

# THE GO-TO EXPERT



**HOW TO GROW YOUR REPUTATION,  
DIFFERENTIATE YOURSELF FROM THE COMPETITION  
AND WIN NEW BUSINESS**



**HEATHER TOWNSEND & JON BAKER**

With a Foreword by Charles H. Green

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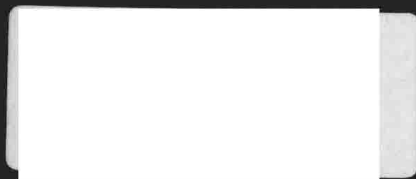
# The Go-To Expert

How to grow your reputation,  
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the competition and win  
new business

**Heather Townsend and  
Jon Baker**

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# Praise for *The Go-To Expert*

**//** Differentiating yourself from your peers is the challenge that every professional faces. This book gives you the clarity, process and confidence to make yourself stand out in a crowded marketplace.

TONI HUNTER, PARTNER, GEORGE HAY CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

**//** Just reading the contents list was enough to confirm my instinct that this is a book that any professional or small business owner needs to read. This easy-to-read book gives you the stuff that most books on networking don't – how to build a firm foundation to win business regularly from your network. Highly recommended.

CHARLIE LAWSON, NATIONAL DIRECTOR, BNI UK & IRELAND

**//** I thought I was pretty good at this 'expert' stuff and being noticed – until I read this! Packed with tips, I was left with a page full of things to do, and I genuinely believe that any professional will benefit from reading (and using) this book.

CARL READER, DIRECTOR, DENNIS & TURNBULL CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS AND STRATEGIC ADVISERS

**//** Having become the Go-To Expert for raising your profile, Heather has shown she walks her talk. This book is a great guide for people who want to follow in her footsteps and learn how to sell themselves as the expert in their field. Buy it now!

JENNIFER HOLLOWAY, AUTHOR OF *PERSONAL BRANDING FOR BRITS*

**//** This book was made for you. More than just another 'How To' guide, if you take the message and wisdom to heart, then your future is set to develop in a rich and rewarding way. Of course, you will have to work diligently on your craft and get ahead. But if you love what you do, then that's easy.

JULIAN SUMMERHAYES, BLOGGER AND PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER

**//** This book is full of really helpful and practical tips for those wanting to succeed in business. I was taking notes before I had finished the first chapter.

JAMES MENDELSSOHN, CHAIRMAN, MSI GLOBAL ALLIANCE

**//** An excellent practical guide for everyone in professional services. If you want to move your career on, shifting from being just another professional advisor to being truly recognised as a Go-To Expert, this book will show you the way.

RICHARD NEWTON, AUTHOR OF *THE MANAGEMENT BOOK*

**//** With job security no longer a given, every professional needs to understand how to build up a profile and reputation in the competitive legal landscape – read this book and learn how to thrive whether you are employed, freelancing or doing interim work.

SHIREEN SMITH, LL.M SOLICITOR AND PRINCIPAL, AZRIGHTS SOLICITORS

**//** This book proves to be a brilliant tool to help professionals appreciate the benefits of becoming recognised as the Go-To Expert in their field. The book gives you some truly great ideas on how to differentiate yourself from your competitors along with guidance on how to implement these ideas, whilst also embracing the social media methods of marketing.

CAROLINE BIRD, DIRECTOR, MENZIES LLP

**//** Like so many lawyers struggling to come to grips with the new environment in which we work and the increased need to find my own instructions, I have a shelf full of books which claim to point me in the right direction. Although my intentions are good, I've only ever managed to get through a few of them due to the fact that they have an alarming tendency to be full of buzzwords and light on specific advice on which steps to take to start changing your fortunes right away.

*The Go-To Expert* has no such problems. It is written very much as a 'business case' in its own right and not only equips you with the tools you need to succeed in our new multi-platform world, but explains why each step is important and how it can ensure your survival and prosperity. It can be dipped in and out of to deal with a specific point or worked through (as I did) to take you through the process of making yourself truly stand out for all the right reasons. With helpful case studies to demonstrate how the suggested steps have worked for others and a straightforward prose style and tone which doesn't leave you feeling baffled or indoctrinated, this is most importantly an easy and worthwhile read and is a sound basis for pretty much any personal development plan. And, if you don't have a personal development plan, this book will tell you why you should.

*The Go-To Expert* covers every base you'll need to set yourself apart from the competition and, to be honest, you can't afford to ignore it.

STEVE KUNCEWICZ, HEAD OF IP AND MEDIA, BERMANS LLP

**//** This is an essential and significant resource for anyone looking to develop their careers or their business, jam-packed with practical ideas to help you achieve that 'Go-To Expert' status.

PAUL HICKMAN, PARTNER, MENZIES

**//** *The Go-To Expert* is a great guide for aspiring professionals and reflects the changing world in which we operate. It is no longer good enough to be a very solid practitioner – you now need to be known for something and if that is as unique as possible so much the better. That isn't just about career progress to the highest level your skills can take you, it may just be about keeping the job you've got.

PETER GILLMAN, EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, PRICE BAILEY

**//** In our cluttered, competitive world of business, the fight for air time and mind space is fierce. Making somebody think of you first when they need what you do is a major marketing objective. Unfortunately few entrepreneurs or professionals get it right, which is why they struggle to market themselves, their ideas and their companies. As a fellow bestselling author on the topic of reputation and standing out in a crowd, I love what Heather Townsend has done with this book. It addresses the 'tyranny of choice' by explaining in very practical ways the benefits of becoming the go-to-expert, the power of niching and how to become irresistible to your target market. Using a blend of methods including the three massive reputation builders, writing, speaking and networking, she unpacks the mystery surrounding why some people get chosen and some don't. If you want to become the stand out option in a competitive environment, this brilliant book should be your blueprint of choice!

ROB BROWN, AUTHOR OF *HOW TO BUILD YOUR REPUTATION*

**//** Heather Townsend's *The Go-To Expert* provides a brilliant step-by-step guide to growing your professional services business. If you leave this book on the shelf you will miss out!

MATT BIRD, FOUNDER, RELATIONOLOGY

# The Go-To Expert

## PEARSON

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# About the authors

**Heather Townsend** helps professionals become the Go-To Expert. She is the author of one of the top selling FT Guides – *The FT Guide To Business Networking*, the co-author of *How to Make Partner and Still Have a Life* and a high profile member of the professional services industry. Over the last decade, Heather has worked with over 300 partners, coached, trained and mentored over 2000 professionals at every level of the UK's most ambitious professional practices.

Heather is a member of the professional speaker's association. She regularly speaks at large conferences within the professional services sector e.g. ICAEW's insolvency practitioners conference. In 2011 and 2012 Heather judged the British Accountancy Awards.

Heather is increasingly gaining a reputation as a fresh thinking, astute, practice management expert. She regularly writes for the trade press and is often quoted in the national press. She writes monthly for CCH, a large software provider and technical publisher for the accountancy industry.

**Jon Baker** specialises in helping small professional practices grow profitably and sustainably from 5 to 50 people. He has 25 years' experience of managing, training and coaching in business helping ambitious professionals improve their leadership, marketing and sales skills. He is also an in demand speaker, social media and sales trainer (Jon is a member of the professional speaker's association). Before Jon started his own practice as a coach, he spent 17 years working for BP. In the last 7 years he has coached hundreds of business owners, helping to grow their firms by more than 63 per cent. He has also had blue chip clients; including BP, Total, and Feel Good Drinks.



# Authors' acknowledgements

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# Foreword

Countless books have been written about how to do networking, lead generation, social media, selling and brand management. Probably even more have been written about content mastery and how to become really good at doing something. Call those perspectives marketing and content, respectively.

Curiously, I can't think of any books that specifically link those two perspectives for professional services – how to develop and run a business built around the idea of expertise. Until this book.

It sounds so simple: get better than anyone else at something and then build your business around it. For example, we've all heard the quip, 'Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door.' But that optimistic formulation begs a few critical questions.

The first is – why mousetraps instead of bicycles? If mousetraps, then what does 'better' mean? Is a green mousetrap better – or is colour irrelevant? How can I be better than anyone else at it? These kinds of questions go on, and on, and on.

The second question is – just how is it that people will come to beat a path to your door? How will they know where your door is? How beaten does the path have to be in the first place? How will they even know you have a mousetrap, much less a better one?

And finally, if you have a better mousetrap and people find out about it – what will you do with it? How can you ensure mousetrap quality control? How to become the world's best-known mousetrap? Should you branch into cheese? And so forth.

It sounds so simple. And of course, it may be simple – but that doesn't mean it's easy.

In *The Go-To Expert*, Heather Townsend and Jon Baker have produced a comprehensive, practical book about how to build a client portfolio and/or firm *based on expertise*. (Interestingly, the book itself is a

marvellous example of precisely what Heather and Jon are talking about: an offering linked to a defined market, with a comprehensive package of business building tools around it.)

It may sound obvious that a professional, or a professional services firm, should build itself around an area of expertise – but it's not obvious or even necessary. Many firms, intentionally or otherwise, build their strategies around markets alone, or products alone, or based on a competitive segmentation, or a cost position, or relationships, or distribution channels. Expertise is not the only choice and it's easy to fall off track even if the choice is made.

It may also sound obvious that an expertise-based professional services firm, having chosen that as a strategy, will intuitively know just what to do – but, again, the truth is counter-intuitive. For a host of reasons – which Townsend and Baker itemise – professionals are marketing-averse, fearful of specialisation and loathe to think at a meta-level about content. Again, it's easy to fall off the track.

Whether you're a solo practitioner, interim, freelancer, salesperson or a professional services firm of any size, the ideas in this book are insightful, provocative and powerful. But it's not just an idea's book. Townsend and Baker have included a rich vein of examples, exercises, practical advice and tips, and an accompanying online Workbook. If you have trouble implementing the ideas in this book, it won't be for lack of a concrete roadmap!

And if you do implement them, you can look forward to higher levels of brand awareness, profitability, effectiveness, reputation, sales and probably personal satisfaction as well. Being a Go-To Expert is simple and not easy – but well worth the effort.

Charles H. Green, co-author of *The Trusted Advisor*,  
and author of *Trust-Based Selling*  
West Orange, New Jersey

# Introduction

## Why become the Go-To Expert?

Differentiating yourself from your peers, internally and externally, is the challenge that every professional faces. With today's clients more inclined to look for a better service or deal, the pressure is on for every firm and professional to justify their fee levels and increase the value they bring to clients. One way of curing these commercial headaches is to grow a reputation as the Go-To Expert within your marketplace and firm.

Becoming the Go-To Expert conveys kudos and status. When you achieve the status of Go-To Expert, you have the luxury of clients coming to you and being able to pick and choose those you want to work with, whilst being able to charge premium rates for your services. Which professional doesn't want this?

With job security no longer a given, senior professionals are often moving between periods of employment, freelancing and interim work. Whether you acknowledge it or not, today's senior professionals need to be able to sell themselves – not just to their current clients or current employers but also future clients and employers. This book will show you how to sell yourself in a way that feels comfortable and authentic. Regardless of your current employment status, it will show you how to build up your credibility, profile and reputation so that you are in control of your career, always in demand and never short of work again.

When you have built a reputation as the Go-To Expert it allows you to spend less time on business development – after all, your reputation and profile in the marketplace and your firm are enough to generate enquiries on their own. From our research, the single biggest challenge professionals have with business development is making the time to do it properly. This book shows you how to spend less overall time on business development, but win more profitable clients who will work with you for longer.

# What makes a Go-To Expert?

A Go-To Expert can mean many things to many different people. For example, you can become a Go-To Expert in a firm by having a specialist skill set that is in demand. This specialist skill set could be as simple as 'the person who really knows their way around the IT system'. We asked people we trust for their views of what makes a Go-To Expert.

## THE MARKETER'S VIEW

*"A Go-To Expert must have some definable expertise, plus visibility and influence within their target market."*

LEE FREDERIKSEN, MANAGING PARTNER, HINGE, AND CO-AUTHOR OF  
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES MARKETING

## THE JOURNALIST'S VIEW

*"A Go-To Expert is someone who is authoritative. This is because they will have built up a profile in an industry or they have the ability to influence the marketplace due to their job role or profile."*

GAVIN HINKS, FREELANCE JOURNALIST

## THE MEDIA EXPERT'S VIEW

*"There are so very many self-proclaimed experts these days. People who say 'I'm the world's top expert' or 'A thought leader in...'. Therefore, in my opinion, a true Go-To Expert will be seen by others as the Go-To Expert due to their body of work and the results they have achieved."*

ALAN STEVENS, AUTHOR OF *PING*, *THE POCKET MEDIA COACH* AND  
CO-AUTHOR OF *MEDIA MASTERS*

In this book we will help you to become a Go-To Expert by giving you tools to grow your reputation, profile and influence in order to make it easy for you to sell and market yourself.

# Social media: the game changer

*"The internet and social media are going to be the biggest change to professional services since they became deregulated and were allowed to advertise in the 1970s and 1980s."*

LEE FREDERIKSEN, MANAGING PARTNER, HINGE, AND CO-AUTHOR OF  
*PROFESSIONAL SERVICES MARKETING*

Five years ago, social media was very much in its infancy. The online world was still a very junior and poor relation to the face-to-face world. To gain the status of the Go-To Expert typically meant you were reliant on gatekeepers to your target audience such as journalists, editors, publishers and event organisers. However, that is not the case today. With the advent of broadband and social media, you can grow your reputation without having to go via these traditional gatekeepers.

Trust has always been important in the selling process – particularly for professional services. After all, you don't buy a big-ticket item from someone you don't trust. Historically, the trust between buyer and seller has been developed through personal contact. After all, the larger the risk the more likely a buyer will want to see the 'whites of the eyes' of the seller before they will commit to a purchase. The internet has opened up another avenue to developing trust between a buyer and seller. It is possible to develop trust in a person through reading and digesting their content over time, and beginning to trust their advice and their judgment before you meet them. Consequently, those professionals who commit to regularly producing content for their target market are more likely to get called than those who rely solely on personal contact to build trust.

The internet has largely removed the geographical barriers to professionals winning business. It has also given people access to huge amounts of knowledge. In fact, in the last two years we have produced more data than we did in all the years leading up to this point. Consequently, we are all becoming conditioned to expect that we can have access via the internet to anything, anywhere. This means that people when they want help are much more inclined to find the expert; the person who's done exactly what they are looking for, who has the specific expertise.

Typically, prospects and intermediaries will now meet you first in the online world. What do you do when you want to find an answer to a problem or issue you are facing? Google it. What do you do before you meet someone for the first time? Google their name. Only if your prospects like the look of what you do, and how you do it online, will you receive a call or email. If they don't – you will never know. Consequently, the skill of being able to build up a strong and credible reputation online is essential for every professional. This book shows you how to do this, plus how to communicate your brand and story in a compelling and credible way to your ideal clients.

## **Why do professionals struggle to market and sell themselves?**

If you went into any service provider, such as an accountant's or doctor's practice, and asked the question, 'How many of you went into your profession in order to sell and market yourself?', I doubt you would get a single affirmative answer. This is because most professionals chose their profession because they were attracted to the technical work, not the marketing and selling side of being in the profession.

Many professionals struggle to translate their technical expertise into something that is easily understandable to the lay person. It's very easy to write more and more technically orientated copy, rather than simple, easy-to-understand material that their target audience can relate to. Consequently, as a result, they often fail to connect with their audience via their marketing efforts.

Very often the barrier that many professionals face with their marketing is a self-limiting belief that they can't openly share their thinking on a matter, i.e. 'If I share how I do something, or share our secrets, what will my clients need me for – and wouldn't our competitors nick our thinking?' These are typically just beliefs, and often not founded on anything tangible. After all, if all your expertise is something that you can share on a blog post, then it's not much expertise! Most people, even if you give them step-by-step instructions on how to do something in a blog post, will rarely execute them in the most time-effective way. After all, reading a blog can't deliver the level of

expertise, insight and ability that your qualifications and number of years in the profession have given you.

Culturally, here in the UK, less so in other parts of the world, it's not the done thing to brag about your expertise or 'blow your own trumpet'. Many professionals subscribe to the view, which isn't always correct, that you should let your results do the talking for you. If professionals are to get better at marketing and selling themselves, they will need to become more comfortable with proactively saying, 'This is what I can do.'

Very often professionals are poor at marketing and selling themselves because they haven't been taught how to. All too frequently firms focus their fee earners' development on technical skills, at the expense of softer skills. Often, as a result of this focus on technical skills, and a firm's business model, there becomes an implied or even explicit culture in firms that client work is the number one priority for a fee earner. Consequently, business development can often be seen as something to do when you don't have any client work, something to delegate to the marketing department or something that can be left to the rainmakers.

Whatever your reason for picking up this book, we know that, if you take just a few actions or ideas away from this book, you will get better at marketing and selling yourself.

## **Why did we decide to write this book?**

We specialise in working with professionals, from the owners of the very smallest professional practices right up to people in the largest and global firms. Jon tends to work mostly with partners in firms with fewer than five partners, whereas, Heather is very often working with aspiring, junior and established partners from the mid-tier and large firms who have a strong desire to build up a partner-sized portfolio. What we noticed with these two different populations of professionals was a strong desire to become the Go-To Expert within their firm and marketplace, as well as a reluctance to get out there and market and sell themselves. We found that when our clients focused and achieved this status of the Go-To Expert they found that clients came



to them, rather than the other way around, and they achieved significantly better results than we – and they – expected. Not only did it help them easily attract the right type of clients, but it put them firmly back in control of their career and practice.

*“Establishing your reputation is something that every professional needs to do, regardless of the stage of your career.”*

TIM LUSCOMBE, PRINCIPAL, KLO PARTNERS

As a result, we studied what the most successful of our clients were doing and found that we could replicate their techniques, not only for our own business but also our other client's businesses. This book is the result of us capturing what many of our very successful clients were doing naturally and turning this into a practical guide that you can use to replicate their success.

## Case study 1

### John Cassidy, The Headshot Guy

John has run his own photography business for many years. When the newspaper business severely cut back its usage of freelance photographers and his regular freelance work with *The Times* came to an end, he realised he had to find a new niche for himself. He knew he didn't want to get involved in the social side of photography and so, initially, started to focus on old-style corporate and PR photography.

Over time he noticed that an upsurge in people's usage of social media sites, combined with more people going into business for themselves, was resulting in a high level of demand for headshots. In 2010, he committed to his niche of headshots, raised his prices and rebranded his business and service offering to John Cassidy Headshots. It was at a business networking event where the name 'The Headshot Guy' came about, and it has stuck.