

MANAGEMENT CONSULTING NEWS

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Grow Your Consulting Practice with eBooks

By Skip Pratt

A creative marketing tool that deserves serious attention by consultants is ebooks. What is an ebook? It's an *electronic* book in a PDF or Word file. Most ebooks are "how-to" or "tips" guides. You don't need a New York publisher's permission or expensive software to publish an ebook. Many tools are now available that provide everything you need to publish, distribute and protect this expression of your intellectual capital.

Catch the eBook Wave!

Consider this: The Association of American Publishers (AAP) completed an extensive study of the ebook market last year, and concluded that ebooks represent a significant opportunity. According to AAP forecasts, by 2005, ebooks are expected to account for almost ten percent of the total consumer publishing market. That represents an estimated incremental retail sales opportunity of \$1.6 billion.

As you look for new ways to bring value to your clients, an ebook is a natural alternative. After all, you DO have the expertise. Why not use that expertise to take advantage of the ebook phenomena and create a new product line?

Creating eBooks

As a management consultant, there are many ways to take advantage of ebooks, for example:

- Write on your area of expertise, including proven processes, methods or techniques.
- Create a "special report," which might be from eight to twenty pages of detailed information, such as a case study.
- Conduct a research study and publish the results. Give your audience a special view of market attitudes, best practices or client results.
- Position yourself as an analyst or industry insider, and write up your views, insights, tips, secrets and industry projections in an ebook or a series of special reports.
- Co-author a how-to with your client about the type of products they feature, or focus on service and support issues.

- Conduct interviews with key industry leaders. Using the opinions of these leaders, compile ebooks around hot topics of the day.
- Write reviews of industry trade shows, magazines, books, audiotapes, seminars and keynote speeches. Give your special “take” on what is and is not important and why, educate, or forecast the future.

The examples above are just a starting point. Think about your expertise and the needs of your clients, and find ways to generate win-win scenarios to leverage the power of ebooks for mutual benefit.

Publishing Formats

A number of formats exist for publishing ebooks, but you don't have to focus on just one. In fact, after numerous interviews with industry leaders and considerable research and evaluation, my advice is that you offer your material on all three of the major platforms for online publishing, including:

Microsoft Reader - Claims a market of six million potential readers, including four million Pocket PC ebook-enabled devices and two million downloads of MS Reader for desktop/laptop computers.

Palm Digital Media (PDM) – This subsidiary of Palm, Inc. says it is the largest seller of ebooks. PDM, whose ebook reader is bundled with every Palm device, of which there are reportedly twenty million, offers 4,000 ebook titles that can be bought only through its web site. PDM estimates that 100,000 customers buy at least five times a year from the site.

Adobe PDF - Reports over three million Acrobat eBook Readers downloaded and over thirty million Acrobat Readers downloaded.

Acrobat eBook Reader: <http://www.adobe.com/products/ebookreader/main.html>

Acrobat Reader: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/>

To learn more about each of these ebook tools, visit their web sites via the links included above.

Where and How to Sell eBooks

Now, what should you do with your ebooks and special reports? This is the fun part. Let your imagination run wild. Here are some ideas:

- Add them to your web site and sell them.
- Use them as "free" tools to get the door open for new accounts.
- Offer them as a special bonus for buying one of your products or services, or for signing up for your newsletter.
- Create bundled combinations of your ebooks and special reports with different price points.

Sell your special report or ebook for a fraction of what your actual consulting service would cost, but at a high enough price to create a meaningful revenue stream. Let's say, for example, that you charge \$225 per hour for your consulting services. Why not have your ebook on your web site ready to sell for a one-time price of \$225?

When potential clients buy and read it they will recognize your clear expertise, and seek your advice. With even a small sales volume, you'll generate paid publicity for your practice.

Prospective clients will appreciate a “try before they buy” option to make sure you know your stuff. At \$225 for your downloadable ebook, what easier way can they find out? I often find that my ebooks do the work of generating NEW business without any selling.

So, let ebooks add to your credibility. Everyone knows it takes courage to put your opinions and ideas out there for the world to see. You are already an expert, and now you will be an author as well.

Today more than ever, consultants and their clients are looking for ways to grow revenue and cut costs. You have the ability to help your clients do that. But, if you're not already in the water, you're missing the ebook wave!

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Skip Pratt is the founder of [Knowledge Download](http://www.knowledge-download.com), an online ebook publishing service. He is an entrepreneur, consultant, author and former Vice President of Electronic Commerce for a F500 company. Visit his web site at <http://www.knowledge-download.com>, or write to him at: skip@knowledge-download.com.