

Dr Greg Chapman



Doing the business

Sales for accountants who can't – or hate to – sell.

Hello, this is XYZ Accountants ... Yes certainly we can help you with your tax ... Yes, we can also assist with the personal returns, trusts and super reporting for your directors and their families ... Are you talking to any other accountants? ... You only want to deal with us? That's great. Would you like to know our rates? ... Oh, you're happy with whatever our standard fees are ... When would you like to start? ... Yes I can fit you in tomorrow at 10am. I look forward to meeting with you, and thank you for your business."

I guess you get calls like that all the time. You don't? If you had a stream of calls like this, you would never have to get into the uncomfortable business of 'selling yourself' to every new caller. Don't believe it's possible?

Who needs to sell?

There are some businesses where the person behind the counter just says: "May I take your order?" They don't need to sell or convince you how their products are better and cheaper than those from the business across the road.

Do you, instead, feel at times like a used-car salesman trying to push your services, and that this is unbecoming to your professionalism? The key difference between the used car salesman who has to twist arms for a sale and the person serving at the

store is their marketing. The store person needs very little in the way of sales skills, because they know when you make contact, you have already made up your mind to buy from them.

Most used cars sales deals are done on price. Apart from some signage, there is little in the way of marketing. In the case of the aforementioned store, there will have been substantial marketing. This could be in the form of branding, advertising, website, publicity or pro-active word-of-mouth marketing, so that when the customer has a need for the company's products, they are the natural choice. The customer has already made up their mind to buy before they walk in the store.

Promoting your services

How is it possible to sell your services without selling? The more marketing you do, the less you need to sell.

How does this help accountants? In order for the type of conversation presented above to become common, the accountant must prepare the potential client so they are ready to 'buy' when they call. If they are ready to buy, you don't have to sell.

The biggest reason that your client enquiries may not sound like the one in the introduction is because your practice looks like all the others. You have used a standard accounting website package that thousands of other accountants use. You don't demonstrate how you will be better at solving their issues. You don't give them the confidence that you have a unique process that will address their problems so they don't need to contact other accountants, and your fee is barely an issue.

If you are unable to create this confidence in your potential clients so that they believe you are the right accountant for them, the only choice they have is to com-

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pare by price, as most accountants look the same to them. If you are referred by someone else, the potential client will still be looking for clues that you are not the same as other accountants. What clues are you giving?

Giving your potential clients confidence

The first thing most people seeking a new accountant will look at is your website (even if they have been referred). What does it say about your practice? That you are a 'Jack of All Trades' or you have particular specialities?

Perhaps you specialise in tradesmen. If that is the case, what particular benefits do you offer the tradie that a general accountant does not offer? Does your special process save them time or money, or make their business more profitable? What proof is there that it will work?

If you had a package that helps tradesmen be more productive with their time so they could make more money and pay less tax, and you had lots of testimonials about how good you were and had a system for getting this message out to all the tradies in your area, don't you think most your conversations with new enquirers would be like the one in the introduction?

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Dr Greg Chapman is the author of *The Five Pillars of Guaranteed Business Success*. Visit www.FivePillarsBusinessSuccess.com to download a free copy of his Mission Statements Made Easy tool.

Reality checklist

1 Marketing your practice is essential to retain and attract clients.

2 Most new clients check out your firm's website to see your offering.

3 Promote your services clearly to give clients confidence in your practice.