

SENIOR CONSULTANT

The Voice of the Investment Management Consultant

Your Real versus Perceived Value Part V: Maintaining Motivation and Excellence in Yourself and Your Team

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Your ability to develop a world-class business and to work with the wealthiest clients is predicated on two things: (1) your ability to deliver an excellent product (an objective determination), AND (2) the client's perception that you are the "best of the best" at what you do (a subjective determination). This means that you must be highly competent and project an image that attracts ideal clients. You and your team must constantly hone a host of skills, if you hope to compete at the highest levels. It isn't enough, for example, to have an excellent grasp of portfolio management techniques if you aren't a good communicator. As part of your job responsibilities, you must also know how to systematically develop your business and maintain high levels of motivation and focus for yourself and the members of your team. There are four interdependent skill sets (called the "Pinnacles of Success") that are required to achieve optimal results: (1) Sales and Client Strategies, (2) Business and Marketing Development, (3) Professional Knowledge, and (4) Perpetuating Motivation.

Each of these essential skill sets includes numerous subcompetencies. For example, in the Sales and Client Strategies category, you must be able to impact clients, which, in turn, requires communication skills and an understanding of the client's financial needs and goals, their psychological make-up and buying motivations, etc. Each of these requires another distinct set of skills that form the basis of effective communication such as effectual questioning, verbal patterns and presentation skills.

The first article in this series ("[Your Actual vs. Perceived Value](http://www.SrConsultant.com/Articles/2002-07-Drozdeck-Real-vs-Perceived.pdf)," *Senior Consultant*, February 2002, <http://www.SrConsultant.com/Articles/2002-07-Drozdeck-Real-vs-Perceived.pdf>) described some of the key competencies in each of the four categories and asked you to determine your overall level of proficiency. The second ("[Your Actions Speak Louder than Words](http://www.SrConsultant.com/Articles/2002-09-Drozdeck-Real-vs-Perceived2.pdf)," *Senior Consultant*, September/October 2002, [\[Drozdeck-Real-vs-Perceived2.pdf\]\(http://www.SrConsultant.com/Articles/2003-02-Drozdeck-Real-vs-Perceived3.pdf\)\), third \("\[Is Your Business Really a Business?\]\(http://www.SrConsultant.com/Articles/2003-02-Drozdeck-Real-vs-Perceived3.pdf\)" *Senior Consultant*, February 2003, <http://www.SrConsultant.com/Articles/2003-02-Drozdeck-Real-vs-Perceived3.pdf>\) and fourth \("\[Professional Knowledge and Sophistication\]\(http://www.SrConsultant.com/Articles/2003-05-Drozdeck-Real-vs-Perceived4.pdf\)," *Senior Consultant*, May 2003, <http://www.SrConsultant.com/Articles/2003-05-Drozdeck-Real-vs-Perceived4.pdf>\) articles asked that you perform a self-evaluation of yourself with regards to Pinnacles 1, 2 and 3. Before providing the questions for the fourth and final self-assessment, it is important to realize that rigorous, objective self-evaluation is imperative if you truly wish to professionally advance – without self-delusion. Within our industry, many advisors "think" they are doing a great job, but in reality, they are not. That's self-delusion. What is surprising is the number of advisors who have learned to promote themselves as experts, without ever trying to obtain the required underlying competencies. That's](http://www.SrConsultant.com/Articles/2002-09-</p>
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deception – whether it's purposeful or not is immaterial. The only way you can determine your actual competency level is by measuring yourself against certain benchmarks that represent the best practices in the industry. For example, in the realm of professional knowledge, competency can be measured with testing to quantify your knowledge of a particular topic or area. With the other Pinnacles (Sales and Client Strategies, Business and Marketing Development, and Perpetuating Motivation), competency is measured by what you actually do. The following questions deal with self and team motivation and were taken from my forthcoming book, *The Mega Producers: Secrets of Financial Services Superstars to Lead You to the Top* (available: December 2003, Dearborn Press).

Benchmarking Self and Team Motivation

The following benchmarking questions allow you to assess your ability to effectively manage yourself

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and your team – a skill deemed essential by top producers throughout the industry. Managing yourself involves setting effective goals, maintaining personal motivation, dealing with stress and a host of other things that allow you to keep moving forward. It is not enough to keep yourself motivated; you must motivate your team – the team that will propel your business to the next level. Answer the following questions with a “Yes” or “No.”

Self Performance

1. Do you have a written business and life plan?
2. Do you have a personally motivating mission statement that you articulate to your clients?
3. Have you articulated your personal values?
4. Do you have a clear vision of your ideal lifestyle?
5. Do you have specific goals for the other aspects/areas of life, that is, social, mental, moral/spiritual, family, physical? (It is vital that you have a balanced lifestyle.)
6. Are you able to put yourself into a mental “State of Excellence” whenever you work?

- (Essentially, can you “be on” at will? This is an important attribute of great performers in all fields of endeavor.)
7. Do you rigorously analyze your personal performance and make conscious efforts to become even better?
 8. Are you willing to take objective criticism/advice without becoming defensive?
 9. Do you invite such criticism/advice?
 10. Do you maintain a self-development program that includes development of your character and leadership ability?

Team Performance

1. Have you established specific job descriptions for each member of your team?
2. Have you identified the personality attributes necessary for a person to be an excellent performer in his job?
3. Have you had any managerial training? (Most of the mega producers had not and, in fact, indicated that this impeded their corporate growth.)
4. Do you have good interviewing skills?

5. Do you have specific performance standards to which your team members are held accountable?
6. Do you insist on cross-training of all job functions? (This is essential for the delivery of high level service.)
7. Do you have a reward/compensation structure in place?
8. Are you an effective motivator for your team?
9. Do you have coaching and counseling skills?
10. Do you have a process and procedure to analyze a person’s performance?

The questions, of course, do not deal with all of the skills or behaviors necessary in this Pinnacle. Your answers should provide you with some insight about your and your team’s strengths and weaknesses. You should start taking steps to deal with any deficiencies now, while enhancing your strengths. As suggested in a previous article, also consider conducting a 360° peer review to obtain a comprehensive, objective look at your practice. In all probability, you will receive some surprising revelations.

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Be a Standard Bearer

Our industry is facing a massive challenge in professional development. There is certainly a tremendous need for it. The firms that require advisors to continually enhance their knowledge and skills are to be applauded. It's an expensive undertaking. Individual advisors, who personally finance their continuing education or who spend the requisite time studying, are to be honored and emulated. Getting professional certifications (CIMA, CFP, CLU, etc) demonstrates commitment and professionalism. If you haven't already done so, commit yourself to on-going professional development.

Avoid those who promote themselves without developing their underlying competencies. While there is a definite need to differentiate yourself from the competition, your differentiation should be based on REAL added value as opposed to the smoke-and-mirror techniques used by so many individuals and firms. For example, it IS smoke-and-mirrors for an advisor to say that they can analyze a portfolio when neither they nor their firm has the technology to perform a viable analysis. But, what is "viable"? In the "olden days" of the 1970s and 1980s, portfolio analysis was compiling comments from various analysts and possibly taking into account a firm's recommended asset allocation for institutional portfolios. Now, of course, customization of a portfolio should be the norm. An advisor should take into account tax efficiencies, consider strategic and tactical asset allocations within multi-disciplinary portfolios, and evaluate everything relative to a client's multi-faceted, long-term needs and objectives. You'll certainly agree that most advisors do not and cannot provide such services. That's why those who deliver these services are the elite.

Ours is a unique industry. People are hired to advise clients on how to invest and manage their money (often the client's life savings). Most advisors only receive a minimal amount of training before they are allowed to hang their shingle and start their practice. They pass Series 6 or 7 and become fully licensed registered representatives. Anyone subscribing to this publication realizes that a licensing exam is merely the beginning of a long-term educational process. Unfortunately, far too many people allow studying for the exam to be the end of their formal industry education. While they may pick up additional knowledge along the way, it is usually knowledge required to make a better sales presentation, or because the advisor needed to answer a client's question. Does this sound harsh? Probably. But, if you take a close look at the industry, you'll realize that there is a lot of truth written here.

A Call to Arms

We need to demand and set more stringent standards within our industry. Collectively, we can upgrade the financial industry by telling our firms that we want higher levels of professional development courses and seminars. We cannot settle for courses that only offer the minimal information required to meet continuing education requirements. Higher demands should also be supported by the various industry associations. Most importantly, you should make higher demands of yourself. ■

About the Author

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