

The background of the cover is a photograph of a desk. On the left, a white ceramic mug is partially visible. In the center, a white square planter holds a green succulent. To the right, a silver laptop is open, with its screen reflecting the scene. The overall lighting is soft and natural, creating a professional yet approachable atmosphere.

Starting your HR Consultancy Business

A guide from
The HR Consultancy Business School

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The HR Consultancy Business School



Introduction

Who is this Guide for?

This guide is for you if you are a HR Professional who is,

- In the first year of running your HR Consultancy Business
- ~ Intending to start a HR Consultancy Business in the next 12 months.
- ~ Considering starting a HR Consultancy Business at some point and want to know more about what is involved.
- ~ Looking for more consistent and reliable ways to find leads and Consultancy clients



Introduction

What does the Guide Cover?

This guide covers 3 main areas,

~ **Business Essentials**

- What do you need?
- What do you not need?

~ **Marketing**

- How do you find leads and clients for your Business?

~ **Sales**

- Setting your prices
- Making Sales
- Getting set up for Clients



Business Essentials

What do you really need?

Probably a lot less than you think!

You can spend a huge amount of time and money in the early days of the business on things you don't really need - (I have a drawer full of business cards I never needed and an embarrassing amount of headed notepaper and compliments slips that for some reason I thought would be vital!).

Most of us are used to a Corporate environment and we draw our knowledge of what we think we will need from our experience of that. But now you are setting up on your own resources are a lot scarcer and you need to make good choices about how to allocate those resources.

Most of us have a few horror stories about things we invested in that turned out to be a big waste of money - and these are just the battle scars of starting your own business - but I would like to help you to avoid at least a couple of them.



Business Essentials

Marketing Materials

By Marketing Materials I am including things like,

- An Email Address
- A Website
- Business Cards
- A Business Name
- Leaflets and Flyers

An Email Address

One of the first things you will need is a professional work email address. Don't try to get by with a generic gmail, hotmail or yahoo email address. It will make you look completely unprofessional to a corporate audience and it's really inexpensive and easy to sort out.

You need to buy a domain name (you do this via sites like GoDaddy and 123-Reg) and then you get the option to set up a webmail based email address using that domain name. It costs from about £30 a year and is an investment you definitely need to be making.



Business Essentials

Marketing Materials

A Website

A lot of new businesses start without a website but you are going to be working with Business Owners and they will expect you to have one. It will damage your credibility and undermine the confidence of potential clients if you don't have one.

But you don't need an expensive all singing and dancing website - just a basic start up one with,

- a Home page
- an About Me page
- a Services page
- Some case studies or testimonials
- a Contact Me page

If you are intending to use blogging as a marketing strategy then also a page for that.



Business Essentials

Marketing Materials

Website - A few pitfalls to avoid

- Set yourself a firm deadline to get your website live - I have seen people spend months and even years on this - everything is put on hold 'until the website is ready' and in the meantime you're not making any money and your business is going nowhere
- Always buy your own domain name - it can be tempting to sign up to an all inclusive website development package but then you lose your business identity if you part ways later. You can buy a domain name from about £10 a year
- Get an SSL certificate for your website - it can be tempting to not bother, particularly if you are not using it to collect any personal details but seeing that 'Not Secure' notification pop up when they bring up your site will send your potential clients away from the site and away from your business faster than you can blink! They need to know that they can trust you so you don't want the words 'Not Secure' anywhere near your business!



Business Essentials

Marketing Materials

A Business Name, Business Cards

It can feel very satisfying and exciting to start working on those things that make your business dream feel real but if you can easily end up over investing in things you don't really need.

Choose a **business name** that is clear rather than clever and one that can potentially grow with you if you alter the focus of your business at a later stage.

Business cards - avoid the temptation to order vast quantities of them, even if the deal looks good. A lot of businesses re-brand after a while and if you have ordered 5,000 business cards with your old business name and logo then you are going to be stuck with them.



Business Essentials

Marketing Materials

Leaflets and Flyers, dedicated phonedlines

You will see lots of **leaflets and flyers** on tables at networking events but my advice is to hold back on getting these for your business - the chances are that you will never actually need them, they will generate no business for you and there are better things for you to be spending your money on

- **A business landline or dedicated number** - even just 5 years ago opinion was that you needed a landline for a business but everyone uses mobile numbers now. If you can be bothered to carry 2 phones and you really want a separate one for your business one then that is an option but it is unlikely to be necessary.



Getting your Business Seen (Marketing)

Market Positioning

This is probably the most important section of this whole guide and yet hardly anyone will do it - so if you want your Consultancy business to stand out from all the other people out there providing similar services then this is the way.

Choose your position in the market, What do you to be known for? Which businesses do you want to work with? What kind of work do you want to do? What is your business going to be the go-to business for?

Most people start their businesses believing that there is a small amount of work available and will position their services as broadly as possible in order to maximise their chances of finding that work.

The marketing message I see repeated over and over by about 90% of HR Consultants and Freelancers is something like - 'I provide Outsourced HR Services to Businesses that don't have in-house HR'.

So what's wrong with that? It's nice and clear and says exactly what you do right?



Getting your Business Seen (Marketing)

Market Positioning

Well yes - but even a basic search on LinkedIn for HR Consultants in the UK will bring up over 150,000 people.

So if most of them are saying the same things as you are saying then how are your potential clients ever going to see you?

It's like standing in a packed stadium shouting to be heard. You may get lucky and be standing next to the right person - but the chances are your message will be totally drowned out.

So be brave and choose a marketing message that stands out - be the specialist for a particular sector or in a particular service - be known for something clear and specific.

So it takes a bit of bravery to do this - but if you do it and you really commit to it can then it's the fastest way to get results (and clients!)



Getting your Business Seen (Marketing)

LinkedIn

There are a lot of social media platforms and you will almost certainly get people telling you that you have to be on Instagram or that Twitter is great for business (which it is) but your resources are limited. You need to start finding those paying clients and there is simply no better platform for this than LinkedIn.

It's a business network, people are there to talk about business and to find business connections. They are identifying themselves to you by their job title, the industry they are in, where they are based - everything you could possibly want to know to be able to find them.

- Start building your network - Use the LinkedIn search tools to find the people you want and invite them to connect with you. You can be doing this months before you even start your business.
- Post something everyday. Have your ideal client in mind, make a list of topics and ideas of interest to them and post about them. This is hugely important for the visibility of your business. If your potential clients don't know you exist then they are never going to buy from you.



Getting your Business Seen (Marketing)

Be the Business Owner

Although you are both the owner of your business and (usually) the sole provider of the services there are times when you need to have your Business Owner hat on rather than the HR Professional one.

When you are posting (or talking) about your business you will usually focus on HR topics but keep in mind that your job at this stage is to get visibility for your business. The reason most HR Consultants find it difficult to get clients initially is because no-one knows we exist!

As HR Professionals we have a tendency to be very risk averse, write very bland, non controversial copy, keep it all very safe (and boring) but while can be the approach you need to take when you are delivering the service - it will not get you the work in the first place. So don't be afraid to express an opinion, stand out a bit - say what you think - people buy from people. Don't be the HR robot - it's not good marketing strategy.

Also when you are talking to other business owners about how you can help them - be the business owner. It's a peer to peer conversation and it is all about building reassurance, trust and credibility with your prospective client - **it's not a job interview.**



Signing up your first Clients (Sales)

Templates and Documents

I remember signing up my first HR Consultancy Client and suddenly feeling completely terrified. I had been so focused on this for so long and now that it had happened all I wanted to do was give them their money back and tell them it had all been a big mistake!

A few things that will help with this are - getting your business terms sorted out in advance of signing up that first client. Draw out the whole process from initial enquiry through to starting work. What do you need to have in place? Do you have a quote template? What documentation do you need to provide at each stage? How are you going to accept payment? What if they want to pay with a business card? Do you have an invoice template? What are your payment terms?

Planning all of this out in advance and having a clear process written down will help you to feel confident and will reassure your client that they have made the right decision to work with you.



Signing up your first Clients (Sales)

Setting Your Prices

I've seen a lot of people get into a research spiral with this one. By all means have a look to see what other HR Consultants are charging but don't assume that this is necessarily market rate. Avoid making your price your competitive edge. Low prices are often perceived by potential clients as an indicator of low quality work.

Trying to find out the market rate for Consultancy work is like asking what someone would pay for a car or a bottle of wine - people will buy at all sorts of different price points - again it all comes down to market positioning.

So decide how much money you need to generate with your business each month - set your income goals, look at how much time you have available to use to generate that money - divide it in half (your time is not all going to be billable) and then divide one figure by the other to understand where you need to pitch your prices.



The HR Consultancy Business School

How can we help?

So that is a very brief run through some of the key areas to consider in the early stages of starting your HR Consultancy business. If we tried to cover everything you probably want to know at this stage the guide would be enormous and you would be unlikely to ever get around to reading it. So I have included the things I would talk to you about if we had ten mins together and you were asking for my advice.

My goal with the HR Consultancy Business School is to equip HR Professionals with Business Building skills and knowledge - really practical, actionable information that you can implement, that will help you to start getting results, finding clients and making money with your business as soon as possible.

The programmes and services we offer are predominantly about Sales and Marketing - finding clients essentially. You can find further information by visiting the website to see what is currently available.



Who am I?

Tracey Hopkins



I'm Tracey Hopkins and I am the owner of The HR Consultancy Business School. After a 10 year career in HR Management and Consultancy I set up an Independent HR Consultancy in 2012. I realised quickly that my HR Skills alone were not going to enable me to make a success of my business and if I was not going to find myself back in the world of employment I needed to figure out how I was going to get clients.

Fast forward through some dead ends, a couple of lucky breaks and a lot of hard work and I started to figure it out. Before long I had made a significant pivot in my business and started teaching business building skills to other HR Professionals setting up and running businesses.

The path to becoming a HR Professional is fairly clear and straightforward but the path to becoming a successful business owner is much less so. My goal is to change that and to help as many of you as I can have to the businesses that you want with clients you love to work with, work that challenges and excites you and money in the bank.



Let's Stay in Touch

What Next?

1. If we are not already connected on LinkedIn then let's change that - send me a connection request - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/traceyhopkinscheshire/>
2. If you would like to continue to get my help and support to help you in the early stages of establishing your business and also be part of a great community of like minded HR People then come and join my free Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HRFreelancers/>



Thank you

The HR Consultancy Business School



www.linkedin.com/in/traceyhopkinscheshire



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