

Act Like a Consultant

Achieve results from relationships.



by Chip R. Bell

HAVING SPENT 31 years as a consultant, I've learned much about how to make life work and how to make work come alive. *In that sense, I wish everyone could be a consultant.*

Consultants who make it beyond the *lean and mean* years get to taste the rewards of freedom, despite facing the anxiety of *what if I fail?* They acquire a devotion to the rhythm of riding their purpose, unshackled from the slavery of following a conventional schedule. Their initial guilt about not being at the office on Monday morning melts away, replaced by the bliss of working on a project into the wee hours because *you are enamored by the work!*

When you act as an independent consultant, you act in these six ways:

- **You act self-employed.** Your work day is the day you create. No one tells you what to work on. No one cares if you punch in or when. No one cares about the depth of your in-box, the location of your parking spot, or the number of meetings you attend. *Only concrete results matter; tireless effort is just what you do to get there.* Those who work with the same perspective are more successful than those who act as if they are a passenger on a cruise ship transporting them to retirement. Winners act self-employed, assuming *complete responsibility* for their destiny; losers hide behind *victim thinking* and *scapegoats*.

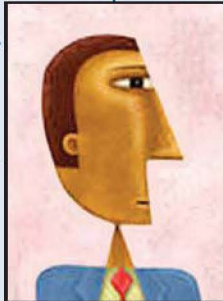
- **You bring optimism, courage, character and spirit to those you serve.** Those who are *joy carriers* thrive for the same reason. You do not inherit spirit, acquire spirit, or borrow spirit—you *choose spirit* much like *you choose* to introduce yourself. Those who opt for an upbeat, positive spirit are *happier, healthier, and more productive*.

- **You focus on results and are accountable for your performance.** Playing the *blame game* does not get you far. Clients are never moved by your hand-ringing excuses nor made more confident by your shifting the focus to the supplier who let you down. *Being late signals lack of commitment, regardless of*

the reason; being unprepared telegraphs you don't care about your client, despite the demons you tussled the day before. Those who work with a similar results-orientation are more successful than those who engage in *shake and fake*—passionate interest without substantive performance. Winners show up ready to perform and are only interested in efforts that yield achievement.

- **You are both a doer and a marketer.** Consultants don't just *do* the work—they also *market* the work. In fact, consultants who spend their energy on the work itself without regard to making its value known, typically fail. Likewise, those who spend their energy thinking about image and influence also fail. It takes a balance between *delivering value* and *insuring those who make buying decisions are keenly aware of that value*. Too many people who quietly do great works assuming it will insure their success are sadly surprised when their name ends up on *the layoff list* rather than *the unsung hero list*. On the flipside, those who focus on the billboard and not the "worktable" meet the same fate.

- **You value substance, not form.** We once dined with a colleague who became a consultant. At the bar was her ex-boss.



He was embarrassing himself. Watching the scene from our table, she said, "Just a month ago, I was frightened to go in his office. Now, I see *my fear was all about me, not him. He is not his rank.*" Consultants understand politics but expend their energy toward what is *real* and *contributive*, not what is *ritual*

and *ceremonial*. Successful people live the lesson of Eleanor Roosevelt: *No one makes you inferior without your permission.*

- **You are generous and serve others.** The soul of service requires *caring about the client at a personal level*, not just at a professional one. The *relationship* is more important than the *transaction*. The wisdom and talent you generously share is more valuable than what you hoard or protect. *The humble facilitation of discovery is more powerful than the arrogant delivery of expertise.* Clients remember who you are and what you stand for long after they forget what you recommended or where you came from. *Success emanates from the exact same zeal to serve.*

Not everyone can be a consultant, but those with the *greatest influence* and self-worth are those who act as if they are. **LE**

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ACTION: Act like a consultant in your work.