



Professional Biographies: The Forgotten Marketing Collateral

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What is the first thing that you do when researching a provider of professional services? For most people, the answer is visit the professional's website and, more specifically, read her biography on that website. This is generally true regardless of whether the professional was referred by a trusted source or found randomly through a Google search.

When written and used properly, biographies are effective means of sharing and obtaining information about professionals. They can be crafted in many different ways, depending on the respective industry and the professional's business development objectives. For example, a biography can employ a traditional structure that sets forth the professional's background and experience or a summary structure that leads with abstracts followed by accompanying tabs or subheadings. It can focus on the professional's achievements, reference her personal interests or hobbies, include humorous bits about the professional's life, and so on. But while the format can vary, all biographies must take into account the professional's objectives, differentiate the professional from her competitors, include the professional's picture and be updated regularly.

Even though a biography is often a significant element in the "first impression" conveyed to prospective clients, many professionals generate ineffective biographies. To make matters worse, they fail to update their biographies for years after they are posted.

Preparing and maintaining a well-written and up-to-date biography is something that should remain on a professional's priority list throughout her career. As the professional increases her online engagement with prospective clients and embraces new media opportunities, she must not forget about this basic piece of marketing collateral.

New media initiatives such as writing blogs and participating in social networks are intended to increase visibility, build relationships with prospective clients and drive traffic to a professional's website. When visitors get there, they should discover a biography that is both informative and up-to-date.