

CPD PROVIDERS USE CPD TO SELL THEIR SERVICES!

by Diane Davy

We business people are frequently told that networking is the life-blood of our routes to new clients. A plethora of organisations have evolved offering organised opportunities for structured networking. Working as an independent consultancy, my Partner and I endeavour to ensure that one of us attends those with diverse participants: it is important to be seen as well as to spread the word about, and hopefully to sell, the services we offer.

We are told that if you cannot state clearly what you or your business does in a single sentence, you do not have sufficient focus to sell yourself effectively. A few months ago, when I attended a local networking event, I was struck afresh by this maxim. I endeavoured to explain that one of my areas of expertise is Project Management, because I wanted to explain that, actually, it wasn't just any old projects, but they were invariably quite unusual projects, frequently linked to CPD support or delivery. My companion's eyes glazed over and I deemed it wise to change the subject and ask what she did, and she obliged in a smart and concise sentence. Ouch!

This episode set me thinking, and I decided that I needed to find a clearer way to present the brief explanation which still made sense. I started by talking with some people who know the services we offer and asked for their ideas. I played around with carefully worded phrases and sentences until I distilled it down to a short text to try out at another event. I started by "road testing" it out on someone friendly and asked for feedback, then made some adjustments before moving on to new people, my free guinea pigs.

As soon as I was back at my desk, I made notes of further changes and then created a draft flier, which I felt I could hand to people to take away from these events for (hopefully) their records: it could be useful one day! I handed that out to a few trusted associates, who gave great feedback and gradually the document's text evolved. The next task was to try it out for how it looked, and I was given a generous and much needed re-vamp of the flier's visuals by a skilled Marketing Man, preparatory to having it printed as an A5 2-sided card.

An outside eye can be so valuable in reviewing and re-affirming the good in what you do, or in challenging your established way of operating. This is particularly so in the not-for-profit sector and in membership organisations or, indeed, in any leanly-run business.

This whole exercise has been of value. In a curious way I found it to be a real learning experience, not least about how other people see the value in what we do from a different perspective to our own. The use of words from outsiders' vocabularies has made such a difference to presenting the concepts to other

people in ways they can understand clearly. I can also say that I have been really impressed with the generosity of those who gave their time to help me to see both the woods and the trees in presenting something succinct. That is real CPD in action.

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