

Introduction

Why become the Go-To Expert?

Differentiating yourself from your peers, internally and externally, is the challenge that every professional faces. With today's clients more inclined to look for a better service or deal, the pressure is on for every firm and professional to justify their fee levels and increase the value they bring to clients. One way of curing these commercial headaches is to grow a reputation as the Go-To Expert within your marketplace and firm.

Becoming the Go-To Expert conveys kudos and status. When you achieve the status of Go-To Expert, you have the luxury of clients coming to you and being able to pick and choose those you want to work with, whilst being able to charge premium rates for your services. Which professional doesn't want this?

With job security no longer a given, senior professionals are often moving between periods of employment, freelancing and interim work. Whether you acknowledge it or not, today's senior professionals need to be able to sell themselves – not just to their current clients or current employers but also future clients and employers. This book will show you how to sell yourself in a way that feels comfortable and authentic. Regardless of your current employment status, it will show you how to build up your credibility, profile and reputation so that you are in control of your career, always in demand and never short of work again.

When you have built a reputation as the Go-To Expert it allows you to spend less time on business development – after all, your reputation and profile in the marketplace and your firm are enough to generate enquiries on their own. From our research, the single biggest challenge professionals have with business development is making the time to do it properly. This book shows you how to spend less overall time on business development, but win more profitable clients who will work with you for longer.

What makes a Go-To Expert?

A Go-To Expert can mean many things to many different people. For example, you can become a Go-To Expert in a firm by having a specialist skill set that is in demand. This specialist skill set could be as simple as ‘the person who really knows their way around the IT system’. We asked people we trust for their views of what makes a Go-To Expert.

THE MARKETER’S VIEW

“A Go-To Expert must have some definable expertise, plus visibility and influence within their target market.”

LEE FREDERIKSEN, MANAGING PARTNER, HINGE, AND CO-AUTHOR OF
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES MARKETING

THE JOURNALIST’S VIEW

“A Go-To Expert is someone who is authoritative. This is because they will have built up a profile in an industry or they have the ability to influence the marketplace due to their job role or profile.”

GAVIN HINKS, FREELANCE JOURNALIST

THE MEDIA EXPERT’S VIEW

“There are so very many self-proclaimed experts these days. People who say ‘I’m the world’s top expert’ or ‘A thought leader in...’. Therefore, in my opinion, a true Go-To Expert will be seen by others as the Go-To Expert due to their body of work and the results they have achieved.”

ALAN STEVENS, AUTHOR OF *PING*, *THE POCKET MEDIA COACH* AND
CO-AUTHOR OF *MEDIA MASTERS*

In this book we will help you to become a Go-To Expert by giving you tools to grow your reputation, profile and influence in order to make it easy for you to sell and market yourself.

Social media: the game changer

"The internet and social media are going to be the biggest change to professional services since they became deregulated and were allowed to advertise in the 1970s and 1980s."

LEE FREDERIKSEN, MANAGING PARTNER, HINGE, AND CO-AUTHOR OF
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES MARKETING

Five years ago, social media was very much in its infancy. The online world was still a very junior and poor relation to the face-to-face world. To gain the status of the Go-To Expert typically meant you were reliant on gatekeepers to your target audience such as journalists, editors, publishers and event organisers. However, that is not the case today. With the advent of broadband and social media, you can grow your reputation without having to go via these traditional gatekeepers.

Trust has always been important in the selling process – particularly for professional services. After all, you don't buy a big-ticket item from someone you don't trust. Historically, the trust between buyer and seller has been developed through personal contact. After all, the larger the risk the more likely a buyer will want to see the 'whites of the eyes' of the seller before they will commit to a purchase. The internet has opened up another avenue to developing trust between a buyer and seller. It is possible to develop trust in a person through reading and digesting their content over time, and beginning to trust their advice and their judgment before you meet them. Consequently, those professionals who commit to regularly producing content for their target market are more likely to get called than those who rely solely on personal contact to build trust.

The internet has largely removed the geographical barriers to professionals winning business. It has also given people access to huge amounts of knowledge. In fact, in the last two years we have produced more data than we did in all the years leading up to this point. Consequently, we are all becoming conditioned to expect that we can have access via the internet to anything, anywhere. This means that people when they want help are much more inclined to find the expert; the person who's done exactly what they are looking for, who has the specific expertise.

Typically, prospects and intermediaries will now meet you first in the online world. What do you do when you want to find an answer to a problem or issue you are facing? Google it. What do you do before you meet someone for the first time? Google their name. Only if your prospects like the look of what you do, and how you do it online, will you receive a call or email. If they don't – you will never know. Consequently, the skill of being able to build up a strong and credible reputation online is essential for every professional. This book shows you how to do this, plus how to communicate your brand and story in a compelling and credible way to your ideal clients.

Why do professionals struggle to market and sell themselves?

If you went into any service provider, such as an accountant's or doctor's practice, and asked the question, 'How many of you went into your profession in order to sell and market yourself?', I doubt you would get a single affirmative answer. This is because most professionals chose their profession because they were attracted to the technical work, not the marketing and selling side of being in the profession.

Many professionals struggle to translate their technical expertise into something that is easily understandable to the lay person. It's very easy to write more and more technically orientated copy, rather than simple, easy-to-understand material that their target audience can relate to. Consequently, as a result, they often fail to connect with their audience via their marketing efforts.

Very often the barrier that many professionals face with their marketing is a self-limiting belief that they can't openly share their thinking on a matter, i.e. 'If I share how I do something, or share our secrets, what will my clients need me for – and wouldn't our competitors nick our thinking?' These are typically just beliefs, and often not founded on anything tangible. After all, if all your expertise is something that you can share on a blog post, then it's not much expertise! Most people, even if you give them step-by-step instructions on how to do something in a blog post, will rarely execute them in the most time-effective way. After all, reading a blog can't deliver the level of

expertise, insight and ability that your qualifications and number of years in the profession have given you.

Culturally, here in the UK, less so in other parts of the world, it's not the done thing to brag about your expertise or 'blow your own trumpet'. Many professionals subscribe to the view, which isn't always correct, that you should let your results do the talking for you. If professionals are to get better at marketing and selling themselves, they will need to become more comfortable with proactively saying, 'This is what I can do.'

Very often professionals are poor at marketing and selling themselves because they haven't been taught how to. All too frequently firms focus their fee earners' development on technical skills, at the expense of softer skills. Often, as a result of this focus on technical skills, and a firm's business model, there becomes an implied or even explicit culture in firms that client work is the number one priority for a fee earner. Consequently, business development can often be seen as something to do when you don't have any client work, something to delegate to the marketing department or something that can be left to the rainmakers.

Whatever your reason for picking up this book, we know that, if you take just a few actions or ideas away from this book, you will get better at marketing and selling yourself.

Why did we decide to write this book?

We specialise in working with professionals, from the owners of the very smallest professional practices right up to people in the largest and global firms. Jon tends to work mostly with partners in firms with fewer than five partners, whereas, Heather is very often working with aspiring, junior and established partners from the mid-tier and large firms who have a strong desire to build up a partner-sized portfolio. What we noticed with these two different populations of professionals was a strong desire to become the Go-To Expert within their firm and marketplace, as well as a reluctance to get out there and market and sell themselves. We found that when our clients focused and achieved this status of the Go-To Expert they found that clients came

to them, rather than the other way around, and they achieved significantly better results than we – and they – expected. Not only did it help them easily attract the right type of clients, but it put them firmly back in control of their career and practice.

“Establishing your reputation is something that every professional needs to do, regardless of the stage of your career.”

TIM LUSCOMBE, PRINCIPAL, KLO PARTNERS

As a result, we studied what the most successful of our clients were doing and found that we could replicate their techniques, not only for our own business but also our other client’s businesses. This book is the result of us capturing what many of our very successful clients were doing naturally and turning this into a practical guide that you can use to replicate their success.

Case study 1

John Cassidy, The Headshot Guy

John has run his own photography business for many years. When the newspaper business severely cut back its usage of freelance photographers and his regular freelance work with *The Times* came to an end, he realised he had to find a new niche for himself. He knew he didn’t want to get involved in the social side of photography and so, initially, started to focus on old-style corporate and PR photography.

Over time he noticed that an upsurge in people’s usage of social media sites, combined with more people going into business for themselves, was resulting in a high level of demand for headshots. In 2010, he committed to his niche of headshots, raised his prices and rebranded his business and service offering to John Cassidy Headshots. It was at a business networking event where the name ‘The Headshot Guy’ came about, and it has stuck.

John markets his business via social media, blogging, a regular newsletter, networking and speaking at events. Before he meets with prospects he sends them out a tips booklet to help them get the best headshot on the day. This helps to establish his credibility and expertise before potential clients meet him in person. John has carefully crafted his website so that any potential client can clearly see how John works and the stages in the process to help get the best headshot possible.

Over time John has honed and refined his service, offering different packages and services for six different potential markets, e.g. speakers, authors and trainers, company teams, event headshots, female entrepreneurs and business professionals. Unlike most photographers, John has thought of everything to help you get the best headshot possible, in order to communicate your personal brand. For example, he can provide a hairdresser and make-up artist, helps clients with their visual branding messages and advises on the best colours and clothing styles to wear.

As a result of building his reputation as 'The Headshot Guy', John generates all of his business by referral. As he says, to be known as the Go-To Expert by your peers and business colleagues is the perfect marketing goal. His business has grown steadily since 2010 and, in the last seven months, his reputation and profile have passed a tipping point, which has allowed him to quadruple his revenue.

Who is this book for?

This book is written for technical specialists. People such as lawyers, accountants, consultants, financial advisers, trainers, engineers, surveyors, architects, software developers, freelancers and coaches. If this is you, you know that you have time pressures and business/career goals to hit. Many of these goals probably require that you need to market and sell yourself – but selling and marketing yourself probably weren't taught to you at university or during the early stages of

your career. There are many routes you can take to help you generate a reputation in your marketplace as the Go-To Expert, helping you attract higher-paying and better clients by doing what you love. This book brings together all the options into once place and allows you, the reader, to choose the right path and tools for you.

This book shows you how to:

- choose, capitalise and leverage your chosen niche
- sell yourself without it feeling as if you are selling at all
- present yourself and your ideas in the best possible ways
- put firm foundations into the growth plans for your part of the business
- build a compelling proposition to attract the right type of clients
- communicate your brand externally and effectively both through face-to-face and online media
- keep your knowledge and offering fresh, regardless of the length of time you have spent in the marketplace
- build your profile by using all the different tools available, e.g. networking, writing a book/blog, public speaking, seminars and PR
- confidently convert an opportunity, when it presents itself, into real business
- manage your sales pipeline so effectively, such that you spend time only on the business worth winning
- build a team around you to be able to keep and effectively service your clients' businesses
- bring together everything you have learnt in the book, apply it to your situation and implement a plan to help you become the Go-To Expert.

If you are working within a professional practice, whether as a partner or employee, this book will:

- put you back in control of your career by giving you an easy way to build your own highly loyal client following
- help you get promoted to partner, or the next stage of partnership, because you have built your own client portfolio, which has increased the size of the partnership 'pie'

- allow you to enjoy the rewards of partnership by having a large and profitable client portfolio
- show you how to develop yourself into a thought-leader in your industry and your network, and earn status and respect for your efforts
- show you how to become one of the rainmakers in your firm.

If you have business development responsibilities for your organisation, this book will:

- show you how to build your profile and visibility to generate more leads from the right type of clients
- help you to use your profile to get introductions to prospects
- allow you to turn your networking into a well-oiled marketing machine.

If you are a self-employed technical specialist, this book will:

- show you how to spend less time on business development, because clients will be attracted to you based on your reputation and visibility
- enable you to pick and choose the right type of clients that you want to work with
- minimise the amount of time you waste with your business development because of slow-converting clients or the wrong clients wanting to work with you
- help you build a team around you to support you to achieve your career or business aims
- show you how to develop yourself into a thought-leader in your industry and your network and earn status and respect for your efforts.

If you are a partner or marketing specialist responsible for business development in your firm, it will:

- provide you with an overview of how you should help your fee earners structure and spend their business development effort
- enable you to build a reputation for your firm as thought-leaders

- minimise the amount of time and money you need to spend as a firm on business development
- show you how to use social media to help your fee earners quickly build their profile and reputation
- give you strategies and frameworks to harness the power of inbound and word-of-mouth marketing.

This book will give you the confidence, motivation, inspiration and all the information you will need to build a successful, profitable and successful practice off the back of becoming known as the Go-To Expert.

Case study 2

Carl Reader

Carl, by his own admission, fell into accountancy – more by luck than judgement. Early into his career with Dennis & Turnbull, he was given the opportunity to look after a portfolio of approximately 30 martial arts schools. He took this opportunity and got to know the key players in the industry, adjusted their services to meet the needs of the industry and, through that, learnt how to crack into a very niche industry.

Through his profile in the martial arts industry and relationships with the collection agencies that collect the fees from the schools' owners, Carl has been able to grow his portfolio of martial arts clubs and schools to 250.

His expertise in servicing martial arts clubs and schools led him to his next niche – franchising. As a result of helping one of their martial arts clients franchise his business, he gained an expertise in franchising. To help his client franchise his business, he attended a franchising exhibition in 2004. At this exhibition Carl realised that accountants either specialised in helping franchisors *or* franchisees. No one in accountancy had

yet looked at the franchising market place holistically and how they could add value to the franchisor and franchisee by servicing both of them.

Carl used his first big franchising client win, Stagecoach Theatre Arts, to prove his credibility in the franchising market place. After winning Stagecoach, Carl attended as many franchising events as possible, did talks on franchising and built relationships with franchising consultants and bankers specialising in franchising. When they discovered that their conversion rate for new franchising and martial arts schools was nearly 100 per cent compared with a 33 per cent conversion rate for local business, they stopped actively marketing to local businesses. Dennis & Turnbull finds that every new client who comes from the franchising or martial arts school marketplace tends to have arrived pre-sold on the basis of at least two recommendations.

How to use this book

This book is best read through from the start to the end, then dipped in and out of as you build your own client following and practice. If this book is going to help you build a reputation as the Go-To Expert, don't ignore the exercises or questions it poses. Be brave, make a positive commitment now to your career and business by making the time to answer the questions and complete the action points and exercises in each chapter. Some of the techniques and processes will appeal to you more than others; however, we would encourage you to be curious, to keep an open mind and to have a go at using them. Some may not work for you but, until you have a go, you won't know.

At the end of each chapter are:

- exercises for you to do to put into practice what you have just learnt
- links and references to further resources.

The book is split into five parts, supported by a Workbook that you can download from www.joinedupnetworking.com/the-go-to-expert-workbook

THE WORKBOOK

We want to make sure you get the most out of this book and take action, so have put together a free accompanying Workbook. Within the Workbook is a series of exercises that have been fully road-tested by our clients over the last few years. These exercises will help you get to grips with the ideas and frameworks contained in this book.



We have used this symbol throughout the book to show you where there is an accompanying exercise in the Workbook. To get the Workbook and the full pack of companion material in our Go-To Expert Toolkit, head over to www.joinedupnetworking.com/the-go-to-expert-workbook

Finally. . . you don't need to complete this journey alone. Both of us have played a significant part in many hundreds of professionals enjoying the rewards that come from being the Go-To Expert. We know that you can also accomplish this for yourself. Good luck on your journey and remember that we'd love to hear from you and be a real part of your support team.

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1

Why do you want to become the Go-To Expert?

Topics covered in this chapter.

- What are your reasons for wanting to become the Go-To Expert?
- The importance of setting goals
- Getting started on your journey to becoming the Go-To Expert

To become the Go-To Expert, you need to be passionate about what you do and why you do it. This strong passion is going to be the reason why you:

- get up stupidly early to go out to meet a client on a cold, wet winter morning
- face and overcome your personal demons
- successfully sell what you do to others just by your enthusiasm for what you do and how you do it
- pick yourself up after every knock-back.

In this chapter, you will be challenged to identify why it's important for you and your future to become the Go-To Expert. You will use the downloadable Go-To Expert Workbook as you work through this book.

The most important ingredient of being successful is to know and be able to articulate to everyone what you want from your business, your career and your life.

SIMON CHAPLIN, OWNER OF PULL YOUR SOCKS UP SIMON AND
AUTHOR OF 7 SAVVY STORIES

What are your reasons for wanting to become the Go-To Expert?

There was a reason why you picked up this book. At this point in time, that reason may be buried in your subconscious. It's now time to dig it out from your subconscious and get clarity on why it's so important for you to become the Go-To Expert. To find this clarity, you may find it helpful to ask yourself a series of 'Why?' questions.

1st question *Why is becoming the Go-To Expert important to me?*

2nd question *Why is the answer to the 1st question important to me?*

3rd question *Why is the answer to the 2nd question important to me?*

... and so on.

Continue asking yourself these questions until you reach one of two answers like these:

- 'Just because'
- 'Well, it's not really important to me.'

When you have reached the *Just because* answer, normally you will have uncovered a key driver or motivator for you. If you reach the *Well, it's not really important to me*, it's very likely that you've identified a reason that your family, friends or others have given to you.

A real-life example will illustrate this questioning process.

Raj wanted to become the Go-To Expert for wills and probate for small business owners. He asked himself a series of 'Why?' questions

Question *Why is it important for me to become the Go-To Expert for small business owners for wills and probate?*

I need to differentiate myself from the other private client solicitors in my firm (and other local firms).

Question *Why do I need to differentiate myself from the other private client solicitors in my firm?*

So that I can start to build my own client portfolio and become easier for others to refer to.

Question *Why do I want my own client portfolio?*

So that I can get promoted to partner or start my own practice.

Question *Why do I want to get promoted to partner or start my own practice?*

Because I like the status that comes with being a partner or running my own practice – and hopefully the financial rewards as well.

Question *Why do I want the status and financial rewards?*

Just because. . .

As a result of asking himself these questions, Raj decided to build his reputation as the Go-To Expert for wills and probate for small businesses as he believed that this would be an important part of his strategy to get to partner.



Reason why exercise

For you, does becoming the Go-To Expert mean any of the following?

- Being head-hunted for your next job?
- Being known in your firm as the person to go to for 'x'?
- Having a client portfolio containing the types of clients you want to work for?
- Being paid for doing what you love?
- Regularly getting your articles published by magazines and newspapers?
- Being a destination point for journalists who want quotes or content for their articles?
- Getting regularly asked to speak at events and conferences?

- Being able to charge a certain level of fees for your services?
- Something else?

Once you know what becoming the Go-To Expert means for you, then you can set meaningful and measurable goals to achieve this.

Case study 1 Caitlyn

Caitlyn was an interim recruiter in a traditionally run recruitment consultancy. She believed that she needed to change the way she won business, i.e. via a large focus on outbound calls, if she was ever going to be the top consultant on the team. She looked at her list of clients and successfully placed candidates and noticed that she was having a reasonable amount of success in placing marketing specialists. As a result, she decided to become known for placing marketing interims. She set herself a goal to triple the size of her network of senior interim marketing specialists. After 12 months of focusing on building up these relationships, and regularly writing articles for senior interim marketing specialists looking for roles, her strategy started to pay dividends. She found that at least 30 per cent of all her new business came to her via her network rather than relying on outbound calls. Within 18 months, she was promoted twice due to her success in winning business.

The importance of setting goals

Athletes, and other successful people who are driving themselves forward for success, use goal-setting to establish a future focus, then the milestones along the way give them short-term motivation. Having clarity on goals allows you to decide whether something is or is not a priority, i.e. do you need to invest time in this?

Goal-setting will focus your acquisition of knowledge and help you to organise your time and resources so that you can make the most of the opportunities that come your way. By setting sharp, clearly defined goals, you can measure your achievements of those goals and you will make progress in what previously may have felt like a long pointless grind. Your self-confidence will also improve as you achieve your goals.

Some professionals worry about whether people around them, including clients, will see them as 'pushy' if they set goals and are open about their career and business aspirations. Actually, telling other people about your goals is an excellent way of committing yourself to action.

The differences between goals, milestones and objectives

Goals: These are what you want to achieve in the future. They can be measured in some way.

Milestones: These are sub-goals, which, if achieved, will help you realise your goals. Like your goals, these can be measured in some way.

Objectives: These are the specific, measurable actions you will do to accomplish your milestones.

Examples

Goal: To become the Go-To Expert for tax for technology businesses within five years.

Milestones

- I will be asked to join the firm's technology sector team within two years.
- Within 12 months, I will have 3 technology clients within my portfolio.
- Within 18 months I will have an article published in the *Engineering and Technology Magazine*.

Objectives

- Every month, brainstorm ideas for articles to pitch to the technology press.
- Gain agreement from the head of the firm's technology sector team that he/she will be my mentor, by January.
- Identify all the partners who specialise in working with technology businesses and set up a conversation with them to understand the challenges these businesses face, by April.

Getting started on your journey to becoming the Go-To Expert

"The journey of a thousand miles starts with one single step."

LAO TZU, CHINESE PHILOSOPHER

Don't confuse good intentions with action. Sometimes we find that professionals delay committing to a specialism until they have reached a certain point in their career or with their business, e.g., 'After I have got this many clients I can then afford to specialise', 'When I move to my next firm I can specialise...' There will never be a right time to get started, but, if you are serious about becoming the Go-To Expert, the time to take action is now. Merely saying you want something won't make it happen!

"The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

ENGLISH PROVERB

It's time to identify your goals to help you become the Go-To Expert. To help crystallise these, it's often helpful to imagine you are taking a video of that moment in time when you have achieved your goals. What can you see? What can you hear? What will you have achieved? Using this picture in your mind, now write down your goals. For example, one of our clients, Janet, wanted to become the change management guru for public-sector bodies. She initially told us what it meant for her:

"I know I will have got there when I find that I am asked to speak at industry conferences and have an income that is higher than when I was employed. I will not be worried about the phone ringing any more and probably will have employed another pair of hands to cope with the demand for my services."

We challenged her to make this picture of the future more tangible, i.e. turn these indicators into measurable goals.

This is what she said.

- More than 80 per cent of my business will be helping public-sector bodies successfully manage large-scale change projects, typically involving the introduction of new technology.
- I will generate more than £20,000 fees per month and employ a project manager within my team.
- All my business will come to me from repeat business, referrals from my existing clients or people who have read my blog or heard me speak.
- My marketing and sales processes and systems will work effectively so I hit my revenue target of £20,000+ a month.
- I will speak at four major public-sector conferences a year.



Goal-setting exercise

Summary

Before you can start working towards becoming the Go-To Expert you need to understand your personal motivation for doing so. Once you understand your reason why you can then define what being the Go-To Expert actually means for you. This definition then forms the basis of your goals within your Go-To Expert Plan.

Action points

- 1 Ask professionals you consider to be Go-To Experts how they have built up their profile and visibility. Listen to what they say and adopt one tip or tactic they have used and apply this to your own situation.
- 2 Put a task in your diary to revisit your definition of the Go-To Expert every three months. Is it still what you want and valid for you and your situation?

Further resources

For help to think through what you want to achieve in your career, we recommend these resources.

BOOKS

- Townsend, H. and Larbie, J. (2012) *How to Make Partner and Still Have a Life*, London: Kogan Page
- Maun, R. (2012) *Bouncing Back: How to get going again after a career setback*, Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Business

WEBSITES

- Richard Maun's blog: www.richardmaun.com/writing
- How to make partner and still have a life: www.howtomakepartner.com