

**Lessons Learned & Ideas  
from the  
The Million Dollar Consulting®  
Private Roster Mentor Program  
Hall of Fame Inductees 2010**

***Bill Corbett***

***Dave Gardner***

***Linda Henman***

***Simma Lieberman***

***Andrew Sobel***

## **Best Practices for Consulting and Life—Bill Corbett**

- To better serve others, I must work relentlessly to know myself. It is a process of uncovering, discovering and discarding who I'm not, and then building on who I truly am.
- I must tear down the walls I built between my business and personal lives. I only have one life. The richness comes from weaving them together, and selflessly and confidently sharing my tapestry with the world.
- Meet people where they are, not where you are or where you think they should be.
- Listen deeply, not only to the spoken words, but also to the words, message and questions behind the words.
- Take 100% responsibility that your listener hears your message.
- I have the right and the responsibility to become a teacher, as long as I remain a student.
- Give away only your overflow. We need to stay in a fit condition spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally in order to have enough to share with others. The overflow will attract people to us. Our job is to keep the window clean, so the light shines through.
- Stop judging others. We don't know where they started from. They probably have grown more than I have. If I started at zero or minus three, they may have started at minus ten. The people I resent the most are very much like me...Oops.
- I don't have any secrets that are damaging to me. I have two men who know everything about me. We can do together, what I cannot do alone.
- Sometimes our presence is more important than our words.
- Kindness is the greatest wisdom of all. It works in the boardroom, the Hospice room, and the funeral home.
- I have the right and the responsibility to confront inappropriate behavior in my area of responsibility, both in business and personal arenas.
- Silence is an important tool, whether you are collecting money, having a discussion with your spouse, or gaining conceptual agreement. Do not be afraid of long silences.
- Listening is a gift we give each other. It is as good to receive, as it is to give.
- Love is action; it's a verb, not a noun.
- Call Alan; ask him what to do, ask him how to do it, and then do it.
- Those most horrible things that were done to me, and that I did to others, are my most precious gifts today, because they enable me to reach a still suffering person when no one else can; not the psychiatrist, the priest, the doctor, the family or a friend. What a gift, what a responsibility, in both business and my personal life.
- Be persistent, in building on your core strengths, in overcoming the obstacles that keep you in the herd, in learning/mastering the skills needed to become the expert in your field, and in getting the check every time.
- This is the success formula: You will succeed if you stay close to the Weiss community, accountable to it, participate in it, ask for help, implement the solutions, and share your expertise.
- Work with Alan Weiss, of course. But, in addition, participate in a mastermind group, have an accountability partner for projects, and choose one or two 'buddies' that are where you want to be in a year or two (when you play tennis with someone better than you, you improve rapidly).

- Stop with the, yeah buts.
- The need to be 'right' can waste an inordinate amount of time.
- Stand up for what you believe in, articulate it clearly, and move on.
- Do something big (important) everyday.
- Make a list of five nice things to do for yourself, do at least one everyday and keep adding to the list.
- Fight to deliver the outcomes the client needs, even if they don't know or believe.

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## **Best Practices for Consulting—Dave Gardner**

- If you are not learning constantly, be concerned that your relevancy in your marketplace may not be sustainable. The great thing about this profession is all the things you get to learn as a result of client engagements and your interactions in the business world.
- Eschew “here today/gone tomorrow” business fads. You don’t want to become known for something that becomes irrelevant in the marketplace. Focus on what clients want—their needs never go out of vogue.
- If Alan offers a program, sign up. I’ve never heard anyone say they wasted money or time with any program that Alan has offered. Alan offers value far in excess of his program fees.
- When a client asks you do something, consider that they are looking for you to help them produce the outcome, not necessarily insist that you do the work. It is perfectly acceptable to bring in sub-contractors to augment areas where you may not have the expertise or to create headroom so you can assist other clients, free up time to write a book, or have discretionary time.
- Alan Weiss has built a magnificent community for us through the Society for the Advancement of Consulting, LLC, Alan’s Forums, the Mentor Program, Alan’s blog, the myriad of programs he offers, etc.
  - Committing to regular review of the discussions in Alan’s Forums will help you become a more effective. You’ll learn to frame issues, frame responses, and be more succinct. Do you take a bit of a risk at times? Of course. There have been no fatalities.
  - Ask questions in Alan’s Forum—there is no need to suffer or struggle over any question or issue you may have. As much as you may believe your problem is unique, it probably isn’t and there are folks who can offer a multitude of perspectives that can help.
  - Watch what others who are more successful than you are doing—they offer insights you can benefit from.
- If Alan is doing it, you should consider doing it, e.g., book publishing, video on your website, blogging, podcasts, etc.
- From His Holiness, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama: “When you lose, don’t lose the lesson.” If you don’t achieve the outcome you were looking for, stop and reflect about it and then move on.
- Reach out to others in Alan’s global community. You can do this via email, the Forum, telephone or even free video conferencing, e.g., Skype. You’d be amazed how it feels to know you have a network of support all over the world.
- Remember above all else from Alan himself:
  - The first sale is to yourself.
  - This is a relationship business.
  - Real wealth is discretionary time.
  - You don’t have a work life and a personal life—you have a life!

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## Top Ten Lessons I've Learned About Consulting—Linda Henman

1. Have a crystal clear value proposition that you can say in one sentence. I help \_\_\_\_\_. Mine is "I help companies improve performance." If someone asks, "How do you do that?" I'll say "I help senior leaders drive strategy, plan succession, and develop talent." Make it short, and say it until it rolls off the tongue. Put it on everything. It's your mission.
2. Never, ever stop learning. In addition to reading a local paper daily, when I started my own business 7 years ago, I committed to reading the *Wall Street Journal* every day and the weekly business journal. I also take at least two classes with Alan a year and one other in a field pertinent to my specialty. Your competition will keep improving, so you can't afford not to.
3. Read. Read novels, business books, non-fiction, history—anything you or your clients find interesting. In addition to making you more interesting, it will stimulate your creativity, make you a better writer, and improve your speaking skills.
4. Invest in your business. Hire the best graphic designer to do your web page and marketing materials, (not your brother-in-law who's shown an interest in this sort of thing). Have the most expensive materials you can afford. Find a small business expert to do your taxes. (This is an area of specialty that changes yearly).
5. Hire someone else to do the things you aren't good at or don't want to learn to do. If you don't, you'll waste an inordinate amount of time and energy on things that won't drive your business.
6. Write and create intellectual property. Write every day. Write articles, tip sheets, blogs, and a book. Put them on the web; send them to industry publications; send them to former clients or prospective ones. Create process visuals that you'll put in articles and on your materials.
7. Have a clear strategy and don't get sidetracked by tactics that don't support your goals. Too many consultants waste hours tracking their "hits," exploring the latest technology, and finding out about the next new miracle. It all comes back to the basics. These tools will only help if you have something fantastic to begin with.
8. Hit a home run every time you're at bat. You can't afford to do a mediocre job when all around you strive for excellence. If you aren't great at something, learn to be, or don't take the work. You swim in a very small pond, so if you aren't committed to excellence, the word will get out.
9. Give to get. You won't always be repaid by the person or company that you gave generously to, but you will reap rewards. The universe has, for lack of a better word, an accounting system. Those people who volunteer, help new people get started, and take extraordinarily good care of the clients they have just simply get more chances to do great work.
10. Take advice only from those who have done what you are attempting to do. Well-intended people, ones who had never actually had a consulting practice, offered me advice, like "Charge by the hour." and "Remember you have only your advice to sell. Don't give it away." There are many people trying to make a living giving others advice about something they've never actually done. Avoid them.

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## **Lessons I've Learned About Consulting—Simma Lieberman**

- 1- Invest in yourself and your business- If I was to do one thing different, it would have been to think about the ROI and invested more money in my business, particularly with Alan.
- 2- Worry less about what you don't have, and focus more on the resources you do have
- 3- Create a solid time structure, ask for help from the right people, develop relationships for mutual accountability
- 4- Every time you feel tempted to send a proposal to a non-decision maker stop yourself, and remember it's a waste of expensive time.
- 5- Always have a strategy for every meeting and every phone call
- 6- Know what you want from every business interaction, and be open to unplanned opportunities
- 7- Join or create a mastermind group with people who are not afraid to be honest
- 8- Don't waste time listening to advice from people who don't know what they are talking about, but want to sound like they do
- 9- Be active on Alan's forums, ask for help and give it when appropriate
- 10- Understand the culture of your client's organizations
- 11- Outsource when possible to people who know more than you
- 12- Write articles, get published and let people know what you've written and where it has been published
- 13- Ask for referrals, and when you feel uncomfortable, ask anyway
- 14- Make decisions without over thinking. Listen to Alan's adage, "when it's 80% ready, it's ready to go. Being a perfectionist caused me to miss deadlines, and it didn't matter that it was 100% since no one got to see it.
- 15- Find humor even in rejection. You'll get over it much faster.
- 16- It's not always about you. You're not responsible for other people's indecisiveness, choosing the wrong consultant over you, or their personal problems.
- 17- Don't be afraid to ask questions. Just sound confident when you do.
- 18- Take care of your health, spend time alone and with people you love. Mind, body and emotional health are crucial to enjoying each day.
- 19- Focus on personal and business strengths, rather than on weaknesses, or you'll waste a lot of time and deplete your energy.
- 20- Don't be afraid to change your viewpoint and try to put yourselves in other people's heads.
- 21- Have empathy for your clients, and avoid rote thinking.

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## Lessons I've Learned About Consulting—Andrew Sobel

1. It is important to be perceived as very good at what you do. It is much better, however, to be perceived as the *only one* who does what you do. This is possible to achieve if you are both creative and extremely focused, and it results in a huge increase—a step change increase—in market renown, the level of your fees, your marketing gravity, and so on.
2. Always be acutely tuned into the preconditions for a client to become a buyer. Does this person own the problem and can they hire you? Is there a significant problem or opportunity? Is there a “healthy dissatisfaction” with the current rate of change? Do they lack the people, expertise, time, etc. to do it themselves? Do they perceive you as a viable if not leading alternative? People will call all the time with “issues” and with some interest in using your services. Many will waste your time. The more rapidly you can sort the wheat from the chaff, the more time you’ll have for the truly serious clients.
3. Redefine individual events and one-off assignments as a process or program. This allows you to move towards value billing. Say, “This is how I approach it with my best clients...”
4. Learn to add value for time in the first 30 minutes. Forget about methodology—senior clients don’t really care about it. They want to know: Do you understand my goals? Can you help me grow? Can I trust you to do it? Ask penetrating questions, add insight, share best practices, help the client reframe the issue, and so on. Leave them wanting more, not overwhelmed by detail.
5. Use Alan and members of his communities to challenge your own assumptions—to help move the invisible barriers that hold you back as surely as if they were concrete walls. Play with what may seem to be “outrageous thinking”—it probably won’t be that outrageous at all! “What if I doubled the fee for this? What if I said no? What if I just let go of some of my closely-held beliefs about consulting and what works and doesn’t work?”
6. Get the flywheel moving for your intellectual capital and market focus and continually reinforce the momentum. Don’t write just a few articles on your subject—write 50! Don’t write just one book (as long as they are truly good ones...), write two or three! Repurpose all your IC—take a book chapter and use it in a blog, then in your newsletter, then a checklist for a workshop, then an online survey, etc.
7. Be excited about what you do. Enthusiasm is contagious. Clients like to be around upbeat, passionate people. Come across as if you would do what you are doing even if you weren’t getting paid. I call this “the mindset of independent wealth.”

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Author of the business bestsellers:  
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