Growing Your Business
Strategies for Independent Contractors

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Growing Your Business
Strategies for Independent Contractors

• Welcome!
• Who we are
• What we plan to share

Balancing Your Workload

• Embarrassment
• Unemployment
• Damage reputation
• Lost clients
• Stress

Spreading Work Out

• Work ahead
• Isolate and focus on project pieces
• Review schedule with client and adjust
• Assume every project will be extended
• Be the catalyst

Juggling Jobs and Nurturing Clients

• Don't over-commit
• Conceal how busy you are
• Tend to the "little" things
• Figure out your threshold (magic number)

Saying Yes without Losing Your Mind

• I can't afford not to.
• I'm flattered that they asked me.
• I want them to call again.
• I simply can't say no.
• There will NEVER be another opportunity like this again!
• I don't want them to reject me.
• I like doing this work soooooo much!

Saying No without Losing the Client

• Tell them why
• Keep the door open
• Give referrals
• Leave them with insightful tips
• Subtly maintain your presence
Using Sub-Contractors

- Cautiously!
- Use people you know
- Establish who is in charge
- Define the area of work
- Pay on time or before
- Be ready to step in

Plan Your Services

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<th>Element</th>
<th>This year</th>
<th>Next year</th>
<th>Year after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>5%</td>
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</tbody>
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Look at Patterns

- Small projects vs. large
- Time-consuming projects
- Types of clients
- Levels of clients

Continuing Your Education

- Meetings
- Books
- Internet
- Colleges

Professional Groups

- Attend professional meetings, seminars, conferences, and workshops
  - STC
  - See list of other organizations
- Participate in special interest groups (SIG)
  - Many organizations have a variety
  - Find the ones you can learn from

Colleagues

- Work collaboratively with colleagues
  - Learn from their skills and experience
  - Be open to new ideas
- Use peer reviews
  - Ask for peer feedback and offer the same
  - Be specific about your needs
  - Enter competitions
  - Use manual evaluation workshops
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Books and Publications

• STC publications
• Publications unrelated to technical communication
• Books of all types, not just tech comm
• Trade magazines

Keep up with Technology and Tools

• Try software demos
  – Inexpensive way to learn about new tools
  – Lets you try before you buy
• Determine which technologies are important to you
  – Based on your specialties
  – Based on your interests

Use More Formal Environments

• Training classes
  – Influent
  – Solutions
  – See Resources handout
• University and community college classes
  – Check your local phone book
  – Good way to learn tools; brush up on other skills

Don’t Forget the Internet!

• Web sites
  – http://english.ttu.edu/ed_ind/
  – http://english.ttu.edu/gscic/
• Listserves
  – http://tigger.clemson.edu/utest/
• Online classes
  – Universities

You Are Unique - Use It!

Bringing Who You Are To What You Do

- G. M. Bellman

Unique. Who Cares?

• You vs. the masses
• You ARE the product
• Is the marketplace defining who you are?
• You and clients will know the difference
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How Are You Unique?
- What is unique about me?
- Ask others: what is unique?
- Test on others.

Self-description:

Your Business Wish List
- I wish I could do more ______.
- I really get a kick out of ______.
- I really enjoy ______.

Connect Who You Are with Your Business
- Self-description:
  - Traits
  - Characteristics
  - Personality

Future work
Career aspirations
Business dreams

Growing Your Unique Side
- Legitimize it:
  - name it
  - talk about it
  - experience it
  - read and write about it
- Growth = Risk

Marketing Your Business
- Contacts, Contacts, Contacts!
  - Professional associations (within and outside technical communication)
  - Community groups
  - Volunteer - get involved!
    - Makes you visible
    - Be reliable!
Networking Etiquette

“Networking is a reciprocal process, an exchange of ideas, leads, and suggestions.”

Susan RoAne, *The Secrets of Savvy Networking*

- Soft sell
- Share ideas
- Be appropriate

Referrals are everywhere

- Ask for Referrals
  - Friends
  - Family
  - Current clients
  - Colleagues
- Use the appropriate setting
- Thank them

Public Speaking

- Speak at meetings, conferences, seminars
  - Gives you visibility in mailings, printed program
  - Lets you share and show your expertise
- What if you are not a good speaker?
  - Learn - college courses, Toastmasters, private coach
  - Or, don’t do it

Develop Personal Niche

- Type of work
- Industries you work for
- Medium you work in (print, online, multimedia)
- Needs you see unfulfilled
- Use your unique personality
- Target marketing efforts to that niche

Go Above and Beyond

- Do value-added work for each client
  - Software testing
  - Usability analysis
  - Web site feedback
- Do more than expected
- Give clients a “freebie” once in a while

Market to Current Clients

- Design training materials to complement the manual
- Create online help
- Edit error messages
- Write or edit web site content
- Edit or create marketing materials
- Write for other products in the product line
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Balance  Education  Uniqueness  Marketing