

Giving More Service

A wise man once wrote that one of the keys to succeeding in business is to always give more and better service than you are paid for. This is advice that every consultant should take to heart.

In a current contract, I'm working for a small software company. My contract describes a whole set of duties, all of them having to do with the design and development of online Help and documentation. Recently, when the sales and marketing staff was caught up in getting ready for a big trade show—the most important show the company does each year—the marketing manager asked if I had any time to help her write some marketing spec sheets. I said, "Sure."

The same day, the development manager mentioned that she had to quickly put together a demo disk on one of the new products. I told her I had some experience scripting demos and would be glad to help.

All of this happened when I already had more than enough work to do and deadlines that were already tight. I put in some extra hours that week, but I also added a bit to my experience base for both marketing literature and multimedia. More importantly, I gave more and better service to the client than I had originally contracted for—enhancing my reputation as someone who can be counted on in a crunch and increasing the likelihood that this client will invite me back in the future.

To be sure, the opportunity to work in so many different areas is easier to come by when you are contracting with a small company. But even with the largest clients, there are always opportunities to give more service, if you look for them.

Keep your eyes and ears open to discover the problems within the organization and look for ways you can use your talents to solve them. Perhaps there are reports or other internal communications that need a good writer to "fix them up." Maybe there's a process that's not working well that you can suggest ways of improving. Maybe you can help the programmers improve the software design specifications or—gasp—come up with a template to encourage them to start doing design specifications.

The wise man, Napoleon Hill, cited this reason for always giving more service: "to enlarge the space you may occupy in the world." Think about that. Then think about ways you can give more service. Your clients' will love you for it. And you want your clients to love you, don't you?

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