RAINMAKING®

A COMPREHENSIVE CLIENT RELATIONS AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TRAINING SYSTEM

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BECAUSE TODAY'S COMPETITIVE CHALLENGES DEMAND A NEW STANDARD OF PERFORMANCE

Historically, as trained professionals, we have been in great awe of those few professionals who seemed to possess the magical powers to attract and retain business. Many of us have been under the impression that these abilities must emanate from some secret source of knowledge, accessible only to a select few.

Thousands of articles have been published, but it remains painfully clear that effective business development is not the result of more knowledge. While some are naturally competent at working with clients, most of us must learn those skills. The difficulty with developing these capabilities has been in teaching them in a way that is practical and usable in the normal office setting.

Now there's RAINMAKING®. A dramatic departure from conventional approaches, RAINMAKING® develops the specific skills that are needed by professionals throughout the day for effectively handling a variety of client episodes.

The real difference in RAINMAKING® is that it provides a totally new way to teach these critical skills. While existing efforts have been content with simply reading articles or discussing complex theories, they overlook a fundamental fact: we learn by watching good examples, understanding basic steps to follow, practicing the skill, and receiving feedback.

RAINMAKING® doesn't focus on lectures. Instead it isolates critical business development and client-relations skills, and breaks them down into a few key steps. RAINMAKING® includes practice followed by feedback. This practical combination promotes usable “on assignment with clients” application.

The result is high performance "Rainmakers" possessing skills that enable them to approach client interactions with the energy and confidence necessary to be effective. Mastering these skills is a prime determinant of successful performance for professionals and their firms. Those who succeed will thrive. Those who don't will stagnate.

THE RAINMAKING® TRAINING PROCESS

How do we teach a professional the skill of handling telephone inquiries from new prospective clients, the process for securing retainer fees, courting prospective client contacts, or cross selling existing clients on other services provided by the firm? The best learning process developed so far is called Behavioural Modeling. It involves five elements:

1. **A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING.** This is similar to the checklist provided to pilots to outline the required steps to take off and land an airplane. The framework is important to understanding the various elements of the example. In the RAINMAKING® program, participant workbooks provide a framework for understanding. Each contains a brief overview of the topic, its importance, the three to six key steps the professional is to follow, and a rationale for each of the key steps. The balance of the written materials include checklists or forms to aid participants in practicing the skills.

2. **A DEMONSTRATION.** If a picture is worth a thousand words, then an example or model can convey a complete story. In the RAINMAKING® program, sessions begin with a demonstration where a volunteer from the group handles a particular episode in a realistic manner. These demonstrations are an important element of the program.

3. **PRACTICE.** Watching someone drive a car does not build sufficient skills. Practice is essential to acquire a skill. Practice is at the heart of the RAINMAKING® program. Practice is required to perfect any skill. Practice builds the skill itself along with the confidence to try it in the real world following a training session. Practice is the vehicle in which the individual gets comfortable with applying new behaviour to everyday client interactions. By a careful learning design, every practitioner has the opportunity to practice becoming a competent Rainmaker. Real life situations are used. In each module of two hours, more than half of the training time is spent in practicing the specific skill.

4. **FEEDBACK**. Providing feedback lets participants know how they are doing. Similarly, they are directed on how their behaviour can be improved. Feedback is provided by several means within the RAINMAKING® program. First it comes from the other professionals, constructively passed on to participants. Feedback comes from the program leader who is constantly working with the participants during their practice sessions. Finally, because steps and principles have been carefully spelled out, one is able to be highly self–analytical about his or her own performance.

5. **TRANSFER**. This final phase ensures that skills acquired during the session are applied by the professionals back in their offices - in their “real world”. Participants commit themselves to applying their newly acquired skills with clients. Following the implementation of these skills, participants report their progress at each subsequent training session.

THE RAINMAKING® MODULES

RAINMAKING® is comprised of individual "stand–alone" modules designed to help professionals deal with the most frequently faced and difficult client situations.

MODULE ONE: **ACTIVE LISTENING**

At the very least, an inability to listen can cause confusion and misunderstanding, resulting in the loss of time and revenue. See the tremendous value in positively impacting client communications through active listening.

MODULE TWO: **HANDLING TELEPHONE INQUIRIES**

One of the greatest untapped resources for business development comes in the form of countless telephone inquiries from prospective clients. Discover ways to convert those inquiries into active on going clients of your firm.

MODULE THREE: **COURTING PROSPECTIVE CLIENTS**

Many occasions will arise when you will make contact with people who may be prospective clients for your services. Learn how to follow up and take full advantage of those occasions.

MODULE FOUR: **MEETING THE PROSPECTIVE CLIENT**

The first meeting with a prospective client can be unnerving for even the most experienced professional. This session will show you how to handle the interaction effectively while maintaining a consultative atmosphere.

MODULE FIVE: **MANAGING CLIENT EXPECTATIONS**

Many find out the hard way that clients don't appreciate good efforts that fall short of their expectations. This module teaches the basic steps to creating the ruler by which the client will inevitably measure your performance.

MODULE SIX: **REQUESTING RETAINER FEES**

One of the most difficult obstacles any professional must overcome is what appears to be the natural reluctance to ask for money. Discover the steps to making the request for an initial retainer relatively painless, for you and the client.

MODULE SEVEN: **CROSS SELLING SERVICES**

The one statistically proven business development fact is that the clients you already serve will continue to be the ongoing source of the great majority of your work. Learn the skill of cross selling them on the other services your firm provides.

MODULE EIGHT: **TRANSFERRING THE CLIENT**
So, you're transferring one of your clients to some other professional in your office because of the specialized nature of the client's situation. What happens if your client feels like they were passed off? Discover how to handle this effectively.

MODULE NINE: **ASKING FOR REFERRALS**
We just assume that our clients know that we would welcome new business. Unfortunately, referrals happen infrequently if left to chance. This module deals with ensuring an increased ongoing supply.

MODULE TEN: **DELEGATING CLIENT WORK**
This session will cover the basic steps for moving aspects of client work to other professionals without the traditional frustration faced by both delegator and delegatee.

MODULE ELEVEN: **HANDLING ACCOUNTS EXCEEDING ESTIMATES**
You've noted that your time on a client file exceeds that which you initially anticipated. What do you do: discount your time or simply bill and cross you fingers? This module outlines how to handle these situations more profitably.

MODULE TWELVE: **HANDLING CLIENT COMPLAINTS**
Central to rendering good service is mastering the skill it takes to deal with client problems. Here we build the skills necessary to handle complaint situations in such a way that we can at times dramatically improve the client relationship.

MODULE THIRTEEN: **BUILDING CLIENT RAPPORT**
Clients who trust and like us tend to perceive services rendered more positively and complain less. Building this rapport is a skill that many possess naturally and others can acquire.

MODULE FOURTEEN: **PRESENTING ADVICE**
Good quality professional services can be appreciated more by clients who not only understand them but who also feel a degree of participation in selecting from the menu of available alternatives (in harmony with the professional’s considered recommendations).

A COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING SYSTEM

This particular training effort is designed to be completely self-contained, such that it can become your firm's own internal program, led by your own professionals, and capable of transferring skills that already exist within your firm. There have been over 300 professional service firms throughout the world, ranging in size from small boutiques to firms of over 1000 professionals using this program. The fourteen-skill building modules contained in this program include participant workbook materials, a leader's implementation guide, on-site coaching of your internal leaders, and ongoing implementation assistance.

There are several valuable results which the program is designed to achieve:

• It transfers the knowledge and skills about client relations from your senior professionals to your younger practitioners.
This program is predicated on the realization that for most firms, 10% of your firm's professionals already possess exceptional client relations skills. The key is transferring this know-how and skill to the majority of your people.

• It shortens the learning curve by speeding up development of client relations and marketing skills in its participants.
The client relations skills it traditionally took ten or more years to acquire through trial and error can now be developed far more quickly.

•Your own professionals and/or internal support people can deliver the training without the need for outside consultants or "experts".
Outside experts rarely know enough about you professionals, your firm, your clients, or your competitors. Since this program is led internally, your people will be far more candid and open about real situations and opportunities where they may exist.

• It compliments other marketing programs your firm already has in place such as mentoring, individual marketing plans, industry niche marketing, and total quality management programs.
This program does not pretend to be the only solution to your firm's client challenges, but it does address the neglected area of client relations skills training for your professionals.

• This program is highly considerate of practitioners time.
There is no pre-reading or post reading required of participants. And, our leaders tell us that on average they only spend about 20 minutes preparing to lead a session.

• It is highly flexible and modular so it can be delivered the way you want, when you want it, consistent with your firm's needs, time demands and culture.
It's not a cookie-cutter training program. We suggest a one two-hour session be held every month. If time demands on your professionals are such that two hours per month is too much, then schedule less frequently. It's always your judgment call, not ours.