

Module 2: The Marketing Plan

What am I going to offer? What will I not offer?

Our recommended approach is to keep things simple, to ask the key questions and to do your research through contacts and desk research. Questions such as:

- + What am I going to offer?
- + Who am I going to offer it to?
- + How am I going to present myself and my service in different scenarios to different clients?
- + What do I want my clients to say about me that would make me proud?
- + Am I clear on what the Ideal client and Ideal assignment looks like?
- + How much would I charge?

Useful lines of exploration and enquiry are:

The marketplace and what is going on – What do I know?

- + Trends – hotspots / needs that are increasing or contracting
- + The breakdown of the market and the size of individual segments
- + Market drivers and how organisations are reacting

Target customers – Who do I want to get in front of? What needs will they have?

- + Typical customer needs and the characteristics of different segments
- + Buying drivers and habits
- + Seasonal and cyclical drivers
- + Benefits – what do different customer segments value?
- + What would be the Ideal brief for my business?

Competition – What do I know?

- + Who offers what and to whom?
- + Pricing comparisons
- + Who is being successful and why?

Competitive edge – Where do I fit?

- + Better service or product
- + Unique service or product
- + Minority clientele
- + Stronger contacts
- + Customer service and reputation

What do I want to be known for? Brand values - for example:

- + To be the most respected?
- + To be excellent at what I do?
- + Value for money?
- + The 'Go To' specialist?

Charging / pricing and business terms

- + Typical arrangements?
- + Levels for different types of work and different clients?
- + Trends / habits?

TIPS:

- + Summarise your findings in the form of a series of crisp, concise bullet points – the simpler the better.
- + Where you have questions think of those people you can talk with to check out assumptions, clarify data and points made by others, and to answer specific questions.

The results of your work on Modules 1 and 2 will be giving you a sense of direction and purpose for what you are going to offer and who you are going to offer it to. As part of this you will learn a lot and also define what you are not going to do! Treat this as a 'work-in-progress summary' of what you believe to be accurate and insightful. Your marketing and business plans will change over a year and clients have an unnerving way of redefining them as they often come up with a brief that you could not have foreseen!

MODULE 2 SUMMARY

Creating a personal marketing and branding statement on what you can bring to the party is a critical exercise. As a result of your work, you will be able to think more precisely about:

- + Presentational materials – business name, cards, letterheads, email footers, website, brochure, wallets to hold materials and any other items you feel would fit with your style of business.
- + The way you describe your service or product and the personal approach you bring to your work. You may wish to consider using a designer or website developer to help you to express the brand and content of your business creatively.
- + You will also start to think about all the creative ways you can reach your clients, e.g. through harnessing key networking relationships, joining associations / institutions, using social media channels, writing articles on key topics relevant to your specialisation, attending conferences / symposiums as a speaker or a delegate, creating your own network of like-minded people. You might run your own events or attend programmes to upskill in topics such as marketing and sales, building client relationships, consulting and networking skills.
- + Your work may have convinced you that your future lies in working for clients through a third party such as an interim / NED search organisation or via a consulting house. If so, you need to research these types of organisations – perhaps consider using the skills of a professional researcher. If this is your chosen route, all the work you have done to date to create your bio and to assess your key skills can now be channelled to market yourself appropriately.

There are some very refreshing and creative books and materials available on all these areas and we list some of them at the end of this section.