

REPLACING
- THE -
RAINMAKER

WORKSHOPS

WHAT CLIENTS WANT

This workbook accompanies the audio workshop. It includes speaker's notes, which summarize the content covered in the workshop. It also includes activities, which you'll complete during the workshop, and a continuing education assignment, which you'll complete after the workshop. The continuing education assignment gives you a chance to apply the theory you learned in a practical setting. At the end, there's a quiz to test what you've learned as well as space to make notes and information on where to go to learn more.

SPEAKER'S NOTES

Learning outcomes

- You'll learn what factors are most important to clients when evaluating or choosing an accountant.
- You'll learn about the biggest gaps between client expectation and accountant performance.
- You'll learn how to write your messaging to speak to client priorities.

What clients want

- Understanding what your clients want is a key part of crafting your messaging.
- Your messaging explains what you do, for whom you do it and why you're different.
- Your messaging should speak to your clients' top priorities.

Know your audience

- Think about how you pitch yourself to clients and prospective clients.
- The important question is: Do your clients care about the things you're talking about?
- The things that matter to clients matter for the entire duration of your relationship.

Target your messaging

- By learning what clients care about, you can better target your messaging efforts.
- Better messaging means you'll spend less time looking for new clients.
- It also means you'll find better clients, who stick around for the long haul.

Unread emails, unreturned phone calls...

- Clients want firms that are responsive.
- Responsiveness is a big deal to clients.
- Clients don't want to feel ignored.

Rapid response

- Give your clients assurances of your commitment to responsiveness.
- Integrate your policies into your promotional materials.
- You want your messaging to shout loud and clear: We will be there for you.

Proactive, not reactive

- Consider how you can exceed client expectations around responsiveness.
- Anticipate client needs and offer proactive strategic advice.
- Put processes in place to discover if you're underserving your clients.

A personal touch

- Clients want service that is personal.
- Clients want accountants who invest the time to understand and serve their needs.
- It's not good enough to provide a one-size-fits-all suite of accounting services.

With personalized solutions

- Offer personalized service to each client, tailored around their individual needs.
- Tell them about the products and services that your firm offers.
- Be clear how these products or services will benefit them.

Earn their trust

- Clients also want accountants who offer a comprehensive set of services.
- Clients don't only see their accountant as a commodity provider.
- Clients increasingly see their accountant as a trusted advisor.

Expand your offerings

- Clients want strategic advice and it's on you to provide it.
- Become a one-stop shop for all their financial and accounting needs.
- If you don't offer a comprehensive set of services, your clients will find an accountant who does.

Spread the word

- Educate your clients about all your firm offers.
- Develop strong relationships with strategic alliance partners who can deliver additional services.
- Make sure accountants are comfortable talking about all the firm's services with clients.

Know your stuff

- Clients want expertise.
- Clients pay attention to the expertise of the partners at the firm.
- Clients want to trust that their accountants will give them accurate and authoritative information.

Speak in specifics

- Be specific about what expertise you offer.
- Use numbers to back up your claims.
- Give your clients confidence that they're in good hands.

Ditch your flip phone

- Clients want technology that is easy to use.
- Your clients are taking advantage of new technologies in their own businesses.
- They expect their accountant to be doing the same.

Put tech to work for you

- There are plenty of opportunities for integrating technology.
- Adopt technology that facilitates "anytime" communication.
- Consider moving away from paper to digital.

Leverage new technology

- Online client portals allow clients to access their account anytime, anywhere.
- Utilize your website as an information hub.
- Figure out how you can leverage technology to drive success.

Know your field

- Clients want their accountant to be knowledgeable.
- Clients want to trust that their accountant is up to date in their field.
- They want their accountant to communicate about changing regulations and standards that could impact them.

Keep up to date

- Provide your staff with sufficient resources and opportunities to stay up to date in the field.
- Provide examples in your messaging of how clients have benefitted from your expertise.
- Show future clients how they'll benefit too by offering proof early in the sales process.

Money matters

- Clients care about cost.
- They want an accounting firm that provides an excellent value and a reasonable cost for service.
- No matter how much they're paying, clients want to be clear what they're paying for.

Value matters too

- Clients are particularly price sensitive when choosing a firm in the first place.
- They don't want to feel as if they're spending more than they need to.
- They want to feel they're getting the best value for whatever amount they choose to pay.

Specialize, don't generalize

- Clients care about specialization.
- They don't just want compliance products, they also want strategic advice.
- If you can't serve their specific needs, they're likely to go with someone else.

Know your niche

- When developing your messaging, focus on your specialized skills.
- Consider whether you have a concentration of clients in a certain area.
- Consider whether you specialize in a particular product or service that appeals to clients across a variety of industries.

Analyze word choices

- Eliminate talking points that don't resonate with clients.
- Think about the reasons clients give when they leave your firm.
- Create messaging that speaks to their true concerns.

Lose the fluff

- Craft messaging that speaks to your ability to meet the most important client needs.
- You may have to let go of words and phrases that have been part of your lexicon for a long time.
- If they aren't resonating with your clients, they aren't helping your cause.

Back up your claims

- As you craft your messaging, be specific about your claims.
- Use facts and figures and be precise when citing statistics.
- Tell your clients exactly what you do to deliver on your claims.

Improve their lives

- Articulate the benefits you offer.
- Don't get lost in describing the features of your service.
- Focus on how you make your clients' lives easier.

Practice what you preach

- If you don't deliver on your promises, your messaging won't save you.
- If you promise responsiveness yet ignore emails, there's no congruency.
- You have to prove that you mean what you say from the very beginning.

See it live

- For example, you know that clients want to see their accountants as trusted advisors.
- Therefore you need to develop messaging that speaks to that priority.
- Your messaging might read: "We're more than just CPAs to our clients; we help them plan for every part of their lives."

Ask for feedback

- Check in with your clients regularly to see how you're actually doing.
- Make sure you know whether you're actually giving them what they want.
- Ask: How are we performing in the areas that are most important to you? Are you satisfied?

Summary

- Target your messaging to speak to client priorities.
- Jettison any talking points that don't resonate with your clients.
- Don't waste an opportunity by talking about things that clients don't care about.

ACTIVITIES

If you're completing these activities on your own, please write down your answers in your workbook. If you're completing these activities in a group, please write down your answers individually. Then share your responses with up to two other people. Look for commonalities among everyone's responses and discuss any differences.

Activity 1

Before we talk about the specifics of what clients want from their accountant/accounting firm, what do you think is the most important thing clients want from their accountant/accounting firm? How do you personally deliver on that want? How does your firm deliver?

Activity 2

If clients want an accountant/accounting firm that's personal, responsive, comprehensive, accurate, technologically savvy, knowledgeable, affordable and specialized, how does your firm's messaging speak to each of these wants?

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Ask five of your most trusted clients to answer the following questions: Why did you choose our firm? How are we performing in the areas that are most important to you? Are you satisfied? How likely are you to switch firms? What are the primary considerations that would make you consider switching? Use the feedback to craft messaging that speaks specifically to what clients want.

QUIZ

1. By learning what clients care about, you can learn how to better target your messaging efforts.
2. Lack of responsiveness is one of the top reasons that clients leave their accounting firm. So when you're developing your messaging, you should consider what assurances you can give to clients about your commitment to responsiveness.
3. Rather than just reacting to client needs, it's prudent to consider how you can anticipate them and offer proactive strategic advice.
4. It's not essential to learn about your clients' families, jobs, hobbies and passions.
5. While your clients are taking advantage of new technologies in their own businesses, they don't necessarily expect their accountant to be doing the same.
6. No matter how much they're paying, clients want to be clear what they're paying for.
7. Clients want service that is personal, responsive, comprehensive, accurate, that uses the latest technology, that is knowledgeable, affordable and specialized.
8. You want to craft messaging that speaks directly to your clients' priorities. Lose the fluff that clients don't care about.
9. You don't have to back up your claims with facts and figures or be exact about what and how you will deliver. Clients don't care about the details.
10. Features are far more important than benefits in pitching solutions to client needs.

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about additional workshops, or other Replacing the Rainmaker products and services, please visit ReplacingTheRainmaker.com.