

YOUR VISIBILITY LEADS TO CREDIBILITY, WHICH LEADS TO PROFITABILITY

Visibility has become a trendy subject is about being seen in the marketplace with the right message, the best platform and for the right reasons. We all know about information overload and how much competition there is for your customers' attention, both online and offline. So being seen – in person, online, in the media – is essential. However it is dangerous to stop there.

Visibility is one element of the VCP model created by BNI founder Dr Ivan Misner and it is an important first step in business relationship-building. The model shows how you first need to be visible, then, over time as people in your network get to know you, Credibility is achieved. Finally, only when you have that credibility amongst your advocates and prospects will you see Profitability. Misner asserted that every relationship needs to be built in that order. So you need to get out to networking events and become active on social media, just to be seen.

But it is not until you achieve credibility that you will get the business. Just think about someone you see a lot at business events or online, but he has not impressed you. In fact, you suspect he doesn't know a lot about his subject, and it's embarrassing to watch him making a fool of himself. You know exactly who I'm talking about, don't you? And you won't be giving him any business in the near future, will you? That's because he has not engendered any credibility with you.

The word credibility comes from the Latin and means 'belief'. If you are believable and trustworthy, people will share their contacts with you. People in your network also have to believe that you can add value. The best way to convince them of that is to be actively writing, publishing and speaking. Good, credible professionals show people what they know and what they think. They provide a lot of substance in the form of detailed ideas, views and examples of where they have added value in the past. They are usually bold and opinionated, since that is what is needed to really get people's attention. So, if visibility is about being seen, then credibility is about being heard.

Just look at what happened to Steve Glowinkowski, managing director of organisation and leadership development consultancy practice Glowinkowski International. Steve has been consulting with high level clients for over 25 years. He and his team were well-known within a small business community, but relatively unknown outside of that sphere. A year ago, Steve made the decision to do more speaking and writing. As a result, he did some interviews with business publications and started working on his first book. In March 2009, he launched *It's Behaviour, Stupid!: What Really Drives the Behaviour of Your Organisation* (£14.99, Ecademy Press). One person who bought the book at the launch was a director at a large organisation Steve had been wanting to talk to for several months. After reading the book, the customer *believed* the story and *believed* his organisation could benefit from some consultancy of this nature. Instead of Steve having to chase the customer, the customer rang Steve and they agreed a large contract for consultancy work.

The customer knew about Steve and his firm for several years. So Steve was visible. But it was not until he put his specific ideas and expertise in writing and gave people some read substance that they understood the full value of what he delivered. So many times, we assume people will have conversations with us where we will be able to convince them of our value. But people are busy and they need the proof first. It's what I call 'table stakes'. These days, there are a minimum number of credibility (and visibility) building activities without which you will not even be invited to play at the table. They include writing (articles, blogs, good web content and of course good quality books) and speaking (at events of all sizes, networking and video content online). These activities create the space at the table for you, and they ensure that everyone else understands what value you bring to the table.

The fact is that we need to be both seen and heard (contrary to what some of us were told when we were children!). We need visibility first, and then credibility, if we are to create more business for ourselves. If possible, join all of the networks you are invited to, especially online. Then populate your profiles with great content, and keep creating good content to give people a sense of your value. And while you are at the event, make sure you mention your books, articles and blogs so that they can get to know, believe and trust your expertise. The great news is that when you do your job well and become credible, others begin to write and speak about you, which creates a viral effect, so you don't have to work so hard.