



## Newsletter of the Society for the Advancement of Consulting® - October 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.*

### Above & Beyond: Exciting Announcements from SAC

We have news! As you read this, we are at the SAC Annual Meeting in New York City, where we're making a number of important announcements. Here's a summary:

#### **New! Advancing Consulting Award**

We announced today that we are creating an annual award for the independent consultant who has done the most to advance the profession in the previous year. The first Advancing Consulting award will be presented at next year's annual meeting in New York. A committee of SAC members will review submissions and choose the winner based on a set of pre-defined criteria. If you're interested in being part of this committee, [contact us](#).

#### **New! Practicum Webinars**

We're launching a new program, quarterly PRACTICUM webinars, to help consultants work ON their business, featuring such topics as how to more effectively use LinkedIn, improving your writing, navigating the insurance maze, understanding legal issues, and financial literacy for consultants. The series kicks off in November with LinkedIn expert Sandra Clark telling us how to use the platform more effectively to build relationships. [More information](#).

This new series is priced at \$299 for the general public, \$199 for SAC partners, and is included at **no charge** in your SAC membership.

#### **New! SAC Press**

We're also introducing the *SAC Press eBook Series*. Each book will feature a compilation of 500-1000 word articles written by SAC members and edited by a member volunteer. Members will have access to the eBook version to distribute as you'd like. Printed copies will be available on demand for a low fee. More information. Interested in being an editor? [Contact us](#).

#### **New! Software Discounts**

We're excited to announce FreshBooks has joined our member discount program with a special offer for SAC members. [Login](#) to the SAC website then go to the Members Only Resource page for more information.

#### **New! Ambassador**

We're excited to have Praveen Puri join us as an ambassador in the Chicago, IL area. We now have six SAC ambassadors. [Read](#) about them here.

#### **Come Dine With Us**

We're expanding our informal dinner program, with fall events in the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay Areas. These events are a great way to meet local consultants, and discuss what's on your mind

related to consulting. There is a nominal fee (\$15 for members; \$25 for nonmembers), plus the cost of your dinner. [Register here](#).

### **Do You Find Millennials Scary?**

If you've ever wondered what makes Millennials tick and how best to work with or for them, you'll want to [join us](#) on Halloween, Wed, Oct 31<sup>st</sup> at 10am PDT/1pm EDT for Money, Meaning and Millennials featuring Lisa Earle McLeod and Elizabeth McLeod. No costumes required. Spoiler: One of them is Millennial, but we're not telling which one! Prior webinars are posted in the members only section of the SAC website.

The latest Weiss Advice is below. Enjoy!

Lisa and Linda

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## **It Pays to Share.**

### **Refer New Members to SAC and Extend Your Membership.**

Have friends and colleagues who would benefit from membership in SAC?

As a SAC member, for every new member\* you refer to us who joins SAC between now and the end of 2018, we'll extend your own membership for an additional month.

It's a Win/Win/Win situation. They get to enjoy all the benefits of the association, while you get credit for bringing us together, and we all get to associate with more high quality consultants.

Simply have your referrals put your name in the box on the membership application that says, who referred you to SAC.

There's no limit to the number of people you can refer, so share early and share often. Forward [this link](#) to your friends and colleagues.

*\*New SAC members as of 9/1/18 only. Does not apply to renewals or membership extensions.*

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## **New Pricing Coming Soon**

Back in 2003, a gallon of gas cost \$1.72, a one pound steak was \$3.97, and a membership in SAC was \$250.

**A lot has changed since then, but not the price of SAC membership!**

**In order to provide the value we want to give our members at the level of quality we expect, we need to raise the price of membership. Effective Jan 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, Regular SAC Membership renewal will be \$350 per year, and International Membership will be \$295 (The application fee for initial membership remains \$45).**

**We are also instituting a minimal fee for the annual meeting to cover costs (similar to what Alan does for the Mentor Summit). The annual meeting attendance fee for next year's meeting will be \$250—still an outstanding value.**

**We want to keep SAC membership affordable so that we can offer benefits to as many members as possible. That's why we're giving you a 3-month notice about the pricing change. [Renew before December 31<sup>st</sup> to extend your membership at the existing rate.](#)**

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## **Help Us Help You**

There are still a number of SAC members who have not yet put their profile on the SAC website. Don't let this be you! If you don't remember your password, go to the Member Login and ask for a password reset. Any questions? [Contact us](#).

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## Wanted: News Release Editor

We're looking for someone to coordinate our bimonthly news releases. You should have good writing and editing skills and attention to detail. Interested? [Contact us](#).

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## Follow Us On Twitter - We're Following You!

Our twitter handle is @consultingassn. Our goal is to follow all of our active members and to retweet your posts when appropriate. If we're not yet following you, it's because we don't have your Twitter handle. Send us a DM and we'll add you to our list. [Follow us](#).

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## SAC October Release: Never An Afterthought: Pricing Is Strategic to Business Success

CLAREMONT, CA—Organizations that think about pricing strategically are best able to weather changing business situations, build customer loyalty, and differentiate themselves from competitors, according to The Society for the Advancement of Consulting® (SAC). [Read more](#).

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## November 15th Deadline for Next SAC News Release

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

**Topic: *Does culture pay a pivotal role in growth? What are your most successful clients doing differently to stand above the crowd as it relates to culture, and is this translating into bottom line business results?***

Please send input of less than 150 words formatted into 2-3 paragraphs in the same format as the prior releases no later than November 15<sup>th</sup> to Lisa Anderson, [landerson@lma-consultinggroup.com](mailto:landerson@lma-consultinggroup.com). Please remember to check your grammar and provide your name with attribution!

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## Weiss Advice:

### A QUICK GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE CLIENT INTERVIEWS

It would be unusual to have a project in which interviews weren't necessary. There may be formal interviews, in which you are trying to gather the sentiments of the top team, for example. Or there may be informal interviews, in which you're chatting with someone in an office about the experience with a particular type of customer complaint.



In either case, it helps to have a format and structure to accomplish several objectives:

1. Gather as much qualitative information as possible.
2. Keep the interviews brief, for your sake and the interviewee.
3. Avoid having to return for further information.

4. Discourage the interview from being a “gripe session.”

Here are my suggestions for ensuring that interviews are maximally effective and productive. A little homework never hurts.

1. **Get some background on the interviewee.** Find out his or her correct title, tenure in the job, prior experience, and recent accomplishments. This will serve to give you perspective on the responses, as well as to have some “ice breakers” at the outset. (“I understand you used to be in the London office...”)
2. **Arrange for privacy.** If you use the interviewee’s office, request that your time together be undisturbed. You may have an office on site that the client provides. Don’t conduct interviews in public places (e.g., the cafeteria, or in a cubicle) and don’t conduct them over meals. (It’s tough to take notes and there are a zillion distractions.)
3. **Ask permission to take notes and explain the purpose** (e.g., they are just to guarantee accuracy). You may want to read the notes back before you depart to comfort the interviewee. I prefer not to record discussions because the recorder creates a somewhat intimidating atmosphere. (I often take notes on my lap top, because I can touch-type very rapidly.) Never trust your memory.
4. **Set a finite time limit and finish early.** This will aid your schedule as well as the interviewee’s. I’ve never, personally, needed more than 45 minutes for an interview, and many were completed in under 30.
5. **You may or may not want to provide advance notice of some of the areas.** This can work well if you need background and recall which may require some digging and can stimulate people into being better prepared. But it doesn’t work well if you want spontaneous reactions to controversial issues. Providing advance questions in that case may only generate politically correct responses or tap dancing.
6. **Bring about 10 scripted questions with you.** Start with these (no need to use them all) so that you have a comfortable starting point. But don’t be trapped by them. Use follow-up questions to earlier responses to dig deeper wherever appropriate.
7. **Ask reaction questions.** In other words, don’t ask, “Do you favor the current compensation system?” or “How would you rate the current compensation system on a scale of one-to-ten?” Ask instead, “What are the best and worst features of the current compensations system” or “If you could make one change to the system to improve it the most, what would it be?”
8. **Don’t offer your own opinion or show any bias.** But do use your impressions from prior interviews. In other words, it’s fine to say, “Several prior interviewees have mentioned that they think the compensation system is the primary reason for turnover at mid-management level here. What is your reaction to that?” (Not: “Do you agree with that?”)
9. **Be conversational but directive.** If the interviewee rambles or digresses or keeps repeating the same point, politely interrupt and say something like this, “Excuse me, I’m sorry to interrupt, but before I forget, you said something that triggered a question: What is your reaction to the merger plan announced yesterday?” Don’t let conversations run aimlessly. Politely point them in the right direction.
10. **Send a thank you note and encourage the individual to let you know of any other thoughts they have.** Occasionally, you’ll receive a call or email with further insights that can be quite helpful.

When you summarize your interviews, eliminate identification and disguise anything that may give away identity (e.g., “A woman with the firm in accounting for only three months reported...”). Look for patterns and trends. But also watch for the one-off comment which may be quite singular but also quite insightful. Many times the conventional wisdom is neither conventional nor wise, and someone close to the operation has actually figured out what’s actually going on!

I've found that when interview feedback matches focus group and survey feedback, those agreements are almost always valid and demand close scrutiny.

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

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## Upcoming SAC Events

**October 24**

**Regional Dinner - Los Angeles, CA.**

[Learn more](#) and [Register here](#).

**October 25**

**Regional Dinner - San Francisco Bay , CA.**

[Learn more](#) and [Register here](#).

**October 31**

**Lisa Earle McLeod and Elizabeth McLeod — Money, Meaning and the Millennials.**

SAC Best Practices Webinar Series; 10 am PT/ 1pm ET. No charge for members. [More info.](#)

**November 7**

**Sandra Clark—Business Development on LinkedIn: It's About Relationships.**

SAC Practicum Webinar; 10 am PT/ 1pm ET. No charge for members. [More info.](#)

**November 14**

**Omar Khan—Creating Value Globally.**

SAC Best Practices Webinar Series; 10 am PT/ 1pm ET. No charge for members. [More info.](#)

**November 16**

**Alan Weiss's Super Best Practices Seminar, Adelaide, Australia**

Discount for SAC members. [More info.](#)

**March 27, 2019**

**SAC One-Day Regional Event in San Francisco Bay Area with Alan Weiss**

More information to come soon.

**May 29, 2019**

**SAC One-Day Regional Event in Boston, MA Area with Alan Weiss**

More information to come soon.

**October 23 and 24, 2019**

**SAC Annual Meeting in New York City**

*Mark your calendar!*

*Webinars and the Annual Meeting are included in your SAC membership. [Join or renew](#) your membership now.*

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**Society for the Advancement of Consulting**

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