



Marketing Your Professional Engineering Services

An Online Continuing Education Course for Engineers

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Marketing Your Professional Engineering Services

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INTRODUCTION

“How can I make the most of my engineering education, talents, and experience? Should I start my own business? How would I know if it’s doable? Where do I start?”

This course is about answering those questions and a lot more from the same marketing perspective that a new company of any size would have to ask.

Naturally, since your professional services are the “product” and not some inanimate object, there are several steps in a typical marketing plan that would not apply (such as “product testing”), but there are also many steps involved that are not always evident to someone that is not familiar with the process.

We have adapted the theoretical marketing process taught in the best business schools into one that can help you get closer to answering the questions above.

You will have to adjust your perspective from that of a traditional engineer to that of a good salesman.

(NOTE: **We are not talking** about a fast-talking, ethically challenged and cartoonish used-car salesman



but an insightful thinker who understands this concept: *“We realize the weekend do-it-yourselfer doesn’t necessarily want an electric drill and a pack of bits with various sizes, what he really wants is a ½” hole through that piece of wood. It’s my job to focus on helping him get the hole he wants.”*

Or, the farmer with a wide creek running through the middle of his property doesn’t necessarily want the structural engineer’s bridge design, he simply wants to get to the other side! The bridge is just one possible way of getting there.)

You, then, aren’t selling YOUR ENGINEERING SKILLS as the primary focus of attention to the client! Instead, you are helping him get what he wants through application of your engineering skills. (Put the client’s needs first in your thinking.)

There is a worksheet at the end of the course to help you consolidate your thoughts about marketing your unique professional services.

Remember, we make no promises that, even if you do everything we describe here, you will find success in starting your own business!

We are simply trying to help you get closer to the pot of gold that may be waiting at the end of your rainbow. (Remember, *the two saddest words someone can hear themselves say is, "What if...?"*)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

We will not spend any time talking about advertising strategy or social media because that world is evolving so rapidly that much would be obsolete by the time you read this.

There will be plenty of up-to-date guides to read, YouTube channels to watch, and advertising consultants with the latest news once you have this marketing foundation established.

Remember, your job is to use your professional engineering skills and abilities to help the client – **your primary focus** – to get whatever they need to be successful.

You aren't selling bridges and hoping you find someone who needs to cross a creek; you're selling the other side which can only be reached by your bridge.



WHY DO BUSINESS FAIL?

Before we go any farther, let's take a moment to look at 10 reasons why businesses fail.¹

Competitive Weakness	_____
Disaster	_____
Excessive Fixed Assets	_____
Fraud	_____
Heavy Operating Expenses	_____
Inadequate Sales	_____
Inventory Difficulties	_____
Neglect	_____
Poor Location	_____
Receivables Difficulties	_____

Number these from 1-10 based on what you think is the biggest reason businesses fail (#1), then the next biggest reason as #2, and so on to 10.

The more you are aware of the dangers means the better your chances are of avoiding them.

(Answers at the end of the course.)

These topics are just as relevant for a small business as they are for the largest. Our intent with this course is to help you understand enough about marketing so that you can apply that knowledge successfully in developing your own consulting business.

Note: If we compare your potential consulting business to the table above, it is likely that you won't be carrying an inventory since you're selling services, not tangible products. However, depending on the equipment you must use to support your skills (PCs, software, printers and plotters, and other technical equipment), the heavy operating expenses could easily become a factor.

WHAT IS MARKETING?

The American Marketing Association defines marketing as “...the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. (Approved October 2007)”ⁱⁱⁱ While that’s the official definition for the profession, I’m not sure that it helps a potential small business get stated.

Maybe this definition from a major Twentieth Century management guru, Peter Drucker, will be more helpful: “*The aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous. The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits him and **SELLS ITSELF** (emphasis mine). Ideally, marketing should result in a customer who is ready to buy. All that should be needed then is to make the product or service available.*”ⁱⁱⁱ Drucker’s definition is getting us closer to our starting point.



This last reference should help you understand where we are going. It’s from an article in the Harvard Business Review from 1960 by Theodore Levitt entitled “Marketing Myopia.” It was about how businesses looked at themselves and their products traditionally and how they should look at them in the future if they want to survive.

One of his primary examples was the railroads.

The railroads did not stop growing because the need for passenger and freight transportation declined. That grew. The railroads are in trouble today not because that need was filled by others (cars, trucks, airplanes, and even telephones), but because they were *not* filled by the railroads themselves. ***They let others take customers away from them because they assumed themselves to be in the railroad business rather than in the transportation business.*** The reason they defined their industry incorrectly was that they were railroad oriented instead of transportation oriented; *they were product oriented instead of customer oriented....*(Note: Think of the bridge back on page 5.)

The emphasis in that statement is mine because that’s the message you must understand before you begin marketing your professional services to potential customers: You are not selling your professional skills; you are selling solutions to their problems.

As we go through this course, we will keep coming back to the basic question of “*why would they want to hire you and not someone else?*” We will help you devise a set of answers to that question that are the best fit for you. Then it is up to you to apply that knowledge to:

- 1) pass the quiz associated with this course and,
- 2) market your services to the largest audience you can handle! That audience may exist in the market*place*, a physical locale where people see your name on a storefront sign, or in the market*space*, where they find you via your website on the internet.

Orientations to the Marketplace

There are several ways to market your services such as:

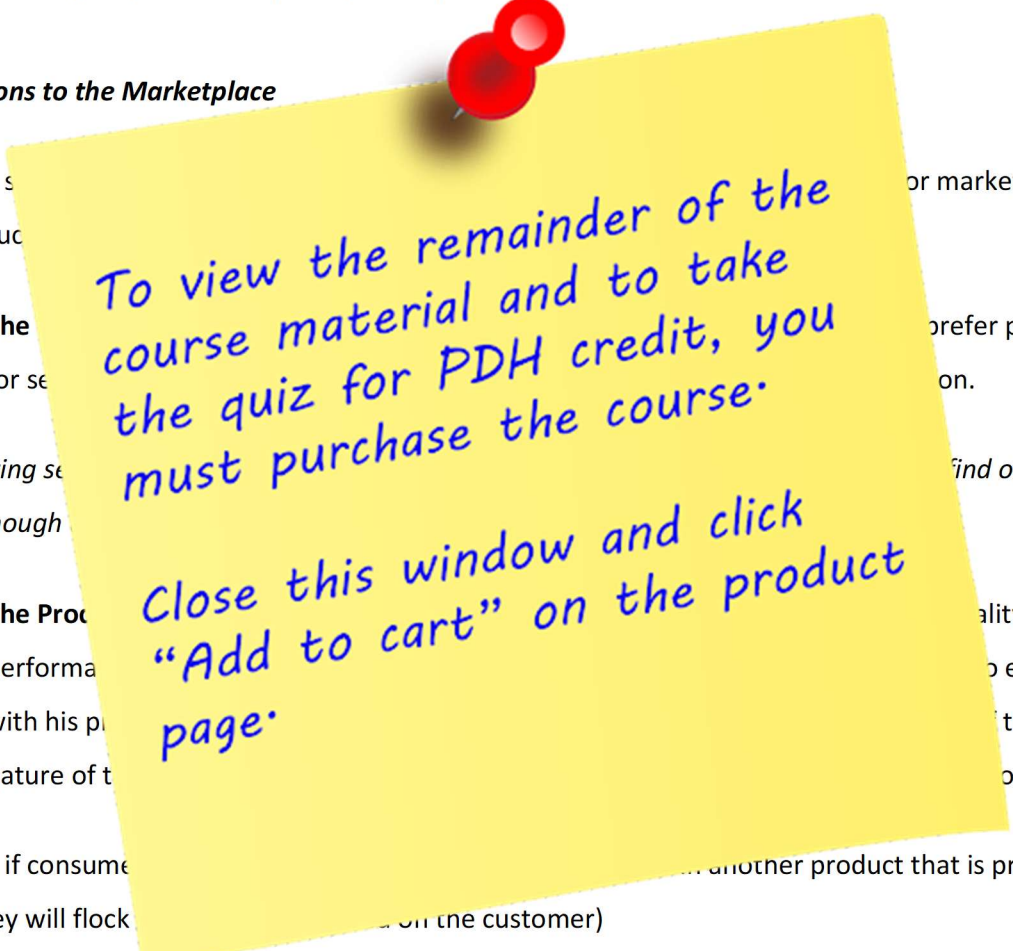
- **The** (or se

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- **The Pro** performan
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However, if consumers find another product that is priced lower, they will flock to it (on the customer)

- **The Selling Concept** – The idea that consumers, if left alone, will not buy enough of our product (or services) to sustain us: therefore, we must encourage their purchases by selling to them. This is why Coca Cola is so large today. They felt customers wouldn’t buy enough product *if left alone to make their own choice*, so they *sold the product to them* to encourage them to make the correct decision.



To view the remainder of the course material and to take the quiz for PDH credit, you must purchase the course.

Close this window and click “Add to cart” on the product page.