

## Part 4: Winning Through Your "Guru Quotient"

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The Guru Builder

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*This fourth article in the series on being a guru looks at some of the steps necessary to become a guru.*

Consider three professionals, all of whom want to be seen as "gurus" in their fields. Each of them has a different idea of how to get to the top of their profession.

Professional "A" thinks it's all about the **work**. Year after year he plods away, producing brilliant reports, recommendations and action plans - and wonders why nobody will pay more than a standard hourly rate for what is a pretty outstanding product.

Professional "B" sees **marketing** as the key. So she racks up the frequent flyer miles doing speeches at conferences, has a binder full of articles, and her Web site has MTV's designers green with envy. And while standing at yet another luggage carousel on her way back from speaking at a conference, she asks herself why she's considered an intellectual lightweight with more show than go.

For Professional "C," it's all about **qualifications**. Blessed or cursed with two Ph.D. degrees, she spends her time gaining every professional designation she's eligible for. Her wall is filled with diplomas and her nights with study, but her days aren't as full of billable work.

Who's at the top of the pile? None of them.

There isn't one for-sure aspect to being a guru. Moving from being a "garden-variety" advisor to guru is multi-faceted, and getting there requires being strong in each of the eight areas discussed below.

Any "wannabe" gurus need to think where they are in their practice, between one and ten, for each of the eight attributes. They need all eight to succeed.

It is important to note that each aspect expresses itself differently, in different fields. For example, in some areas of engineering one of the chief aspects of guru-dom is the number of patents for which one is responsible. In other areas, it is the degree of acceptance of one's textbook. For some, it is winning industry association awards, for others it is getting papers published in academic journals. In reading about the eight areas, it is best to consider how to apply each tool in one's chosen field.

## Marketing

Essentially, this is anything that makes clients, potential clients and referral sources aware of their services and convinces them that a professional advisor can help them. It includes several kinds of initiatives - speeches, seminars, articles, books, White Papers, brochures, coverage in newspapers, magazines, radio and television, newsletters (electronic and paper), and the Web site. The Web site has to be noticeable, and this is done through search-engine optimization tools, getting inbound links, having the URL printed on literature and in many other places.

Marketing must move "up the food chain" from demonstrating technical expertise, to strategic. A guru needs to be seen as someone can see the big picture and get results for clients. Speeches should be equally strategic in nature, not tactical.

However, it's important to not ignore the softer side of marketing, which includes joining committees and task forces in the right associations, and being on the editorial boards of publications read by the target group.

A would-be guru should also consider contributing papers to academic publications, not so much to reach potential clients, but to list the papers on the resume and drop references to those papers into conversations. Teaching courses either at university or college will help with build guru status.

The ultimate marketing credential, of course, is a book. Society has had a longstanding respect for published authors, going right back to the pre-Gutenberg days. The wonderful thing is that "having a book" is so much more accessible today, due to printing and binding technology improvements. A quality book can be produced economically in quantities as small as a single copy. Potential buyers can find out about a book through a Web search, learn about it on-line and order it without leaving their desks. A book can be, effectively, an oversize business card.

*In the next article in this series, we'll consider some of the other essential building blocks of being a guru.*

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