

# Crafting sound bites that lure clients

Mindsets of businesses must be in tune with what they want

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**M**ODERN technology and the rapid pace of interaction have brought about the need for a new way of interacting with customers, suppliers and other business stakeholders.

That's the view of The Consultant Powerhouse's Vanessa Bluen, who points out that most communication nowadays is in the form of sound bites, and to be effective in business meetings we need to recognise this.

"Everyone is so easily distracted and there is so much competition for their attention that the most important thing in any meeting is narrowly focused relevancy," she says.

"This means a change in mind-



Vanessa Bluen

set from what you believe you can offer to what it is that they want. If you can recognise what's important to them, you can start working out how your competencies and the products and services of your organisation can meet their needs."

It's no longer about going in with a ready-made solution, or with a catalogue of offerings and making a presentation, Bluen stresses.

"Bearing in mind that time is short, you need to go into every meeting with the aim of making that hour the most valuable one in the diary of the client that week," she says.

So, it needs a change in orientation from "me" to "you".

You need to pick up the cues and discover what the value is that they can get out of the interaction, not focus on the value that you believe you can add.

"Your intention is not to 'tell and sell', but to listen, and to make sense of the complexity of the situation," says Bluen.

"In these days of information overload, there's no point in telling people things they can easily find out for themselves.

"Instead, you should be challenging the information, getting them to see things on a different

level, offering alternatives, and demonstrating the value of your wider experience.

"That way, you will build trust and begin to understand the critical relevance of the role that you can play.

"It may not bring you a sale in the short term, but that's not the point. It's about finding out what is important to the prospective client, ahead of future interactions."

You should articulate the value of the interaction, not the product you are offering.

Bluen equates the approach to that of a general practitioner, rather than a surgeon.

"A surgeon looks for solutions based on his specialised skills. The general practitioner has to investigate all possibilities and then use his wide experience to craft a remedy," she says.

The technique is not to have a structured conversation, Bluen explains.

"Avoid monologues. Enrol the

other person, get their permission to move in a certain direction, that's how you keep the conversation relevant and valuable to them."

And it's important always to bear in mind the scarcity of time.

"The content of the conversation is important," she says, "but the pace of the interaction is as crucial. Think of the relevance to the other person all the time. Remember, it's not about you and what it is you think you can sell, at this stage.

"You need to place their challenges in a broader context, applying your learnings in other areas to provide a framework. If you can make it clearer to the prospective client, providing insight and direction, you will build trust.

"And if you make it clear that the interaction is about them, not your capability, you will make the meeting relevant and valuable, which is what it's all about."

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