

## **Develop your profile as an expert in your field**

The article that accompanies this checklist sets out a few simple steps towards establishing an expert profile and using it in ways that your customers, friends and colleagues can share and enjoy. If you work through this checklist, and try to incorporate as much of this thinking into your everyday behaviour, it should both raise your profile and help lift your income as a result.

### **Overcome your resistance to the idea of being an expert.**

The most important first step is to allow yourself to accept your own expertise – and remember this is relative. There will always be people who know more than you, and people who know less than you. Aspire to learn from those with more knowledge, and pass on your learning to those with less – in truth, that's the primary role of an expert. As you develop your profile and your own sense of yourself as an authentic expert, people will begin to gravitate towards you – you'll begin to connect with them - and they with you, in a different, more productive way.

This is not something you should aim to do overnight – it's probably best to do this using a series of small steps, rather than by introducing radical changes in the way you work – you don't want to freak anyone out – or find yourself disturbed by trying to change too rapidly.

### **How can you become an expert?**

If you can honestly say 'Yes - I have knowledge to share', then you are well on the way.

How many of the following can you also say yes to?

- I often help others achieve results.
- I'm good at solving problems.
- I can explain how I do these things – and I know my results are not the result of luck or random activity.
- I make it my business to keep learning from others who know more and share their increasing level of knowledge as part of a continuum.

### **Raise your profile – based on your expertise:**

So - how can you raise your profile, establish your credibility, and become known more widely for what you do?'

If this is really what you want, then it is essential to do the following things. You don't need to do them all in the same place at the same time. You can do some of these things within your CV, in your marketing activities and on your

website, and you can do some on an everyday basis with the people you meet.

**1. Be open about your experience and knowledge:**

Showcase the things you've achieved in life and work – be proud of the experience you have and don't be afraid to share it with others.

Be honest – to what extent do you blow your own trumpet, and to whom? Even amongst your friends, family and close colleagues there will be people who know very little about what you do.

What simple methods can you use to let people know about this?

Where and when can you do this? List these and act on them.

**2. Let people know what qualifies you to do what you do:** Show your qualifications (if you have them), they are important! Your CV and website should list your qualifications, and any masterclasses or courses you have attended. If you have public and/or product liability insurance or are CRB checked – let people know – it builds your credibility.

There are a number of facets to this – if you have degree level qualifications, well and good. If you don't, list vocational qualifications and courses you have attended – even one-day workshops and masterclasses count. But above all, remember it's your experience that qualifies you most of all – how long have you been doing this? What exhibitions or shows have you exhibited in or contributed to? How many workshops or evening classes have you run? This can all add up to quite a convincing bundle –and I bet there are some things that you'll have forgotten all about until you sit down to think about this.

**3. Visibility:** Be seen, be known, have a reputation for being a specialist...hiding away doesn't do anyone any good at all! Give up the reluctance to stick your head over the parapet. Who do you want to be known by? – and for what? Brand yourself as the person that people seek out for these things.

Visibility is all about showing up. It needn't involve a huge song and dance. Attend workshops, seminars, artists talks, a few well chosen networking events, the act of being there and being consistent about this means your face will get known, people will introduce themselves to you and your networks will grow. And don't forget to collect people's emails and contact details assiduously.

**4. Track Record:** Share success stories, facts, figures and testimonials – tell the story of your life and work – broadcast this where you can. Do you have an 'About Me' page on your website? If you do, is it as comprehensive as it could be? Do you collect testimonials and comments from happy clients and customers – and if so do you use

them to best advantage? This is an easy way to establish your credibility.

5. **Communicate:** Do talks, workshops, public appearances, use publicity, demonstrations of your skills and knowledge, speak up at meetings. This doesn't need to be complex stuff – people will be interested.

Think about and list a range of places you could do talks –there are many opportunities for this. Visit libraries, read newspapers and regional magazines and check out the regular venues where other people do talks – get the contact details for the organisers and put your name forward.

6. **Share things:** Write articles, put 'How To' sections on your website or blog, be open to giving advice. A good starting point is by offering to write a short article for someone else's newsletter or blog – or set up a reciprocal arrangement with someone else – it adds value to what they do and vice versa.

7. **Be open-minded:** Be open to exploring and sharing what you don't know as much as what you do.

No-one likes a know-it-all. Instead of sounding like you know everything, talk to people about your aspirations for learning – what you want explore next, who your heroes are, what you'd like to add to your portfolio. Jot down a few ideas about how you might start sharing not just what you know, but what you as an expert are interested in investigating – this all part of the story you tell about yourself and your work – and makes you sound much more interesting.

8. **Tell people more about the things you make:**

People are fascinated by the process of creativity. They also like to be able talk to friends and family about the stuff they buy – and want to sound knowledgeable when they do this.

Make it your business to supply them with information – about the techniques and materials you use, how the object is constructed, and whether or not you have used rare or precious materials. All this information is actually a selling point – so make sure you tell the story of the piece.

A neat way to do this is to put together a product factsheet that tells the story of how the article was created.

- 9. Communicate like an expert:** First and foremost, an expert needs to be liked, trusted, sincere, and authentic.

What you say, what you do, and how you behave need to link together in a way that reflects the real you. Just be yourself – that’s what people really want.

Distil your knowledge down to ‘bite size’ chunks of information. People will respect you if you give small amounts of high quality information at any given time. Hone it down to fundamentals – distil your wisdom like a fine scotch.

Aim to be approachable – a true expert shares and communicates freely.

- 10. Ask for help with your own development:** Finally, a real expert knows when to ask for help. Don’t be shy of approaching people who have been down the road before you –and they will share stuff precisely because this is the way they learned themselves.

### **Postscript:**

I make it my business to spend time each day reading, learning and researching new stuff. I know I’ll never catch up with my gurus – because, of course, they continue to do exactly the same thing!

Properly applied, your expert knowledge can help you develop new working relationships, refresh your networks and contacts, and vastly improve your chances of getting exactly where you want to go.

**Pete Mosley**