



YOU ARE AN ENTREPRENEUR.

Consultants are industry experts that help organizations and individuals grow. They inspire leadership, find solutions for problems, and share fresh perspectives.

The vast majority of Birkman consultants previously worked internally within organizations or in more traditional roles, and it's often a bit of an adjustment to go from a corporate career to being self-employed as a consultant.

If you are an independent consultant, it's important to remember that you are an entrepreneur. Your skills and knowledge are so valuable that people want to pay you to come into their organization so that they may learn from your expertise.

Being an entrepreneur isn't easy. **You have to juggle many responsibilities, including sales and marketing.** Business development is what makes the difference between consulting as a hobby or building a successful (and lucrative) consulting business.

For some people, self-promotion may feel like a natural skill. For others, it's intimidating or uncomfortable. Regardless, there's always more knowledge to learn and technologies to leverage... and further growth to pursue.

This Business Development Playbook explores the sales and marketing best practices that Birkman independent consultants can use to grow their businesses and impact more lives.



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Section 1: Laying the Groundwork

THINK ABOUT YOUR GOALS

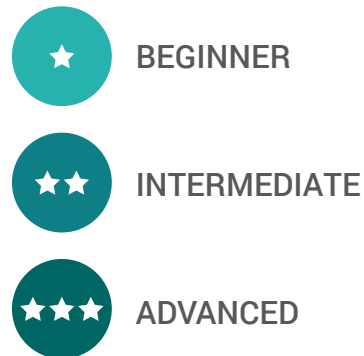
Professionals launch their own consultancy businesses for many reasons. Some want the flexibility of making their own hours, the passion of blazing their own trail, the opportunity to travel, the chance to be a thought leader in the field, or the ability to work part time as a transition into retirement.

To achieve your goals for your consultancy business, you will need to set aside resources for marketing and sales. **The question is – how much time and money makes sense to spend on business development?** The answer depends on your goals for growing your business:

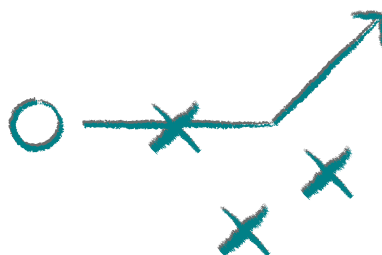
- Are you looking to work 40+ hours per week consulting? Or only part time?
- What areas are you looking to serve? Are you willing and wanting to travel?
- What revenue goals do you have for this year and next year?
- Are you looking to expand your services in the future or always stay niche to a certain specialty?
- Are you looking to focus on a certain industry (e.g. Oil and Gas) or serve a range of organizations?
- Do you wish to add more consultants to your firm?

There's no such thing as perfection with business development. Your web presence can always be more informative, more user-friendly, more visible, or more engaging. You can always be doing more to attract more leads, delight more clients, and drive more referrals.

As you go through this Business Development Playbook, you'll notice that different marketing and sales strategies are marked as:



This designates between marketing and sales basics that every business should have and ways to better optimize your efforts after you are already attracting leads.



DEVELOP BRANDING



Branding is the important first step for marketing your business, and it's fun to contemplate. **This is the strategic side of marketing** – building the foundation for the rest of what you'll be creating in your marketing efforts.

You will want your branding to reflect your specialty/expertise, consulting style, and vision.

Brainstorm about:

- How do others see you? Warm and friendly? Energetic? Analytics-oriented? Looking at your Usual Behaviors in your Birkman report can be helpful to see your consulting style.
- If you could think of one to three words that best describe you and your consulting, what would they be?
- Find inspiration. Look at the personal websites of thought leaders (e.g. Barbara Corcoran, Whitney Johnson, Brené Brown, Daniel Pink, etc.) as well as the websites of businesses you admire. Think about what you like and what you would want to do differently.
- What value do you provide to your clients? What makes you a great choice for them? What do they love about you?

Note: Many consultants struggle because they try to market themselves as jack-of-all-trades consultants instead of specialists in one or two types of consulting.

It's actually much **better to position yourself as a specialist** – that way you can speak proudly about your expertise and tout it as a differentiator.

If you do offer consulting for a variety of issues, you can promote a couple as your specialties, build trust with clients for those services, and expand your services with them once they've seen the value you provide.

Projects for Developing Your Brand

Business Name – Some consultants decide to use their own name (e.g. John Doe and Associates), and some decide to create a name for their consultancy business. There are pros and cons to each path.

Elevator Pitch – If you could boil down your value proposition and differentiators into just a couple of sentences, what would you say? Refine your response... it'll become the basis for your brand.

Color Palette – The color red exudes power or even aggression. Yellow exudes cheerfulness and warmth. Blue exudes peace and professionalism. What colors reflect your brand? <http://www.fastcompany.com/3028378>

Logo – Much like colors, fonts and graphical elements can express modern vs. traditional, energetic vs. calm, etc. If you are working with a graphic designer, they should be able to take your vision about your brand and craft a logo that uses colors, fonts, and graphics to reflect it.

Make sure to get several file formats of your logo:

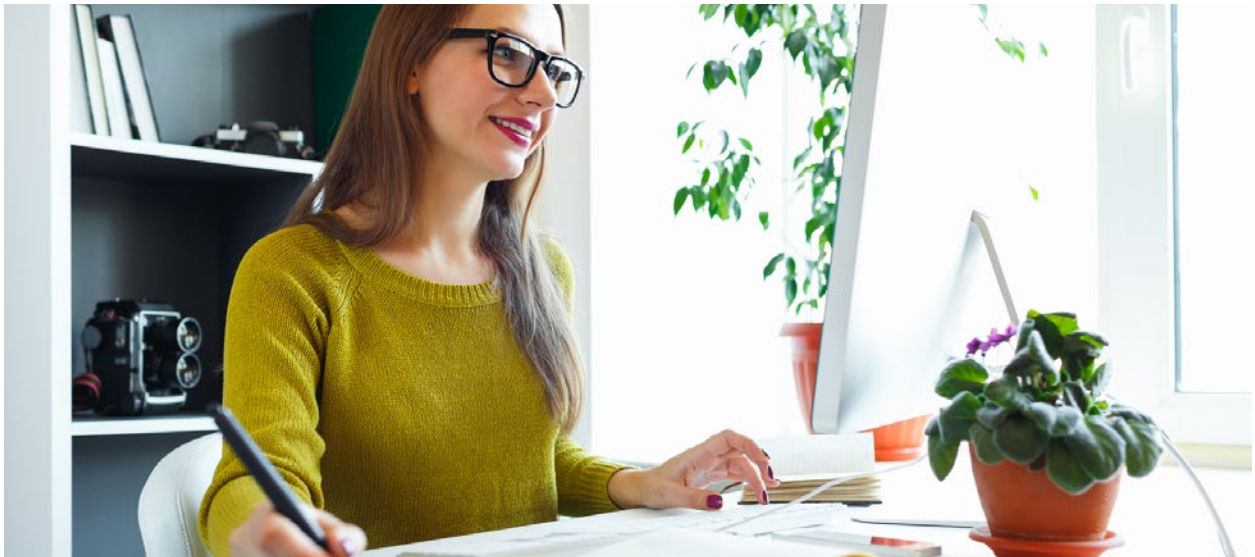
.jpg – Very popular image format. Get in both web friendly and high resolution sizes.

.png – Popular image format as well. Available with a transparent background, which you'll want to have. Get in both web friendly and high resolution sizes.

.ai or .eps – Vector format, so it's scalable to any size and doesn't look pixelated at large sizes. This is essential but often overlooked. You may not be able to use vector formats unless you have graphic design software on your computer, but if you ever work with a graphic designer again in the future, they'll need to have it.

Once you have your branding solidified, keep it consistent. Use the same logo for your business card, email signature, website, social media pages, brochures, and other collateral.





A Note Regarding Graphic Design

To execute quality marketing, you will need a reliable source for graphic design. High quality graphics are important for your website, emails, and social media posts to appear polished.

If you are on a tight budget and have a willingness to learn, you may wish to develop some graphic design skills yourself (yet another example of the many hats an entrepreneur wears!).

Lynda (<https://www.lynda.com/>) is a leading resource for learning creative software skills (including Adobe Creative Cloud, which features Photoshop and Illustrator).

Otherwise, you will want to find a reliable source for graphic design help. Please note that you get what you pay for with graphic design. Working with a professional isn't cheap, but you'll have a professional experience working with them and a quality outcome.

If you work with a freelancer (it seems like everyone has a family member or a friend of a friend who "knows" Photoshop), be aware that your project may not be a priority for them. We've heard countless stories of drama, awkwardness, and delays when small business entrepreneurs rely on friends for professional services.

Professional graphic designers and agencies often charge \$50/hr - \$150/hr. It's very possible to find freelance graphic designers that charge \$30/hr, but they usually charge less because they're less experienced – so keep that in mind.

Here are a few sites for finding freelance graphic designers:

- <https://www.upwork.com/>
- <https://logotournament.com/>



Section 2: **BUILDING A WEBSITE**

WHAT YOU NEED, WHY YOU NEED IT

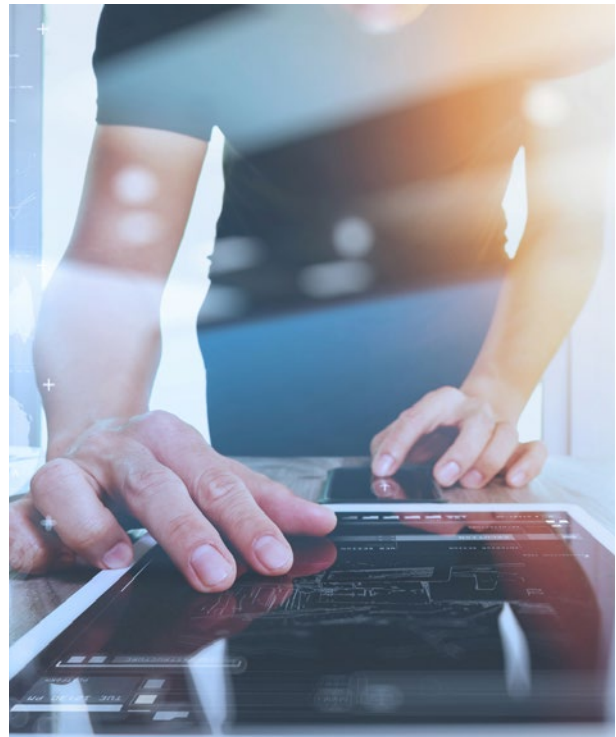
Your website is the face of your business. It's essential for lead generation and establishing yourself as a professional.

To be perceived as a professional in the marketplace, **it is now necessary for any consultant to have a good website.**

Even if you already have an established reputation and do much of your business by word of mouth, don't you want to give clients a good experience from start to finish? Having an informative and polished website gives them confidence in working with you and provides a positive first impression.

But what makes a "good" website for a consultant? **There are a few overall goals for a website. You will want it to:**

- **Rank well** in search engines so that your business is found
- Allow visitors to **easily navigate** the website, no matter what device they use
- Provide informative and **engaging content**
- **Encourage people to reach out** and contact you



A quality website for a consultancy should feature:

- Easy site navigation
- Mobile-responsive design
- Informative page content
- Clear value proposition
- Videos and photos – not just text
- Case studies / clients served
- Written and video testimonials
- Press mentions of the business
- Blog
- Multiple methods for contacting the business
- Website analytics
- Solid SEO (follows Search Engine Optimization best practices)
- Links to social media profiles



STEPS TO BUILD YOUR WEBSITE



STEP 1:

Figure out your keywords and familiarize yourself with SEO.

The goal of SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is to make your website ranked well by Google (and other search engines). You want Google to see your website as relevant to search queries and **show your website highly on their results page.**

Google's ranking algorithm assesses many features of a website when determining how to rank it for a search query, but there's no one secret key to getting your website to rank highly. By creating a website that is easy to use, filled with quality content, and follows core best practices (that make it easier for Google to assess the relevance of your website), you will be well on your way to having solid SEO.

Keywords are the words and phrases that best describe your service – and they are a core underpinning of building out an SEO plan. If someone was looking for a consultant, what would they type into Google to search for one?

To research your keywords, make a list of your services and brainstorm what people might search to find you. Create and organize a long list of variants (e.g. career guidance coaching, coaching for careers, professional career coach). Google processes more than 3.5 billion search queries daily, so if you can think it up, someone is searching for it.

There are many tools out there for researching keywords. Notable ones are:

MOZ
<https://moz.com/products/pro/keyword-explorer>

Yoast
<https://yoast.com/suggest/>

WordStream
<http://www.wordstream.com/keywords>

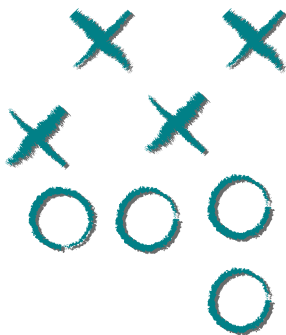
Google Trends (for assessing volume)
<https://www.google.com/trends/>

Most of the quality tools are paid, but you may be able to use demo or free versions for some valuable (albeit limited) data.

Your keyword list (phrases that represent your service and for which you want to rank in Google) is a central part of your SEO (Search Engine Optimization) plan. Your keyword list will be important for many of the steps for building and maintaining your web marketing presence.

Anyone handling their own marketing (or paying an agency) should familiarize themselves with SEO concepts, as it is a core underpinning of web marketing.

Here is a robust and free guide for learning about SEO: <https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo>



STEP 2:

Reserve your domain name.

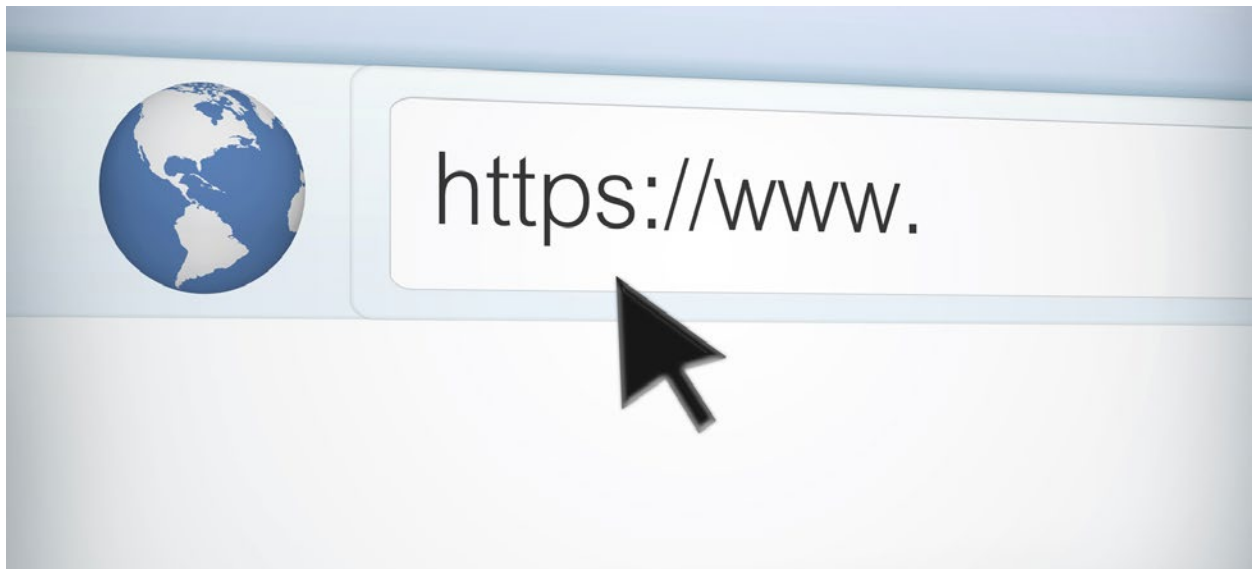
A domain name is the name of your website (e.g. Birkman.com or BirkmanConference.com).

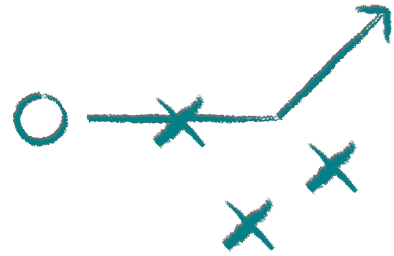
Many people choose to include a keyword (such as “consulting”) in their domain, which can have optimization benefits.

You'll pay a small price per year (usually only about \$10) to reserve your domain, and it's important to remember to set up automatic payments so that it never lapses. GoDaddy is the biggest name for domain registration, and they provide excellent customer service and competitive rates.

Domain name best practices:

- Avoid hyphens (such as best-consultant-ever.com)
- Use the .com suffix (avoid uncommon ones like .tv)
- Keep the name under 15 characters (don't use teambuildingconsultantthatrocks.com)
- Strike a balance between unique vs. keyword-rich





STEP 3:

Decide on your hosting and CMS.

Web hosting stores the files that comprise your website and requires a small monthly fee to maintain. You will want to get quality hosting for your website so it loads quickly for visitors.

CMS stands for Content Management System – which is how you log in to edit and create content on your website. Gone are the days of having to work with a web designer for every small edit to your website. CMS platforms have greatly improved over the years, making it easier for small business owners to have direct control over editing their own websites.

It's becoming more and more common for CMS to be bundled with hosting, which can be nice for managing payments in one place and having the same customer support for both products.

Most small businesses today typically build one of these two types of websites: WordPress or drag-and-drop (such as WIX, SquareSpace, Weebly, etc.).

There are significant differences between WordPress and drag-and-drop websites, and it's important to start down the path with a CMS that makes the most sense for you.

Drag-and-Drop CMS		WordPress CMS	
<i>Build your website quickly and easily.</i>		<i>Build a full-featured website.</i>	
Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated customer support • Safe and secure, with automatic updates • Many themes are mobile-responsive • Easy to get started, no matter your skill level • Fast, simple, and cheap to build a small website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrapped into hosting, monthly fee • Not as customizable • Not as many features may be added • Additional fees as you add on features • Varying support for SEO customization • You likely will want to switch to WordPress as you grow • Not easily scalable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free, open-source • Can use with any hosting service • Many plugins for adding features • Excellent for SEO • Highly customizable styling • Many themes are mobile-responsive • Chosen by marketing professionals • Easily scalable as you add more site pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates needed regularly • May have security issues • No dedicated customer service • Can be intimidating to beginners

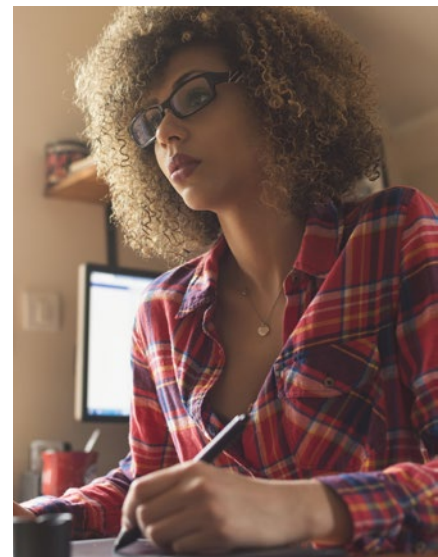
Generally, if you're tech-savvy and have the patience to learn a more robust CMS, go with WordPress. If you're not tech-savvy and have a tight budget, go with a drag-and-drop CMS. If you're not tech-savvy and your budget allows, go with a professional web designer/agency for best results (they'll end up building you a WordPress website that you can still easily edit on your own).



A Note Regarding Web Design

If you use a web agency for anything (SEO, web design, graphic design, etc.), there are a few tips you should keep in mind:

- Get at least three quotes before you commit to starting a new web agency relationship, and look at their portfolio of work. Ask for references. An ideal agency has excellent customer service, a strong portfolio of designing small business websites in your budget, and competitive rates. Don't necessarily go with the cheapest rate if it'll give you more headaches working with them or a lower quality result.
- Just like for graphic design, it's standard for professionals and agencies to charge in the \$75/hr - \$150/hr range for web design work. Of course, you can find people out there to work for \$25/hr - \$50/hr, but there is usually a reason they charge less. Regarding flat rate fees, here's a useful article on the topic: <http://webdesign.about.com/od/beforeyoustartawebsite/a/how-much-should-a-web-design-cost.htm>
- It's not essential to work with someone local to you. What matters is the agency's professionalism, responsiveness, quality, and value.
- One easy way to save on website creation is by writing all of your own content and providing your own photos – you can negotiate a lower price for web design if you plan to input all of the content from the start.
- Make sure you understand exactly what you're purchasing before you sign any contract. If they say they have a monthly SEO plan to increase your rankings, find out exactly what efforts fit into that and estimate a price for which you think each of their efforts is worth. If they have a monthly social media management plan, consider the frequency of posts that makes sense for you and your followers. A good agency will be willing to customize their packages to your needs. **Too many small businesses get ripped off by web agencies that don't build marketing plans that make sense for them, wasting their money on services that don't provide results.** If you're looking at a contract and it mentions terminology that you don't know, do some research and get educated on what you're purchasing before you commit.





STEP 4:

Build a sitemap.

Have a plan for the content on your website before you begin writing. What pages do you want on your website? Which pages are your priorities to create first?

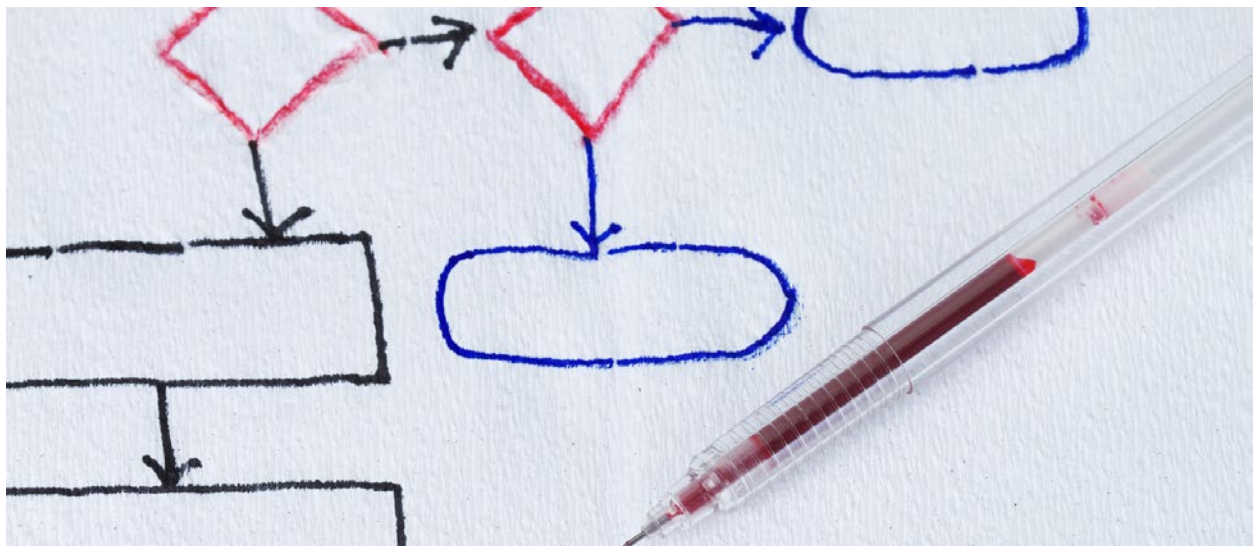
Look to see what other consultants and thought leaders are doing and what makes the most sense for you.

Your website is your first chance to influence and answer questions for potential clients. If there are common questions that prospective clients ask you, try to answer them on the website so that visitors can be informed before they reach out to you.

It's common to have these core pages on a consultancy website:

- Homepage
- Services (include applications and any industries served)
- About the Team (or About Me)
- Case Studies / Testimonials / Video Testimonials / Clients Served
- Blog
- Contact (make it very easy for people to convert)

Think back to your branding goals as you plan out your content writing. Do you primarily focus on executive coaching but also offer team building workshops? The amount of real estate on your website that you dedicate to a certain service or topic will be perceived by your site visitors, so keep that in mind if you're trying to push one service more than others.



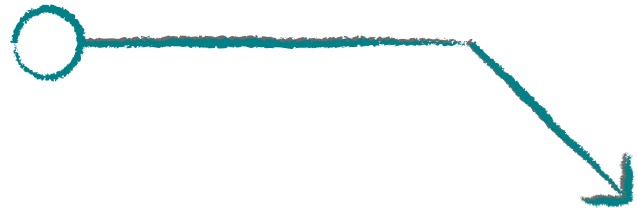
STEP 5:

Write original content with optimization in mind.

Once you start writing content for your website, make sure that you don't copy and paste from other websites but instead write your own content (this is important for SEO as well as for giving visitors a unique site experience).

It's perfectly fine to speak in a conversational and approachable tone on your website. Your website is a reflection of your consulting, so keep your style consistent with your message.

As you write content, use bulleted lists and subheadings to visually break up large spans of text, making it easier for people to read or scan. Also, make sure to **use your keywords strategically throughout your content** to follow SEO best practices for on-page optimization.



STEP 6:

Establish a blog. (And maintain it!)

A blog is simply a list of articles (or “posts”) that you have on your website.

You can think of your blog as your own weekly newspaper editorial column where you share your perspective on your services, recent consulting experiences, trending news, or hot industry topics.

Blogs are great because they automatically chronicle each post based on time and with searchable “tags,” so all of the articles you add to your website are immediately organized for visitors.

It's important to contribute to your blog regularly. If you visit a website and notice that the blog hasn't been updated in several months, it sends out a bad signal about the company's thought leadership – that they aren't staying current.

You can't ever blog too much, but a good goal is to aim for at least one post per week. Blog posts can vary in length – from 200 words to 1000+ words in length – what matters is that the content is engaging, thoughtful, and optimized with your keywords.

One tool that is useful for bloggers of all kinds is creating a blog calendar or weekly routine – planning in advance to blog is the best way to ensure that you publish posts consistently.

Remember – the more content you create, the more searchable you become. Google favors websites with plenty of fresh, high-quality content over ones with static or minimal content.



STEP 7:

Use photos responsibly.

Photos are critical to any website and shouldn't be an afterthought. They break up walls of text on the screen and can convey branding that words can't.

It's important to remember that photos are intellectual property, and just like stealing written content, you can't copy photos off of another person's website (or randomly pull from a Google Image search) without permission.

Your options for responsible use of photos include: purchasing stock images, creating your own photos, using open source photos, or getting permission from the owner of the photo.

When you are choosing the photos to use on your website, it's worth it to put resources into having good imagery. Most consultants have headshots on their websites, so having a current, professionally-taken headshot is a must-have. Consulting is based around personal connections. It's important that the people visiting your site can get to know you – and what better way than with a photo (or video)?

Some good websites for photos:

- <http://www.istockphoto.com/>
- <http://www.thinkstockphotos.com/>
- <https://us.fotolia.com/>
- <https://pixabay.com/>



STEP 8:

Make it easy for them to reach you.

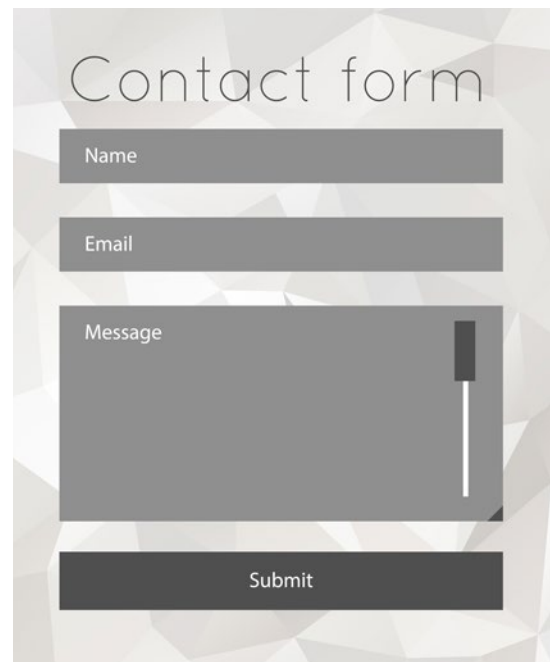
Your website is your best way to generate leads, so make it as easy as possible for people to contact you. Make sure that your website works well on mobile (more than half of web traffic is on mobile devices) and features a click-to-call button.

Give people multiple avenues to contact you – by phone, email, and web form – so that you're meeting their needs instead of the other way around. That said, visually encourage visitors to use your web form by making it the dominate focus on your Contact Us page.

Web forms have a few advantages:

- You can make fields required to ensure you get the data you want
- People can submit them 24/7 (unlike calls, which will just get your voicemail)
- They're easier to track (it's easy to track "conversions" on your website with marketing analytics)
- They can integrate directly with your CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software, saving you from having to do manual data entry

Don't have too many required fields on your web form, as you may make it too cumbersome to complete and actually scare off potential leads. Strike a balance between getting the information you need and not annoying your visitors.



STEP 9:

Promote your website.

Ok, so you've built a killer website for your consultancy – now it's time to drive visitors to it!

It takes extensive time and effort to get a website to rank well, attract traffic, and get leads in the door. However, there are some things you can do to promote awareness of your website and speed up the process:

- Share your blog posts on social media (content syndication).
- List your company in local and industry directories. Look into Yelp (<http://www.yelp.com/>) and MozLocal (<https://moz.com/local>).
- Encourage your clients to link to your website.
- Write guest posts on industry blogs (and have them link back to your site).
- Run targeted search advertising campaigns.
- Publish noteworthy web press releases (make sure to follow best practices – here's a link on the topic: <http://www.brightedge.com/blog/best-practices-seo-pr-together/>).
- Network/participate in online business communities (LinkedIn Groups, etc.).



Business Development Q&A



with

Amelia Smith

Marketing Manager at Birkman
6+ years of Marketing Experience

What blogs do you visit to stay current in your marketing knowledge?

- **HubSpot** – HubSpot popularized the “inbound” mantra that is so popular in the marketing world today. Inbound methodology is popular for a reason – it works well for small businesses, it efficiently uses marketing dollars, anyone can do it, and it gives customers a good experience throughout the buying process. I subscribe to the HubSpot marketing blog and I often search their posts when looking for specific answers to marketing questions.
- **MOZ** – MOZ is all about SEO, so it’s their business to have the latest information on Google ranking factors and best practices for building an optimized web presence. There are always a lot of rumors on SEO blogs, and MOZ separates themselves by posting trustworthy information, not just gossip.
- **Social Media Examiner** – Ignore the goofy graphic design – this website has some meaty content that’s well written and goes in-depth on social media topics and more. Some of the best how-to marketing guides on the web can be found on their blog.

What do you think is the greatest marketing challenge for small businesses?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO), for sure. Achieving top search engine ranking positions is a constant battle. More and more entrepreneurs are understanding the importance of web marketing, and competition is always getting stiffer to be at the top of Google search results. Plus, once you achieve top results for an important keyword, there are other businesses looking to displace your hard-earned ranking and more keywords for which you could rank. It requires ongoing maintenance and awareness of the latest trends and updates to do SEO well.

Finding a reliable and affordable marketing agency to help you with SEO can be difficult. I can’t tell you how many small businesses I’ve seen waste money on overpriced and poorly-designed web marketing packages from agencies. Even if you don’t plan on handling your SEO projects yourself, it’s worthwhile to get knowledgeable on the topic so that you make educated decisions with your resources.

What do you see as low-hanging fruit for consultants starting their marketing efforts?

Always make sure to target your local market and your best specialty first. It’s much easier to rank for “conflict resolution specialist Houston” than it is for “team building.” Expand your targeting (both for additional keywords and regions) slowly after you’ve gained traction marketing closest to home first.

What resources would you recommend for someone looking to get started?

- **The Beginner’s Guide to SEO by MOZ** – It’s a must-read for anyone who will be making web marketing decisions. It’s written for those starting out but is very comprehensive.
- **HootSuite Podium** – It’s a free eLearning course with video tutorials about how to get the most out of social media.
- **GoDaddy Managed Wordpress Hosting** – They make it easy because they provide domains, hosting, and email service all in one place. I’ve consistently had good experiences with building WordPress websites though their managed hosting service, and they have WordPress 101 video tutorials to walk newbies through the ins and outs of using WordPress.
- **Google** – If you have a question about something marketing-related, there’s a 99% chance there’s a blog post or forum out there that will answer your question.



Section 3: SOCIAL MEDIA

THE BASICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA



Your website is the reflection of your business online, and social media is an extension of it.

Proper social media management is essential for any business owner, especially if networking and thought leadership are core to your livelihood.

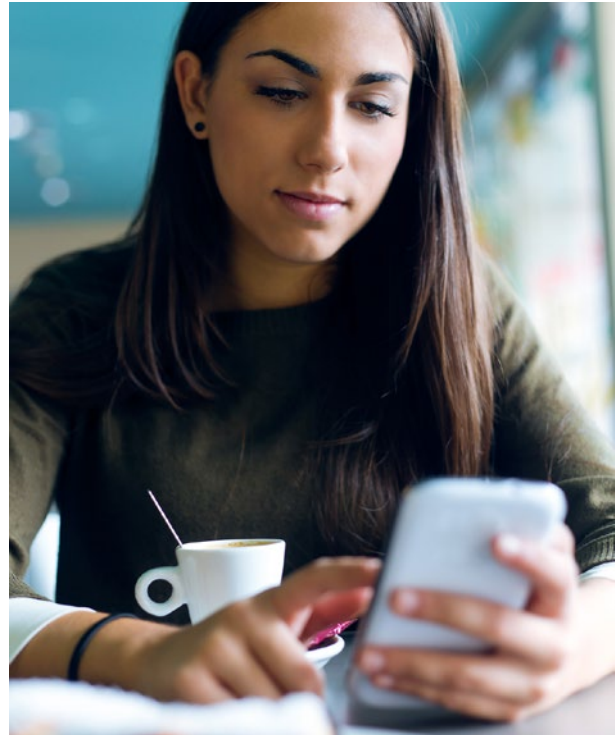
If social media isn't second nature to you, you aren't alone. Managing a social media presence isn't a natural skill – it's learned.

Virtually all thought leaders today use social media actively because there's no better way to spread your message and grow your network.

One core rule of social media: if you're going to do it, do it well. It's better to be active on three social media networks than neglectful on seven networks, so don't spread yourself too thin.

Just like with blogging, it's difficult to be overly active on social media for your business and personal brand. There's also no rule of thumb for the ideal frequency of posts (and it may vary by platform), but if you haven't updated your profile in over a month, it will start looking neglected.

It's important that the content you share improves the lives of the people who follow you – be engaging, stimulating, and thoughtful. Your social media posts need to provide value. Most people, when they have a Facebook friend who over-posts uninteresting information and clutters their feed, will "unfriend" them or block their messages from their feed – you don't want your business page to be the analogue to that annoying friend.



A few tips:

- Don't be too self-promotional. Self-promotional announcements should be a fraction of what you share.
- Be authentic. Not everything has to be perfectly polished all of the time – social media is your chance to express your day-to-day photos, videos, thoughts, etc.
- Respond when people engage with you.
- Use your keywords throughout your profile description – search engines index social media pages, just like they do for your website.



Below is a listing of popular social media channels that you should be familiar with, along with our recommendations for which make the most sense for a Birkman consultant.

Name	What it is	Estimated monthly users	How you could use it
LinkedIn ✓	Professional networking	255 million users	Of all of the social media sites, LinkedIn is best designed for you as a consultant. Establish a brand by sharing insightful content that you find online, plus share your own commentary and blog posts. Get involved in relevant LinkedIn groups, publish yourself on LinkedIn Pulse, and use social selling.
Facebook ✓	General social networking	1.1 billion users	Create a Facebook page for your consultancy business – this is different than the personal profile that you may have. A page is a publicly visible page on Facebook that people “like” rather than “friend.” You can share your blog posts, share commentary on trending business or industry topics, share photos from workshops, and express support for your colleagues and clients. A Facebook page reflects your business to your colleagues and clients – your personal Facebook profile reflects you to your friends.
Twitter ✓	General social networking with posts of under 140 characters (tweets)	310 million users	Follow thought leaders, brands, or other consultants and respond to or share their tweets. Create your own tweets to share content with your followers or dialogue with them.
Google+ ✓	General social networking	120 million users	You’ll probably have minimal engagement on Google+, but you can share the same types of content as on Facebook. The main reason to maintain a Google+ page (again, similar to the difference between a page and profile with Facebook) is because it acts as a directory listing with Google, which is important for lead generation.
YouTube ✓	Video sharing	1 billion users	Share videos of client stories and videos of you expressing opinions on different subjects. Connect with both your existing clients and share more about yourself by embedding YouTube videos on your website.
Instagram	Photo and video sharing mobile app	100 million users	Engage with your clients by taking photos during workshops and sharing them, plus sharing motivational quotes.
Pinterest	Social bookmarking network	250 million users (80% of users are women)	Share motivational quotes and business inspiration.
Snapchat	Mobile app to send photos and videos that disappear after a few seconds	100 million users (71% of users are under age 25)	If your target market isn’t younger millennials or Gen Z, Snapchat is likely not a good platform for you to reach your audience at this time. If your audience is in that age range, you can share a “behind the scenes” glimpse at consulting that is authentic, fun, and relatable.

Data from ebizmba.com, July 2016

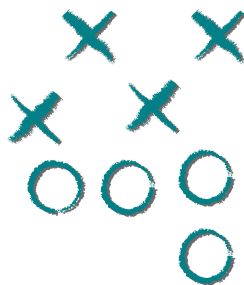
✓ = Highly recommended for independent consultants



USEFUL GUIDES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

We've compiled a list of useful guides for setting up social media pages and profiles:

- **LinkedIn:** <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/linkedin-publishing-beginner-guide#sm.0000tz6lx9vzfe-w7r5z201wtim9d5>
- **LinkedIn:** <http://www.inc.com/bill-carmody/the-4-secrets-of-social-selling-revealed-by-linkedin-s-vp-of-sales-solutions.html>
- **LinkedIn:** <http://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/how-to-market-yourself-with-linkedin-profile-6-steps.html>
- **LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140512154436-13778264-uploading-a-slideshare-to-your-linkedin-profile>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/set-up-facebook-page>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/business/overview>
- **Twitter:** <https://business.twitter.com/en/basics/intro-twitter-for-business.html>
- **Twitter:** <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-to-use-twitter-for-business-and-marketing/>
- **Google+:** <https://blog.hootsuite.com/create-a-google-plus-page/>
- **Google+:** <https://business.google.com/create>
- **YouTube:** <http://www.verticalresponse.com/blog/the-complete-guide-to-using-youtube-for-your-business/>
- **Instagram:** <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/instagram-for-business-tips/>
- **Pinterest:** <https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-use-pinterest-for-business/>
- **Pinterest:** <https://business.pinterest.com/en/pinterest-guides>
- **Snapchat:** <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-to-use-snapchat-for-business/>
- **Snapchat:** <http://marketingland.com/marketers-guide-snapchat-story-feature-117724>



EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

LINKEDIN



Example of Profile vs. Page

CEO OF VAYNERMEDIA | HOST OF THE #ASKGARYVEE SHOW
SERIAL ENTREPRENEUR | INVESTOR

Gary Vaynerchuk
 CEO, Entrepreneur, Investor, Best-Selling Author, Speaker, Jets Fan

Greater New York City Area | Marketing and Advertising

Current: VaynerMedia, VaynerROSE, The #AskGaryVee Show
 Previous: Wine Library TV

Follow | Know Gary? | Connect

591,534 Members

Posts

Published by Gary

The Strategy Behind Snapchat's Memories Update
 July 10, 2016

Nintendo's Pokémon GO Wars With Technology & Instagram
 July 13, 2016

This Generation Will Be Pink: Why Social Media...
 July 11, 2015

Background

Summary

I've built businesses all my life.

In my 20s I joined my family liquor store Wine Library and helped grow it from \$3-\$50 million dollar revenue business in only a few years. During this time, I launched winelibrary.com, one of America's first wine e-commerce sites.

In 2009, I started VaynerMedia along with my brother AJ. We're a social-media-focused digital shop that helps Fortune 500 brands tell their stories and drive their business results. We currently have five locations: New York, London, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chattanooga, TN.

In 2014, I launched VaynerROSE, a \$25 million seed fund that invests in and launches the next generation of world-changing technology companies. In 2015, I launched VaynerCapital. More on that very soon.

In 2014, I also launched The #AskGaryVee Show, a YouTube show and podcast that answers your questions on business, entrepreneurship, marketing, and more.

On his page, he features first-person commentary about his career, examples of his posts to LinkedIn Pulse, a personal headshot, and a custom cover photo.

VM VaynerMedia
 Marketing and Advertising
 501-1000 employees

Home

DO EVERYTHING WITH LOVE

VaynerMedia employees

Gary Vaynerchuk
 CEO

Careers

Interested in VaynerMedia?
 54 jobs posted

Ads By LinkedIn Members

Overhauling Finance
 A guide to finance transformation, from experienced business experts.

Invitation from LinkedIn
 Place ads on LinkedIn. Acquire new customers for your business. Try it now.

LinkedIn Ads with Video
 Use the power of video to reach your target audience on LinkedIn.

Recent Updates

VaynerMedia is hiring: Supervising Producer

Careers at VaynerMedia · See more jobs · 3 days ago

VaynerMedia is hiring: Supervising Producer

The company page features the logo, website, details about the company, updates from the company, and a branding message ("Do everything with love").



LINKEDIN



Examples of LinkedIn Pulse Articles



This photo includes the title on the image to grab attention, plus the post has an intriguing title.

Why Reading This Article Won't Help You Become a Better Entrepreneur

Published on May 25, 2016 | Featured in: [Entrepreneurship](#), [Technology](#)



Gary Vaynerchuk [Influencer](#) [Follow](#)
CEO, Entrepreneur, Investor, Best-Selling Author, Speaker, J...



664



79



106

I love that I have fans. I love that all of you consume my content and learn from me and get inspired. But the truth is, I don't care about *how many* of you are subscribed to my YouTube channel or *how many* of you actually read these articles. That's not the point of why I put out all this content.



Image by Take Aim Photography

This is a nice post because it features a candid photo that shows his personal side and then relates life to business.

Perfecting My Backhand Is a Lot Like My Business Strategy

Published on January 11, 2016 | Featured in: [Careers: Getting Started](#), [Careers: The Next Level](#), [Leadership & Management](#), [What Inspires Me](#)



Richard Branson [Influencer](#) [Follow](#)
Founder at Virgin Group



4,829



278



634

In this series, professionals describe the skills they're building this year. Read the stories [here](#), then write your own (use [#SkillsGap](#) in the body of your post).

My advice in these LinkedIn columns tends to focus, understandably, on my business



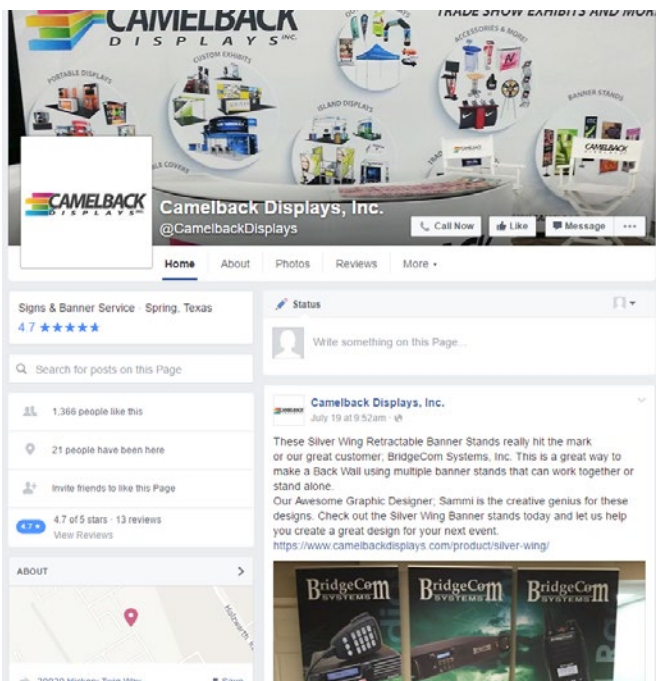
FACEBOOK

Examples of Facebook Pages



This Facebook page includes:

- A slogan in the cover photo
- A post promoting a limited-time discount
- Contact information



This Facebook page includes:

- Examples of their work
- Contact information
- Reviews from clients
- Map to their location



FACEBOOK

Examples of Facebook Posts



This Facebook post shares a link to an interesting article and her commentary on it.



This Facebook post is simply a photo – easily created in Photoshop or other editing software – of a motivational quote and a photo of her.



TWITTER

Examples of Tweets



Here, she retweeted a tweet from another person on Twitter.



This is her sharing a candid photo from a speaking engagement.

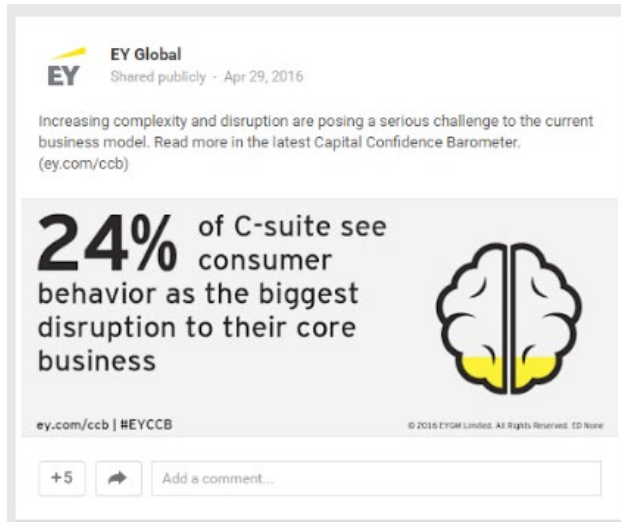


This is an example of her sharing an article with her Twitter followers.

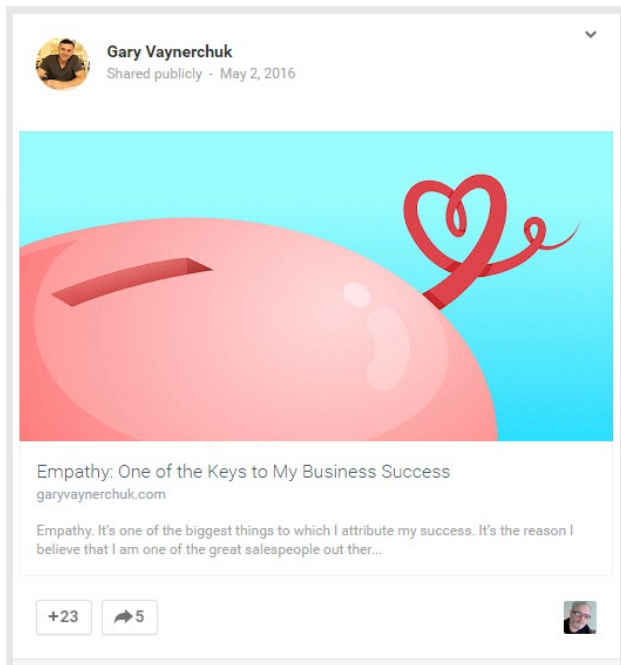


GOOGLE+

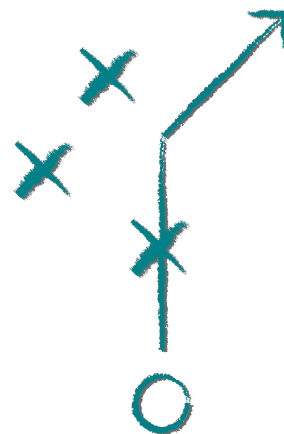
Examples of Google+ Posts



This post features a photo with a business statistic on it, along with commentary that promotes some of their own content.



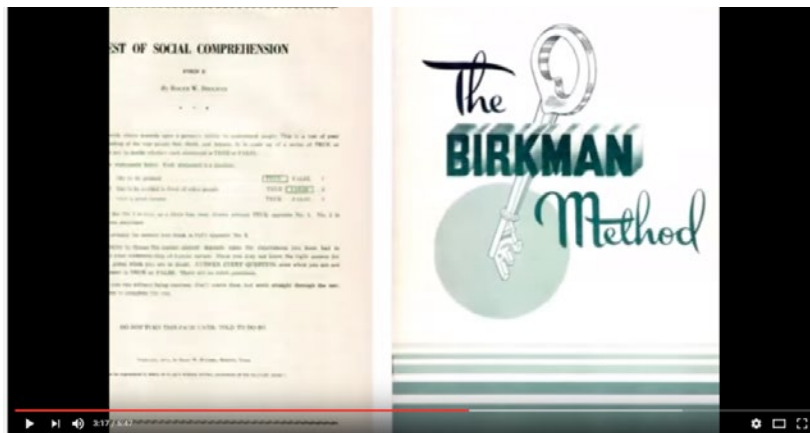
This is an example of content syndication – him sharing one of his own blog posts via social media to push it out to more viewers.



YOUTUBE

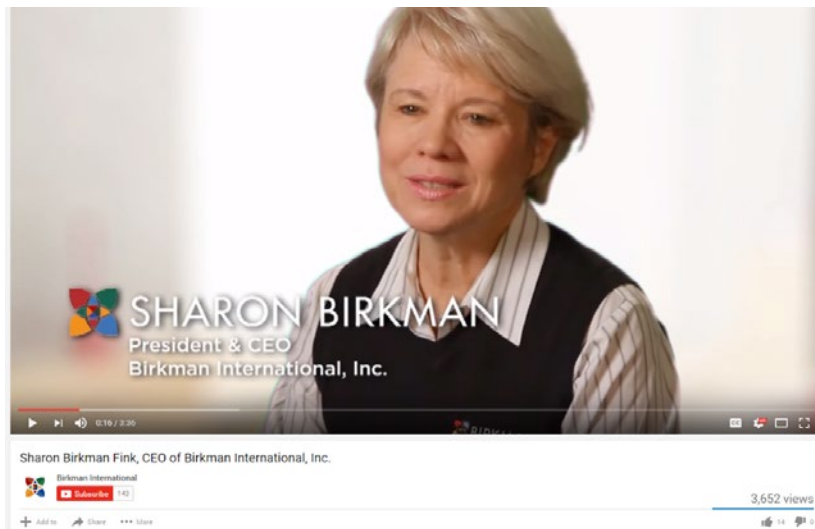


Examples of YouTube videos



A Conversation with Dr. Roger Birkman

Even if you just have mostly still images to show, you can piece together a nice video with stock audio and your voiceover in iMovie or other similar software.



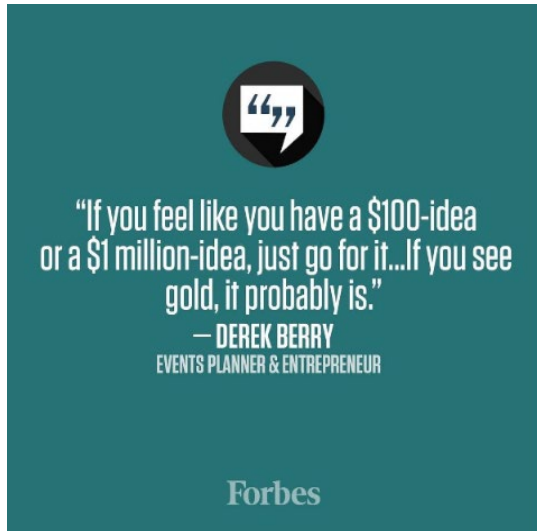
Smartphone cameras and laptop built-in cameras have gotten so advanced that you can take quality footage of you speaking to your viewers. Small details such as minimizing background noise and making sure the camera is stabilized make a big impact on the video.



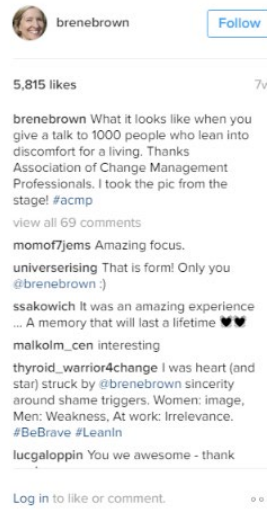
INSTAGRAM



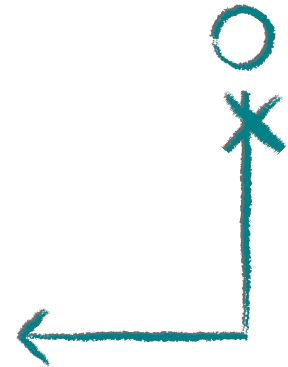
Examples of Instagram Posts



Motivational quotes are very popular on Instagram, even amongst business users.



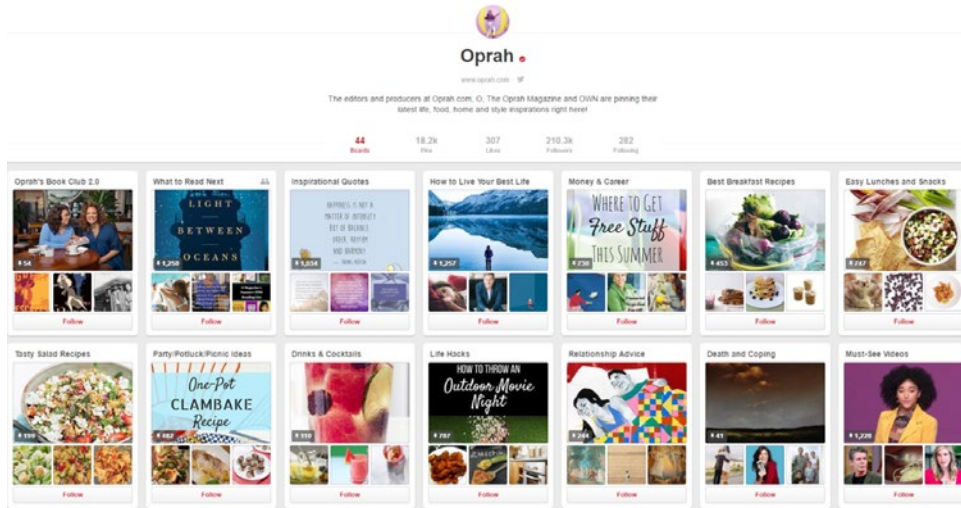
Instagram is photo-centric, so snap photos with your phone and share them with your followers.



PINTEREST

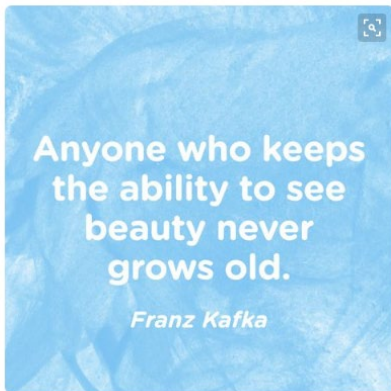


Examples of Pinterest Boards and Pins



Save Like Send ... 186 22

Oprah.com
Quotes About Aging - Franz Kafka



Article from Oprah [Read it](#)

Get more Pins from Oprah [Follow](#)

Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old.

Comments

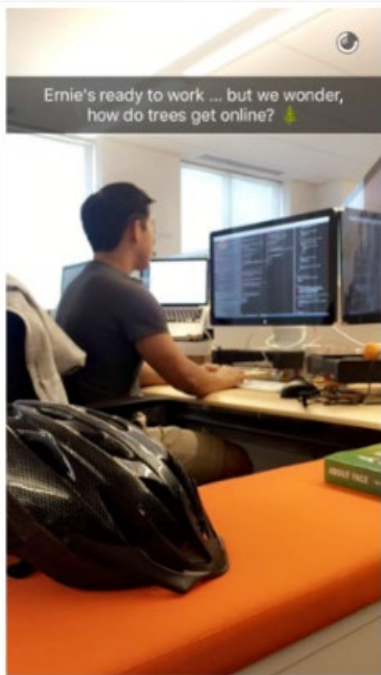
Oprah saved to **Inspirational Quotes**
"Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old."
— Franz Kafka

Pinterest is a great place to share things that you find inspiring – whether it be books, motivational quotes, insightful blog posts, or anything else.



SNAPCHAT

Examples of Snaps



Snapchat is all about sharing the moment. An increasing number of businesses use it to share humor and a behind-the-scenes glimpse at what they do.



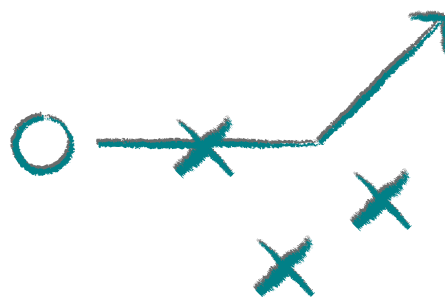
LINKEDIN: YOUR PRIMARY FOCUS



As the leader in professional networking, LinkedIn should be the focus of most of your efforts as a consultant.

Here are some LinkedIn-specific tips:

1. Start with a professional, current headshot and cover photo. Avoid using a profile photo that is in black and white or uses a filter. Use a photo taken within the past two or three years, so that it accurately reflects you. Make sure that the clothing that you're wearing in the photo is something that you'd wear to meet with a client (this may vary depending on the location you serve, the type of consulting you provide, or the type of client you serve).
2. Use your keywords strategically in your profile description, but don't have it sound canned. This is your opportunity to express your enthusiasm and voice to potential clients. Avoid cluttering your profile with overused business buzzwords ('motivated,' 'passionate,' 'strategic').
3. Incorporate a SlideShare to highlight your deliverables and benefits to clients. LinkedIn now owns SlideShare, so it's easy to embed a presentation into your profile.
4. Focus your entries on LinkedIn on the value you provide in order to have it sound less like a resume. Don't elaborate on past jobs that aren't relevant to the work you do now.
5. Feature testimonials from past clients on your LinkedIn profile – it's okay to ask for them!



SOCIAL SELLING



Social selling means using social media to connect with prospective clients. Many of the ways to use social media for your business fall into the social selling category. It can be a great way to exhibit your thought leadership, set yourself apart, increase your visibility, and establish trust.

Here are a few “social selling” actions you can take on social media:

- Join LinkedIn groups, engage in discussions, and answer questions on topics that you’re knowledgeable about.
- Comment on or like content that a prospect shared.
- Monitor Twitter (using a tool like HootSuite is helpful) for conversations about your area of expertise and contribute meaningfully.

To be successful with social selling, it’s helpful to be aware of the difference between “inbound” and “outbound” sales and marketing approaches. With inbound marketing, the lead comes to you when they have a need. With outbound marketing, you present yourself to a prospect, hoping that they have a need for your services. Inbound marketing gives clients a better experience – they aren’t being bombarded with people trying to sell to them. Instead, they’re able to quickly find a solution for their needs when the need arises.

You can take an inbound or an outbound approach to social selling. By creating a strong brand for yourself through optimizing your profiles, actively contributing to conversations, and sharing interesting content, you’re putting yourself out there and getting the awareness of potential clients by openly sharing value with them – this is the inbound approach to social selling. If, instead, you cold tweeted or messaged prospects, that’s more of an outbound approach (comparable to cold calling) that can potentially irritate them (make sure to use this approach strategically).

To have the best success when reaching out to prospects via LinkedIn:

- Start with your existing network. It’s easier and more natural to connect to people if you share a mutual connection than if they are complete strangers.
- Customize your communications – nobody likes to feel like your message to them is the equivalent to a telemarketer recording. Discuss something you noticed on their profile or recent news about their company and sound authentic.
- When reaching out to individuals, Twitter and LinkedIn are more socially acceptable for professionals than Facebook or other social media networks.

Note: LinkedIn has a premium service called Sales Navigator that gives you additional InMail messages each month and makes recommendations on who you should connect with based on your target client demographics. They offer a free trial, so you can see if it works for you before paying anything.



Business Development Q&A



with

Michael Wilk

Vice President of Operations and Product at Birkman
20+ years of Marketing Experience

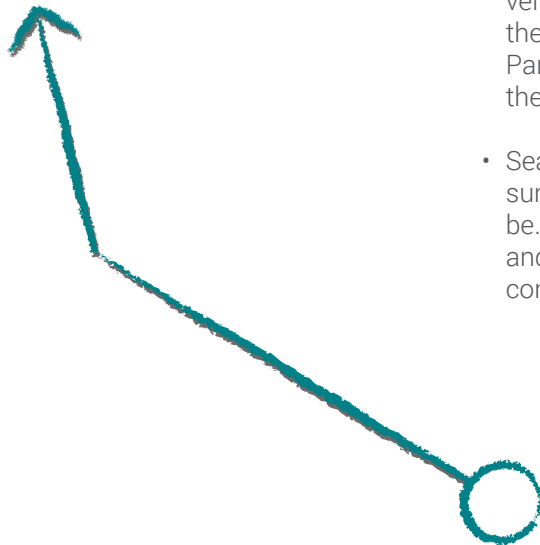
There are so many social media sites, where do I begin?

You have to understand who you are selling to (human resources and organizational development folks). So, you start with LinkedIn and you perfect it before you go anywhere else. This is the best place to reach your target market in the B2B landscape.

Once you have mastered all the free features of LinkedIn, you can then look into their fee-based opportunities as well as branching out to Google+, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. If you are doing all of these right, you won't have to do anything else when it comes to social media.

What should I do if I don't know how to market myself and I do not have the money to use outside resources?

- You market and sell yourself every day, from how you dress to what hair style you have to what cologne or perfume you are wearing. As an Independent Consultant you are your brand and it doesn't take a lot of money to establish and market that brand.
- Start online. More than 60% of all B2B buying decisions are made before the buyer has even spoken to a salesperson...meaning, they Googled and they decided. If you are not part of that Google search, you are already losing out.
- How do you get to be a part of that Google search? There are several low-cost website vendors who can help you design and write the content necessary to become relevant. Participate in LinkedIn as Google includes it in their search.
- Search for yourself and see what you find. Make sure it matches what you want your brand to be. People will collect information about you and form opinions without you there to provide context.



Section 4: **ADVERTISING**

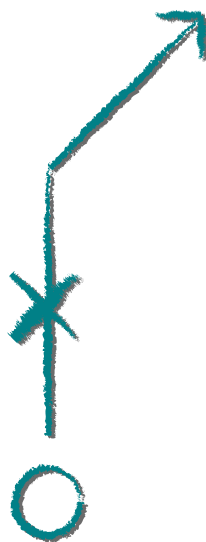
AFTER BUILDING A SOLID WEB PRESENCE

You should only look into spending money on advertising once you've established a strong website and social media presence – otherwise you're paying for visibility without exhausting free or low-cost tools first.

On the topic of advertising, your immediate thought may be of television commercials, radio ads, and billboards.

Unlike for the Coca-Colas and AT&Ts of the world, not every person out there is a potential client for your consultancy business – so using the “shotgun approach” of marketing to the masses doesn't make sense. It's too expensive for small businesses, and you're expressing your messaging to people who aren't relevant to your business.

Fortunately, the digital age empowers marketers and small business owners more than ever. **You can target your ads just to people that are actively looking for consulting services in your local area.** However, advertising can get expensive quickly, so it's important to be careful and deliberate in any advertising efforts.



PAY-PER-CLICK SEARCH ADVERTISING



Search “Pay-Per-Click” (PPC) advertising is a way to have an advertisement about your business show up alongside the natural search results that Google, Bing, or Yahoo! produce.

This is the most targeted type of advertising possible, as **your ads will only be shown to people that are actively searching for your service.** The best part is that you only pay when your ads work (someone clicks on the ad and goes to your website).

SEO can help your website rank highly in natural search results, but it can take time and lots of hard work for your website to rank at #1. **PPC ads allow you to “cut in line” by paying the search engine to be shown at the top of the page.**

There are two PPC platforms to be aware of: Google AdWords (ads show on Google and its search partners, such as Ask.com) and BingAds (ads show on Bing and Yahoo!).

If you built your website today, you could rank at the top of Google search results tomorrow by using Google AdWords, whereas it may take months or even years to rank at the top of natural search results with SEO. That said, SEO is an important investment to continually make in your marketing, since once you achieve top natural rankings, all clicks to your website are completely free (unlike PPC, which will continue to charge you).

There are countless resources online for learning about PPC advertising, and here are a few that we suggest:

- <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/google-adwords-ppc#sm.0000tz6lx9vzfew7r5z201wtim9d5>
- <http://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2013/07/30/ppc-guide-for-beginners-1>
- <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/6154846>

There are a few factors that affect the expense of running a PPC campaign:

- The relevance of your website to the keywords in your campaign (If your website isn't relevant to your keywords, Google will charge you more.)
- The amount of competition from competitors for your keywords (More competition means higher cost-per-click.)
- The reach of your campaign (Are you targeting a smaller market with fewer people searching or a larger market with lots of people searching? More searches mean more traffic and a higher total cost.)
- The breadth of your campaign (More keywords that you wish to target means more clicks and a higher total cost.)
- How high on the page you want your ad shown (Search PPC campaigns are technically an auction, and you have to bid more aggressively to have your ad shown in the highest position.)

Note: It can be a very expensive mistake to jump into running your own PPC campaigns without proper knowledge of Google AdWords or Bing Ads. It's a very common mistake to include overly broad keywords or target too large of a geographic area – wasting money advertising to people who aren't your true target audience.

Either be very thorough in learning PPC best practices or hire a professional to help you get set up. Once your campaign is running well, you'll want to monitor it regularly, but it most likely won't need major adjustments on an ongoing basis.



DISPLAY ADVERTISING



Search advertising is great because it targets people the moment their need arises. Display advertising is one step less targeted – it's a way for you to target your ads to your key audience, but **it's not reaching them when they're actively researching**. If you've ever seen a banner ad on a website, on Facebook, or on LinkedIn – that's display advertising. Display ads are like billboards for the web – they reach you when you're passively looking at other content, creating awareness and potentially capturing some clicks. **Display advertising is an "outbound" marketing approach.**

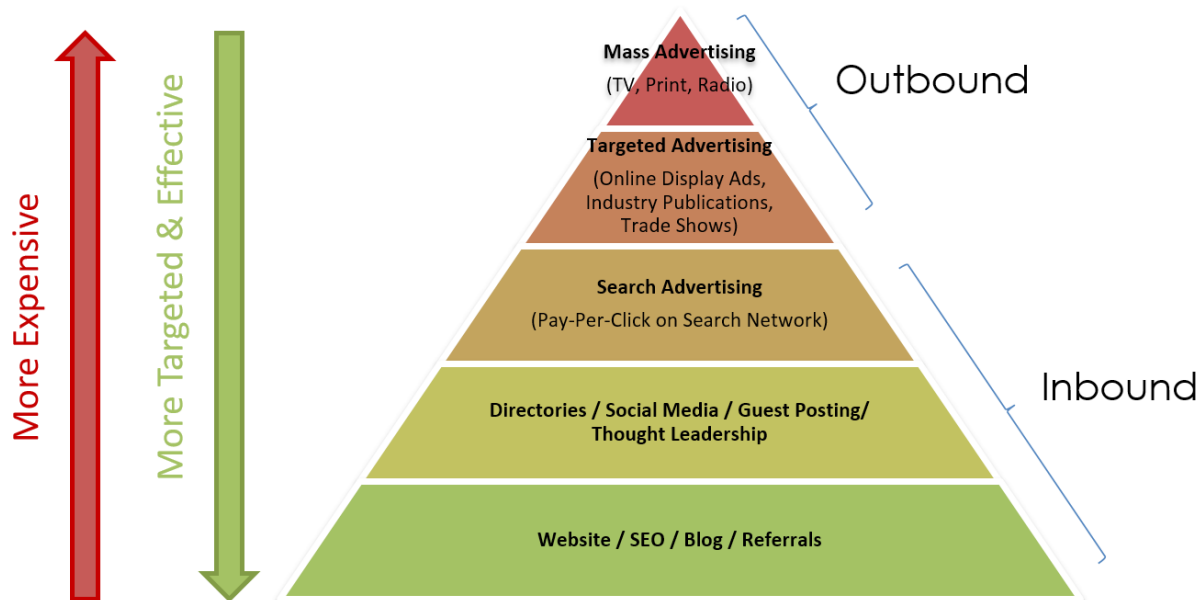
The problem with display advertising for business consultants is that you have a very small niche, and the vast majority of people out there aren't in your target market. For that reason, Google Display Network and Facebook ads probably don't give you enough targeting options or the right venue to reach your audience.

LinkedIn ads do give you highly customizable options for targeting and is probably the best display ad platform for independent business consultants. Here is a list of all of the targeting options you have: <https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/answer/722>

Here are some guides for getting started with LinkedIn ads:

- <https://blog.kissmetrics.com/guide-to-linkedin-ads1/>
- <http://marketingland.com/linkedin-paid-ads-a-beginners-guide-69920>

Again, because display ads are less targeted than search PPC, SEO, and social selling, there is likely going to be a lower rate of return than inbound marketing efforts. That said, it can be a nice way to augment other well-performing web marketing efforts.



Section 5: **MANAGING LEADS**

AFTER THEY'VE CONVERTED

Great! You now have leads coming in! Now what?

There are three things you need:

1. **CRM (Customer Relationship Management) Software** – a way to manage, sort, and update your records about your leads and customers
2. **Web Analytics** – ways to measure your website traffic, lead conversions, advertising spend, and other important metrics
3. **Email Marketing** – a way to keep the relationship growing stronger with your leads and clients



CRM SOFTWARE



It is extremely important to track all activity in a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) tool. When managing multiple opportunities, it becomes challenging to remember the key decision makers, pain points, contact information, action items, and activity history/discussions. A CRM can help you identify who to contact, when to contact them, the subject of the next discussion, and opportunity information.

Using a spreadsheet is a simple way to keep track of a few leads, but **as you develop more accounts, gain more leads, and increase the sophistication of your business processes, a spreadsheet will not give you the functionality you need as you scale.**

Salesforce (<https://www.salesforce.com/>) is the biggest name in CRM solutions. They have some lower-priced options for small businesses, and it will scale well with your business. However, many people feel overwhelmed by Salesforce if it's their first experience with a CRM. The advantage that it is highly configurable can actually be a disadvantage, making it feel confusing and daunting.

Some popular low-cost CRMs include:

- **Insightly:** <https://www.insightly.com/>
- **HubSpot CRM:** <http://www.hubspot.com/products/crm>
- **Zoho:** <https://www.zoho.com/crm/?src=zoho>

Most CRMs allow you to do a free trial – test out the ones that interest you and see which feels the most intuitive and capable of handling your needs. Since you'll be spending a lot of time in your CRM, you should like it!

One thing to look for as you test out a CRM is its integration abilities. Salesforce has the ability to integrate with marketing and accounting software to make it easier for you to run your business seamlessly. Many of the lesser-known CRMs are growing their capabilities in this area as well.



ANALYTICS



If you have “yellow” Birkman Interests or Usual Behavior, you may love using marketing and sales analytics. If not, setting up and monitoring analytics is a chance to grow and push yourself.

Analytics are a key part of any successful business – **sometimes we all need to step back, assess our efforts, and realign to our goals.**

Marketing analytics empower you to see where your leads are coming from, how much you’re spending to acquire a lead, and how they interact with your website.

At a very minimum, you should set up Google Analytics for your website. It’s easy to do, it’s free, and it immediately starts tracking valuable engagement data. “Drag and Drop” websites usually have an easy place for you to input a Google Analytics ID number, and there are several WordPress plugins that can give you the same functionality.

With Google Analytics you can track:

- Which external websites are directing traffic to your website
- How much time the average visitor spends on your site
- Which pages are the most visited on your website
- Which pages are pulling in the most organic search traffic
- The countries, languages, and other demographics of your site visitors
- What times of the week your website is most visited
- The speed at which your site loads for visitors
- What led to conversions or other goals achieved on your website

Google Analytics metrics let you know the strengths and weaknesses of your web marketing efforts. You can see what has been most successful for you (what efforts you should try to replicate and expand) and what has not helped as much (efforts either to be abandoned or revamped).

Analytics are only useful if you spend time reviewing them and letting them impact your decision making. **Set aside time each month to review** your performance, note your achievements, assess your challenges, and plan for the next 30 days.

Advanced Analytics



If you want to take your analytics insights a step further, look into call tracking software, A/B testing, and website engagement heat maps.

Regarding sales analytics, your CRM should also feature reporting options to help you understand your sales funnel and start making predictions based on close rates.

More and more sales and marketing software programs are adding a new feature called ‘predictive lead scoring’ that allows you to prioritize managing your leads based on how they’ve engaged with your website and certain criteria based on company size, title, etc. Sales and marketing analytics are constantly changing, and the technology is getting more advanced each year to help you focus your time more efficiently on the business development efforts that most attract revenue.



EMAIL MARKETING



Once you attract an inbound lead, you'll respond to their inquiry and begin a sales conversation. But, as a small business owner, you may feel overwhelmed at times trying to maintain contact with all of your leads and clients.

Email marketing is an easy, affordable, and efficient way to maintain a relationship with many of your contacts at once.

MailChimp and Constant Contact are the biggest names in email marketing. The pricing is often based on the volume of emails you send each month, so, for small consulting businesses, email marketing is a low-priced way to make a big impact.

In your marketing emails, the goal is to engage with your contacts – provide value for them with your content, share case studies and client stories, and ask them questions to reignite the conversation. As with social media and blogging, there's no perfect frequency for sending out emails.

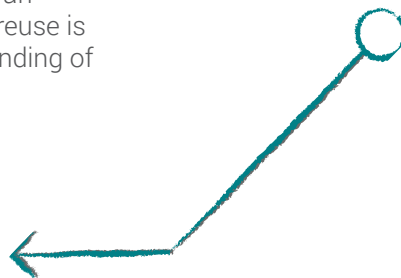
What's important is that the content isn't too self-promotional and shares value with the recipients.

If you search online for beautiful email marketing campaigns, there are endless examples of creative and visually stunning emails. As a consultant, you'll want your emails to be professional without looking boring (such as just a wall of text). Creating an email template with your logo that you can reuse is the best way to have consistency to the branding of your emails.



Marketing Automation

If you're ready to "jump in the deep end" with your marketing, you may wish to research marketing automation software, such as HubSpot or Pardot, which combines the power of email marketing with additional features, such as social media management and more.



Section 6: **WORKING WITH CLIENTS**

SENDING PROPOSALS



Reflect on your own Birkman profile to know which projects you should do yourself and which you may want to hire out (such as preparing a proposal or issuing invoices) – this is key in closing the sale and getting paid.

Many consultants procrastinate on the administrative side of sales because they enjoy the presentation and coaching part of their jobs. If this is the case for you, you may wish to hire an assistant who can use your template for your proposals and invoicing.

The proposal should include:

- The scope of work
- Date and hours involved
- Agenda with short descriptions
- Cost estimate

Keep proposals simple and straightforward, with no more than one or two pages. Make sure to send the proposal by the date and time you agreed.

THE SALES CONVERSATION



After you send a proposal, contact the client to review and discuss the details so you can gauge their level of understanding and response.

Depending on their goals, you can create a plan of action for a phased learning approach with milestones. This may help your client see the benefit of having you work with their group on more than one occasion for expanded knowledge.

The greatest struggle or challenge for those involved in sales is not fully qualifying the buyer and entering into a sales cycle when there isn't really a true cycle. Precious time is spent with “happy ears” or thinking there is a deal when there never was one to begin with. This prevents the sales person from spending time on real opportunities because they are hanging onto “pipeline bloat” and opportunities that will never come to fruition, rather than spending time on projects that are a true fit and will most likely close.

The ability to have walk away presence is key for anyone in a sales role. When there is not a fit between the product and/or service and the potential project or client, it is best to walk away to save time and effort for opportunities where there is a fit. **Being able to admit that there is not a fit and walk away is a true benefit for both the client and your own organization.**



PREPARE WELL FOR YOUR SESSION



Once you are hired, **make sure to call the client prior to the event to review their expectations and goals – as well as discuss logistics for the event.** This includes the details such as internet access, microphone, remotes, provided materials, lunch, media assistance, and anything else that needs to be discussed prior to the event to guarantee a smoothly-run session.

Agree with the client on the end goal and make sure that your plans are catered to their objectives for the session.

ASK FOR FEEDBACK AND REFERRALS

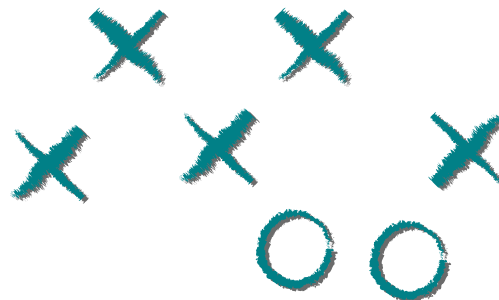


Once you complete a session, ask clients for their comments on their experience working with you. **Gather feedback from the group** (not just the key stakeholder), so that you get a well-rounded perspective of your performance and see how you can better adapt to the organization in future meetings.

Since you will already know the group, **check back with them at a later date to do a follow-up session** on a different topic or deeper exploration of the previous discussion.

Also **ask for referrals to conduct other workshop sessions** with other departments or groups within that organization. On occasion, send social media or email notifications to the key stakeholder with short insights that reinforce the session. This is another way to keep the learning alive and continuous.

Following an event, **always send a follow up appreciation note** with a few key insights of their group from your perspective.



REFERRALS FROM BIRKMAN

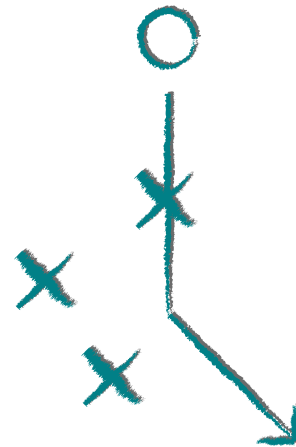


Birkman occasionally gets requests from organizations looking to hire independent consultants.

To be considered, please contact your Birkman account manager and provide us with background on your consultancy business – this will help us make the appropriate match when we receive requests.

Please share details on your:

- Expertise in a given area of work (such as team building or leadership coaching)
- Types of organizations with which you prefer to work (such as corporate, non-profit, or a particular industry)
- Willingness to travel (such as “will travel within the state of Texas, but not outside of the state”)
- Restrictions for days of the week, hours, one-day minimums, etc.
- Any other details that may be helpful (such as languages spoken, etc.)



Business Development Q&A



with
Diana Sheley

Vice President of Business Development at Birkman
20+ years of Sales and Marketing Experience



What tips can you provide for sales conversations?

- Don't just answer a question when asked, but **seek to understand why the question is being asked** and carefully answer the question with a question.

Answering too quickly can lose you the deal because you don't know what your client is looking to solve and presumptions are dangerous. For example, "That is an interesting question. Why do you ask?" If the prospect asks the same question twice rather than clarifying, go ahead and answer to avoid frustrating your contact. Otherwise, answer the question with a question to seek to understand and take the conversation to a level deeper. Another example (Buyer) "Can you get this delivered in two weeks?" (Sales person) "Help me understand what happens in two weeks?"

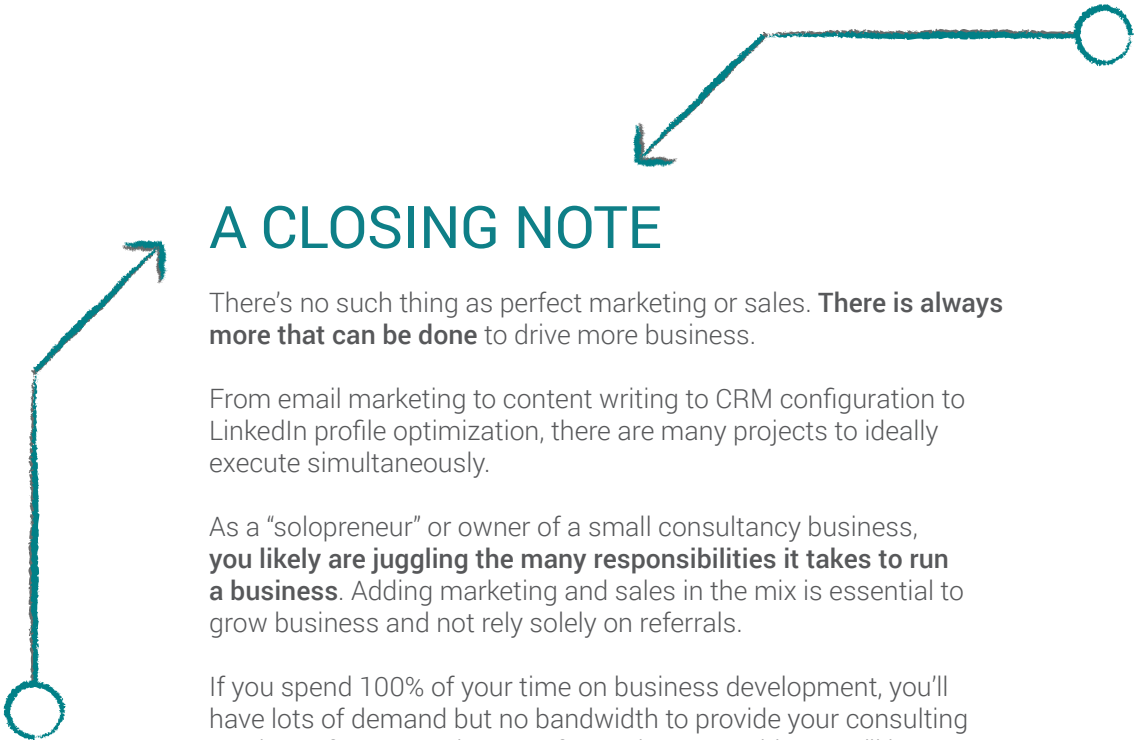
- Another rule of thumb, which is typically a challenge for sales people, is to **never answer an unasked question**.

Most sales people tend to ramble and provide information that was never asked in the first place. This can overwhelm a buyer and becomes more about the sales person and their company than the buyer and their objectives or pain points.

- It is paramount to know your audience; **really listen to their pain points**, asking layers of questions to get to the bottom line.

The problem the prospect brings you is never the real problem. Always use the rule of 3 questions. Sometimes clients don't know the real pain point until they can talk it through, and through this series of questions and discovery, they come to the realization that what they thought was the issue was just a surface level problem. Watching body language is key so you know when to pause, continue, ask more questions for understanding or validate and move on in discussions.





A CLOSING NOTE

There's no such thing as perfect marketing or sales. **There is always more that can be done** to drive more business.

From email marketing to content writing to CRM configuration to LinkedIn profile optimization, there are many projects to ideally execute simultaneously.

As a "solopreneur" or owner of a small consultancy business, **you likely are juggling the many responsibilities it takes to run a business.** Adding marketing and sales in the mix is essential to grow business and not rely solely on referrals.

If you spend 100% of your time on business development, you'll have lots of demand but no bandwidth to provide your consulting services. If you spend 100% of your time consulting, you'll have plenty of bandwidth to serve clients but you won't be growing your business.

This Business Development Playbook is an intro guide to marketing and sales best practices **to help you feel empowered, not overwhelmed.** Prioritize your time on the basics and explore more advanced efforts as you wish.

Most importantly, take an honest look at your Birkman profile and reflect on your own Usual Behaviors and Interests. If you truly hate the idea of handling business development yourself, recognize that within yourself and find a partner or agency to handle some elements for you. **Ultimately, though, one of the most important skills of an entrepreneur is the ability to sell and market.**

We hope this Business Development Playbook has been helpful!

We always welcome feedback and ideas from Birkman users. Feel free to reach out to us at support@birkman.com.

Regards,

The Birkman Team



“There’s no such thing as perfect marketing or sales.

There’s always more that can be done to drive more business.”



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