

Spiraling Up Self-Assessment

This self assessment is based on the book *Spiraling Up: How to Create a High Growth, High Value Professional Services Firm*. The book is available for free download at www.spiralingupbook.com.

We've created this marketing self-assessment instrument to help your team understand where your firm stands today. Try to answer each of the following questions honestly. The more people in your firm who participate, the better your data will be.

This self assessment is broken into sections that cover three topics critical to the success of your firm:

- > Strategy
- > People
- > Operations

Once you have completed this exercise, compare your answers with those of others in your firm. Discuss the inevitable differences and try to form a consensus. If you can't reach consensus, go with the more pessimistic assessment. (In our experience, it's probably more accurate.)

For help interpreting the results of this assessment, please refer to *Spiraling Up* or contact us at Hinge Marketing: info@hingemarketing.com.

Strategy

Strategy is the key to high growth and a premium valuation. Get the strategy right and the rest is easier. What goes into a good strategy?

- › Understand and anticipate your client's needs.
- › Make sure your services solve key business problems.
- › Deliver superior value.
- › Have a well-thought-out strategy to differentiate your firm and position it in the marketplace.

If you can accomplish these things, then getting new business becomes a lot simpler. In our experience, firms with a successful strategy are able to maintain a steady flow of the “right kind” of new clients.

Compelling Value Proposition

You must be able to solve important client problems in a way that delivers a significant economic impact or makes their life much easier.

- > Does your service produce a direct economic benefit for clients? Can you prove it?

- > Will it clearly make their life easier? Can you prove it?

- > Does your service address an issue that potential clients really care about?

- > Can you communicate the value you bring in a clear and compelling way?

Clear Differentiator

You should be different from your potential competitors in a way that is understandable, meaningful and believable to prospective clients.

> Can you describe your firm in a way that other firms cannot?

> How are you different?

> Can you prove it?

> Do potential clients really care?

> Do your competitors acknowledge the difference?

People

In the professional services, people are the product. This makes hiring the right individuals for the right roles crucial to a firm's success. And as most firm executives know from hard-won experience, finding and retaining talent can be devilishly difficult. You'll know you are successful in this area when you are able to attract and keep the high-quality new hires you need to maintain sustainable growth.

Operations

Can you reliably and cost-effectively deliver on what you promise? Firms that can confidently answer “yes” to this question tend to have profitable, satisfied clients– clients that make valuable referrals. These clients become an engine of sustainable growth and contribute to premium valuations. You’ll know you are successful if you’ve got a smooth process, a healthy bottom line and an accumulation of loyal, referring clients.

Deliver on Your Brand Promise

You must be able to deliver on the promise that you explicitly and implicitly make to your clients.

- > Do your clients believe you deliver what you promise?

- > Does your staff believe you do what you promise for your clients?

- > Do clients consistently refer your firm to their friends and colleagues?

- > What is your reputation in the marketplace?

- > What do your competitors say about your firm?

Solid, Believable Financial Results

You must have financial results that are both believable and demonstrate the ability to generate acceptable returns.

- > Is your growth rate superior to competitors?

- > Are your earnings comparable or superior to competitors?

- > Are your accounting assumptions considered conservative?

- > Are financials up-to-date and produced on a regular and timely basis?

- > Can you accurately predict future financial performance?

About Hinge

Hinge is a national branding and marketing firm for the professional services industries. For more information on Hinge, visit www.hingemarketing.com.