

## CHECK LIST : QUESTIONS TO ASK IN BUILDING AN EXCEPTIONAL BUSINESS

### ✦ FIRST PRINCIPLE

- What really matters to us?
- Where do we want to be in five years? Why? Are we sure?
- How do we want lives, at work and outside it, to be different?
- What key changes must we make to get there from here?
- Never mind what we have done or others have done: What is possible?
- What would clients think was remarkable?
- If we were starting from scratch today, what would we do differently?
- How would we organize ourselves to better serve clients?
- What would we add? What would we eliminate?
- How should we start to make there change, beginning today?
- If we were competing against us, where would we attack us?
- How do we shore up that weakness?

### ✦ ADDING DEEPER INSIGHT

- Which ten or twelve clients, friends, industry insiders, or other individuals can give us the most insight about improving our business?

### ✦ GETTING TO THE WHITE HOT CENTER

- Who makes up the White Hot Center of our Industry?
- Which members do we have contact with? Which do we not?
- What should we do to increase our influence with these people?

### ✦ GETTING THE KEY CLIENTS

- What three to four prospective and acquirable clients would have the most long-term impact on our business - as uniquely strong references?
- How can we begin to convert them into clients?



## 🔑 **ATTACKING OUR INDUSTRY WEAKNESS**

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- What is the greatest flaw in our industry, in the perception on prospects and clients?
- How can we dramatically eliminate this flaw?
- What stereotypes do outsiders have of people in our business?
- How can we overcome this?

# POSITIONING & BRANDING

## ✦ FOCUS & POSITIONING

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- What truly distinguishes our company, our products, or our services from our competitors?
- Is there a definite benefit, to our clients, of that distinction?
- Are we communicating that distinction and that benefit clearly?
- Do we clearly stand for one of the following key positions in our market?

*The Historic Leader The New Innovator*

*The Reliable Performer*

*The Server*

*The Premium Offering*

*The Low Price Alternative*

*The Generalist (one-stop shopping, everything under one roof)*

*The Specialist*

- Would a majority of prospects, when asked which company (or product or service, depending on the focus of this exercise) occupies each of the above positions, mention us first in one of these categories? Which one?
- Are we leveraging the strength of that position, or are trying instead to occupy a position that already has a formidable occupant?

## ✦ OUR BRAND

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- Is our Brand unique?
- Is it Vivid?
- Is it Simple?
- Does it communicate a clear and powerful message, in the way most want and need to communicate? Is it inviting?

## ✦ OUR NAME

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- Is our name distinctive?
- Is it memorable?
- Is it brief enough to be processed and remembered?
- Does it express or imply an important message?
- Does the value and equity of our current name outweigh the value of changing it to more Powerful and useful name?
- Can it be pronounced easily, even musically?
- Will most people have to ask how to spell it? If so can you easily explain how to spell it? Is it short? (Eleven letters and four syllables should be the maximum.)
- Does it have the traits to make it memorable-is it unique, sensory and outstanding?
- Is it interesting? Does it have "story value"?
- Is it authentic? Is it who we really are?
- Can our employees say the name proudly?
- Does it set the right tone?
- Is it different enough from competitors' names?
- Is it acceptable to virtually every important prospect?
- Does it make some people uneasy? (The answer "yes" is desirable.)
- Does it express or imply a desirable message?
- Is it rich with meaning? Does it imply more than one positive message? (Some good names do not meet this test, but many great names do)

## ✦ OUR PRICE

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- What does our price communicate about the value of our work?
- Is our pricing absolutely clear?
- Is it so simple a prospect understands it immediately?
- And so simple that it does not delay or distract the client?

## ✦ OUR PACKAGE: THE VISUAL AUDIT

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- Look at every point where our prospects come into contact with us - from business cards and signage to attire and envelopes.
- Does each contact make a strong impression?
- Does each say, "The firm is special"?
- Does each contact clearly convey a sense of quality and professionalism?
- Are the messages at each point consistent with each other?

# CLIENT COMMUNICATIONS & RELATIONS

## ✦ OUR COMMUNICATIONS

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- Do our marketing communications consistently-even relentlessly--deliver and repeat a single, memorable, important message about our company, product and or service?
- Do we stand for one single thing?
- Are our messages brief and to the point?
- Does every word count - or are there unnecessary and wasted words?
- Do we immediately convey our point of difference?
- Do we clearly and convincingly communicate the distinctive benefit of working with us?
- Do we provide strong proof for each of our claims?
- If person never reads a word of the message, does the communication still convey a sense of quality?
- Does the reader feel engaged by the copy? Does it speak to him and his wants and needs-or do we talk too much about ourselves?

## ✦ OUR PRESENTATIONS

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- Do our images, by themselves, convey an unmistakable sense of quality and professionalism?
- Is each slide necessary? Does each one deliver its message better than words alone can?
- Are slides kept to a minimum, so that our audience will focus on our people rather than our slides?
- Does each image convey no more than three succinct points?
- Can any point be made in half as many words?
- Are the images interesting yet appropriate?
- Are the words engaging and interesting?
- Is our presentation about the client and his needs-or is it about us?
- Is the presentation compelling without being immodest?
- Is our presentation human, warm, inviting and personal? Are there moments where it is too institutional?
- Are our testimonials powerful and believable?
- Do we use stories to make our message clearer and interesting?



## # OUR SERVICE

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- Are 20 percent of our clients thrilled with us?
- Are all but 10 percent of our clients very pleased with us, and what we do for them?
- What plans do we have for graciously eliminating that 10 percent?
- Is our receptionist warm, welcoming, and optimistic?
- If not, what must we do- this week-to fix that?
- Does someone feel extraordinarily welcome when they enter our doors?
- Are phone calls answered and forwarded in near real time?
- What can we do to ensure that they are?
- Do we return calls or follow up on contacts in near real time?
- Do we follow up every contact with a prospect or client within twenty-four hours?
- Do we have regular and closely followed program for thanking clients and prospects at least once a year?
- Does each of our special clients clearly know they are special to us?
- When we make a promise to a client, do we make sure to put it in writing so we will know what we have promised and what to do- and they will know exactly what to expect from us, and when?