How to confidently conduct consulting / advisory client interviews

Neal Coogler
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- You must stay in the session for the duration of the training
- This session is eligible for **1 hour of CPE**
- CPE certificates are emailed directly to you within 4 weeks of the conference date to the same email address you used to register
About today’s speaker

Offering advisory, consulting and outsourced accounting services

Certified Business Advisor (CBA), Institute of Business Advisors

Graduate of Professional Development Program, Woodard Institute

Elite Level Advanced Certified QuickBooks Online ProAdvisor

Tech-oriented Silicon Valley firm

Neal Coogler
Senior Partner,
All About Business Services
Goals for this session

Tips for preparing for and guiding consulting or advisory interviews

Ideas for deliverables that will set you apart

Ways to turn proposals and onboarding into further sales opportunities
Agenda

Definitions
Preparing for the interview
Conducting the interview
Creating awesome deliverables that lead to more business
Questions?
Wrap up
Definitions
“Basic” accounting or bookkeeping services

What are basic accounting or bookkeeping services?
# Five versions of basic services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Accept &amp; Code Transactions</th>
<th>Bill Pay</th>
<th>Clean Up</th>
<th>Tax Organizer</th>
<th>Sales Tax</th>
<th>Monthly Reports</th>
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</table>
Consulting versus advisory

Consulting/Consultant
Engaged in the business of giving expert advice to people working in a professional or technical field.

Service provided by a professional advisor.

Advisory/Advisor
A person who gives advice in a particular field.

Having or consisting in the power to make recommendations but not to take action enforcing them.
Types of advisory services

Operational
Financial
Technology
Leadership
Succession

The Woodard Institute has developed advisory training programs in these five types of advisory services.
Let’s play a game.
Preparing for the Interview
Preparation steps

Preparing mentally

Decide on a pricing strategy

Think though phases

Identify potential clients
Preparing mentally: Mental shifts

From fixing problems to creating a road map
What clients are willing to pay and how they perceive you
Imposter syndrome
Your time

“We are, each of us, a product of the stories we tell ourselves”
— Derren Brown, Happy: Why More or Less Everything is Absolutely Fine
Certification programs

 Depends on type of advisory work

Woodard Institute – program for each of the 5 types of advisory

AICPA – Client Accounting Advisory Services, Data Analytics, Cybersecurity and more

Rootworks – practice management program

Others
Pricing strategies

Possibilities:

Use a scaled approach where you begin at a low monthly rate ($500) and scale up over time
Do a 6-month package or 3-month package with introductory pricing
Negotiate a percentage of profit gained while working with you to be paid monthly, quarterly or upon reaching a particular milestone
If you are really unsure, offer limited time free advisory to an existing client that you think is a good candidate for services
Sample phases for operational advisory services

- **Initial Meeting**
  - Initial interview
  - High level pain points and needs assessment
  - Report and proposal to client

- **Discovery**
  - In Depth Needs and Business Analysis
  - Involve all key personnel
  - May take several sessions
  - In depth report
  - KPIs for next 3 months

- **KPI Check In**
  - Monthly review meeting
  - SWOT check in
  - KPI progress
  - Adjustments

- **Strategy Review**
  - 3-month milestone
  - Were goals met? Why? Why not?
  - Contingency in case something does not go according to plan
  - Review and tweak strategies, KPIs

- **KPI Check In**
  - Monthly review meeting
  - SWOT check in
  - KPI progress
  - Adjustments
Identify potential clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing monthly services clients</td>
<td>Analyze existing client list for good candidates and contact them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New clients coming to you for monthly services</td>
<td>Update your usual intake interview to include questions related to consulting or advisory services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New clients coming to you for consulting or advisory services</td>
<td>Update your branding to include and eventually highlight consulting or advisory services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.” - Arthur Ashe
Analyzing your client list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Name</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Potential for QF Consulting</th>
<th>Potential for Biz Advisory</th>
<th>App Integration</th>
<th>QF Consulting</th>
<th>Gap Analysis</th>
<th>Visual Reports</th>
<th>QI Flow</th>
<th>Automate Workflows</th>
<th>Financial Literacy Training</th>
<th>Monthly KPIs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client 37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client 38</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client 39</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client 40</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client 41</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client 42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client 43</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td>Client 44</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
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**Clients Scoring Over 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Name</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client 34</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client 35</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client 36</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client 42</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client 10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client 12</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client 24</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client 41</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client 23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conducting the Interview
Goals of initial consulting / advisory interview

Discover pain points
Explore value of resolving those pain points (ROI)
Demonstrate your ability and credibility
**Generate excitement about possibilities**
Make a small initial sale
Interview logistics

Who attends
When and where
In person versus virtual (via video conference)
Authority signals
During the interview

You kick off the meeting
Have an agenda but be flexible
Timeline of project
Pricing questions
You end the meeting and define next steps
General interview tips

- Ask multiple types of questions
- Use quotes effectively
- Describe the process
- “Proprietary” names
- Using humor and telling stories
- Listening
Types of questions

Open
Challenging
Clarifying
Confirming
Feeling
Closed
Sample questions

What is holding you back?

How many hours are you working? Are you being paid?

If you could wave a wand over your business, what would you like to achieve?

What would it be like if you could have more time for family, hobbies, etc.?

“You are an expert in your business…we are experts in systems and processes to build your business”

- Peter Hickey, Institute of Advisors
Three interview approaches

Use different strategies for different types of clients or for your unique services

Intake Interview
Enhance your existing intake form with additional questions geared towards consulting or advisory services
Useful when interviewing clients who did not come to you for advisory or consulting services
Brainstorm afterwards on ways you could increase value for the client

Needs Analysis
Do a brief needs analysis with the client
Use either your own set of questions or advisory software such as Maus
Use the software to produce a summary report
Useful for clients who are looking for advisory or consulting

Tailored Interview
Create a custom approach that combines these
Useful when you have a specific or unique advisory service you would like to promote
Will have to create your own appropriate deliverable(s)
Maus needs analysis: Business goals

WHERE IS THE BUSINESS NOW

- Revenue: 1,429,502
- Profit: 897,270
- Margin: 63%
- Number of hours the owner works in the business: 2,500

WHERE DO YOU WANT THE BUSINESS TO GO?

- Revenue: 2,430,000
- Profit: 1,600,000
- Margin: 66%
- Number of hours the owner works in the business: 2,000
- Ideal timeframe (years) to achieve this forecast: 3
Maus needs analysis: Pain points

At today’s meeting, we began analyzing your business needs and goals. We will continue to discuss these in more detail over the coming months.

For today, we identified the major pain points in your business and discussed the relative priority, impact, and financial impact of each one. The chart below summarizes the results of our conversation.

What are the pain points in your business?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pain Point</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Financial Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing - don’t do enough</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimating/Proposals</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium Low</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invoicing</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pricing</td>
<td>Medium High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent is too high</td>
<td>Medium High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need bigger space</td>
<td>Medium High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting job out/help/manage hours</td>
<td>Medium High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creating awesome deliverables
Elements of effective deliverables

Visuals
Rule of three
Powerful whys
The only land animal that can’t jump

The rule of three

The Divine Proportion (aka Golden Ratio, Golden Mean, etc.)

Humor in threes

Storytelling: What happens when you deliberately violate the rule of three
The power of why

Why use your firm and not another firm?
Why contact you after looking at your website?
And … the right level of why

Source: https://www.psychotactics.com/marketing/the-power-of-why-your-psychological-ally-to-marketing-success/
Software tools for enhanced deliverables

A very brief list of potential tools

Excel or SmartSheets

Advisory software tools (Maus)

Financial reporting tools (Fathom)

Actual visual editing tools like Canvas, Photoshop, or even PowerPoint
# Excel: Package options

## Options for Acme Client, Inc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offered Services</th>
<th>Assist</th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Coach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly transaction coding and account reconciliations</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlimited phone, email and video conference support</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QBO fees included</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gusto fees included</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time tracked through Gusto</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll run through Gusto, direct deposit in 48 hours</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes filed through Gusto</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll tax returns filed through Gusto</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receipt images archived in QBO</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer payments matched to invoices</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aging A/R support</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals tracking and projections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytics dashboard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly coaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Monthly Price</strong></td>
<td>$XXX</td>
<td>$XXX</td>
<td>$x,xxx</td>
</tr>
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Prices valid for 30 days after: November 5, 2019

Letter of Engagement to follow once your packages are selected
Fathom: Profitability summary

**Profitability**

**TOTAL REVENUE (Dec 18):** $150,875

**EXPENSES TO REVENUE RATIO (Dec 18):** 62.95%

**BREAKEVEN MARGIN OF SAFETY (Dec 18):** $58,526

A measure of the total amount of money received by the company for goods sold or services provided.

A measure of how efficiently the business is conducting its operations.

The break-even safety margin represents the gap between the actual revenue level and the break-even point. In other words, the amount by which revenue can drop before losses begin to be incurred.
Proposals for long term projects

Scope and proposal for each phase of project

Define the scope for Phase 1 of the project, which might consist of discovery, research and recommendations

For bigger projects, Phase 1 may only be discovery and report
## Packages followed by letter of engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Talk the client through the options - do this in person or via video conference</th>
<th>4. Once they make their selections send the letter of engagement with their selections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. They may then need to go off and discuss the options, get approval</td>
<td>5. Focuses the initial decision on which package to choose and not on any questions they may have about your terms of services, etc. in LOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Give them reasonable time to do this before following up (this will depend on the type of business)</td>
<td>6. Reduces “cherry picking”</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Automating your proposals

Using an automated process:

Makes your onboarding more efficient

Tends to impress clients

Can use the process to further promote your services
Questions?
Final thoughts

What is the first thing you will implement?

Resources in Appendix:

• Sample reports
• Sources for more ideas and inspiration (books, Youtube, blog)
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3. Select **Survey**
4. Add **Ratings**
Material Download

1. Find the session on the agenda
2. Select + for more information
3. Download PDF of slides and/or supplemental material

https://quickbooksconnect.com/agenda/
Appendix: Sample Reports and Resources
Maus software: Business goals visual

BUSINESS GOALS

Listed below are our Business Goals.
We will turn these goals into monthly metrics to keep the business on track

FINANCIAL METRICS
Increase profits through a combination of increased monthly services fees, allocating external tools costs, adding new services, and trimming expenses.

CUSTOMER METRICS
Deepen relationships with our current clients by offering them advisory services. The goal is to provide premium services to fewer clients rather than taking on more small clients. Pull the trigger on disengaging with our bottom three clients.

SYSTEM & PROCESSES
Continue to verify and tweak processes for both current clients and new clients. We are happy overall with our internal tech stack. The external tech stack could potentially use some tweaks. Investigate Cash Flow Tool and Smart Sheets as potential part of external tech stack. Further training in Maus and Profit Beacon already scheduled.

PEOPLE & INNOVATION
Craft new advisory services packages based around our unique skill set and business experience. This can become a key differentiator for our business.

Increase hours for our staff bookkeeper. Develop next phase training plan for her.
Fathom: Goal explorer
Resources

Advisory tools and ideas:
Fathom product and blog: [https://blog.fathomhq.com/](https://blog.fathomhq.com/)
Maus software and training: [https://www.instituteadvisors.com/](https://www.instituteadvisors.com/)
Woodard Institute Advisory Certification program: [https://woodard.com/institute-ta/](https://woodard.com/institute-ta/)
Other advisory programs

Marketing ideas for inspiration and easy, practical things you can do:

*POP!: Create the Perfect Pitch, Title, and Tagline for Anything* by Sam Horn
Psychotactics, Why Clients Buy and Why They Don’t, blog and newsletter
[https://www.psychotactics.com/](https://www.psychotactics.com/)
Creative use of Excel:

Youtube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mctq1_i8ggY

How to create this circular goal tracker (it fills the doughnut as you reach your goal!)

www.contextures.com – Excel blog with formatting tutorials
Resources (cont.)

The mind, persuasion and sales:

*Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, by Robert Cialdini

YouTube videos by British mentalist Derren Brown -especially *The Secret of Luck*, entertainment rather than science-based but still interesting

*The Art of the Sale: Learning from the Masters About the Business of Life*, by Philip Delves Broughton