email, and the worst culprit of them all: so-called "smart" phones.

When I came to Thailand I sold my iPhone out of necessity and bought the cheapest "stupid" phone I could find ($15). When I went on holiday to the South islands recently, I forgot my phone charger. Now, 2 weeks into my trip as I sit here in beautiful Phuket with a steak and egg breakfast waiting for me to fully engage in its devourment, I look at my 2-weeks-uncharged phone with 2 out of 4 energy bars still alight, and I smile.

While an iPhone would have been dead in a matter of days, this cheap, crappy phone is perfectly alive and, most importantly, devoid of any temptation to keep me continuously partially engaged with any kind of entertaining but distracting stuff. It lacks the ability to use apps, or for that matter, the internet.

But if, for instance, I were to get in (another) motorbike wreck, I could count on my phone to call for help. If I drop it, it probably won't break. And if it does, it'll cost me just $15 to replace. So which one is the truly smart phone to have?

True productivity is focusing completely, totally, on one thing at a time and blocking out absolutely everything else. Further, if you focus on, say, answering emails, even if you're fully absorbed in the task, it probably still doesn't carry the same productive value that a more vital task does. So the second rule is "focus on the items that bring the biggest results first and ignore the rest." Put another way by the management guru Peter Drucker: "first things first, second things not at all."

If you're in a street fight, there's no time to fix your hat or take the contents out of your pockets. You've got to start swinging for the fences or you'll get your ass kicked. So it is in biz. Always give priority to the task that brings the biggest chunk of progress. Hint: it's probably the one you're most reluctant to do!

Notice that I haven't talked about time management at all. Why is that? Trying to manage your time is the wrong approach *fundamentally.* ***The currency you must learn to manage is energy:*** where it goes, how efficiently you use it, how efficiently you renew it, and how to keep this cycle going consistently, day to day.

Time goes on whether you attempt vainly to manage it or not. The fewer tasks you have to do across as few 'domains' as possible, the more fully you'll be able to engage. Particularly if the task is enjoyable.

To-Do Lists

To-do lists: should you use them? I think to-do lists are OK if you have a lot of items to complete. They can help you remember things you might not remember yourself.

I used to use to-do lists frequently. But what I observed over a long period of time is that I'd complete a few tasks and carry the rest over to a new to-do list. Now I've moved away from them. Why?

Because I focus on as few (vital) tasks at a time as possible (ideally, just one). And I focus on these select few tasks intently. Now here's the cool, almost alchemical result: at this level of absorption and presence, it's very rare to forget everything you need to do because it all belongs to this "meta" task.

In other words, if you're utterly focused on cleaning up your room, would a to-do list of each individual item – e.g., "make the bed," "sweep the floor," "arrange the desk," "hang the clothing," etc. – be necessary...? If you're 100% engaged in cleaning your room, the details will take care of themselves. If, on the other hand, you're only partially engaged and performing the task absent-mindedly, it's likely you'll forget to hang something or simply do a slipshod job.

The 80/20 Rule

The 80/20 rule states that about 80% of your results and progress come from only about 20% of your work. In other words, if you focus on the most crucial 20% of tasks, clients, inquiries, etc., you'll get disproportionate payoffs from that small slice. Put yet another way, one stiff hook will end a fight in an instant, whereas dozens of weak jabs will only slightly jar an opponent.

In business this means forcing yourself to do the things that will have the highest payoffs and likewise forcing yourself to ignore minutiae that give the *illusion* of progress but bring little actual progress.

Sometimes the distribution is even more skewed. For instance, you will likely find that a small handful of clients give you a totally disproportionate amount of headaches. Unless they are paying you significantly more than your other, more amicable clients, there's absolutely no reason to put yourself through hell for them unless you simply can't afford to ditch them (see: firing clients).

The 80/20 rule (also known as Pareto's principle) is a useful rule of thumb that applies surprisingly well in a large variety of situations. Keep it close to home.

Parkinson's Law (And Dorfman's Caveat)

In the lifestyle design/productivity classic "The 4 Hour Workweek (http://amzn.to/10mrfs8)" by Tim Ferriss, Ferris extols the virtues of Parkinson's law. It states that a task shrinks or expands to fill the amount of time available for its completion.

If you have one month to deliver a project, you'll take a month to finish it. If you have one week, you'll get it done in a week. **The caveat:** I don't deny that there's a lot of truth to Parkinson's law, but I wouldn't recommend it as a default *modus operandi* for a mature consultant.

This approach presumes that you will procrastinate, protract, and put off a task if you have plenty of time to do it. And you very well may. But this is where willpower (explored in the next section) comes into play.

Intentional procrastination under the guise of productivity is the way a high school student writes a term paper: all at once, the night before it's due. But unlike a high schooler, you won't be able to turn your project in, go back home, and nap off the sleep debt you've accrued. Other clients and projects will be waiting and you'll have depleted your energy reserves. This may result in missing deadlines, getting anxious client emails, high stress levels, etc.

The smarter approach is to always stay as much ahead of the curve as you can. Complete as much as you can as early as you can. Not only does this keep a lot of unnecessary stress out of your life, it also ensures that you're constantly delivering work ahead of time – work you've had plenty of time to check and double-check – thus overdelivering on deadline and quality expectations.

Procrastination dressed up as productivity is *not* the way of the superior consultant. Please don't fall for this casuistry.

Will Power & Hustle

No matter how slick your productivity system may be, it cannot eliminate the need for a strong willpower. Yes, studies show that willpower is unreliable and that human beings are prone to mindless, repetitive behaviors and slips (called “automaticity” by experts) to a shocking degree.

But think of it, even reading this book requires forcing yourself to some degree. You sure as hell aren't auto-magically reading, paying attention, or taking to heart the wisdom found in these pages. You are engaging your willpower.

You will *have* to force yourself to do things you don't want to do, learn things you have no inclination to learn, and continually step outside of your comfort zone in order to grow as a businessman. It doesn't happen on autopilot!

Another Example: we just discussed full engagement, i.e. forcing yourself to focus like a hawk on **one** critical task to the exclusion of everything else. This requires willpower and practice. Focus is a *skill* whose capacity you train just like strength in the world of weightlifting. People may see a guy lift a lot of weight and dismiss the feat saying “Oh, that's just strength.” What people who don't train with heavy weights don't understand is that strength is very much a skill that requires systematic development.

Likewise, forcing yourself to disengage completely is the only way to fully renew energy and it requires massive willpower to shut off your computer, your phone, your social media, your TV, and all of the other crap grabbing for your attention like hungry vampires.

Willpower has been much maligned by modern cognitive and behavioral science. But it has been upheld as a virtue since time immemorial. It is a virtue that the ancients preached, but it has been lost in the comfort of modernity. The mature, superior consultant is a paragon of willpower, hustle, and hard work. Put another way, “good things come to those who ~~wait~~ work their asses off!”

Vacations

A pleasant note to finish out the chapter on productivity...

Total focus and utter sloth are not opposites. They are two sides of the same coin. They complement each other and they are both crucial. We understand this intuitively as manifested by the concept of the vacation. We go somewhere, perhaps somewhere exotic and warm, to disengage from work and our obligations at home, to restore our health, and to seek eustress (positive stress) in the forms of adventure and novelty.

But the problem is that we vacation too infrequently. This is especially a problem for Americans, Japanese, and a few other nationalities, who seem to take a masochistic pride in working ourselves to death...quite literally! We vacation less than our “lazy” European counterparts, who have regular energy renewal built into their very laws in the form of statutory vacations.

Everybody has their own rhythm. It's important you find yours. As a personal example, I'm productive for about 2 hours in the morning. I wrote this book by hand in 30-60 minute chunks at my local café while I sipped my morning coffee every day for about a month. Then, I tend to have another productive period in the afternoon that lasts for 2 hours or so. Sometimes I get another 2-hour jolt between 6pm and 8pm but I usually go the gym at this time unless there's a lot of work to do.

After 8pm I try to force myself to shut down my computer and not look at it again until the next day. I don't always succeed. In the intervals between productive chunks, I'm walking, swimming, playing some guitar, going on a date, etc. On average, I'd say I'm truly productive only about 2 to 4 hours a day. I try to keep weekends free to work on my own non-consulting side projects as they are a great source of renewal and excitement for me.

On a macro level, I burn out after about three months of this routine. At that point I try to take a week or two period of restorative travel. That usually means flying to the south of Thailand for some much-needed beach time. I still bring my computer and do work but the change of scenery and the recharge on nature still rejuvenate my excitement for work by the time I have to head back home to Bangkok.

Your options for renewal will vary depending on your circumstances and will improve as your business grows. Whatever your situation, jealously guard your energy, say no to continuous partial engagement, learn to disengage completely, and create a rhythm of expenditure and renewal.

Your health, your productivity, your happiness and, of course, your business all depend on it!

Chapter 9 – Going Pro

There's no clearly defined point at which you're officially "a pro". In fact, you want to enter into this online business thing with high expectations for your work. Strive to conduct your business professionally at all times.

What I mean by "going pro" is moving beyond the simple act of exchanging a service for money and instituting business *processes*, rituals, and habits that benefit you and your business at a higher level.

Do I Need a Website?

I'll be the first person to tell you that my knowledge and experience with this topic is incomplete. That's simply because I've been very successful in my industry without ever having my own website. The beauty of the Warrior Forum is that you don't need an external website to make your pitch, showcase your work, show testimonials, accept payment, etc. It *is* your website!

And if you follow this guide, I guarantee that the Warrior Forum will give you more business than you can handle. So much so that you won't have the need, much less the time, to set up your own site!

I don't deny that there may be benefits to putting up your own site, but I'll leave this topic to somebody who knows about it better than I. What I *can* tell you for sure is that there is absolutely no pressing need on your part to have a personal business website created, especially if you're still in the budding stages of your consulting biz.

The clear benefit of a website, however, is that you aren't at the mercy of a 3rd party to host your thread. In the unlikely event that the Warrior Forum gets taken down, or if you get banned from the forum because you posted something the moderators didn't like, then your money-making thread will go "poof!" But I honestly wouldn't worry about this. If it happens, it happens rarely enough that I've never heard about it in my years of doing this.

Until your consulting business is well-established and you're doing a lot of business, don't worry about a website. If it's important to you, you can always put one up later.

Building Relationships

Like it or not, business is built as much on relationships as on your skills. Arguably, more so. Thus, even if you're the introverted, leave-me-alone-to-do-my-work, don't-wanna-deal-with-people type, I'm here to tell you that learning to build, nurture, and leverage relationships is as critical to your business as any of the actual work you do.

You may be on the same page as me on this one but please allow me a brief tirade to drive this important point home. After all, people hire people they not only trust to do a good job, but people whom they like, who come highly recommended, and/or who are hard to book. If a lucrative job is between you and Joe Shmoe, and Joe has taken the time to create some good will with the client while you haven't, who do you reckon is more likely to get the gig, all other things being equal?

Favoritism, nepotism, shmepotism, and every kind of subjectivity there is all inform the majority of real world hiring decisions. So you can either ignore it and struggle unnecessarily or you can get with the program, learn to deal with people effectively, and grow your business that much more quickly.

I'm making such a stink about this issue because I, myself, came from the mentality of "your work speaks for itself" (it doesn't; not *just* your work, anyway), "clients will hire me because I'm the most skilled/qualified/competent," (wrong again), and other Ayn Randian, badly out of touch notions. The reality of business slapped me out of this attitude, but only after experiencing the considerable anguish that accompanies a toppling of one's lofty, thoroughly pie-in-the-sky ideas about how things in the world <u>ought</u> to work.

Now, if you're both highly skilled *and* have great relationships, then you're on the right track!

A central place to start building relationships is within your niche. More specifically, with the movers and shakers. In my niche – the building of membership sites – I've built amicable relationships with many important folks, including the developers of many popular, widely-used membership platforms.

Relationships are all about giving value to others, so let's see how you can do this.

I don't mean to ramble on about myself but I think you'll get more out of my own personal examples than dry, theoretical "you should do this, don't do that" type of talk, even if it means sounding a bit self-important.

Say "Hi"

I reached out to the developer of an increasingly popular software in my niche. I was a bit scared he'd blow me off, but to my surprise, he came on Skype and had a long chat with me! It only occurred to me later on that I'd begun speaking more favorably about both him and his product to my business friends after our pow-wow. That's psychological bias at work. But you know what? Who cares? I like this guy and he has a great product. And all the free advertising he gets from me only cost him 20 minutes worth of chit-chat. That's not a bad return on investment!

He, in turn, listed me as an implementation partner directly on his highly trafficked website, thus giving me his implicit endorsement and sending a good bit of business my way. Since I'm seen as an authority on membership sites, my own positive comments on the Warrior Forum also served to bolster his reputation and (hopefully) landed him some new customers.

Notice again that our respective skills and qualifications are secondary to the simple fact of liking each other and thus wanting to help each other out. Make no mistake, you should never endorse an inferior product or service just because you like the vendor; this is a sure fire way to ruin your reputation. I'm simply saying that it's better to have both.

Asking For Help

Asking for help is a great way to engage with the influencers in your niche. Even something as simple as asking for advice or a quick opinion is flattering to just about everyone if it's sincere.

I've built many relationships with vendors, business owners, developers, et al, simply by contacting them, asking their advice, or asking a technical question about the capabilities of their product/service.

It may seem kiss-ass, but again, this is done from a place of sincerity when you have a genuine question to ask. Further, the relationships you build will bring you a lot of business. Referral business is by far the best kind of business you can get. So don't be shy about reaching out. It's just as vital as any of the actual work you do.

Positive Praise

If you're in a position of advanced knowledge, experience, and authority, people listen to you and consider what you have to say. This is a big responsibility and a powerful business-building asset.

Example: I had been working with a particular piece of software for months and I was consistently impressed by the quality and flexibility of the product and the thorough, prompt support team (which included the developers themselves).

So when people would ask for advice on which software to use on their site, I would often (where appropriate, of course) recommend this software.

One day, one of the developers contacted me to thank me for my support and granted me a free, lifetime license to use their software as a way of thanking me. Now this is a wonderful way to do business! Somebody *else* creates a stellar product, *you* use it and praise it, and *you* get rewarded simply for spreading the good word! Value begets value.

Since then, the developers of the software and I have deepened our relationship, and have helped each other out numerous times both with support and marketing issues.

Make Introductions

Making introduction and connecting people with overlapping business goals is a free way to add a massive amount of value to others' businesses and acquire a reputation as an influencer. There's a little bit of tact required in acting as a liaison. So two examples to illustrate:

I'd been working with two big-ticket entrepreneurs and helping them to set up their websites and membership components. The software we were using lacked a certain functionality that they needed and so they hired a developer to custom code an add-on solution.

I was excited about this extra feature and naturally wanted to let the developers know that my clients had added this functionality. So I proposed to introduce them to each other. My clients agreed and I sent an intro email. Here is the exchange that followed:

6/20/13

to me,

Hi Vic, thank you for the intro.

Hi ,

Vic mentioned that you guys had gotten a solution developed. So we just wanted to know the solution you implemented for this.

Did you get custom code developed for auto-creating ? Is that working ok? Just curious, that's all.

...

6/20/13

to ., me,

Hi ,

It's great to connect! Yes, we did come up with a solution that is working brilliantly :)

Would love to explore the idea of how we may be able to work together and possibly offer it as on option for ...

Thoughts?

All the best

To my dismay, my clients made no effort to feel the developers out or make any kind of personal connection. They pitched them on the spot and in a roundabout, dot-dot-dot manner that, to me, came off presumptuous and rude.

I say 'presumptuous' because they were trying to sell two very talented developers an add-on solution of dubious quality with no perspective on what it meant to continue supporting somebody else's piece of programming.

It left a bad taste in my mouth and I never made introductions again for these clients. Not that they're bad people or anything like that. I'm not pointing my finger or accusing them of anything. I simply felt like I'd been taken advantage of when I'd made a earnest attempt to introduce two parties with mutual interests.

Further, the blatant sales pitch reflected poorly on me since the two developers might assume I had something to gain from it (I didn't).

These kinds of situations aren't neatly predictable. And if you know people well enough you can usually count on them to act professionally. Let's take a look at the second example:

I'd been working with a well-known jazz musician, helping him put together a paid members area for his fans. I was also helping him set up a sales funnel for his new record release, which he was going to market online.

We had a great 2-way accountability in our business relationship. He paid on time and always worked *with* me. I, in turn, always did a great job for him and delivered quickly.

Prior to this, I'd been in touch with another high-profile musician and entrepreneur with considerable influence in his industry. I thought it might be a good idea to connect the two of them, even though I had no definite notion of what such a connection could bring. **So I sent the following intro email:**

“Hi Influential Musician Dude,

Long time no talk. How are you?

I see you just released Program 3.0...very cool man. ;-)

Hope you make a lot of money and help a lot of musicians do the same.

What's new since 2.0?

By the way, I ran into Alex J. in Bangkok and somehow we got talking about music and what not and I mentioned you.

And he said he grew up hanging out with you in Nebraska! ...Small world haha.

Anyway, I just wanted to introduce my business friend Jazz Musician Guy to you. I've included him on this email.

He's a musician and online marketer and I thought it would be good for you two to connect.

Jazz Musician Guy meet Influential Musician Dude.

Jazz Musician Guy brought me on board to help set up his sales funnel.

And Jazz Musician Guy happens to be a real talented musician with a dedication to good marketing as well.

Thanks guys, take care.

Best Wishes,
Vic”

As a result of the introduction, the influencer checked out my client's music and looked into his career. It turned out that he was so impressed that he invited my client on to his podcast!

My client, unlike the guys from the first example, made a custom landing page just for the influencer, detailing how they might be able to help each other out. His approach was thoughtful, humble, professional, and had a personal touch. He sought first to *offer* value before asking for something or trying to pitch him.

It's safe to say that I trust my client and will gladly make introductions for him in the future. And of course, this benefits my reputation out of all proportion to the tiny investment of effort I made to bring two good, talented folks together.

When In Doubt, Reach Out

There's almost never any harm in personally emailing somebody in a position of authority and influence. You do have to make it clear at the start of your communiqué who you are (so the other person has an incentive to keep reading).

Whenever you have a question, a technical concern, or just feel like you should connect with an important figure in your industry, just do it.

Give Thanks

I had a strange and pleasant situation months ago in which I acquired several clients on a referral basis from an online entrepreneur – let's call him 'Hank'. The funny thing is, I didn't even know Hank! We'd never done business or even corresponded with one another!

Apparently, Hank was providing online business coaching. He was then instructing his clients to set up membership websites. Hank searched around and found my thread on the Warrior Forum. And since I came highly recommended and had terrific feedback, he sent these clients to me.

I immediately contacted Hank to thank him for his kind referrals and to please let me know if there's anything I could do for him in return. In a way, I was already helping Hank out by being a reliable consultant, thus making his instructions to his clients easier to follow through on. But I would have gladly helped him out in other respects if he had asked.

This just goes to show you that you should always ask your clients and potential clients where they found you. They'll usually tell you. But if they don't, make it a point to find out. And if you find that somebody out there in internet land who you've never met is sending you leads *pro bono,* definitely jot a thank you email and let him know how much you appreciate it.

Raising Rates

We briefly discussed raising your rates in a previous chapter. Now let's dive in a bit more.

You may or may not find it difficult from a psychological perspective to raise your rates. Depends on who you are. Or you may feel ethically bound to keep them below a certain figure. While I understand this mentality, it's usually rooted in a lack of understanding about what's good not only for you, the consultant, but also for the client.

Put simply, people value that which they invest in. The greater the investment, the higher the perceived value and the greater the desire to get a return on that investment. Objectively speaking, it may seem absurd that the same results would feel more or less valuable based on how much a client spent to get them. But true objectivity is possible only in theory.

We put things through our psychological sieves even when we think we're being impartial. By charging more, you give your clients the experience of high-value consulting. Obviously, you've got to deliver the goodies; that's your end of the bargain. The client, in turn, is bound to feel a greater sense of accountability, since every bit of time you spend with him is costing him good money.

I've found that this forces clients to refine their thinking about what it is that they want, communicate it to you more clearly and concisely, and respect your time (and their money) more highly overall. Conversely, a client who pays some contractor $17/hr can easily dissociate himself from the project, withdraw his own participation, and leave it to the contractor to figure everything out on his own.

Now you may think “so what's wrong with that?” Why not just do a large *volume* of business but at a lower rate? Sure, you can do that. But it's an unsustainable, stressful, and unintelligent way to run a consulting business if you're a one-man show. It's less stressful and more efficient to have fewer clients but charge them much more money.

This leads us to the idea of **positioning**. If can you become the go-to guy for high-priced consulting in your niche, why not do it? <u>Somebody</u> will fill that role and enjoy the superior financial and creative rewards. So why shouldn't it be you? And a big part of achieving this positioning is constantly raising rates to see just how much you can charge before too many people start balking.

Yes, you may lose a few leads. But if you have enough inquiries coming in, you can afford to do so. Eventually, you will reach a ceiling. That's your signal that the market demand for your service and the price you're asking in return are misaligned. We'll discuss how to break through it in 'pure consulting'. For now, let's move on to a very important topic.

Firing PITAs (Pain in the Ass Clients)

From here on out, the term “PITAs” will refer to clients who constitute a significant **P**ain **i**n **t**he **A**ss to deal with.

You will invariably encounter – invariably, I say! – a small handful of clients who totally sap your mental and emotional energies, who treat you dismissively, don't pay their bills on time, quibble over pennies on invoices, make egregious demands, or otherwise make you question why in the hell you're even putting up with their crap.

Remember, once you're in a position of abundance and choice to the point where you don't *have* to accept any old bit of work just because it's on the table, then firing badly behaved clients won't make you nearly as nervous as when you desperately need the work. I totally get that. So firing PITAs may not be an option until your business is at a more advanced stage. But it's still good to know this stuff.

Over time, you'll get sharper and sharper at identifying nasty clients before you invest too much energy in them. The sooner you spot these nickle-and-dimin' troublemakers, the faster you can cut your ties with them.

Perhaps the number one, telltale sign of a problem client that you should be on the lookout for is a blasé attitude towards your compensation. Some clients feel like paying you is an afterthought and that you're lucky to get *anything* from them. These people are vampires and to do business with them is to dabble in the dark arts.

Professional, respectful clients, on the other hand, go out of their way to make sure you get paid and get paid on time. They appreciate the fact that you always charge for your time and expertise. Unsurprisingly, these clients are almost always former or current consultants themselves.

So firing clients should always be done as tactfully as possible and at a logical cut off point. Further, you want to leave them with the impression that you're simply too busy to take on any other projects with them at the moment. **Not** that you're getting rid of them! (If it can be at all avoided, that is).

Contribute

Value begets value. If you can help the folks in your market become better informed and more inspired; if you can help to solve their pressing problems and contribute somehow to growing their businesses, you will be rewarded. An example:

Sometime around the middle of 2013, I decided to write a free report for folks who are considering starting their own membership site and don't know where to start. I'd often receive emails from people asking me for advice about which software to use, what pitfalls to avoid, best practices, and other preliminary information that a potential membership site owner would need to know before even getting started.

At first I responded to many of these emails *pro bono.* But then it dawned on me that I'd be better off writing a report and directing people to read it. For one, I wouldn't have to answer the same questions *ad infinitum* and two, I'd be able to inform many more people than if I were to respond to emails one-by-one.

So I uploaded the report to my website, added it to my forum signature on the Warrior Forum, and that was that. Soon enough, people were emailing me thanking me for the informative (and free) primer on membership sites. And I got a lot of business from that report as a result.

You don't have to write a report per se. You could make a free video (or a series of them). You could start a blog. You could write a full eBook. Whatever medium you choose, make sure your free offering satisfies all of the following conditions:

It's free

It's short

It's easy to consume

It's in layman's terms (<u>**not**</u> technical, <u>**not**</u> academic, <u>**not**</u> pompous)

It's at least mildly entertaining (it shouldn't be a snoozer!)

It helps to solve a common problem(s)

To elaborate on this last point: depending on how technical your niche is, it may or may not be best to solve a very concrete problem. For example, if your niche is business to business (B2B) sales, the number one problem faced by most of the folks in your market is likely to be cold calling. If, however, your niche is “how to sing,” then there are any number of problems you can solve like “how to stop singing out of tune,” “how to hit high notes,” “how to sing with vibrato,” etc.

The best kind of problem to solve is what I call the “don't know what you don't know” problem. It's when you know, for example, that you want to learn how to speak French. But you have no clue where to start. Should you buy a French dictionary? Well, what's the best one to get? Should you get private lessons? From who? What's the fastest way to learn? The easiest way? The most effective? What materials do I need?

What you know is that you'd like to learn French. What you don't know is what you don't know about making that happen as quickly and enjoyably as possible. And it's way easier to hire somebody who has a deep understanding of these questions to fill you in, rather than try to figure everything out for yourself through trial and error, which could take forever and sabotage all your original enthusiasm!

If you can effectively bridge the gap between a complex topic and the average person trying to get it, you'll have solved a big problem. A person may know, for instance, that a membership site is a great way to earn a recurring income online. But they probably *don't* know how to set one up, what software to use, the best way to attract and retain members, best practices, etc.

And if you're an experienced consultant in that field, you'll have definite, well-informed opinions on these topics, rooted in ample tinkering, trial and error, and the insights that are available only to someone who dabbles in membership sites for a living.

The reason I prefer reports is because you write it once and then it generates qualified leads for your business on autopilot. You may have to update the report occasionally but unlike a blog, it'll only be *occasionally*. This manner of contributing is incredibly profitable for a relatively small investment.

The driving idea is always the same: give value, establish your expertise and authority, get yourself and your offer out in front of a lot of eyeballs. Be creative. You can volunteer to do interviews, go on podcasts, write guest posts on various blogs, participate in additional forums, and much, much more.

Referral Business

As you progress in your consulting career, you'll likely find that more and more of your business will come from referrals. This ties directly back into the section on building relationships and your reputation for getting things done, properly managing expectations, and treating folks professionally.

Referral business is perhaps the most powerful form of business. That is to say, it puts *you* in a powerful position. If an influencer refers a client to you, the client is already predisposed to view you favorably (otherwise, why would the influencer refer you?)

The influencer essentially vouches for you, stakes his reputation on you and this “put your money where your mouth is” kind of endorsement really preps a client to approach you with a certain deference to your time and expertise. In other words, referral clients are overwhelmingly well-behaved, professional, focused, and ready to pay you for your time ***on*** *time.*

This last point is big. Referral clients are much more likely to feel that your hourly rate is fair, as opposed to prospective clients who haven't been given the expectation that they'll pay that much. Further, if the influencer who referred the client to you paid your rates and says you're worth it, then you must be worth it.

The client, then, is in a position of humility to both you and the influencer who referred him. Thus he works *with* you (2 way accountability) and treats you well, lest he fall in the eyes of the influencer. Sounds like a power game, and I suppose it is. But power games or no power games, the fact is that this position on the client's part is conducive to progress. Humility breeds progress and a willingness to learn; egotistic warfare just wastes time and energy.

Finally, make sure to thank the people who refer business to you. Find out their emails and track them down if need be. They've put money in your pocket. They've put food on your table. They've put a roof over your head. You must agree that the very least they deserve is a heartfelt “thank you!”

Expand Across Networks

The Warrior Forum is great but there *are* other ponds to fish in. Especially considering that **big** clients are unlikely to be found there. If you want to land clients with big budgets, big dreams, and big projects, you'll have to start looking for them where they hang out.

One good resource is LinkedIn (http://www.linkedin.com/). Even though my LinkedIn profile just sits there and gets me business from time to time, I admit I haven't fully utilized LinkedIn. Everybody keeps recommending Lewis Howe's course LinkedInfluence (http://529d5hj0tkxazzxapbpdr3y8om.hop.clickbank.net/) but I haven't managed to check it out just yet. Apparently, it's the guide on utilizing LinkedIn groups, making connections, establishing authority, and getting great leads.

LinkedIn is where many real medium and large-sized businesses and decision makers spend time, interact, and find contractors. One of the clients I got through LinkedIn (he reached out to me) turned out to be a disaster. And several other clients were a pleasure to work with. So while people speak highly of LinkedIn as a way into bigger and better projects, I'll be the first to admit that I haven't fully utilized it. So I'll hold off on saying anything much about it, except that it's a good idea to get a basic profile up. At the very least, it will generate some leads passively.

The whole idea of having a thread on the Warrior Forum or a website is that your lead generation happens on autopilot. That's great, and once it happens it's easy to get complacent. But there's always a next level. Once you reach this stage, it's good to start reaching out to potentially bigger clients (in keeping with the idea that one long, high-paying gig is worth more than several equivalent but smaller contracts).

Even if it means cold calling prospects. Don't be afraid to pick up the phone or send that email. It's the tiny barrier between you and potentially, thousands of dollars.

"Pure" Consulting

If your consulting business is based on a somewhat complex set of skills, you may find that over time, more and more of the inquiries you receive won't be for implementation but for guidance/advice/best practices. This is what I call pure consulting.

Pure consulting is based on helping your client to know what he doesn't know. This kind of consulting can be a lot of fun because it's easy money. You are already so competent and knowledgeable in your niche that communicating this information to another takes up very little mental bandwidth. Of course, there's no truly free lunch. You still have to deliver a lot of value. A few ways to do this:

1. **Answer your client's questions** – What I mean is, resist the temptation to 'geek out' and self-indulgently demonstrate your superior understanding of a topic. Instead, answer your client's questions directly, simply, in layman's language, and without going off on unrelated tangents.

2. **Speak slowly and clearly** – Merely speaking is not the same thing as high-level communication. The idea is to impart something and to get off the call, leaving your client with the feeling that he learned something, has a plan of action to move his business forward, and that the experience of consulting with you was pleasant and professional, not patronizing and frustrating.

   Programmers and other technical types are particularly susceptible to masturbatory explanations and egotistical ramblings. Please practice *active empathy* and continually remind yourself to answer the question "what's in it for **him** (the client)?"

   Pure consulting adds a nice supplement to your income at a minimum of distraction from ongoing projects. I typically insist (politely) on a paid consultation after a few email exchanges in which a potential client asks a lot of questions and gets a lot of free answers. Here's an example of how I'd typically word it:

Vic Dorfman <victor.dorfman@gmail.com> Jan 28

to [redacted]

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for the reply.

I understand that you're trying to go in a new direction so it definitely sense to use Wordpress.

Also, I agree that MemberMouse is the better choice for your particular project.

What I could do, if you'd like, is do some research on your behalf and reach out to some of my contacts.

I'd get back to you with an *intelligent* overview of solutions and my opinions on what the most elegant and cost effective approach would be.

I would have to charge for that time since we would be getting into consulting territory. (my rate is $50/hr)

However, you'd have a well-researched, objective idea of the time, costs and technology involved in getting your project going. So, even if you wind up working with somebody else, you'll be informed and they won't be able to rip you off or sell you things you don't need.

We'd be looking at about 2-4 hours of research.

Let me know your thoughts, [redacted]

Talk soon,
Vic

Some clients will balk and reply with something like “let me get this straight, you want to charge me for the call?” To which you can simply reply “yes, that's correct”. There's no need to be haughty about it. But the fact is that nobody has a right to your time and years of expertise without compensating you. It took you *years* to learn this stuff! Remember, it's not only in your best interest but also the client's.

As you saw in the example email (which was a real email), you're best off setting a 1-hour minimum , otherwise you'll wind up doing 20 minutes here, 35 minutes there; all in all too much hassle for too few dollars in your pocket.

If your business lends itself to a lot of pure consulting, then there's no reason you couldn't reposition yourself as a “coach” (as I've done) in your niche and focus purely on the consulting aspect. The only caution is that you should always do some work in the trenches, so to speak, to keep on top of developments and make sure your advice is current and sound.

Hiring Employees & Starting a Firm

Once your consulting business is thriving and the inquiries are pouring in, you may start to feel that you're saying 'no' to an awful lot of potential business. If you wish to work alone and remain a consultant, this is just the price you have to pay for having your choice of clientele.

If the idea of expanding appeals to you, you may want to play with the idea of hiring help. The easiest and lowest-overhead way to do this is to hire help on a contract basis through a 3rd party like oDesk or Freelancer.com. You can farm out just enough of the work to handle the spill-over in business or you can start a proper business. This is a big topic, but the main thing to keep in mind when transitioning from doing things yourself to hiring help is that your role will change quite significantly.

You will essentially step into the role of a project manager. You will have to effectively manage the business of your business, rather than the business of the work. There's a lot of money to be made in this position and it can teach you about several dimensions of business that direct consulting can't. But it is by no means the logical next step up from consulting.

Some folks, myself included, really prefer the simplicity of consulting and make great money doing it. I spent several months expanding my consulting business into a small agency, in which I essentially managed contractors whom I hired via oDesk. It was a disaster from start to finish. Not only is it very difficult to find qualified contractors who know what the hell they're doing, but it's very difficult to allow other people to mess up easy work and drag your name through the mud every time they do so. To me – and this is a purely personal decision – it's better to do things myself and do them *right* than spend the same amount of time just trying to manage some nincompoops who had no intention of giving the job the love it deserves.

That's not to say that good help can't be found. But to me it isn't worth the headaches. If you'd rather deal with people than deal with the actual doing of the work, this may be right up your alley. There's really only one way to find out and that's to try.

Information Product Creation

One of the coolest things about doing business online is that you can sell information products that, once created, cost you almost nothing to sell. By far the most difficult part of creating a good information product is being so immersed in your niche that you intimately know your market's problems and concerns and how to alleviate them.

This is why consulting is the perfect preparation for your first information product. It gives you that insider's insight you need to not only create the product but to market it effectively.

One of the first things I learned when I started trying to make money online was SEO. Specifically, I created niche websites that I monetized with Google AdSense. In the process, I learned how to perform proper keyword research and how to accurately assess the strength of competing websites. This was vital to ascertain whether or not even *trying* to build a website focusing on a given keyword made any sense.

Many people were trying to hop aboard this niche site gravy train. But at the time, most folks were seeing minimal success. I read through countless forum threads and chatted with folks who were struggling to build a niche site business. I saw a common thread. People thought that merely building a website would start making them money on autopilot. They didn't realize that doing keyword research and looking at the strength of their competitors was actually the first step. And if they got this step wrong, their sites were doomed from inception.

The very first listing in any Google search gets a hugely disproportionate amount of all clicks; something like 70%. The second listing gets substantially fewer clicks. The third listing gets even fewer. And below that, the traffic is basically insignificant. So it really only makes sense to pursue keywords that you can realistically rank in the #1 spot. At least, that's the case as far as niche sites go.

This depends entirely on figuring out whether the site sitting in the #1 position is “beatable”. In other words, how easy would it be to outrank the website and would it be worth the money and effort to do so? The point is, most people didn't do this step at all. And others who tried, usually didn't know how to do it correctly.

So it occurred to me that I could record a series of screencast videos demonstrating step-by-step how to properly conduct this keyword research and competition analysis. This would ensure that people only started building websites focusing on keywords that actually had a realistic chance of ranking in Google, getting a decent amount of traffic, and making money.

So that's exactly what I did. That's how my information product “Smart Keyword Research” was born. This course sold very well when I released it on the Warrior Forum as a Warrior Special Offer. And it sold pretty well once the WSO expired and I placed the product on Clickbank.

Unfortunately, I didn't update the course content regularly. Google changes its algorithm so often that it would have been a nightmare to continually update the course. Perhaps that's what I should have done, but I guess I just got lazy and bored with that topic. I reckon if I had stuck with it, I could have made a lot more sales. But I didn't want to constantly be nipping at Google's heels. I wanted to go into a niche that was more 'evergreen.

Anyway, the point is that you, too, can create these additional income streams. And if one of your info products does really well, you might even be able to stop consulting altogether and parlay your success into full-time product creation.

Continuing Education

Regardless of your field of consulting, you have to keep educating yourself and improving your craft. And really, in a sense, a consultant is a craftsman. There's *always* room to learn more about your industry. And there's a **lot** more to learn about business and marketing in general, which is equally important to your success.

Some aspects of business and marketing that deserve at least a basic acquaintance include: copywriting, salesmanship, psychology, outsourcing, personnel management, money management, productivity, joint venture partnerships, business law, tax law, etc. The more experience you acquire and the more education you avail yourself of, the more effective you will be in whatever business venture you undertake, be it consulting, coaching, running your own firm, creating info products, etc.

Bonus Chapter -
Location Independence

I touched cursorily on location independence towards the beginning of this book. People ask about this all the time so I thought you'd get some value if I addressed it in a bit more detail. But first, a few anecdotes!

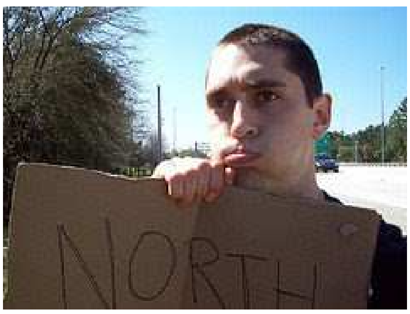
I used to be a professional classical singer. Glamorous, right...? Well, not quite. You see, the classical music world is nice to be a part of as an interested listener. But as a striving professional, it's back-breaking. Imagine that in between zipping all over town from teaching engagements to gigs to lessons, whatever's left of your free time is spent in a tiny practice room with mountains of sheet music to learn and a big-ass cup of coffee which seems to be utterly powerless against a running sleep debt weeks in arrears.

That's the life of most professional classical (and jazz) musicians. Add to that the petty politics between music directors, patrons, and other snobby musicians and you've got a recipe for a full-on emotional, physical, and spiritual melt down.

After two years of heroic effort, I decided to 'retire,' Maybe I wasn't persistent (or masochistic) enough, or maybe I didn't love music enough. But what I knew for sure was that I did love women, I did like having money, and I did like having free time and more than 5 hours of sleep per night.

I decided that I'd love to come back to music one day on my own terms, from a position of plenty of free time and financial independence. If you think you love something, try making it into your only means of paying the bills. You just might start to hate it.

Once I quit the last of my gigs (a job as a church music director), I did something I'd never done before and for no particular reason: I stepped out of my apartment at 6am with a backpack full of bare essentials. I walked up the road to the off ramp to Interstate-95. And I stuck my thumb out.



And thus I hitchhiked my way from Jacksonville, Florida up to Philadelphia, then from Philadelphia to Minneapolis. I won't regale you with the details but it was a pretty epic adventure. And I felt alive again for the first time in years.

Then on a whim, I decided to fly to Costa Rica. And so I gallivanted around Costa Rica and Nicaragua for a few months. Then I read this strange little book called "The 4 4-Hour Workweek (http://amzn.to/1wBaWob)". Maybe you've heard of it...

It details this crazy idea where you create a business that runs largely without you. It's called a "muse". Hmm. That got me thinking. What did I know how to do that most people didn't but some people wanted to learn? Opera singing!

Thus I began to plan my first muse, or information product. I borrowed money from my dad, flew to San Francisco, hired a videographer and pianist, and rented a room at the San Francisco conservatory. A few weeks later, my first info product, *Sing Opera Now*, was for sale on Clickbank.

Now let's be very clear: it didn't instantly make me rich or anything like that. In fact, it didn't do nearly as well as I'd hoped it would (I kind of thought it would make $10k/month starting on day 1 and with zero further effort on my part). But it gave me a taste of what's possible with online business. I still had a **LOT** to learn and I dedicated myself to a new hustle: internet marketing.

And here I am some 4 four years later, living in Thailand, working a few hours a day (usually about 4) and earning a very decent living. Let's not gloss over all of the failures I've had and times I was broke as hell. This is a hustle like any other. But it pays off with increased freedom to travel, do what you want, *be* who you want, etc. Now I sit down to play guitar and sing without a care in the world. And that's the difference I was longing for.

Where Should You Go?

Let's say your consulting business is gaining some traction and you're toying with the idea of skipping town and country for somewhere new and exotic. Where should you go...? Some ideas:

Thailand

Thailand is perhaps the classic (or cliché) locale to which so many online workers abscond. However, there are many good reasons why this is the case. Thailand really checks most of the boxes. It's:

Cheap: If your'e earning in a strong currency (USD, Pound, Euro) and spending in Thai Baht, your money can go a long way.

Weather: The weather in Thailand is warm. There are two distinct seasons: the rainy season and the dry season. Sometime between January and March it actually gets quite cool, providing a nice respite from the heat. Thailand is very diverse geographically. You've got mountains, waterfalls, beaches, tropical islands and not to mention the rest of Southeast Asia –, all just a short, cheap flight away.

If you love tropical islands with pristine beaches, you're there. And if you love cosmopolitan life in a big, bustling city, the Big Mango (Bangkok) has you covered. Best of all, you can travel anywhere within Thailand very cheaply by utilizing the extensive bus and minivan network OR or by flying AirAsia (which happens to fly just about anywhere in Southeast/South Asia for under $100).

Even *within* a city, you'll generally have plenty of public transportation options (especially in Bangkok), or failing that you can simply rent a cheap motorbike and zoom around at your leisure.

Safety: Thailand is a very safe country. As I write this in late January of 2014 in Bangkok, we are in the midst of mass protests in the city. Judging by the news, the outside world must think it's pure chaos here. But I've seen no violence and the so called 'mob' resembles more of a giant picnic than an angry gang.

True: some people have been killed, but these were political deaths that were specifically targeted. As a general citizen moving around the country, you'll feel extremely safe, even as a woman. I've been to Central and South America and let me tell you, that can be pretty freaky. Thailand, on the other hand, is safe just about anywhere, anytime, day or night. [Update: now as I sit and edit this book in late April, the protests have been over for more than a month and things are back to normal.]

Infrastructure: If you work online, you need a good internet connection. Thailand has decent internet (not to be confused with “excellent”) just about anywhere in the kingdom. You can even buy these internet cards that plug into your computer's USB port and get you pay-as-you-go service even in remote spots.

Additionally, Thailand's general infrastructure is good. Roads are generally good, convenience stores are everywhere (especially 7/11), and things are 'available' for the most part. The exceptions are: certain Western commodities like organic foods, supplements, and other items you might be able to easily order on Amazon.com. Thailand doesn't have an Amazon.com. You can have things shipped too you but it takes a few weeks for them to arrive and you may have to pay outrageous customs fees.

The People: Thailand is called the land of smiles. The people are warm and friendly in general. There are exceptions, of course, and there's a side of Thailand “behind the smiles.”. But that's to be expected of any country really. You can't expect everybody to smile and act amazing all the time. But overwhelmingly you'll feel welcomed and treated with respect. If you're a white guy, Thai women will love you. If you're a white gal, Thai men will like you. This country has something for everyone. It isn't a squeaky clean Western locale...

If you learn a little Thai – just a little! – Thais will be absolutely thrilled! You generally hear the same conversation many times, so taking a few language lessons early on in your stay will make your experience that much more immersive.

Thailand provides a near-Western standard of living at a fraction of Western prices. It's warm and safe and convenient. It's really a perfect headquarters for building an online business. When you stop over, make sure to let me know so we can grab a beer together!

Medellín

Pronounced meh-deh-djeen.

Medellín is a city in Northern Colombia (pronounced coh-LOHM-bee-ah NOT coh-LUHM-bee-ah!) It's situated in a green, hilly part of the country. The combination of elevation and geography give Medellín near-perfect weather all year round. In fact, it's called “*la ciudad de la eterna primavera*” – “- tThe city of eternal spring.”

It's warm and pleasant in the daytime and cool in the evenings. I never slept so well in my whole life as in Medellín.

Safety: Medellín is infamous for its almost unbelievable levels of crime in the late 1980s. This crime was mostly urban warfare between drug cartels, linked with the infamous drug lord, Pablo Escobar, who basically controlled the entire country. Since his assassination by the US government in 1993, the city's crime rates have decreased dramatically, though they're still quite high. However, if you stay in one of the better neighborhoods like El Poblado (which has virtually no violent crime), and use common sense, you'll be fine.

However, unlike Thailand, you do have to exercise more caution. The main precautions are to never go anywhere alone at night nor go to unknown places with strangers. Duh. Use common sense and you'll be ok. If you lack common sense, perhaps Thailand is more up your alley. :P

The best, safest and swankiest neighborhood to stay in is El Poblado. You can still find cheap accommodations compared to the West and you'll have anything else you need withing walking distance –. Including great night life at Zona Rosa.

There are, of course, many other places in the world you can go. But you know better than I what floats your boat. So I won't ruin the excitement for you by delving too deep. Let's just say that if you keep at it, the world can be your playground. A lover of mine once said something that blew my mind. “You know...” she said “we discovered this whole Earth. Yet we're afraid to go anywhere.”

Outroduction

Howdy! I'm Vic Dorfman.

:: Working on this very book at the café near my apartment ::

I'm an internet marketer currently living in Thailand. I used to be a professional classical musician in Florida. I was passionate about music and singing, but it's a terrible career. You basically have to spend every free moment practicing. Things like sunshine, exercise, dating, and sleep are commodities for classical musicians. Needless to say, I burned out after 3 three years.

I decided that the best strategy wasn't to live like a pauper and martyr my finances, social life, and health on the cross of “doing what I love.”. Instead, like most folks who get into internet marketing, I realized that the smarter approach was to create some kind of online business that would give me a measure of financial independence, location independence, and free time to do the things I love on my own terms, no strings attached. Perhaps you can relate...

So I started doing this online marketing thing slowly but surely. I began unglamorously, by offering article writing services on the Warrior Forum. That's what started it all. It took me about 3 three years of busting my ass to grow my online services business to the point that I could quit my job and live from my online income alone.

I've learned a lot of lessons over the course of my career (and I'm nowhere near finished screwing up and learning from it). Unfortunately, I learned most of them the hard way. My sincere hope in writing this book, and also my one, overarching piece of advice to you as you read these pages, is that you take what I've given you here and apply it to your business as soon as possible. Use what I've given you. Don't read this stuff for entertainment and then do nothing with it. That would defeat the whole purpose.

Most of us have to learn all the important lessons of business and life the hard way because we don't take others' good advice. That's understandable because how can you know ahead of time whose advice is good and whose advice is a lot of hot air? But truly smart people who become successful quickly take that leap of faith and learn from the mistakes and successes of those who came before them.

My only promise to you it that everything you read in this book is 100% practical. It comes from real experience in the trenches. None of this stuff is theoretical. If you follow the plan I lay out for you; , and if you work smart and work hard, you'll have your own successful online services business sooner rather than later.

How long will it take you? For most people, at least 6 six months to a year. But everybody's situation is different. It may take you less time or more time. One thing is for sure though, nothing beats being your own boss and having the freedom to work from anywhere in the world. Online business is a business just like anything else and demands hustle. *Expect* to work hard to achieve your dream lifestyle.

Now on an encouraging note: once you get some momentum for your business, you can begin scaling things up, investing, creating info products, and basically expanding in terms of income and in terms of how much more free time you'll have to do the things you enjoy that have nothing whatsoever to do with work. That's when things start getting a little less grueling and a lot more fun. You'll also have gained competence and confidence in your skills and you'll enjoy your work more than ever.

It's simple: follow the advice and tips in this book and you'll shave a big-ass chunk off your learning curve. Finally, if you ever happen to be in Thailand, drop me a line. We'll grab a beer. :-)

To your success!

Vic Dorfman - victor.dorfman@gmail.com

Important: Please Read

Thanks so much for picking up a copy of this book! I hope that it's now undeniably clear to you that you can grow a successful online service even if you're starting completely from scratch.

If you haven't already, please take a quick moment to leave your best review of this book on Amazon for me by clicking at HERE (http://www.vicdorfman.com/leave-review).

Finally, if you'd like, email me at victor.dorfman@gmail.com and I'll list your name, service and contact info/website on the "contractors" page (http://www.vicdorfman.com/contractors) of VicDorfman.com.

Thanks!

Vic