# Spiraling Up Self-Assessment

This self assessment is based on the book *Spiraling Up: How to Create a High Growth, High Value Professional Services Firm.* The book is available for free download at www.spiralingupbook.com.

We've created this marketing self-assessment instrument to help your team understand where your firm stands today. Try to answer each of the following questions honestly. The more people in your firm who participate, the better your data will be.

This self assessment is broken into sections that cover three topics critical to the success of your firm:

- > Strategy
- > People
- > Operations

Once you have completed this exercise, compare your answers with those of others in your firm. Discuss the inevitable differences and try to form a consensus. If you can't reach consensus, go with the more pessimistic assessment. (In our experience, it's probably more accurate.)

For help interpreting the results of this assessment, please refer to *Spiraling Up* or contact us at Hinge Marketing: info@hingemarketing.com.

# **Strategy**

Strategy is the key to high growth and a premium valuation. Get the strategy right and the rest is easier. What goes into a good strategy?

- > Understand and anticipate your client's needs.
- > Make sure your services solve key business problems.
- > Deliver superior value.
- > Have a well-thought-out strategy to differentiate your firm and position it in the marketplace.

If you can accomplish these things, then getting new business becomes a lot simpler. In our experience, firms with a successful strategy are able to maintain a steady flow of the "right kind" of new clients.

#### **Strategic Growth**

To grow, your firm needs an understandable and easily communicated strategy.

- > What is the market and need for your service?
- > Is it a healthy and growing segment?
- > Why will you succeed where other firms do not?
- > What will success look like for your firm?
- > Can you describe your strategy clearly and succinctly?

## **Well Understood Target Group**

You must have a clearly defined and well understood target market.

> Have you analyzed your current clients to determine how to define your best target group?
> Do you understand their problems, concerns, fears, hopes and daily reality?
> Can you get specific?
> Do you conduct regular research on your clients and/or their industry to anticipate needs and uncover trends?
> Can you identify the best channels to communicate to your target market?
> Does your firm have credibility with your target audience?
> Have they heard of your firm?

#### **Compelling Value Proposition**

You must be able to solve important client problems in a way that delivers a significant economic impact or makes their life much easier.

Does your service produce a direct economic benefit for clients? Can you prove it
> Will it clearly make their life easier? Can you prove it?
Does your service address an issue that potential clients really care about?
> Can you communicate the value you bring in a clear and compelling way?

#### **Clear Differentiator**

You should be different from your potential competitors in a way that is understandable, meaningful and believable to prospective clients.

# **People**

In the professional services, people are the product. This makes hiring the right individuals for the right roles crucial to a firm's success. And as most firm executives know from hard-won experience, finding and retaining talent can be devilishly difficult. You'll know you are successful in this area when you are able to attract and keep the high-quality new hires you need to maintain sustainable growth.

#### Talented, Well Matched People

You must have a sufficient supply of talented people who are well matched to their jobs and can connect with clients.

Do you have enough people with the right technical skills and credentials?
Are their personalities and people skills a good fit with your target clients?
Do they have the right business values and appropriate attitude?
Can you easily hire more people as your needs grow?
Do your people represent your brand well?
Can all your people clearly and succinctly describe what you do, who you do it for and why you are different?

#### **Strong Middle Management**

You must have a strong middle management team that can effectively guide the day-to-day functioning of the firm.

> Do you have a middle management team in place?
> Can they run day-to-day operations without help from top management?
> Is there a practical plan in place to build the ranks as the firm grows?
> Do middle managers embrace your firm's strategy?
> Do they reflect well on the brand?

# **Operations**

Can you reliably and cost-effectively deliver on what you promise? Firms that can confidently answer "yes" to this question tend to have profitable, satisfied clients— clients that make valuable referrals. These clients become an engine of sustainable growth and contribute to premium valuations. You'll know you are successful if you've got a smooth process, a healthy bottom line and an accumulation of loyal, referring clients.

#### **Deliver on Your Brand Promise**

You must be able to deliver on the promise that you explicitly and implicitly make to your clients.

> Do your clients believe you deliver what you promise?
> Does your staff believe you do what you promise for your clients?
> Do clients consistently refer your firm to their friends and colleagues?
> What is your reputation in the marketplace?
> What do your competitors say about your firm?

## **Believable Growth Projections**

You must have the systems in place to make believable, fact-based projections.

> Are your projections based on verifiable facts and trends?
> Are your projections historically accurate?
Can you document the relationship between marketing spending and new business development?
> Do you have the ability to accelerate or decelerate business growth?
> Is your growth scalable?

#### Solid, Believable Financial Results

You must have financial results that are both believable and demonstrate the ability to generate acceptable returns.

> Is your growth rate superior to competitors?
> Are your earnings comparable or superior to competitors?
> Are your accounting assumptions considered conservative?
> Are financials up-to-date and produced on a regular and timely basis?
> Can you accurately predict future financial performance?

## **About Hinge**

Hinge is a national branding and marketing firm for the professional services industries. For more information on Hinge, visit www.hingemarketing.com.