



Consultative Selling for Nichepreneurs™

Achieving Riches in Niches means occupying a dual role: acting first as a skilled professional, you must also be a powerful, effective sales force. Not only do you perform the services your clients value, but you promote and market yourself as the best place to obtain those services.

While you may be very confident in your professional skills, it's the sales part of the equation that's proving to be problematic for many Nichepreneurs™. Don't worry. You're not alone! Many Nichepreneurs™ find themselves in exactly that position: while they know practically everything possible about their profession, they're not nearly as strong when it comes to presenting themselves and their services for sale.

Selling is both an art and a science. Sales professionals devote years of their lives learning the best way to approach a potential client, create and negotiate a relationship, and finally, most essential of all, close a sale. These are all specific skills, and you don't automatically come into possession of them because you go into business for yourself.

Luckily, sales skills are the type you can acquire 'on the job'. However, you want to minimize the learning curve and quickly gain mastery of these skills -- after all, it's literally your livelihood on the line.

One of the most powerful and effective sales tools -- and one that is a logical natural fit for Nichepreneurs™ -- is the consultative selling model.

Consultative selling has been around for a very long time. The model first appeared in the 1970's, and it's been used successfully ever since. A consultative sales experience is different from any other type of selling, because you begin the relationship with your potential client by providing value right off the bat.

Imagine this scenario. You're a Nichepreneur™, specializing in workplace efficiency. If a job site isn't working as well as it could be -- projects are taking too long, customers are complaining, sales numbers are dropping -- you want to be the person called in to get the team back on track. You've got great problem solving skills, years of management experience, and a staggering ability to cut through the nonsense and get to the core of the problem.

The only problem is, no one knows you can do all of this.

In a consultative selling scenario, you meet with someone who is trying to turn their company around. Free of charge, without any sales pressure whatsoever, you go to their site. You do a needs assessment, identifying challenges and problem areas. It's critical to pay careful attention to the client, so that you both hear and understand what they perceive the issue to be and what outcome they'd like to realize. That's when you offer some suggestions and solutions to their issues.

Implementing your solutions brings us to the sales part of the conversation. At this point, you've already demonstrated an understanding of the client and their needs. You've offered real value: insight and useful recommendations. The client is already beginning to trust you. You've lowered the sales resistance walls that may have existed between you and your client. Closing the deal is an extension of the process begun with that initial consultation.



The question then becomes: how do I connect with people in the first place? How do I get them to want to talk to me about their problems?

There are many answers to that question, and they all come down to one answer: visibility. If you want people to take you up on the offer for free consultations, the first step in the consultative selling process, you need to put the offer where they can easily see and act upon it.

Ways to do this include:

Print Media: Many publications offer an “About the Author” paragraph or blurb. Use this space to offer a carefully worded free consultation. If you submit articles to free content websites, make sure the offer is part of your boilerplate text (generally a paragraph that appears after the article), so it appears each and every time the article runs.

On Your Website: Feature your free consultation offer prominently on your website. Position it so that people can click a button or send an email immediately after reading about the offer -- you don't want to lose them by making them search page after page finding a way to contact you! Make sure to mention the free consultation offer sporadically in your blog.

Community Events: Community events are a great way to generate free consultation leads. Consider conducting a class, teaching a seminar, or leading a workshop. Offer all participants a free consultation. Only a few will take you up on it -- but if those few turn into sales, you've more than recovered your investment in the event.

These are some of the most common ways to promote a free consultation offer. If you're hesitant about your sales skills, consider consultative selling. It's an easy way to demonstrate your professional skills, which may be far more comfortable than straight selling. You'll grow and refine your approach with each consultation, and before you know it, meeting with potential clients will seem as easy as pie!

Written by Susan A. Friedmann, CSP, The NichePreneur™ Coach, Lake Placid, NY, internationally recognized expert working with service professionals to increase their niche marketing potential.

Author: “Riches in Niches: How to Make it BIG in a small Market” and “Meeting & Event Planning for Dummies.”

Claim your free copy of the special report, “The NichePreneur™ Mindset” at www.richesinniches.com