

Why KISS Means More Now than Ever for Advisors, Consultants, and Coaches

By Jennifer Selby Long

With apologies to their fans, this article is not about the band. It's about the need to "keep it simple." As the recovery gains traction, businesses that invest in marketing and promotion will pull ahead in 2010 and run miles ahead of the competition in 2011.

This is especially true for very small businesses, but I see so many consultants, coaches, and advisors resist this, making up excuses for why they can't or don't market. Leaders at a large company wouldn't dare think that way. So if you're a coach, consultant, or advisor, or thinking of becoming one, read on.

Why is it that so many coaches, consultants, and advisors I meet are so full of marketing excuses?

I've been thinking about it, and I believe I know the answer: most of these folks have something in common – they are very well-educated and super-smart.

Almost all of them have college degrees, and most even have graduate or professional degrees. Many worked in corporate jobs before starting their businesses, putting their formidable intellects to work solving complex problems for which there is no obvious or easy answer.

So why would such a stellar and well-respected background work against you?

That's where the KISS principal comes in. In a very small business, marketing is a simple and straightforward problem, in need of simple and straightforward decisions, followed by lots and lots and lots of tactical execution. I mean 2% strategy and 98% execution, and I'm not exaggerating to make a point.

After 15 total years of self-employment, I think I'm qualified to say this with some measure of authority.

Marketing execution means putting yourself out there constantly, and getting more rejection in a month than the typical professional inside a company gets in a year.

So some consultants, coaches, and advisors use their intellects to outsmart themselves and avoid the rejection, getting all wrapped up in trying to figure out a marketing strategy. Of course, the truth is that there shouldn't be too much of a marketing strategy. What there should be is lots of marketing execution.

Think of it this way: are you trying to introduce a controversial consumer product to a war-torn country with a corrupt government? Are you trying to sell the Pope on birth control? Are you trying to grow NRA membership in San Francisco? Are you trying to sell fried chicken to supermodels?

No. You're just trying to make sure that the people who would most benefit from working with you know about you, know that you can help them improve their condition, and can quickly and easily find you. That's simple.

It's so simple, it's scary, because it means that in about an hour, you could be getting your first big, fat rejection instead of standing around staring at a marketing diagram.

The marketing strategy process for a typical coach, consultant, or advisor should look about like this:

1. Pick one or two things you'll do consistently to reach people who would most benefit from working with you. Make sure you enjoy doing these things most of the time, or you'll never stick with them. Give yourself about 30 minutes to make this decision. It's not that tough, and it's not that permanent.

If you don't enjoy doing these things after a few months, you can switch to something else. And you already know what you love doing and hate doing, anyway, right? If you loath being in front of an audience, just choose something other than public speaking.

And don't stay up nights concerned that you'll miss out on opportunities because you're not doing public speaking. You're not. There are other things you can do to reach the people who would most benefit from working with you.

There's no secret sauce. Your business is small and simple. Don't let yourself pretend it's complicated. There's no time for illusion when every buck stops with you.

2. Pick one or two things you'll do to ensure that you stay in touch and add value to your wonderful clients and past clients. (Same time limits and guidelines apply.) Staying in touch is just as important as reaching out.

3. If you don't know how to do these things, learn just enough to get started but not enough to master it, through training, coaching, books, home-study courses, etc.

Once you've barely learned enough to get started, well, get started. You'll improve as you go.

4. Keep up the tactical execution every week. Keep doing the tactical execution forever. Be slow to change your tactics. Marketing only works if it's done on a regular basis for a long period of time.

Consulting, coaching, and advising are all professions which have long runways. It takes time for people to become familiar with you, comfortable with you, and willing to trust you so much that they will pay you or refer you to someone else.

Luck will work in your favor from time to time and just drop a new client in your lap, but mostly, you have to earn it.

5. Be patient. Because of the long runway, it will seem like your marketing is a waste of time.

People who don't know what they're talking about will give you stupid suggestions and criticize what you're doing, mainly because they're too scared to do it themselves.

Brush it off and keep executing. People need to know you're there in order to benefit from your services and it's nobody's job but yours to make sure they do.

A great consultant once told me that the opposite of good marketing isn't bad marketing – it's no marketing!

How true, how true! A few years ago, I lost touch with two past clients, one of whom, frankly, I had barely known. I reached out to say hi to each of them after a few years of being out of touch and learned that between them they had just given \$60K in business to other consultants that they didn't even want to work with, and who hadn't done a good job. Why? Because they didn't remember where to find me or know that I was still consulting.

Lesson learned. I'm a very easy person to find (Google me, try jenniferselby.com or jenniferselbylong.com, or selbygroup.com – all roads lead to me). However, I should never have assumed that either of them would think to Google me. I had previously been listed on their company directory with an internal email address. When they didn't see me on the directory, each just assumed I had done what most consultants do after a few years – got a real job!

My complete lack of marketing cost me \$60k in revenues that week. Even terrible marketing couldn't have done worse. I wanted to cry! Within a month, I started this ezine, and I reached out to every former client I could find to make sure they had up-to-date contact information.

I joke that I should offer a workshop called, "Every Mistake I Made, How Much It Cost Me, and What You Should Do Instead." What do you think?

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