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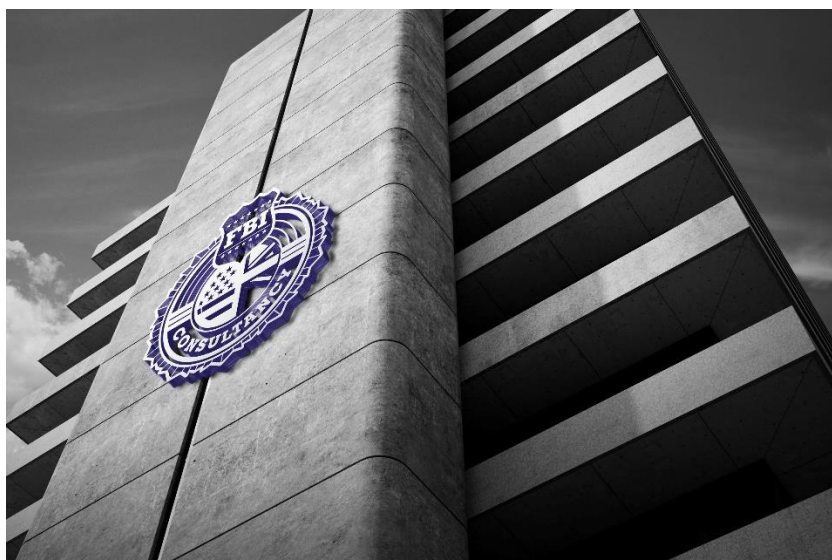


Article:

SPECIAL FORCES BUSINESS CONSULTANCY

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I believe there is a time when every business consultant should leave a business. The problem is most consultants refuse to recognise it when the time comes. Many consultants get entrenched in a business and are quite happy to cruise along because they need the fees. It doesn't matter how good or how experienced the business consultant might be, when it's time to go, it's time to go. The first red flag is generally when the business owner feels he or she is no longer receiving more value than cost. Frequently the business consultant should be aware of this situation before the client is.

Sometimes it's the business consultants call on terminating their contract with a client or business. Typically, this manifests every time you raise your fees. i.e. You'll typically lose approximately 15% of your clients.

Successful consultants regularly cull the bottom 15% of their client base as part of their growth strategy. This allows the business consultant to reach out and expand the upper levels of their client base. In its simplest format you cannot expect your business to grow if you retain all your paid clients. You will at best plateau and hit the financial tipping point.

Consultants who work on a daily rate or per-diem are generally practicing their trade. Their aim is to maximise short term cash flow. For sure this statement will have consultants across the four corners of the globe cursing under their breath. I have attended business growth seminars where the guru presenter has told the attendees to work out a billable day matrix. I.e. establish how much annual income they require and then divide it to identify your daily billing rate.

After deducting weekends, bank holidays and individual holidays, approximately 220 billable working days remain in an average year. Deduct 30% of these days for marketing, business promotion and other non-revenue generating activities. Then assume a 70% booking rate leaving a total of 154 days to generate revenue. Assume an annual salary requirement of £120,000 which dictates a daily charge out rate of just under £800 per day.

Three things generally happen if you adopt this severely flawed concept. First, you're screwed as far as your daily fee can only decline, and your margins erode. Second, you've inadvertently capped your potential for growth. Third is if you drop a few days you'll fail to hit your own required annual salary.

In his Million Dollar Consulting book Alan Weiss mentions, "There are substantial risks in the consulting profession as well as substantial rewards. It is ridiculous to assume the former without capitalising on the latter."

The only exception I apply to this rule is when I provide business consultancy services to clients who have sourced match funding from grant agencies and you have to work to a per diem schedule.

Over the years I have always approached business consultancy from a perspective of helping my clients to become wealthy, irrespective of what type of relationship or system I adopt. My secondary aim is to establish an enduring relationship with my client. Given I am very selective about who I choose to work with, and that some of my clients still utilise my services after 15 years, I guess my philosophy has been successful.

I believe you grow businesses by exploiting strength, not acclimating to weakness. I work hard and have every expectation that I be suitably rewarded for helping my clients to become wealthy. I operate on a project fee

basis only and I always base my fees on the client's perceived value of my business growth contribution. I make it clear from the outset that even though I am talking to the client, it doesn't mean I will be working with them. If I get the sense that a prospective client doesn't recognise me as someone who does outstanding work and someone who requires a high investment, then I am always prepared to walk away from the business.

Some business consultants are specialists, and some are generalists, then there are specialists who have transitioned into generalists. To become a successful business consultant, I advise you to differentiate your services, and then try to identify your unique niche and then commence a very focussed marketing campaign. Never be afraid of failure, because in order to grow you have to fail periodically. These failures will preprogramme you to identify opportunities for improvement. I believe that uninterrupted success, by definition pre-programmes you for failure.

Old school consultancy has maintained a predominant focus on 'reactive', whereas my 'Special Forces' The Art of Business War is 'extremely proactive'. I train my associates to respond to emerging trends and fads by collating detailed research and business intelligence. In my experience very few consultants approach business proactively.

When you work in extremely high-risk security operations in some of the world's most terrible theatres of operation, you quickly relate to the concept of 'practice makes perfect.' I witnessed world class SWAT instructors screaming at their recruits that 'practice makes perfect.' On one occasion I was tasked with running a very dynamic live fire SWAT programme at the Ground Zero tactical facility in Alabama, USA. Some 40 different SWAT firearms instructors attended. Their agencies paid for them to be taught personally by Dr. Mark D. Yates how to clear houses dynamically, in order they could then train their own SWAT officers back at their respective departments. Officers in attendance represented numerous different law enforcement agencies like the FBI, Police, DEA, Sherriff's dept', etc, etc.

At great cost the Ground Zero investors had constructed a ballistically lined 360-degree live fire MATCH Modular Armoured Tactical Combat House. Many of the officers attending had never been through a live fire house, especially with a team of unknown officers before. It's a very hairy experience which is not for fools or the faint hearted. Sadly, one of the Sherriff's SWAT instructors fell into both the fool and the faint-hearted camp.

I caught him inflicting his expertise on a group of officers under my tutorage and I listened as he informed his 'new team mates' that he was highly skilled and experienced in live shoot house tactics. He finished his lecture by stating that repetition is the key, as practice makes perfect. After glancing at my fellow instructors, we knew straight away he was a bluffer and a purveyor of Bull Excrement.

We let him lock and load and placed him where he could cause the least damage, i.e. at the head of a six-officer snake formation. He paused outside a door and placed his chin on the muzzle of his upturned 9mm, whilst his finger was locked rigid around his trigger. This was without doubt the single most dangerous incident I have ever witnessed on any shooting range in any of the 41 countries I have visited.

I aborted the exercise and brought the team outside for a safety brief. Sherriff Bubba refused to believe what I assured him he had done. I asked him what fate would befall one of his agency recruits if they made such a fundamental error. "Instant dismissal from the agency... but that would never happen because I train them properly and I'm big on practice makes perfect," he replied arrogantly.

One of my instructors led the team into the class room and played a video of the Sherriff's Faux Pas. I told the class that practice does not make perfect, and that only perfect practice makes perfect. I also told them that I don't train people, because we train animals and not humans. I prefer to educate people. For some reason Sherriff Bubba slipped away from the programme never to be seen again. Clearly like some business consultants, the time for him to leave was dictated by external forces.

Special Forces know when to arrive and when to leave. They never overstay their welcome.

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Dr. Mark D. Yates is the CEO of FBI consultancy Ltd, which provides a professionally managed business growth service for global business owners, investors, entrepreneurs and C-Level executives. If you need to retain a dynamic managing director, interim director, business troubleshooter, business growth consultant, or his proven LinkedIn consultancy, contact Dr. Mark D. Yates at: Tel: UK 0151 647 1716. E: mark@fbiconsultancy.com W: www.fbiconsultancy.com

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