

Foundations—a Pedestal Group Publication

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FOUNDATIONS

The Pedestal Group

Conveying The Right Messages

Special points of interest:

- *Intellectual Property*
- *Using Rules in Outlook*
- *Managing Email Priorities*
- *Managing Malware*
- *AND MORE!*

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Customers and clients today are more cautious than ever about spending money. We've all experienced longer sales cycles, more detailed, more thorough and just more questions during the vetting process. So how do you help clients cut through their concerns and make the decisions? Answer them up front—go with “a great offense is the best defense”.

First, how can you prove you've been successful in the past? Customers need to know you can do the job and need some kind of third-party validation. Case studies are a wonderful tool because you get to write them without having to get permission from anyone (no company names are mentioned, typically) and you can zero in on a particular problem you solve. The customer feels a sense of “me to!” when they read what the client in the case study was dealing with and that sense of not being alone can go a long way to building trust. The solution you provided your case-study client allows the prospect to understand how you solved it. But don't worry, people who find these stories

compelling don't have a problem if the solution won't be a perfect fit for them. In fact, this will often generate a conversation where they ask how you would tweak the solution to fit their needs.

References and recommendations are invaluable. If you know a few go-to clients you can use as references, offer them up at the first opportunity. Don't wait until the client asks. Or, you can ask to link up on LinkedIn and let the prospect read recommendations there. We like to explain that LinkedIn recommendations are important to us because they can't be faked and will be from customers, employees, and vendors so the prospect gets a more 360 degree feel for us.

A recent study done at Caltech looked at how consumers choose to buy products. It was found that consumers are willing to pay up to 50% more for an item if they can see it and/or touch it. That's great if you have a product to take with you to a demo, but if you are in a service business, case studies and referrals become your “see it / touch it” option so make sure they are written



Case Studies, references and recommendations help your case!

in a way that the reader can get right into the shoes of the client.

Another thing customers are looking for today is stability. Many have experienced deals going south because companies have gone out of business over the last year so you need to deal with that right up front. How long have you been in the business, how consistent a performer are you, and how can they be sure you'll be here tomorrow? The fact that you got through 2009 is a big indicator, but check your marketing materials for how you convey that sense of stability. Play out a scene where your advocate is talking to her group about working

Conveying the Right Messages (con't)

with you. What can she hand them that will explain away the stability fear?

Customers also need to know that they are getting value for their money. Most people make purchasing decisions on more than just price, but will



Proof,
Stability,
and
Value

default to price if the value of one option vs. the other isn't clear. How are you communicating the value of your product or service?

Recommendation: Somewhere in your marketing material have a piece called, "Our Value" or "The Value We Bring to You" or something obvious. Then list the features and BENEFITS of what you bring. Don't make the customer figure it out because the reality is, they won't. You explaining both the features and benefits will ensure you control the message.

Focusing on your material to find proof, stability and value will help your prospects have the information they need to make a faster purchasing decision. It will also help you go back after the sale and confirm they received those values and build on it for the next sale. By saying what you offer, then offering it, and then confirming you delivered what you said you would, you can build a loyal customer who will also be a part of your marketing team as they tell others. It is a win all the way around!

Intellectual Property

**DON'T COPY
OTHER PEOPLE'S
WORK!**

With the current world being all about content, and clients going everywhere from websites to Twitter to LinkedIn to get information, it is often difficult to come up

with content. Many people don't understand the rules of content and intellectual property so here's a brief summary related to content.

You can assign the copyright symbol to anything you create to help protect your work. Keep in mind copyright doesn't copyright the IDEA you write about, but the words you use to express them. If you are concerned you have written something that may be picked up by others, you can set a Google Alert with the first sentence of your piece. That way, you will be alerted if it appears the same way in the future. It is not legal for others to copy your content and use it under their name.

If you decide to read other people's

work for inspiration that's wonderful, but it is important to remember how to give credit. Here are some of the typical ways:

Quotes: This is where you write a piece and then take quotes from other sources. Just like in school, it is important to give credit to the person that said the quote or to the source where you found it. This is also a good idea as it lends credibility to the information you are sharing. Simply put the citation either directly before or directly after the quote and frame it in quotation marks. Turning the citation into a link to the original source makes it easy for readers to check it out.

If there is an article that is so well written and so fabulous as it is that you can't write something yourself, reference the article and post a link to it. Put in a comment or several about why you like it so much and invite discussion. But DO NOT under any circumstances copy the article and use it. That is a clear violation of copyright. The only exception is if the author has a statement explaining un-

der what conditions their material can be reprinted (normally it is in its entirety with proper citation and links). But in all other cases, copying work from someone else is illegal.

In addition to written work, pictures cannot be used without permission. Find a cool picture on a website and want to use it? Unless it specifically says you can use it without permission, you had better get it. There are many services that check the web every day all day for copies of materials registered.

Consequences for copying material generally start with a cease and desist order from a lawyer and can escalate from there. But it is better to avoid the issue and do things properly. If you are looking for content to send out, write executive summaries of 3 or 4 articles and send that to your clients, find an article and write an opinion piece based on it, or pick a topic writing your own material and use quotes from other sources. These options will keep you out of trouble and give your clients a better idea of your company and your perspective!

Using Rules in Outlook

Managing email is one of those tasks that takes a chunk out of your day but without doing it every day, gets out of control. One way to help yourself in this process is to create rules for certain emails to move them out of your inbox and into sub-folders allowing you to read them at a later time.

The easiest way to create a rule is to do so when you receive an email from the source. This is a great thing to do with newsletter, smart-briefs, or other regular communica-

tion from a source that doesn't need to be reviewed immediately.

First, create the folder where you would like the email to go. Next, right click on the email and choose "Create Rule". You will be presented with the most common rule options and can just check the boxes. Select the folder where you want the emails to end up and click OK. The last step allows you to process the rule immediately, moving those emails out of your Inbox and into the subfolder.

Once you start managing your email this way, messages that are interesting but not critical at the moment are set to the side and those emails in your Inbox are truly what need your attention. You can route email by sender, words in the subject, or if they were sent to you alone.

Rules can streamline your email and keep it manageable!



Managing Email Priorities

An email comes in that is important, but won't be something you need to act on until next week/month. How can you remember to do it without cluttering up your calendar? Install Boomerang (<http://www.baydin.com/boomerang/>) for Outlook. This tool which comes with a free trial allows you to set a date for the email to return to the top of your inbox so you receive it when you need it.

How does it work? When the mes-

sage arrives, you simply right click on it and tell Boomerang when to bring it back. Boomerang moves the message out of your Inbox and holds it until it needs to come back. If a time and date are mentioned in the email, Boomerang will suggest times appropriate for that date!

While you can drag this to your calendar and turn it into an appointment, that can clutter up your calendar with items that don't require a specific time and make it confusing to schedule

appointments. To Do's require you to keep the original email message until you mark it done so that makes it more difficult to manage as well.

Boomerang helps you keep your Inbox manageable and gives you just-in-time delivery. True time management!

**BOOMERANG
MOVES EMAILS
BACK TO THE TOP
BASED ON THE
DATE YOU NEED
IT**

Staying On Top of Malware Threats

Malware is software designed for malicious purposes. It is everywhere—on the web, attached to emails, and in social media sites. Generally these programs can't just start running on your computer but must be activated in some way. But, they are written so the user doesn't know when they trigger one.

Malware can be written to do every-

thing from grab passwords and sensitive information to propagating the program itself to others. Generally users don't realize anything is happening until their computer runs slowly. So what is a user to do?

A solid anti-virus and malware tool is key on every computer you own. Currently we like AVG as it does a great job, is inexpensive and doesn't stop

real software from running. In addition, Microsoft's Defender is a solid application and a good idea to add to your system. Defender is also free!

Running these programs definitely help protect

**Malware is
software de-
signed for
malicious
purposes**

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Putting our clients where they belong.

The Pedestal Group was founded to answer a need we saw in small businesses to have a source for help. That could be how to find and integrate the right technology, how to better hire and manage people, how to set goals and create a strategic plan, or really attack and own your marketplace.

Our team has worked in a variety of industries including staffing, recruiting and executive search, retail, technology, healthcare software / IT, higher education and franchising and the consistent theme we have found it is very hard to see the forest for the trees. In small business, that is compounded by the number of resources available.

Our approach is unique in that we don't just say it is all about the customer, it really is. The Pedestal Group puts our customers on a pedestal – right where they belong. That isn't to say the customer is always right because that is an adversarial relationship – in our case, we always come to agreement. We are always in a partnership with our clients but also remember who's the most important – YOU.

The Pedestal Group - Putting our clients where they belong.

Managing Malware (con't)

your computer, but if you feel your computer's performance is not what it should be, you can check other things as well.

One way to see what is running on your computer is to press Ctrl+Alt+Delete at the same time and choose "Start Task Manager". The "processes" tab shows you



Malware can be stealing passwords to accounts!

everything running on your computer. While this list can be daunting,

it is a good idea to check it occasionally. You can build a list of those processes you know about up front and then just look at the new ones when you review the list going forward. The easiest way to identify a process is to enter the name into Google. You will get back a list of sites explaining what the process is. If a site indicates this process is a problem, be sure to check at least one other before following directions on how to fix it.

Another great tool to run periodically is called Stinger and is put out by McAfee <http://vil.nai.com/vil/stinger/>. This tool scans your computer for specific malware and re-

moves it.

Finally, if you really want to get technical, download Process Monitor <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb896645.aspx> and see just exactly what is running on your machine. The reports on Process Monitor are a little more complex than running a Google search but it will give you information including what is starting up with your machine and how programs relate to each other.

Managing malware is an important part of computer maintenance. Be sure you are protected!