

## SELLING SERVICES



# Hassle-free pitching

Seven tips to help you sign up prospective clients and win more business

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- To be successful in practice, you need to encourage prospects to become clients, and clients to become better clients (by signing up for more paid services). But the selling required to get someone to jump into your camp and start paying you makes it the part of running a practice that is far outside many practitioners' comfort zone, particularly if you are an introvert.

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Think of the word 'salesperson' and what do you picture – possibly, an over-confident, pushy individual who is determined to make a sale no matter what? It's an image that doesn't sit well with introverts. They'd do anything to avoid being like that, which is why many view signing up new clients as an unwelcome job (and so put it off for another day).

But you don't have to be an outgoing, smooth-talking salesperson to get more clients 'across the line'. The truth is that introverts are very well equipped to sell skillfully without betraying their values.

## Hassle-free sign-ups

Here are seven tips to help you sign up more clients:

**Change your image of selling.** Helping people to uncover their needs and work out solutions is a positive and helpful approach. Introverts who happily sign up lots of clients view the process as a positive one.

**Educate, don't sell.** Help people to understand the information they need to make the right decision when they're looking for an accountant. You, of course, can show how you deliver on those important points, where many others don't. You'll be helping and educating your prospect, who will respect you for it.

**Listen smart.** Introverts are good at listening, but that's not enough. Does the prospect also know that you understand them? Listen to the prospect, summarise what they need, and check your understanding. Never just present your services and hope the prospect will want them; nobody cares about things they don't want. Instead, listen to what they want and talk specifically about their requirements rather than come out with generalisations such as 'We're good at client service.'

**Find out why.** Why do they want a new accountant? What do they want that's different from their last accountant? Tell stories about your clients that show how you deliver that difference. Your stories should truthfully lay out the experiences that clients have when they are working with you. Stories sell, because the teller's passion shows through. Most introverts don't like showing off, and stories are an easier way to suggest your strengths.

**Treat objections as a good thing.** Many introverts don't like objections. But objections are simply questions, and people don't ask questions unless they're interested. Relish objections as a sign that your prospect is interested. Prepare a list of the common objections made by existing clients before you sign them up and then compare them to those clients' actual experience. Now your answer to an objection is, 'Yes, you're right,' followed by a story of how a client felt before

signing up and what they found once they came on board.

**Understand their needs.** Old-style salespeople were told to 'Always Be Closing' (ABC). Every few minutes they would urge a prospect to sign up. It's a pushy approach that doesn't suit the introvert's style. A better strategy, once you feel you have really understood your prospect's needs, is to summarise those needs and then ask, 'If I solved those, would I be the right accountant for you?'

**Follow up.** You had a great discussion – don't lose it by going all shy afterwards. Following up is not pushy. Before your meeting ends, ask them what they'd like you to do next, confirm what your next step will be – and then deliver it. Don't say, 'I'll call you'. Do say, 'When is a good time for me to call you?' Put that time in your office diary. Then when you follow up, it's, 'Hi, I'm calling as you requested,' or, 'Hi, I'm calling as promised.' You're delivering on a promise you made, not being pushy.

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One final point worth making is about energy. Introverts can lose energy when dealing with people. You can get around that by spending just a short time 'selling' every day, then recharging your batteries by focusing on other work. A regular habit will help you more than a monthly push on following up.

Viewing signing up clients in a positive way will stop you from putting off making sales pitches. And channelling your listening skills and empathy will give you an advantage when pitching to new clients.

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