



---

## SHINE A SPOTLIGHT ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL SERVICE FIRM

### Before the Curtain Rises

Well before any performance, dancers invest time building a solid foundation. It's this foundation – not the costumes, lighting or even music – that enables them to give a persuasive, moving performance that connects with their audience.

With effective marketing, the same sequence applies. Before the curtain rises on your attempts to attract clients, make sure you've mastered the basics first:

**Get aligned.** Dancers spend years learning how to align their body properly for balance and how to keep "knees over toes" to prevent injury. What have you done to align with your customer's worldview? Do you really understand what keeps your clients up at night...what their real problems are, which may or may not have anything to do with what you currently offer? What are you doing to stay aligned? Do you say no to opportunities that aren't within your niche? Do you still have a "Plan B" in case your current direction doesn't pay off or have you fully committed to finding a good niche and making it work? How aligned are your services and pricing with what really sells in today's market?

**Build strength.** Accomplished dancers may look graceful and light on their feet, but the illusion is only possible because of tremendous strength and power from within. How do you demonstrate your firm's strength? By showing the market your authority to do good work through well-written case studies, client testimonials, bios, media appearances, and measurable results.

**Be flexible.** Without flexibility, dancers cannot move fully or prevent injury. The same can be said of your approach to serving your clients. Do you only offer one way to address a client's needs (i.e., high-priced consulting)? If so, you'll miss opportunities. Package what you do in several ways, at various price points.

**Go slow to go fast.** Dancers aren't born being able to execute complicated choreography. Ballet dancers train for years before going "en pointe" (into toe shoes). It may not take you years, but an effective, customer-focused marketing strategy takes time to develop and launch. This doesn't mean you avoid revenue-producing work in the meantime, it just means you take the time to work "under the radar" to craft the right approach that accelerates your effectiveness once you launch it.

**Artistry.** Every dancer interprets the music and story in her own unique way. This artistry is what differentiates truly outstanding performers and makes for a memorable audience experience. What have you done to identify and communicate your unique competitive advantage? What makes you stand out from others offering the same services? Why should customers buy from you when they have a number of choices? What about your offer, price, guarantee or standard sets you apart and how do you demonstrate that?

**Expert instruction.** In any sport or art form, exceptional performers receive expert instruction, feedback, and coaching. Dancers rely regularly on classes, instructors, mirrors, feedback from partners, video, and critics' reviews to continuously improve and refine their performance. What are you doing to refine yours?

**Rehearsal.** Only after getting aligned, building strength, developing flexibility, learning choreography, and expressing artistry is a dancer ready to rehearse for an actual performance. When you're ready to take your strategy to market, make sure you've tested it first. This means trying out your positioning statement informally at networking events, writing an article or two and getting feedback, conducting a small amount of telephone research with people in your target market, and so on.

Before you spend the money to develop a new logo, print new business stationary, design new brochures, revise your website, or go on a sales call test and rehearse your message. When you start getting a "that's for me!" response from your audience, you're ready for the spotlight.

### On Stage & In the Spotlight

Once you're on stage, your hard work and preparation pay off. However the marketing process continues:

**Lights, camera, action!** Being in the spotlight means it's time to shine. The dancer's hard work pays off, enhanced by music, lighting, sets, costumes and makeup. The same is true of how you present your message to the market. Your website, brochures, talks, published articles, how you introduce yourself when networking, and the sales process are simply vehicles for communicating the fundamentals you've put in place before the curtain rises. If you start with them, without the basics outlined above, you risk looking foolish and off the mark when it comes to connecting with your audience.

**Connect with your audience.** Being on stage doesn't guarantee that a dancer will engage the audience. You've gotta work it! At a recent repertory performance of amateur dancers at Joy of Motion, a local dance school, the audience enthusiastically hooted and hollered as the Street Jam dancers fully engaged them with their energy, funk, attitude, and huge smiles of joy. The audience fed off that energy and, in turn, motivated the dancers to give their best. What are you doing to build and sustain a relationship with your clients? Are you pushing a stale portfolio of products and services or are you listening to what your clients want and responding in kind?

**Exceptional performance.** Long-term success at the box office depends on an exceptional performance time after time. So once you've closed the deal, what are you doing to ensure exceptional performance for your clients? Your most powerful marketing strategy is turning in a great performance time after time.

**Remember your supporting cast & crew.** Nobody tolerates a prima ballerina that alienates those around her for long, no matter how talented she is. Likewise, if you don't attend to relationships with employees, peers, supervisors, vendors, and allied professionals, you'll find yourself wondering why everyone around you is so "difficult to work with." What are you doing to nurture relationships and alignment within and beyond your firm to ensure your strategy to attract more clients moves forward?

In the end, if you give your audience a good value, at a fair price, based on solid preparation and a stellar performance, you'll garner good reviews, and have a long, fruitful run at the box office. Break a leg!