

From The Freelancery.com "Give away your best ideas. Win more work."

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From the post:

Give away your best ideas. Win more work.

<http://thefreelancery.com/2010/05/give-away-your-best-ideas-win-more-work/>

Brad:

About the presentation. Thanks for sending it along.

My purely arbitrary, utterly subjective high-level impressions:

First, you did many things right here.

In slide 2, you framed the discussion around the questions and problems you work on. Good orientation.

And starting on slide 6, you described your capabilities and competencies in a nice triad. Three is good. It's the ideal structure.

You also showed examples of output and deliverables. Also very smart. Vagueness and hand-waving never works in these things.

Some cool things you might try:

- Think about, as we discussed, a live 'in-person' version of this, as well as a clunkier, wordier leave-behind. The live version might have maybe 30 or more slides. So you can change them more often. Attention ALWAYS perks up with new slide. (And besides, with those fat 12-line slides, people always read ahead. So they already know where you're going, and just have to wait for you to say it. Not so good.)

- Take Slide 2 and turn it into a rapid-fire series -- 5 or 6 slides. And switch the orientation a bit. (Right now, the answer to these questions is, 'Duh, no. We're dolts.') Maybe pose them more as, "Neat things you'll be able to do: "Tell which programs work, and which don't" . . . "Show precisely what Marketing is contributing to the business". . . . "Get Sales to actually like you." One thing to a slide.

- Take slides 3,4,5 -- about the company -- and think about putting them at the END. Counter-intuitive, I know. The conventional wisdom is, tell them who you are, so they will listen. In my experience, the best thing is to present some really cool ideas. Say something amazing. If they care, THEN they'll ask more about you and where you came from.

- The middle section, about typical projects. Maybe there's a way to categorize these so they jibe with the way customers think about these things. Do clients go in search of firms who can solve 'Medium-Size Projects'? Do they think about fast-turnaround vs. Strategic? Or do they think more in terms of problems and questions? I'd have to ponder this more, but maybe the best structure is to simply lay out the big questions the customer was trying to ask in each case (never mind the size.) Let the issues resonate, rather than the size or complexity of the project.

But then, you've been thinking about this for a lot longer than I have.

Anyway, you have a good story here, I think.

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Jake:

I've been thinking about some possible ways to talk about North Star on your site, and stake out a compelling niche.

I think you have two big opportunities. First is to attract clients with the promise of really sharp development work at surprisingly attractive rates. Budget-friendly brilliance as it were.

You're as smart (or smarter) than the big guns out there, but far more nimble, more responsive. And you don't cost a million dollars.

Second, I think you can do a vastly better job of portraying North Star than most of the competition out there. Most of them are stiff, indistinguishable. And they talk mostly about themselves.

You guys have a chance to be engaging, bright, human. Very credible, supremely competent. And eager. Just the kind of people clients want working for them.

Overall, the 'spin' of the site and content should be more about 'what the client gets', 'problems that can get fixed', 'what it would be like to work with this group -- rather than 'all about us and how swell we are.'

(That's where other firms miss the boat, I think.)

How do we pull this off?

Obviously, the idea is to get a prospective client so intrigued that they say, "I think we should talk to these guys."

I think you're right about the main sections of the site.

I'm seeing a home page that delivers an instantly intelligible message. Your big idea writ large, simple. It makes sense whether they come from a Google sponsored ad, or from a direct referral or organic search.

It hits straight at what your clients are looking for, trying to fix, suffering from. The first reaction is "Ah, this could be interesting. I get this. (In a way, its more about them than you.)

Then, using that 'carousel' graphic your designer mentioned, we lay out the three pieces of your story, more or less, with teasers and lead-ins that invite click-throughs to your sections:

-- **What we do.** What you're offering, in terms of staff augmentation, and/or project work. In what areas (Software Development, Web Analytics, Advertising technology and machinery.) But, we'd present it all from the customer's side of the desk. It's more about what they get, the kind of problems they can have solved, the situations you handle.

- **Who we are.** Your company profile, your bios, your credibility. Again, it's not so much "Why we're great," but here are the people you'll be working with. It's part facts and bullet points (about your Nemeth work, technologies, major projects) and part 'personality'. They should get a feel for how you think, how you approach client relationships, how you attack problems. (Without the usual boilerplate fluff EVERY other site uses.)

- **How we do it.** Here's where we talk about how you deliver such responsive service, such sensible rates. It's about your approach to offshoring. How you get around the usual issues with QA or communications or other problems. Maybe it's not so much about finding lower-cost labor ,but finding exceptional talent or proven specialist teams who aren't burdened with sky-high overheads. I'll have to figure this out when typing. But I'd like to stay away from the 'cheap' aspect. More about being efficient, smarter.

Here, we might also get the client to see that "you'll be working directly with the people who manage and direct the coding, testing, review etc. rather than working through layers of reps and account people. "It's tech-to-tech."

These sections may be 'pages' or somewhat longer, depending on how the content flows out the best. But the overall idea is to keep it all concise. Good signal to noise ratio. More nuts than caramel, so to speak.

Don't overtalk, oversell. (Not like I'm doing here.) Leave a little curiosity to attract a phone call or conversation.

Process: If you'd like to move ahead, perhaps it would be best for me to launch directly into a draft -- both to feel out the message and language, and to uncover precisely what I don't know, and what info needs filling in.

I can start on this in the next day or two, if you're ready. Or if you need to wait, that's okay too.

Anyway, that's what I'm thinking here. And thanks for asking

This could be good.

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Valerie:

Thanks for sending along all the additional material.

Been rolling around and around about how you might capitalize on the upcoming regulations. And the spectre of a federal version.

Here's what I'm thinking:

As we discussed last week, the idea is to get you (COMPANY) sitting across the table with Compliance Managers (or GCs) of medical device marketers -- with a chance to get them interested in your software/consulting solution.

The best bet is to lead with a compelling mail piece, and back it up with solid content on your web site. (Content that we can update, tweak, and iterate quickly as we see how things go.)

- For the mailing piece, I suggest staying away from *anything* slick or clever. It shouldn't feel like 'marketing' or blatant promotion.

You'll get far more traction by playing it straight. Let's lay out a refreshingly clear story - in plain English -- that aims directly at what the Compliance officer/GC is wrestling with right now.

(COMPETITOR for example, offers only consultant-speak, with a lot of vague abstractions. And they talk about themselves, mostly. Same with OTHER COMPANY. We can do way better than that.)

The big opportunity is to talk to what Compliance guy wants, rather than software. Clarity and simplicity is everything. Help the compliance guy picture how your solution will work -- day to day -- and you win. (The other guys are bad at that.)

I'm thinking of a big 9x12 envelope, personally addressed. It looks important, doesn't feel like junk mail at all. Maybe, maybe there's just an unobtrusive note on the outside: Massachusetts? No problem. . . . Or something like: The Massachusetts Regs: A smarter fix." Or maybe no teaser at all. We can tinker with that.

Inside, there's a letter from you, the CEO, one page, maybe two. Personally signed. Addressed directly to the compliance guy by name. The gist: "If you've been wondering how to deal with the upcoming Massachusetts requirements, here's an idea that just might simplify everything for you."

It's not sales BS, but a one-to-one letter, compliance attorney to compliance officer. Peer to peer.

You step through a high-level overview of your solution. Not so much about the software, but the things the CCO can do with it. It's all about his capabilities and options, the stuff he can deliver to his brass, to authorities. You assure him that the solution works - it's in place right now, and directly addresses every particular of the Mass. regulations -- and even the federal requirements on the horizon.

The net message is that with YOUR COMPANY, the CCO can get a working solution in place in XX days -- fully customized for his unique business. All without reinventing the wheel, or starting from scratch. The whole thing is built already.

The subtext is that the Compliance guy will look like a genius for finding this solution -- and making the entire Massachusetts hairball go away. This is a fast-track, low-risk fix. (And it's a lot faster than rolling your own.) I'm thinking of content the guy would easily pass along throughout the organization: "This might be a good way to go. Can you meet with these people on the 24th?"

How does this sound? Call me.

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