

## Retaining An Expert: What Every Business Owner Needs to Know When Hiring a Consultant

(PRWEB) August 3, 2005 -- As an entrepreneur, hiring an expert can be one of the most efficient ways to turbo-charge your business. However, thousands of consultants flood the Information Highway, and each one promises to positively impact your bottom line. How do you know which expert has the right combination of smarts, skills, experience and personality to move your company in the right direction?

It's no small feat to allow a consultant to make decisions on your behalf. Empowering a consultant to advise changes can bring up feelings of doubt and fear. To help you choose the right expert for you, here are 6 cautionary tips from Kathy Szpakowski, founder of KBS Group, one of the country's most successful, organizational development consulting companies:

1. Make sure the expert has a proven track record for delivering on their promises. Visit the consultant's web site and check on their references.
2. Pay attention to the expert's commentary after you've stated your vision. Do you feel understood? Does he or she "get" it, or do you feel like you need to keep on explaining? If, during the initial conversation stage, or in the project outline stage, you feel your vision is not completely understood or that there are areas being overlooked or under-valued, consider finding another expert who is more in alignment with your point of view.
3. Observe if the expert incorporates your thoughts and ideas into the conversation. Do you feel a sense of collaboration or do you feel shot down? While working with an expert, there will be times where you might take his or her well-substantiated advice and whole-heartedly agree with certain recommendations, while at other times, you might mildly agree or not agree at

all. Based on your discussion, get a sense as to whether this person will be open to a collaborative arrangement, or might be intolerant of feedback or suggestions.

4. Assess if the expert understands the term 'within budget.' Rather than have an expert initially tell you all of the wonderful things they can do for you, then fall over from the sticker shock when you receive their proposal and their terms, tell them the budget you need to stay within. A consultant should not be writing from your checkbook. What is important is your budget; not their price.

5. Agree to a mutually acceptable time frame. In order to ensure that the two of you are on the same page, establish timelines to determine when you want to get started, as well as how long it will take before you can expect to receive recommendations, implement the recommendations, and see results. Make sure there is also a way to measure the results.

6. Trust your instincts. Believe in your intuition. If your instincts and experience in your business tells you to go in a different direction, do it. If you don't feel 100% committed to the recommendations, or have a 'gut feeling' that you and the expert are not on the same page – Stop. Ignoring these feelings and going along with any recommendations that you are not committed to, or are convinced will not work, will only make you right – they won't.

A word of caution: after a positive experience with one expert, entrepreneurs often have a tendency to get lax when evaluating additional experts to assist in other areas of their business. When talking with other experts, it can be easy to fail to completely communicate one's vision, the importance of integrating one's ideas, the necessity to stay within budget and on schedule, and the absolute need to know that your new expert 'gets it!'"

Hiring the right expert can be a huge asset to your business, however, you are

the only one who will know which expert is ultimately right for you. By applying the advice from the tips above, you can minimize your doubts and fears, as well as create a strategy to find an expert who can truly help you maximize your growth.

Kathy Szpakowski has 25 years of professional experience in sales, marketing, training, organizational and personal development. She is the founder of KBS Group and the creator of "Performance Management Plus" a turnkey solution that has helped entrepreneurs achieve phenomenal results worldwide.

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