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To Win Clients, Prospects and Consultants

Presentations still hold a lofty place in the institutional investment arena, and can influence a win or a loss in 20 minutes or less. Investment managers are constantly seeking ways to distinguish themselves from their competitors through their presentations. Sometimes, it is just in the basics. Here are some hints as you organize for your next presentation.

1 Prepare on all fronts. Do your homework on two levels. First, qualify your prospect and make certain you are a fit before you commit to the presentation. Understand the prospect's needs and how you will fulfill them. Second, know what you are going to accomplish in your presentation. This is not a report; this is a sales opportunity. If you are not after the sale, you shouldn't be there. What are your key messages relative to the prospect's needs? What is your plan to distinguish yourself? How will you execute your plan flawlessly? Work out your strategy well in advance of your presentation. Respect their time and yours by using the time wisely.

2 Make sure that everyone attending from your firm has an active role. Teamwork is frequently cited as a strength of investment management firms, yet teamwork is not always apparent. Investment firms will have the salesperson sit silent during portfolio manager monologues (a "kiss of death"), or have someone from senior management attend and not have an active role. Plan who will cover what; plan who will answer which types of questions; plan interjections; plan transitions between speakers. Watch "Good Morning America" or "The Today Show" to see how airtime is used to maximum advantage.

3 Be unique by *not* saying you are unique. In over 90% of the presentations we have viewed over the past twenty-five years, the manager has said, "We are unique." The definition of unique is:

1. Being the *only* one of its kind
2. Without an equal or equivalent; unparalleled

Managers say their investment philosophy is unique, their organization is unique, their people are unique, their teamwork is unique, their records are unique. They say their fundamental research is unique, their sell disciplines are unique, their client service is unique. When they go on to describe what makes them "unique," it sounds the same as the last person, who also cited their "uniqueness." You may be distinctive, you may have



a competitive strength, you may have a powerful sell process. But, chances are...you are not unique. Chances are there is at least one other firm that emphasizes fundamental research, one other firm with talented people. Cite your distinctions and strengths, but avoid “unique” if you want to avoid eyes rolling during your presentation.

4 Have the courage not to be “blue.” The blue stack on plan sponsors’ desks towers over any other color. Reminds me of high school when the teachers had us all write our essays in pale blue books. Nobody smiled when they saw the stack of pale blue books – not the teacher who had to grade them, and not the students who completed them and then anticipated their grades. Navy blue is the number one choice by investment managers to portray their “unique” images. Variations of blue are the second choice. If materials are arrayed on the desktop, any color other than blue will stand out. Yes, even the ever-popular hunter green or the rich and stately burgundies or powerful brick reds. Along with an original color, interesting graphic design and striking images stand out. Although you don’t need fancy, slick design, determine how your presentation materials can be more powerful visually. Design won’t win or lose you the business, but it will help make you memorable.

5 Communicate, don’t report. Move away from the same trite headlines that we see in the majority of presentations

- Why Us? or Distinctions
- Investment Team
- Representative Client List
- Investment Philosophy
- Investment Process
- Research
- Buy Examples
- Sell Examples
- Portfolio Characteristics
- Top Ten Holdings
- Performance
- Biographies
- Disclaimer

What do these headlines tell you about the firm? Very little except that it is an investment management firm. Be creative. Do something distinctive, especially if you are as unique as you say you are. Develop your key messages and use every part of your presentation book as an opportunity to convey those messages.

6 Avoid the paper blizzard. If you have over 25 pages, take out the pruning shears! One of the best presentations we have ever seen contained all the key elements in 12 pages; and, one firm did an excellent presentation with one piece of paper. Avoid handing out a lot of different pieces of paper or worse, different books, to your audience. Don’t mix portrait and landscape pages in the same book. A cohesive piece conveys a well-organized firm. Be organized, relevant and concise. Distribute only what’s important to your audience. If you don’t know what’s important, *ask*. Ask the



consultants. Ask your existing client base. Ask the last four prospects where you did not get the business. Ask the prospects who did give you the business.

7 Use a video versus a snapshot. Instead of presenting single time frames – 1-, 3- and 5-year returns, consider showing rolling 3-year or 5-year returns. Instead of showing your sector weightings as of a quarter end, present them over time versus your benchmark. Do the same to show the consistency of your portfolio characteristics. You avoid the “cherry picking” image associated with one time period, and build credibility and trust in your process and firm.

Follow these seven hints, and we are confident your closing ratio will improve. Yes, the environment is more competitive, and yes, presentation opportunities are sparse. That is all the more reason to make your presentation the best it can be.

Good luck!

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