

The Art of Selling Ourselves as Accountants

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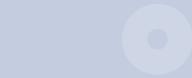
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Woman of a some firsts

- First woman to run a registered accounting practice
- First woman on the FMC Zimbabwe and Simbisa Boards
- First woman on MARS



Background and Journey

Professional Background

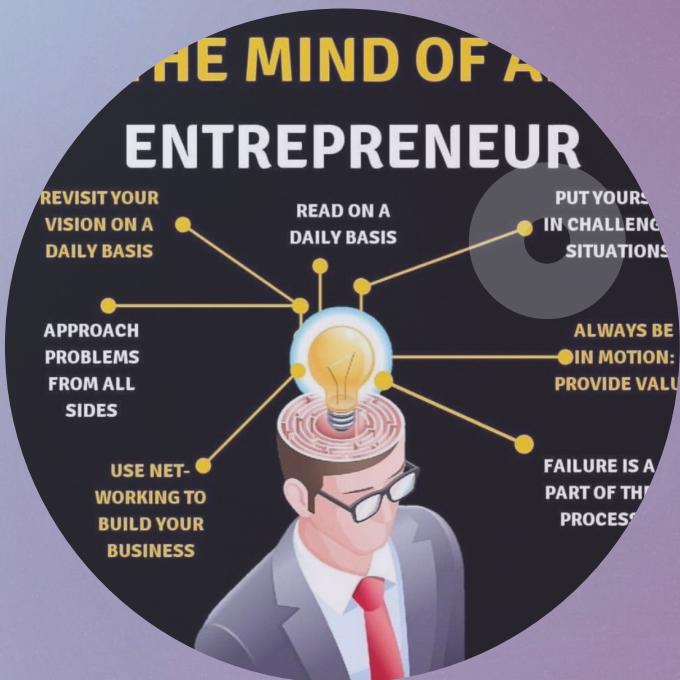
- Started as a Secretary sold bricks and sand before working for a diverse group in the manufacturing sector Randalls
- Enrolled for my first degree in which specialised in Financial Management
- Worked at FML Asset Management
- Joined EY Zim and left with 10 months of articles left
- Had to redo articles at EY SA, effectively trained for 4 years 8 months
- Failed board one, passed on second attempt

Path to Entrepreneurship

Took a leap of faith and left EY at the end of 2009 as an assistant manager,

- Started July 28 in Dar es Salaam, relocated to Zimbabwe
- Created brand awareness through 'oversharing'
- First major Zimbabwe client was family doctor and continues to return for similar ad hoc work
- Built reputation through quality work and networking

Starting July28



Motivation and Steps

- Felt restless and believed I could do more, leading to the idea of starting a firm.
- Registered a shelf company called July28 in 2004, anticipating future use.
- EY TZ office offered a role but required serious clerical work, making the decision to start my own practice easier.
- Assisted a cousin with financial statement preparation, boosting confidence in my capabilities.
- Moved to Zimbabwe in September 2010 and began actively finding new work, leading to the establishment of July28.

The Role of Networking

- Networking was instrumental in the establishment and growth of July28.
- Assisted a cousin with financial statement preparation, which boosted confidence and led to the preparation of 600 sets for government schools.
- Secured initial work in Zimbabwe through oversharing with a family doctor, who introduced a due diligence project.
- Former boss's brother, through networking, led to setting up a finance department and creating cost cards for a milling and snacks company.
- Networking at events, such as playing golf in the Zim Open, resulted in 12 promising business leads.

Importance of Self-Marketing

- Self-marketing played a crucial role in gaining initial clients for July28. For example, oversharing personal updates led to new opportunities.
- While visiting a family doctor, the habit of sharing life events revealed a due diligence opportunity with a Swedish Venture Fund, resulting in winning work from KPMG.
- The quality of work delivered, such as the precise and factual due diligence report, impressed clients and led to further referrals, exemplifying how self-marketing builds a reputation.
- Good acts have unintended outcomes. Sometimes people want to be associated with you because of what you have done for other people.

Strategies for Self-Marketing

Oversharing

Sharing personal and professional updates frequently. This creates brand awareness and keeps you top of mind. Example: "I always told people what was going on in my life."

Leveraging Networks

Utilizing connections to gain new opportunities. Example: "My network was the stepping stone I needed to branch out further to a wider network."

Creating a Professional Image

Ensuring a polished and consistent professional presence. Example: "I engaged a branding company for the organisation's image."

Differentiation

Standing out by offering unique, bespoke services. Example: "We chose to be bespoke. Each client is different so we don't use a one-size-fits-all template."

Building Personal Brand

Building a personal brand is crucial for professional success. As the speaker noted, "your personal brand is also about your values who are you or what you stand for when people want to do business with you." This authenticity helps in creating trust and lasting relationships. For instance, refusing to engage in unethical practices earned the speaker long-term clients. A strong personal brand also involves being visible and memorable, as seen when honesty and transparency led to referrals and new opportunities. Ultimately, your personal brand shapes how others perceive and interact with you, often opening doors to new possibilities.

Unique Value Proposition (UVP)



Understanding UVP

- UVP differentiates you from others in the market.
- It highlights unique skills, experiences, and strengths.
- Essential for attracting clients and building a reputation.

Examples from My Experience

- Diverse roles from secretary to asset management then becoming a CA.
- Worked in three different countries, gaining varied experience.
- Personalized client relationships, offering bespoke services.

Developing New Skills

Importance of Skill Development

Developing new skills and moving with the times matters. Venturing into technology has also assisted me and in the last year I am involving the trainees to AI, Robotics Process Automation over and above the traditional CaseWare automation and Data Analytics.

Staying Updated

The ability to assist with more information-based meetings and production of reports earlier and timely has been of great value. Ensuring you are knowledgeable of your trade establishes your expertise and credibility.

Continuous Learning

As a person I have significant flexibility and am very open to learning new things and not afraid to go into unchartered spaces even with my clients. This approach has allowed me to stand with my clients in challenging situations.

Case Study: Successful Client Engagement



Winning against big brands

Secured a due diligence project from a Swedish Venture Fund after a conversation with a family doctor. The quality of work won over the client, leading to ongoing engagement.

Anonymous referrals have won us work in the private sector against big brands.



Building Trust Through Values

Gained three long-term clients by refusing to engage in unethical tax practices. Demonstrated honesty and transparency, which impressed a bookkeeper present.

Referred to a new opportunities even from my most difficult clients.

Lessons from Board Roles

- Serving on various boards has taught me significant lessons about myself and my capabilities.
- My first board appointment came through a technology rollout project where I impressed the client with my performance.
- Being the first woman on several boards, I faced unique challenges but also found it rewarding as it stretched my abilities and contributed to my growth.
- Understanding that doing a good job and making a difference can lead to more opportunities, as shown by my secondment to another board in Zambia.
- Despite not always being understood, my contributions made a difference, proving that it's okay to approach tasks in a unique way.

Networking and Relationship Building

Step Out of Comfort Zones

You have to be in places you probably don't want to be and outside working hours. Attend events with significant players in your industry, even if it feels uncomfortable.

Build Internal Relationships

Relationship building starts internally. Clients reflect the internal team's alignment and values, which helps in gaining more clients through referrals. Even your own relationship with yourself is important for you to build successful relationships.

Maintain Professionalism

Keep your word and respect contracts. This maintains trust, which is crucial for long-lasting relationships. Ensure your conduct reflects an entrepreneurial mindset.

Marketing Yourself to Potential Clients

Strategies for Marketing Yourself

- Highlight your Unique Value Proposition (UVP). Frame it in a compelling story, e.g., 'I frame mine in a story and love the question why accounting.'
- Utilize social media and public speaking to showcase your journey and expertise. 'Social media and speaking at events in my opinion are good platforms to market yourself and your organisations brand.'
- Always present your professional image. 'Your personal brand is also about your values who are you or what you stand for when people want to do business with you.'

Building Client Relationships

- Leverage your network for referrals. 'Clients grow from other clients. Securing a new client costs 7 times more than securing a client from a referral or happy client.'
- Make a memorable impression by sharing your journey and values. 'Let them know who you are and what you do. Make them remember you by making them feel important without patronising them.'
- Maintain consistency in delivering quality work. 'Doing a good job and making a difference...I was appointed to another board after a series of interviews.'

Conclusion

Self-marketing is essential for personal and professional growth. The journey shared highlights the importance of creating a professional image, building a personal brand, and leveraging your unique value proposition (UVP). Networking and relationship building are crucial, as they can lead to new opportunities and client referrals. Developing new skills and staying updated with industry trends ensures continued relevance and success. Remember, "selling yourself needs to be an authentic process"—stay true to your values and persist through challenges. Start your self-marketing journey today and make a difference in your professional life.

Conclusion



What would you like to ask me?

The image features a diagonal, overlapping pattern of the words "Thank You" in a white, sans-serif font. The text is oriented diagonally, running from the bottom-left towards the top-right. The background is a smooth gradient transitioning from a dark purple on the left to a light blue on the right. The "Thank You" text is repeated approximately five times, with each instance slightly offset from the others to create a sense of depth and movement. The overall design is clean and modern, with a professional and appreciative feel.