

Describing your Firm with Passion & Energy, without being cliché...

No matter how different your services are from those of other consultants, if you have a website, you probably have an "About Us" page. Whether you call it "Our Firm," "About the Company," or something else, the page offers prospective clients a glimpse into your background.

If you look at the "About Us" pages of many consulting firms, you'll find more hype than help for their businesses. Here are some ideas for making sure this part of your website works for you.

What Do You Have to Say for Yourself?

When prospective clients go to your website, their first goal is often to find out what your practice does. If your visitors are intrigued by your offerings, expect them to check out your "About Us" page. You should be thrilled when someone goes that far because it means your site is doing its job.

Don't waste this opportunity, as many consultants do, by offering tepid or irrelevant descriptions of who you are. After all, this is your chance to blow your own horn. On other pages, your content should be client-focused, educational, and promotional. On your "About Us" page, visitors expect you to wax eloquent about yourself and your business.

Best Is Not Good Enough

Most website visitors scan content quickly and move on. Your "About Us" page must make a strong impression quickly or visitors won't stay long.

As you think about what to say, keep in mind that clients know hype when they see it. If you make unsubstantiated or exaggerated claims, you call into question any other assertions you make. One individual practitioner proclaims, for example, that he: "Provides the best information technology solutions for your business needs." Maybe this consultant does provide the best solutions—at least in the minds of some—but, without validation, the assertion seems more of an aspiration than a valid claim, and that isn't helpful.

If you truly are the best—as substantiated by someone other than you—include that on your "About Us" page. Otherwise, find more specific language to characterize the quality of your service.

One consultant, who includes testimonials from clients to back up his claims, puts it this way: "While everyone can recognize a strong brand, very few people know how to build one...XXX has written two books on the subject and helped hundreds of organizations discover, align, and actively manage their integrated brand."

The One and Only You

A close cousin to the "best" consultant is the "unique" one. Service providers often characterize themselves or their practices as unique in some way. For example, one firm says that it "...is unique by specializing in providing a critical range of expertise to owners and leaders of small and mid-size companies." Another firm boasts that it

"...offers a unique combination of academic background and real organizational experience in the IT industry."

Unique means "having no like or equal; unparalleled; incomparable." It would be great for you to legitimately claim uniqueness to differentiate your practice from others. But it is not unique to specialize in services for small and mid-sized business owners. And it's not unique to have academic background and organizational expertise in the IT industry.

It's a mistake to claim that your area of specialization is unique, particularly when it isn't. Be careful about throwing around terms that you believe differentiate you. They might actually encourage your prospective clients to scoff.

If you have ideas, methods, or processes that are, in fact, unique, name them. But before you call yourself the one and only, make sure it's clear why you are unique.

Give It Some Zing

While you have your prospective client's attention, use powerful, positive language to help the client get to know you and your practice. Avoid limp declarations that sap the power of your expertise like this example: "XXX Consulting draws on the knowledge and expertise of our consultants."

Wouldn't clients expect you to draw on the expertise of your team? And what is the expertise that they have to draw on? The language above isn't going to motivate any client to contact you. Are you using any obvious throwaway lines on your "About Us" page (or in any other marketing communication)? It's essential not to overstate your case, but it's equally important to be sure that you *make* a case.

It's Not Your Biography

When clients look at your "About Us" page, they're likely looking for evidence that you are qualified to execute the work you describe in your service offerings. Unlike your biographer, they don't need to know about everything you've done in the past. In this example, the consultant seems to be regurgitating a résumé:

Education and Certification

Virtual CEO Certification, 2000

Target Account Selling, 1996

Karrass Effective Negotiating Training, 1996

Solution Selling Training, 1992

Your prospective client probably doesn't care about a private seminar you took more than a decade ago on a topic that's not relevant to your offerings. Instead, show how your specific skills support the claims you make in your service descriptions and elsewhere on your site.

If you've helped twenty clients solve their cash flow problems, say so. Don't dwell on the *Cash Flow Improvement* webinar you attended. Tell your prospective clients what you actually did. Your "About Us" page is not the place for a laundry list of the classes you have attended. Use it to show your major accomplishments—unless, of course, you are secretly trying to get the attention of corporate recruiters.

"Client First" Clichés

The claim that you "put clients first" has become such a cliché. Steer clear of warmed-over blurbs about how your clients are your first priority. They already believe you will behave that way. One firm, for instance, says that its

goal is: "To Always Deliver More Than We Promise and To Serve As Our Clients' Partner in Their Quest For Excellence."

What does that do to advance this firm's story? Nothing. And readers will readily skip right over it. Your prospective clients *expect* you will help them with all possible effort. If you feel that you must say that your clients come first, find an example that proves it.

What's the Point?

Most consultants I meet talk about their businesses with more energy and passion in person than they can express in writing. They speak in crisp, clear language about their work. Find a way to translate your most compelling verbal descriptions of what you do onto your "About Us" page.

Don't settle for telling clients that you are "unique" or the "best." Most of us find it a challenge to write about ourselves in a convincing manner. And we can easily fall into the trap of recycling the same old language that people have used for decades.

Check your "About Us" page for clichés and empty claims. You may be surprised how easy it is for that stuff to sneak in. With some effort, though, you can transform that page into a compelling marketing message. Look at every sentence on your "About Us" page through the eyes of a prospective client. Will your words get that client to pick up the phone and call you?

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