

Wash, Rinse, Repeat:

Why your firm is stuck in a rut.

As a small business consultant, I speak every day to hardworking professional people that have a genuine passion for doing the best work they possibly can, and never compromising their principles. The good news is you can make a fine career doing this, in whatever your chosen field. However, if you want to grow your business, there is bad news—very, very bad news.

Keep reading because, if the words below describe your business, the next few paragraphs might change your approach to acquiring new clients forever.

Here, I present a fictional, but typical, life of a CPA professional (or any other professional service firm):

Think back to the beginning. After a long, grueling, formal education, and perhaps decades of experience, you have spent thousands of dollars to secure a designation recognized by every business person in America. You are officially a “Certified Public Accountant.” Congratulations! It was hard work, but you earned it. Now the fun begins.

After years of scratching and clawing, you gain some loyal clients and you are busy! But, of course, you could always be busier. You have your head down and you are furiously cranking out the work to make your clients happy. Business is good, but your clients are aging, or going out of business, or (insert any other reason you lose clients). It’s time to go get more work to maintain your accustomed lifestyle.

So, you attend chamber events, and professional meet and greets. You shake some hands and ask for the business. It works! You are busy again, and you scurry back to your office to do the technical work in which you were trained. That is, until you run out of work. Once again, you put on your nametag, muster up an artificial smile, and hit the streets. You land some new business, and back to the office you go. Until you run out of work. Repeat.

This is what we affectionately refer to as the “Wash, Rinse, Repeat” business cycle. When we ask service professionals how they get their clients, almost always they answer “referrals.” And that’s great, but hoping for referrals is not a system to acquire new clients. It is not specific, measurable, and repeatable. Hoping for the phone to ring, or to hear your email chime, is a passive way to do it. And my friends, Hope is not a strategy.

We call this the perpetual cycle of business insanity. Doing the same as you have always done, but expecting a different result. Are you guilty? Be honest.

Now consider how, in this example, a system supported by technology might contribute to your practice.

Step 1. Potential clients are attracted by modern marketing techniques to your website. Visitors perceive you as the thought-leader in your industry because of your content.

Step 2. When they arrive at your website, potential clients are compelled to enter their name and email to earn a valuable whitepaper you offer.

Step 3. They receive an email with the promised whitepaper, and a video introduction from the firm principal.

Step 4. A few days later, the potential client gets another whitepaper describing the level of service they should expect from their CPA.

Step 5. The next day this same potential client receives a video testimonial from a satisfied customer

Step 6. The potential client calls and asks to set an appointment.

This entire time, through an automated process, technology is working for you and continually recruiting clients. You do what you do best, and leave the networking events to the multilevel marketing peddlers.

This is how you lay a foundation to grow a business and break the perpetual cycle of wash, rinse, repeat. Get it? It's about the process, not the technician.

Here is how you can take steps today to move your business forward. Gather together your employees and ask them where they are spending time on tasks that are NOT billable. List them out and look for ways to eliminate them or AUTOMATE them.

Once that is complete, take it one step further. Add up the time collectively that everyone spends on those tasks and plug that into this formula:

Collective hourly rate of employees X Number of collective hours spent on non-billable tasks = ?

Chances are, that figure will be large enough to grab your attention and get you motivated.

About the Author



Brian Barquilla is founder and publisher of Advantage Business Magazine, and an expert in privately owned small businesses. In addition to publishing Advantage, he is also the chief facilitator of Executive Advantage, a professional and business development group for area CEOs. Executive Advantage provides a forum for growth through coordinated discussion and exposure to expert speakers.

To further assist business owners and presidents in achieving maximum business and personal success, Brian has also developed the BMLS (Business Metrics Learning System), a user-friendly, peer-reviewed roadmap for success.

Because of his expertise in small business, Brian has served on the U.S. Small Business Administration's Florida District Advisory Council, and is a regular judge for the SBA's Small Business Week Awards.

Other leadership roles include serving on the Board of Directors for Beaver Street Enterprise small business incubator, and on the Board of Advisors for Jacksonville University College of Business.

Brian taps into his expertise to speak at many events, and has been featured in a number of business publications. An entrepreneur with a drive for success, his skill is starting companies from scratch, refining business models, recruiting top talent, and ultimately executing his exit plan. To date, all of the businesses Brian has created are thriving.

A self-made entrepreneur with more than 15 years of business leadership experience, Brian is excited to be sharing his passion for business building with others. He holds degrees in marketing and management from Jacksonville University. He lives in North Florida with his wife Robin and their two children. In his leisure time, he enjoys boating, fishing, and personal fitness.
