



Newsletter of the Society for the Advancement of Consulting® - April 2018

Founded by Million Dollar Consulting guru Alan Weiss, the Society for the Advancement of Consulting is the premier association for independent consulting professionals who subscribe to an industry code of ethics and provide significant consulting results among their clients.

The Times They Are A Changin'

SAC marks its 15th anniversary this year. To take the organization to the next level, Alan Weiss has asked long-time SAC members Lisa Anderson and Linda Popky to take over the day-to-day management of the organization. Alan will still be involved as our subject matter expert and consulting guru, but Linda and Lisa will be actively managing the organization to provide more value to SAC members.

Some of the changes you'll start to see immediately:

- We're introducing a new Best Practices Webinar Series in May, featuring such presenters as positioning expert Mark Levy, speaking guru Patricia Fripp, social media strategist Lisa Larter, globalization expert Omar Khan, master coach Marshall Goldsmith, sales expert Colleen Francis, PR expert Dan Janal, and more. These events are included in your membership fee.
- There are new discounts on programs and services for SAC members, including disability insurance, E&O and general liability insurance, and PR support.
- Our members will receive benefits from complementary partner organizations, like Women in Consulting and others.
- Our new website launches in the next few weeks with an easier to use member directory, opportunities for member promotion, and a streamlined membership application and renewal process.
- Look for more regional in-person get-togethers around the country throughout the year.

Some things aren't changing at all. We'll still be holding the free annual meeting in New York City, which features two mornings with Alan and afternoon workshops with other speakers. You'll still get discounts on Alan's programs and events, have access to Alan's Forums, have the opportunity to participate in a bi-monthly press release and get his monthly *Weiss Advice*.

Best of all, you'll get all of this for the same low membership fee you've come to expect. **That means SAC remains the least expensive way to stay directly involved with Alan and his community.**

We believe what differentiates SAC is the high caliber quality of everyone associated with the organization. That includes you, our members. We want to work with you to build the association that will help you grow your consulting practice. We'll be coming to you for input and feedback as we embark on the next phase of the SAC journey, but remember you are always welcome to reach out to either of us at any time with ideas and suggestions.

We look forward to growing with you.

How Can We Improve SAC for You?

What SAC benefits are most important to you? What would you like to see added in the future? Give us your advice. [Take survey.](#)

SAC® April Release: Good Business Practices Best Way to Manage in a #MeToo Environment

Businesses should adapt good businesses practices that keep them focused on the right parameters, while adopting a zero tolerance for bad behavior, according to The Society for the Advancement of Consulting® (SAC). [More](#)

You Oughta Be Included!

Have you been quoted in a recent SAC press release? Why not? Here's the information for our next release, Join us!

Topic: The economy is booming! Are you seeing this growth with your clients? What recommendations do you have for companies as it relates to growth?

Please send input of less than 150 words formatted into 2-3 paragraphs in the same format as the prior releases no later than May15th to Lisa Anderson, landerson@lma-consultinggroup.com. Please remember to check your grammar and provide your name with attribution!

Weiss Advice:

HOW DO YOU TREAT CUSTOMERS?

The customer is always right--except when the customer is wrong. Trying to perform acrobatics to please belligerent, unreasonable, and incorrect customers can cost you far more than simply kissing their business good-bye.



For decades, Cross Pens had a policy of replacing and repairing any of its products, no matter what the cause. At one point, a man who dropped his pen into his lawnmower (presumably while keeping track of the grass clippings), which promptly mangled it beyond recognition, was rewarded with a brand new instrument. This stuff became legendary. And dumb.

Cross was blown out of the water by competitors, most notably Mont Blanc, more in tune with the times and less concerned about the past. Today, Cross has missed more dividend payments than it has honored, and has laid off a large portion of its staff. Pleasing the customer at all costs makes for good press but lousy profits.

If there's even a reasonable supposition that your product was defective or your service was inferior, refund the money or provide a credit, by all means. But if the customer decided that, having worn the outfit, the "look" wasn't right, or having copied the software, the CD was "defective," that's not really your problem. A perspiration stain on a returned garment doesn't mean it's inferior, it means the purchaser is trying to pull a fast one. That's why Nordstrom's has stopped accepting all returns, and why many businesses not limit customer returns per year.

Trained and empowered personnel should have the judgment-at the front line and point of sale-to make determinations about whether someone is a wronged customer or is just wrong-headed. They will also know whether a refund, a credit, or a refusal is appropriate. The savings in preventing management and owner's time from being involved is enormous.

The signs of a poor customer and a bad apple are:

- Belligerent behavior: yelling, accusations, threats
- Lack of proof of purchase with merchandise that may not be yours
- Apparently perfect merchandise returned for suspicious reasons
- A history of complaints and criticism
- Unreasonable demands and calls for immediate action

There are some wonderfully effective ways to deal with bullying customers. First, defuse the situation by acknowledging their complaint. "I see you are upset, and I'd like to listen to why that is and what has created the problem in your view." Second, focus on fact, not emotion or supposition, and don't concede anything that's non-factual. "You bought this carpet with the intention of installing it yourself, but are saying that it was stained (not: "we sold you a stained item") when you opened it completely, is that correct?" Third, refute any claims with facts of your own that apply. "Are you aware that it's our policy to completely unfold these carpets prior to purchase in the customer's presence, and that we can question the clerk who sold it to you about that? Do you recall such a demonstration at the time of your purchase?" Fourth, place the onus for solution on the customer: "What, exactly, would make you happy at this point?" Finally, decide on your appropriate course of action. For a long-time customer, you might issue a refund; for someone you have never sold to before, you might issue a store credit; for someone who is nasty and threatening, you might decide to reject the claim.

The importance of the sequence is to first calm the customers down as much as possible, and get them out of your traffic flow. Second, take the time to review their case objectively and determine its validity. Third, make a reasoned judgment about your action, given prudent business considerations.

Adopt these policies:

1. Certain people who are trained and empowered, and who have good judgment, are permitted to resolve these complaints on the spot.
2. Your people have a latitude of action, based on the history of the customer, the details of the claim, and your reasonable conclusions.
3. If possible, it's a policy to try to mollify the complaining customer, but not at the sake of compromising profits, principle, or prudence.
4. You resolve to lose some bad business rather than jeopardize your good business by accommodating unreasonable behavior and claims.

The customer is always right except when the customer is wrong. It makes no sense to imperil your livelihood over an empty bromide.

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Stay in touch with Alan Weiss's events [here](#).

Upcoming SAC Events

SAC Best Practices Webinar Series

All webinars at 10am PT/1pm ET, unless otherwise noted

May 9, 2018

Mark Levy: How To Talk About Your Consulting Business, So That People Care

June 5, 2018

Workshop

June 7, 2018

Linda Popky:

The Stand Out Consultant: Best Practices to be Heard Above the Noise

San Francisco Bay Area, 10am - 2:30pm

Co-sponsored by Women in Consulting (WIC)

Annual Meeting

October 3-4, 2018

New York City: Two full days of high-value presentations.

Mark your calendar!

Society for the Advancement of Consulting

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