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## ARE YOU PLAYING CHECKERS OR CHESS?

- \* Attend a networking event and expect it to generate business
- \* Invest thousands of dollars in direct mail and expect prospects to eagerly call about your services
- \* Treat your vendors poorly by not paying them on time or not communicating with them in a timely manner
- \* Misunderstand the differences between advertising, PR, and promotion - and what they can and cannot do for your professional service firm
- \* Underestimate how important it is for you to address your clients' PERCEIVED need (i.e., what THEY think they need) vs. what you know they need

You're playing chess when you...

- \* Understand that there are right clients and wrong clients for your firm, based on where you want your firm to be in one year, two years, five years - and that your definition of "right" will change over time
- \* Consider what the right kinds of clients look like for your firm and then carefully develop a roadmap for all marketing activities that align with your definition of "right"
- \* Use a combination of carefully crafted "touches" to move prospects through your relationship pipeline from Stranger, to Acquaintance, to Friend, to Lover, to Loyal Partner. Are looking six moves ahead, instead of at the next move. Whether it's developing your website, deciding what committees or networking groups to join, if you should invest in a particular piece of marketing collateral, or where to publish your next article...chess players see the connections between today's marketing decisions and their impact months and years ahead. For a game plan to avoid checkmate, try these things:
- \* Consider where you want to be in 6 months, 12 months, 18 months and 36 months. Identify the big steps to get you there. I organize my actions by "theme of the month." For example, within 6 months, I want to be well into developing an online platform to launch subscription-based marketing tools. So January and February are Research Months. I'm attending two related conferences to quickly assess the latest approaches, make some good contacts, and scope the competition.
- \* Your time is precious, so why squander it on marketing activities that don't fill your pipeline with the right kinds of prospects? Decide how or if to invest time in a particular action (networking, developing a brochure, sending thank-you notes, writing a newsletter, giving a talk) based on how it aligns with attracting attention from the right kinds of prospects. I've recently joined a Steering Committee because, in addition to loving the cause it supports, I'll be exposed in a leadership capacity to my target audience.
- \* When following up after an initial contact or introduction, you're nowhere near making the sale. The game is just beginning. Make your goal one of learning more about the other person's condition so they feel comfortable you're tuned into their needs. Moving from Stranger to Acquaintance to Friend to Lover takes several "touches," including telephone conversation(s), face-to-face meeting(s), email, sending them to your website to dig around (because you've stocked it full of valuable freebies), seeing you in action as a speaker, or reading about you in the press. Put a predictable system of "touches" in place and run everyone through it.
- \* Set a huge, "unattainable" goal and then connect the dots to reach it. In 2005, I have my eye on penetrating specific major organizations and creating partnerships for national distribution of my marketing education programs. I'm envisioning what these relationships look like in the end and am taking much smaller, practical, "doable" steps now to get there. These include attending conferences where I can meet key contacts that I've already identified (and where I'll get the lay of the land to speak at next time), putting the wheels in motion for a series of books (the ultimate business card!) to build credibility and exposure, experimenting with local prototypes (where the sales cycle is shorter and there's not a lot of expensive travel involved to make the sale), and building a solid relationship slowly with VIPs before jumping the gun.

Ready to play chess? Your move!

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