

Accidentally Landing a \$3 Million Client

By Dan Richards
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An advisor recently told me how he landed a client with \$3 million in assets, with more to come. While he claimed that his success was an “accident,” I discovered that it was really the result of a key lesson that any advisor can follow.

This highly successful advisor – let’s call him Alex – is at a bank-owned firm. In 2004, he met with a very successful entrepreneur. While their initial meeting went well, this individual never responded to numerous follow-up calls; after a few attempts to reach him, Alex wrote him off.



That’s why Alex was more than a bit surprised to get a call from this entrepreneur, now 66, who is in the process of selling his business for several million dollars and wanted to meet to discuss how to invest the proceeds and to talk about estate-planning issues. It turns out that this prospect had been left on the list for Alex’s monthly market emails, effectively by accident.

After two meetings, the prospect signed on as a client with an initial investment of \$3 million.

The virtue of consistent contact

“If we were still mailing out newsletters,” Alex said, “there’s a pretty good chance that at some point this guy would have been deleted from the list as a waste of paper and a stamp. The only reason he was still getting our emails is that there’s no cost associated with them.”

There are a number of important lessons here.

First, prospects will work with you on their schedule, not yours. Even though Alex was ready to work with him eight years ago, the client only now felt the need to do something.

As a result, you need a vehicle for staying top-of-mind with potential clients in a way that doesn’t put them under stress or pressure. The best vehicle is to send existing clients and



prospects thoughtful, high-quality insights on a frequent basis (at least monthly to make an impact).

A second key lesson is the importance of regular follow up with prospects, even if it is only once every 18 to 24 months. Alex got lucky with this prospect, in that he hadn't found another advisor in the eight years since they'd met. Earlier this year, I spoke to an advisor who'd built a large list of prospects who had attended talks he'd delivered and, in the evaluation and book draw afterwards, ticked a box agreeing to receive follow-up information.

He initially mailed and more recently emailed his monthly newsletter to these prospects and got a reasonable response – but didn't see a really big payoff until he hired a summer student to pick up the phone and call those prospects to inquire if they'd like to schedule a meeting.

The patience of a top advisor

Finally, sometimes you have to be very, very patient indeed. Back in the 1990s, I invited a high-profile advisor to speak at a conference I was running.

Based in the northeast, for many years, this advisor had been the top producer at a leading firm. He delivered a great talk, during which he discussed the critical role of patience. Even if someone had accepted invitations to his lunches at the Harvard Club for years and still wasn't a client, he didn't let that frustrate him – he emphasized that the more money a prospect had, the more patience was typically required.

In the Q-and-A period, he was asked how long he would communicate with a prospect before giving up, to which he responded, *“I'm sorry I don't know the answer to that question – I've only been in the business 35 years, and I'm still following up today with prospects that I began talking to 35 years ago.”*

You may not have the patience to wait 35 years – but one of the new realities of client development today is the central role of low-key persistence and patience. As you reflect on your own communication with prospects, think about whether it meets the tests of quality, persistence and patience that it takes today to turn many affluent prospects into clients.



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