



THE VALUE OF A MARKETING BINDER

By Bret R. Romney

Suppose you are in the process of buying something very important to your success, but the outcome of your purchase has the potential to impact you negatively. Understandably, you would be very careful to fully understand every aspect of your purchase. Now suppose that during the course of your conversation with the salesperson you are told, 'trust me, everything will work out just fine.' How comforting would those words be to you? Would you feel better if the salesperson could provide you tangible evidence supporting a positive outcome, rather than just words?

We have found that verbal explanations and assurances do not generally provide a high level of comfort to our prospects. How can we convince them that their needs are safe in our hands? We have found a marketing binder to be a successful tool in convincing prospects we can do the job.

What is a Marketing Binder?

A marketing binder is an organized compilation of evidence that clearly demonstrates what it would be like to do business with you. If used properly, your marketing binder will move your prospect into the shoes of a client, and lead them through a successful engagement with you.

Consider our marketing binder for technology services for example. Our sales and implementation methodology consists of five progressive phases: Due Diligence, Implementation Planning, Environment Preparation, Implementation & Training and On-going Support. Each of these phases has been standardized with processes, tools and documents that result in a successful completion of the phase. Our marketing binder is organized with a section for each of the five phases of our methodology. Within each section, we have examples of the processes, tools and documents we will use when leading the client through that phase of the implementation.

It is said that all things are created mentally before they are created physically. This principle supports the use of a marketing binder. I could do my best to explain with words how we arrive at an implementation plan for their solution, but I have no guarantee that my words will paint an accurate picture of the process or the result in the prospect's mind. However, with a marketing binder I can let them see, touch and review the agenda for an implementation planning meeting, as well as the resulting plan document, gantt charts, calendars and task lists. Prospects with this level of knowledge are much more likely to believe you can do the job.

The 30-Minute Walkthrough

When scheduling the first face-to-face meeting with the prospect, we generally ask them to set aside 30 minutes for us to walk them through an implementation of our service or solution. Those 30 minutes represent our 'best message' as to how they will have success

if they choose to engage us. After those 30 minutes, the prospect will have a very clear understanding of how we will lead them to a successful solution that meets their needs. Not only does the marketing binder help the prospect understand our approach, but it also helps us organize our message and remember it in proper sequence.

In addition to the 30-minute walkthrough, the marketing binder becomes an effective tool throughout the entire sales process as an aid in answering questions, educating others about your approach, and emphasizing key elements of your service, solution or methodology. You should have easy access to your binder at all times to get the most value from it.

Building Your Marketing Binder

The first step in creating your marketing binder is to build a comprehensive list of processes, tools and documents you use to achieve success with a client. This list might include:

- A diagram of your Due Diligence process
- Proposal
- Proposal follow-up survey
- Engagement letter
- Implementation plan
- Project management tools
- Client binder lead sheet
- Sample reports
- Entrance conference agenda
- Workpapers
- Progress reports
- Engagement letter amendments
- Customized Procedures
- Satisfaction survey
- Management letter
- Annual system review documents

Next, you need to organize the list into groups or phases that represent a natural progression in leading the prospect toward their desired solution – which in essence becomes your table of contents. Once you have the table of contents, you can begin to print the best samples available of your tools and compile them into the binder. While building your binder you should consider the follow hints:

- Get a binder, possibly leather, that will reflect the quality image you are trying to portray.
- Have multiple copies available for prospect’s staff to see. Your entire team could benefit from knowing how to use the binder.
- Look for ways to spice up your binder with color, diagrams or pictures. However, you should be careful to not let the binder take on a “marketing feel.” Remember, the purpose of the binder is to give the prospect a realistic, accurate view of what they will experience with you. The samples you use should be consistent with what they will see as your client.
- Include a section that contains miscellaneous items such as client testimonials, peer review certificates, staff bios, a picture of your building and staff, etc. Anything that could help you develop trust with your prospect could be included in your marketing binder.

Worth the Effort

Creating and using a marketing binder has easily been one of the most significant things we’ve done in the past several years to move our business forward. As we’ve shared this idea with others, we’ve received feedback supporting our experience. If you don’t have a marketing binder, you should consider creating one in the next 60 days. If you do, and use it correctly, you will see immediate benefits.