

mei-ster:
Suffix denoting
a professional
practitioner

ProfitMeister

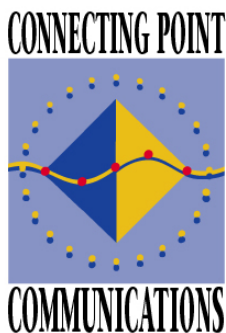
M A X I M I Z I N G Y O U R M A R K E T I N G M O N E Y

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“You boil PR
down to
something
manageable
and actionable
for me.”

Karen Van Cleve

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Ask the Expert-Get Expertise!

In this issue: How to Use Information to Fast Forward Your Projects and Make Effective Special Requests

When change is required, incremental change seems so reasonable and desirable. However, I've never been good at working incrementally. It's all or nothing in my world. Bring it on! It's an attitude that fostered upheaval and created chaos – until I learned the secret of asking the experts.

Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen write in *The Aladdin Factor*: “Most of us don't know how to ask. We have never learned the technology of making an effective request. We have not seen these effective communication skills modeled in our homes, and we were not taught them in our schools or at work.”

The Learning Curve

Ever the salesperson, I thought I understood everything about asking for what I wanted. When I stepped out of a corporate career, I realized those “asks” related to my job and to closing the sale, not to my personal desires. So I dared to experiment with the concept and discovered a need for clarity. Surprisingly enough, I had to practice in order to develop that quality.

Gradually, I began to focus on a major, definite purpose for my “requests” – securing speakers for MARKETLINK, a program I teach for entrepreneurs. I immediately saw increased results. When I heard a presentation that impressed me, I'd talk with the speaker, explaining what I liked and how I wanted my students to experience the same good information. In short order I

added seminars from an intellectual property attorney, a top management consultant, and a tax specialist. MARKETLINK participants received incredible value, and the professionals reported enjoying the experience. I was onto something.

Since my informal ask-the-expert program worked so well in one area, I experimented in other ones. One day I admired a hand-made necklace an artist wore. She called it a treasure necklace and told me that I, too, could make one. I asked a lot of questions; she volunteered to help. It took many hours, but I built a wonderful treasure necklace as a result of this experience. Once again, my expert program had paid dividends.

I added a new component to my experiment: telling others how to ask for what they wanted. A conference committee for the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) wanted to supply bottles of water for seminar participants but had had no money. The conference chair, Leah, had written a letter to a local water company and asked for my input. I advised her to explain the benefit to the company for participating. She said:

“In every training program, our professionals remind participants to take care of themselves. Drinking water is just one suggested care option. As a result of your participation in our conference, our trainers might suggest or supply your water, thanks to their experience.”

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“As you will see in the attached sponsorship brochure, there are a **variety of sponsorship opportunities and many ways to promote your company at this event.**

One option is the donation of 10 cases of water (240 bottles) for conference attendees. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with your organization.”

Leah received a letter granting her the ten cases of water...just what she'd requested.

The moral of the story is to ask. Ask the expert for what you want. There are four steps to my ask process: Be willing to ask for expertise; Prepare for your conversation; Converse confidently; and Follow up

1. Be willing to ask

Motivational guru Zig Ziglar says “You can get what you want if you help enough other people get what they want.” George Shinn offers, “There is no such thing as a self-made man. You will reach your goals only with the help of others.” Once you decide you're willing to ask for expertise, your job is to turn on your personal radar. Simply notice what's happening around you.

For example, I picked up a handout from a luncheon event and called for more information because I thought the offering might make sense for one of my clients. I met the business owner and determined the fit wasn't there. As we talked, I thought of another project and facilitated a connection that resulted in a new collaboration. Had I not gone out on a limb, I might never have made the contact or generated a lead. Sometimes there's nothing to do but ask.

2. Prepare

Your role in preparation cannot be over-emphasized. This involves being clear about what you want to know and specific

in the manner in which you ask. For example, rather than presenting a general question, think specifically. The broad “How can I be creative?” may not inspire expertise like “What creative exercise would you suggest to start my day?”

3. Converse confidently

Your conversation will likely go smoothly as the expert answers questions, makes suggestions and discusses ideas to solve the situation you pose. Respecting an expert's time is key to your success. Be conscious of the time and ready to bring the discussion to a close in a reasonable manner.

Wrapping up your expert discussion could be as simple as saying “Thank you for your time.” If you're producing a newsletter you might offer to send a copy; if you're quoting the expert, offer to let them approve a final document. Your confidence in concluding the meeting contributes to an expert's feeling of satisfaction.

4. Follow up

Because experts have given freely of their time, following up in the form of a personalized, handwritten thank-you note is always appropriate. In addition, do what you said you would do, and keep the expert posted on how you used their information. Some of my most significant experiences occur as a result of follow-up. A simple, “How did that work for you?” can elicit conversation about the experience. Some experts have become friends or clients as a result of our initial contact.

Conclusion

Because we're not completely uncomfortable in the world we know, we endure and muddle through when we might move forward more easily simply by enlisting the help or advice of an expert in the field. So, go ahead. Make the call. Ask the expert!



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