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The "IDKYDT" Syndrome

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The first—and only—time it happened to me, I just stared at my client in total disbelief. He'd just revealed that he'd had a \$4,500 marketing plan written by someone else, not because they were more capable, more experienced, cheaper or more accessible—he'd always loved my work—but because "I Didn't Know You Did That!"

At first I was angry at the client. How could he not know? But after a while, I realized I was really the one at fault—I simply hadn't done my job well enough. And at that moment, I vowed to myself that I was going to do everything in my power to make sure I never heard those awful words again.

Regardless of whether you provide a product, service or both, one of the first things you must do when starting in business is to identify, for yourself, exactly what it is you do.

You need to specifically define for others all the facets of your work. Too often, we're guilty of assuming that others completely understand what we do. One reason this happens is because so much of our time is spent communicating with our colleagues, who likely do understand the true scope of our work.

But our clients and potential clients may not. So, what do we do?

We tell 'em!

Let's begin with something very basic—your business card. Does it tell someone what you do? If the name of your firm is something like "Smith Associates"—it doesn't! Even if the card says "Smith & Co. Engineers," are you civil, mechanical, structural or are you in charge of a choo-choo train?

I'm sure you get my point. The average business card has plenty of room, in addition to the obvious name, address, phone, fax, cellphone, e-mail and web address, to include a few words such as "electrical engineers, specializing in power plants."

My business card carries the words "copywriting/public relations/marketing consulting" across the top. That may not include everything I do, but at least if someone pulls out my card six months from now they'll have a clue as to who I am and what services I offer.

Any printed materials you distribute, including advertising, should give as much of a picture of your scope of products/services as possible. Brochures, websites, newsletters and press releases are all places where this information should appear, but often doesn't. The more often you repeat the message, the less likely you are to fall prey to the IDKYDT Syndrome.

Even when communicating with others verbally, make it a point to cite examples of the variety of work you've done, so your listener is clear as to the potential things you might be able to do for him. With a little practice, you can do this so smoothly and naturally that people are unaware of this marketing tactic, yet your message is being delivered loud and clear.

If you add a new product or service, make lots of noise about it via press releases, letters to existing clients and prospects, and the like. Shout it from the rooftops.

The key points to remember: 1) Don't ever assume that the world is aware of your existence and of

the scope of your products and/or services; 2) Tell them, over and over again, often, all the things you do; and 3) Never stop doing #2!

If you follow these simple rules, which are even more important in tough economic times such as these, maybe you'll be fortunate enough never to have to pound your head against a wall after hearing a client say, "I didn't know you did that!"

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