



#### Baz Gardner, The Social Adviser

Baz Gardner started his own advice business at age 24 and spent the following 14 years building a successful multi-million dollar firm. He has been a follower and participant of online communities for 15 years, generating influence and client conversion before the term social media existed.

Baz has spent the last five years focusing on refining the art of digital influence and what he calls conversion psychology solely as it relates to profession advice. Baz sold his firm in 2010 to focus exclusively on helping advice firms and licensees radically transform their performance metrics at the key areas of both efficiency and growth.

# FOUR BIGGEST MISTAKES PROFESSIONALS MAKE WHEN USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Baz Gardner

**W**ith all of the attention on social media these days, it is just as important for a business to know what not to do as it is to know the right thing to do. But not to fear, in this article I will give you some essential tips on the right way that you can grow your business through an effective online strategy. Avoiding these top four mistakes will save you a lot of unnecessary cost, and potentially, embarrassment.

Leveraging your influence and ability to connect to a large audience is an amazingly powerful business growth tool, but if you get it wrong, at best you can waste both time and money, and at worst damage your reputation, costing yourself clients.

These four mistakes can be adapted to suit almost any business, however at The Social Adviser we focus on professional services firms. These issues are the things we most often see executed incorrectly by financial advisers, accountants, solicitors/lawyers and consultants; in other words the givers of professional advice.

You will notice that all four points on my list are closely related and are the result of a fundamental misconception we professionals seem to have about how to represent ourselves and our businesses online.

## 4. Missing opportunities

**Forgetting that every client contact is an opportunity to grow your business**

Every professional adviser I have ever met is guilty of this – including myself for many years. It is so easy to forget that every contact you

have with your existing clients is a chance to grow your business. Overcoming this is one of my ultimate tools for professional advisers.

In the old days it was drummed into me to always ask your client for referrals. Whilst this approach has some merit it, it is very inefficient when compared with what you can do with the tools of a social adviser.

Have you watched our YouTube animated video titled 'A Tale of Two Advisers?' <http://www.youtube.com/thesocialadviser>.

If not I recommend that you do, as it shows a comparison of the conventional methods of gaining clients through referral reliance in comparison with the new tools and methods we talk about in this article.

While you are on our YouTube channel feel free to look around and check back often as we intend to be keeping you up to date with some great business growth tips.

We get so focused on delivering outcomes and looking professional that we often forget how to get maximum benefit out of the good work that we do for our happy customers.

Every time you communicate with your clients you should include a networking message.

Now of course, it needs to be a balanced approach, and requires some careful use of context and subtlety – but with a little practice it is easy to get the hang of.

A powerful method for overcoming your own psychological objections is to use a simple trick. In your inner vocabulary, switch the word marketing with 'chance to connect', or 'to network'; it will make it easier for you to appreciate how this works and how to employ it tactfully.

Let's take a look at a simple email example:

*'Hi Rob, thanks for sending in that copy of the structure documents, thought I would send you a quick email to confirm we have received them.'*



### The quote

*The secret weapon to developing promotional content is to influence your clients to produce material for you*

*I will need about a week to go through everything and will give you a call to organise a time to get together.*

<In such an everyday email this is where we would normally stop. However, this is where you want to continue and subtly connect with your client.>

*By the way we just put up an article on our Facebook page about our clients' preferred holiday destinations for the last 12 months, and since I know you are planning a trip this year I thought you might find it interesting.*

*There is some lively discussion going on there about destinations so feel free to ask questions. We have some very experienced travelers sharing some great insight.*

That particular example may not exactly suit your business, but the principles of the approach apply across just about every business – and particularly with professional advice. With a little practice and a good social media policy, you can apply this logic to almost all of your client correspondence.

It is also something that you can train your entire client facing team to replicate.

Even if the call to action is just a generic one, don't let the opportunity pass. For example, a flyer in an envelope announcing your new YouTube blog, or a link in your email signature pointing out a recent article on your website will do the trick; you can even finish your phone conversation with a call to action like, 'by the way Cindy is there anything interesting you would like us to talk about in our next email newsletter? Oh did you know we also started a ...'

There are countless opportunities to employ this method – so get creative.

### 3. Interesting trumps smart

#### Make your content interesting not technical

Give your clients content that they will be happy to share. Don't rely on them to make referrals for you, come up with great ways to make it easy for them to share your ideas with their contacts. Make it interesting, not technical. You have to think about what they are going to enjoy receiving, so put yourself in their shoes.

I have seen this in almost every professional's blog, website or newsletter. We tend to be so focused on our own business and trying our best to represent our technical skills to our clients. After all they are paying for those skills, so we should demonstrate them, right?

Wrong. The fact that they are interested in you, or are already your client, is by now an indication that they believe you have the skills.

Articles showing case studies of your strategies, tax plans, court room victories, etc., are all well and good – but they are also boring, sometimes difficult for an average client to read, and worst of all they will almost never be shared by your clients or social networks.

Not only that but technical articles, even if they are read by a potential client, do nothing to solve the hurdle of know, like and trust. It is ok to create some technical content, but use it sparingly and mixed in with your other content – it should be the seasoning on the dish, not the main ingredient. As a rule, it is better to err on the side of what you think is too little technical content, than too much.

I have multiple degrees, and have been giving high-end structuring and financial advice to wealthy clients for nearly 15 years; but when my accountant would send me his newsletter outlining the technicalities of how I could save tax or improve my business metrics ..., how far through his newsletter did you think I got? Not far.

Fortunately my accountant no longer writes his articles in this way. He now writes articles about his philosophy of business and the lessons he has learned through a career of helping his business clients. It is far more insightful and much more interesting and yes, I am much more inclined to share his great ideas with my network.

The same thing goes with all of your physical and digital content. If you are going to write about tax then write something about your philosophy of tax, and how to balance it. The same for investments; don't write about the quality of different investments – write about your investment philosophy or interesting topics like 'how to look at money'.

## The know, like and trust relationship

### Know

For a client / adviser relationship to be successful, the client must feel they know the adviser. Knowing only comes easily once you have met and once you know something about that person (not just what their job is), knowledge becomes deep when they know what makes you tick.

### Like

From what the client knows, they will then decide whether or not they like you. This is dependent on knowledge. Typically, liking someone usually only needs knowledge of two or three facets of the other person which they value which is why the more they know the better.

### Trust

The most important barrier to a client relationship and most difficult to overcome is trust. Before a client is willing to take a risk in you, they must come to trust you and inherently feel you will put their interests before your own. Relationships sometimes exist before this stage is reached, but never truly become successful.

Better yet, don't write about your business at all – prove your breadth of knowledge, and find something else you can write about in an insightful manner for your clients to enjoy.

## 2. Talking about you

### Talking too much about yourself

The more you talk about yourself, the more you sound like an advertisement, and research shows that most people do not trust advertisements. Whilst in the points above we have explained how you should mix up your content publishing, there is an even more powerful tool for creating influence online.

The ultimate material you can attain is open and honest praise given by your clients through social media channels. Let me remind you that I am not talking about the standard written or video testimonials that we see – the ones that look and sound like robots disguised as spontaneous clients, and more often than not are only actors getting paid to do a job.

Remember – it's not who you are connected to, but who your connections are connected to, and what they say about you that is most important. If your clients are happy with you, then make it easy for them to let other people know you have made them happy. Chances are, they will.

If you do it right social media provides the opportunity for your clients to refer you easily, seamlessly and without even having to think about the fact that that is what they are doing.

Get your clients talking and making comments on your social media and digital channels.

Comments on your blogs, YouTube channel, Facebook wall and Twitter streams are a great way for people to relate to you, and begin to feel that you are someone that can be trusted.

This is especially true when it happens as part of a conversation flow. There are a great many ways on how you can keep your clients talking on your social media channels, and we will keep you updated with ideas and strategies that we've found successful, but let me help you out with a simple one right now; ask them nicely.

In order to give you a demonstration of how you can get your clients talking, I am going to ask you to go to our Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/TheSocialAdviser>.

We have created this page for your benefit, and to share with you some of our ideas on how you can grow your business through your digital and social media strategies. Our Facebook page is where we hope to build a community for people to share ideas and ask questions. It is also the place where we will choose people to give some tailored ideas to, at no charge.

If you like the work we are doing for you and the ideas we are sharing, make sure to stop by and say hello on our wall. It's a great way to keep us happy and motivated, and it is also where you can give us ideas on what material you would like us to come up with next.

## 1. Thinking social media is an ad Think that social media is for advertising or marketing

Ok, so this is my number one tip. I don't know why, but most of us have this preconception that building our business through digital channels is about advertising.

You might think to yourself: 'hang on; you are always talking about how to grow your business using social media?' Yes, that is true but it is not about advertising, it is about networking. It is about creating influence and giving people a chance to feel like they know you; that you are someone they can trust.

I think this is because we have grown up with television as being our primary medium. On television it is difficult to target your message; and it's also expensive. This medium works by giving short bursts of information about a product to a consumer. Whilst it can reach many, its ability to convert is low. What's more – you can't build trust from an advertisement, and what do professional advisers need most in order to gain clients? You guessed it: they need trust.

Whilst it is commonly accepted that TV advertising gives a poor return on investment for professional advisers (some legal services being an exception), it's somewhat strange that when advisers take to the Internet, they most often adopt an approach that is similar to TV advertising – and then wonder why it is not effective.

The Internet, combined with the tools of The Social Adviser, can give you the opportunity and know-how to network on an unprecedented scale, totally eclipsing anything you could do through conventional means. But trying to promote yourself by simply pushing out your own message on social media and not engaging with it the appropriate way will ultimately be more damaging than beneficial. The key is to think about building relationships – not promotion.

## Just like you would in person ...

Let me explain with an example. Let's say your target niche is engineers (they used to be mine), and you have organised to attend an engineering conference. Do you:

- Walk around the room loudly introducing yourself to everyone as the best (insert your title here) in the world, handing out your business cards and brochures and asking them for their contact details and diary availability.
- Politely introduce yourself to people, asking about their field. When the inevitable question is asked why a (insert your title here) is at an engineering conference, you explain that engineers are your key clients – and in order to be of better service to them, you are looking to understand their work and needs better. You then follow this up by asking the engineer you're presently talking with if they could suggest some ideas on how you might provide better service to your own clients. Which approach do you think would work better?



### The quote

*Social media is not advertising, it is networking.*

**The quote**

*Remember – it's not who you are connected to, but who your connections are connected to, and what they say about you that is most important.*

This is just like the Internet; social media can provide you with a room full of perfect clients, and the best part is that the room is filled with thousands of people to network with. However, if you act like example A, all you're going to leverage is your ability to look like a jerk.

Use the skills you are already good at and remember that digital strategy is about networking.

While we are on the topic, if you haven't looked into it much yet, then I'll tell you that LinkedIn is a great way to network for professional advisers.

If you would like to see how you can build a LinkedIn profile to better network with your clients then start by connecting to me on LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/bazgardner>.

In your message just mention The Social Adviser so that I know you are someone I want to add.

At The Social Adviser we have come up with some truly amazing ways to use LinkedIn to directly network quickly with a large number of perfect clients, and have achieved some huge growth by using our strategies.

We have developed thousands of ideas on how to grow your business; ideas that large corporations are paying large sums of dollars for – but they are yours here with our blessing, so be sure you have liked us on Facebook, are following us on YouTube, and have added me on LinkedIn, because you'll want to make sure to pick up as many ideas as will work for your firm.

And make sure to comment; the best way to practice is to join in! **FS**