

## **Episode 72: How Did You Get Your First Client Mash-Up—with Deb Zahn and Guests**

### **From Episode 46: Building a Super-Niche Consulting Business—with Reuven Lerner**

Reuven Lerner: So the story is that when I was in college, I interned at HP over the summer and every so often they would hold a staff meeting and there were two people not invited to the staff meeting. One was me because I was a student and there was this other guy and I said to him, "So why aren't you going to the meeting?" He said, "Oh, I'm a contractor." I said, "What's a contractor?" He said, "Oh my God, it is the best." And he described to me how consulting work, which I'm sure the HP managers would that have been so thrilled about. And this always sort of stuck in my mind as, hmm, this sounds like an interesting way to do things. And so in 1995 when I moved to Israel from the U.S., I sort of took advantage of the opportunity of the sort of upheaval in my life anyway. And I said, okay, I'm going to try consulting.

Fortunately, my previous employer at Time Warner said explicitly, they wanted to be my first client. And they sort of, you can think of them as the investor in my consulting firm where they gave me the cushion I needed to slowly but surely learn what it was like to run a business. And to slowly, very, very slowly start focusing on a particular topic.

### **From Episode 49: Helping Clients Navigate High-Risk Decisions—with Linda Henman**

Linda Henman: It was really hard because I had these great relationships with these big companies that I had been working with, but I also had a two year noncompete. And so for the first two years it was really hard for me to get clients. But now I would say 90% of my business comes from referral and repeat business. The other 10% is the one off that I get, like for example, from a podcast like this, somebody might call me to get my help. Or from a marketing piece that I have put out or from an article that I've written that something will come trickling in. But it's a referral business. It's a relationship business and you just have to meet...First of all, you have to do great work so that your clients want you to come back. And I do a lot of repeat business. In fact, probably in 2019, 95% of my business was repeat business. I mean more business within the same client and then them renewing their proposals and then the other 5% I say come as the one-offs.

### **From Episode 52: Helping Companies Achieve More with Technology—with Graham Binks**

Graham Binks: My first client? It was through my network. All my clients essentially early on came through my existing network. So I had connections in a whole bunch of companies. I've worked in some capacity inside of over 250 businesses. A small handful of those, I should emphasize, I was employed at. But for the majority they were customers of mine. So I had a pretty good network. And as an early adopter I was already using social media to stay in touch with people at a business level, specifically LinkedIn.

And so I got out my virtual Rolodex, and I called up a few people, most of whom I tended to keep in touch with anyway. I didn't just call them when I needed them as it were. So, that was very helpful. And

I think everyone recognizes that's a best practice in networking now, you don't just call people when you need them. And a few opportunities came up that I knew them well enough, they knew me well enough to know there was a match and we got started on some projects. So since that time, I've built a fairly significant client base, and in almost every exception is just been repeat business, which means I must be doing something right.

### **Episode 65: Preparing to Take the Leap into Consulting—with Veronica Sagastume**

Veronica Sagastume: My first client was actually...You are in the consulting world, as well, and I'm sure you hear this a lot, it is my last corporate employer. I went and spoke to the CEO and I sort of explained to him where I was at. I knew that me leaving, or giving two weeks, was going to put the company in an uncomfortable position, let's just say that. No one is irreplaceable. We're all replaceable, but it was not the best timing. So, I give him a proposal how I could transition from a full-time employee to a part-time consultant. My proposal included that I would stay on long enough to help him find my replacement and make the transition however long that took. But that last full-time employer became my very first paying consulting client in a part-time basis so that I could then go out and seek other consulting work and with other clients.

Deb Zahn: That's so smart. I've seen other folks who have been wise enough to do that they already know how good you are, so why wouldn't they be your first client.

Veronica Sagastume: They could see the benefit of help me staying on long enough...It's also how you position it, right? You could serve it up in a really disgruntled, or “I'm done I don't want to do this anymore” way. Or you could say, “Hey. I'm making some changes and I would like to do the right thing by the business, by you, and here's how we can do it so it's a win/win for both of us.” It's always how you present it.