The Step-by-Step System
to
Building Your Small Business

Helping small business owners around the world build successful, profitable and rewarding businesses

Module 3

Client Conversion Made Easy

Lesson 3B

Mastering the Complimentary Consultation

Solutions and
Direction for tomorrow's possibilities

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Table of Contents

Introduction 3
Definition 5
What is a Comp Consult? 5
Paradigm Shift 6
Pre-Call 7
Create a Comp Consult Schedule 7
Schedule People Immediately 8
Do the Comp Consult as Soon as Possible 8
Send a Follow-Up Email 8
Assign Homework 9
The Homework Questions 10
Comp Consult Structure 12
1. Build Rapport/Make a Connection 12
2. Establish Call Structure 12
3. Overview of Your Profession and Specialty 13
4. Coach! 14
5. Explain How You Can Help Them 15
6. Ask for the Person's Business 16
7. Handle Objections Effectively/Sign Them Up 17
Assignment Preparing for the Comp Consult 18
Summary 20

Introduction

Dear Business Owner,

Welcome to one of the most popular components of this business-building system: Mastering the Complimentary Consultation.

Here is what a Complimentary Consultation (Comp Consult) meant to most business owners prior to learning this approach:

> "A free consultation is where I consult someone on an issue, and I hope that I do such a spectacular job consulting them on that issue that they will want to hire me."

Well, I think there is a lot more to a Comp Consult than that! True, it is free, and you do coach/consult with your potential client.

However, the similarities end there.

This lesson shows how to conduct the Comp Consult in a highly attractive, structured and systematic way. Not only will you learn *exactly* how to conduct this interview, but you will understand what you need to do, so you are prepared for this meeting even before your phone rings.

Having this type of professional approach to the Comp Consult means you won't be "hoping" that the person becomes a client. Instead, you will be confident that a certain percentage of people will become clients.

Then, it just becomes a numbers game! If you typically convert 50% of your Comp Consults into paying clients and you want 8 new clients, your goal is to schedule 16 Comp Consults.

In this lesson, you will learn:

- The three-part definition of a Comp Consult, including the part that many professionals overlook.
- How to shift your focus from "getting clients" to offering Comp Consults.
- What to do before your phone rings to ensure maximum effectiveness.
- The importance of blocking out time in your schedule for Comp Consults.
- The critical importance of assigning homework questions before the Comp Consult and the best homework questions to ask.
- What to say in your confirmation email to reduce the number of "no shows."

- Exactly how to structure the Comp Consult for maximum effectiveness, including:
    - What to say in the first five minutes to build trust and set the tone for a great meeting.
    - How to focus the coaching component of the consult.
    - How to ask for the person's business in a natural and comfortable way.
    - Specific time recommendations for each component.

Sound good? I hope so!

Thousands of business owners have learned this approach to the Complimentary Consultation. This structure works and can assist you in securing more clients.

So, I encourage you to roll-up your sleeves, learn the methodology, customize this system to fit you and your business and then start using it! I am certain you will be pleased with the results!

Best regards,

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Definition

What is a Comp Consult?

In my opinion, there are three key aspects of a Complimentary Consultation.

1. It is an opportunity for you to provide value.

The Comp Consult is an excellent way to provide value. It's a gift from you to your prospective client, and it is good marketing. You are giving your valuable time and expertise to allow someone to sample your services.

2. It is an opportunity for the person to determine if he/she wants to hire you.

Let's face it. The Comp Consult is basically a sales call. When you follow the system, the majority of the people to whom you give Comp Consults are people who want and need what your business provides.

The Comp Consult is an opportunity for prospective clients to see how you will work with them. They are determining if they like you, if they think you can help them and if they want to work with you.

3. It is an opportunity for you to determine if you want the person as a client.

This is KEY! Many business owners, especially newer business owners, forget this part of the definition. If you do not approach the Comp Consult with this in mind, you will NOT be as successful. You are "screening" the prospective client as much as they are "screening" you!

For example, let's say you meet a woman at a networking event. After a five-minute conversation, she says that she wants to hire you and gives you a check right there. Would you take her on as a client, deposit the check the next day and get started?

In general, I think the answer would be no! I bet you would set up a Comp Consult or initial meeting with her in order to make sure that the two of you are a fit. You want to determine if you can help her and if she is the type of client with whom you want to work.

During the startup phase, most business owners are willing to work with anyone who breathes and has a credit card. We've *all* been there, and it is often incredibly unattractive.

Until that mindset goes away, it is very difficult to attract and secure new clients.

Throughout this program, I talk about the importance of *professional posture.* This is critical when setting up and conducting the Comp Consult. You must offer and conduct a Comp Consult from a place of, "My time is valuable. I am giving a gift. I provide a valuable service. I am checking you the client out as much as you are checking me out. I am selective."

When you approach the Comp Consult with this type of confidence and professionalism, the number of people who will become your clients will skyrocket!

Paradigm Shift

Have a paradigm shift. Instead of focusing on getting clients, focus on doing Comp Consults!

This business-building system is based upon the premise that all of your marketing is for one purpose and one purpose only—to enroll prospective clients after a Comp Consult. I talk more about this in "Lesson 4A: The Marketing Train" because it is so important.

Do your marketing for the purpose of filling your Comp Consults! When you do this, several things will happen:

- You can focus on being of service instead of "selling."
- You become less attached to the outcome.
- You find it takes off the pressure to close.

If you simply focus on securing Comp Consults and work on improving them, you will fill your business with clients. Especially when you do consults with people who match your target market and niche!

Pre-Call

Create a Comp Consult Schedule

Block out specific times in your calendar for doing Comp Consults. I recommend that you do 45-minute consultations and block out an hour in your calendar for each call.

While you can certainly pick whatever days/times you want, I have found that Friday is a great day for Comp Consults. Why Friday? Quite simply because people are generally in the best mood on Fridays! They are winding down their week and looking forward to the weekend. People are in a buying mood!

With that said, the specific day/times you choose aren't half as important as having a set Comp Consult schedule and being focused on filling your Comp Consult slots. When you do this, three things happen:

1. Increased Focus and Intentionality

You will naturally focus on securing Comp Consults to fill the openings on your calendar. For example, if you make Friday mornings your "Comp Consult Time" and block out 9 A.M., 10 A.M. and 11 A.M., you intend to do three Comp Consults that week. Having those slots in your schedule helps remind you that in order to grow your business, you need to be focused on securing Comp Consults. It also tells the Universe that you are serious and committed!

2. Increased Professionalism

When you have a set time for Comp Consults, it makes your business more professional. No more finding out when it is convenient for the potential client and trying to match schedules. You are a professional, and the potential client is looking to you for guidance. You are busy, and you run a structured business. For example, let's say you meet someone who is interested in learning more about your business, and you happen to be a coach. Imagine saying something like this:

Example Comp Consult Offer:

> Would you like to schedule a Complimentary Consultation to learn more about how my coaching can dramatically improve the profitability of your business? I work with my regular clients on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and leave Fridays open for conducting Complimentary Consultations. I have openings at 9 A.M. and 11 A.M. this Friday. Does one of those times work for you?

Isn't that attractive? Doesn't that sound a lot better than, "When is a good time for you?"

3. Get in the Groove!

When you block out time and schedule two, three or four Comp Consults in a row, you get into a rhythm. This is particularly powerful when you are first implementing this method of doing Comp Consults. You will feed off the energy of the consultation and really start building momentum.

In addition, having a couple of calls booked back-to-back helps you be less attached to getting any particular person as a client. If the first person doesn't sign on, no problem—you've got two more Comp Consults that day!

Schedule People Immediately

It is important to sign people up for a specific Comp Consult time as soon as you make the offer. If someone expresses interest, you want to book a time right then and there. For example, when speaking to a group, bring a clipboard with your times already slotted out. See "Lesson 4B: Speaking" for more details.

If you meet someone at a networking event, see if you can schedule a specific time right there. Can you see how this is much easier to do in the moment if you have your "Comp Consult Schedule" already set up?

Do the Comp Consult as Soon as Possible

It is also important to conduct the Comp Consult as soon as possible after making the offer, ideally within three days. For example, if you do a talk on a Tuesday night, I recommend setting up times to do the consultations on Thursday and Friday. Of course, this may not always be feasible, but do whatever you can to conduct the Comp Consult soon. If there is a long lag time, people will forget why they even signed up for the Comp Consult in the first place!

Send a Follow-Up Email

Follow up with an email that confirms the date and time, provides calling instructions, assigns homework and impresses upon them the value of your time. This last point is important, because people have a tendency to not show up because it's free. In your email, make sure to let them know that you keep a full schedule and take these calls seriously. Be sure to send this notice out promptly. For example, if you do a talk on a Tuesday night, send the confirmation emails that night or the next morning. Promptness makes a good impression!

Sample Comp Consult Confirmation Email:

Dear (Prospect Name),

I enjoyed meeting you at the Women's Business Owners networking event last night and learning about your ideas on combining healing, the environment and the arts. Very exciting work!

I have us scheduled for a Complimentary Consultation on Friday, June 28, at 10:00 A.M. Please call me at the number below at that time.

Prior to my call, please spend some quality time to think about and write down your answers to the following questions. I'll use them as a basis for our session. You can either email me your answers, or you can share your thoughts with me verbally on Friday.

1. What are your primary business objectives for the next 3-6 months?
2. How will you feel and what positive results will you enjoy when your business is aligned with your true passion and interests?
3. What has kept you from making these changes to your business already; and how will you feel if, in a year from now, nothing has changed?

One last note. I have a rather full schedule and treat these complimentary consultations very seriously, so please let me know at least 24 hours in advance if you can't make my call.

Thanks so much. I look forward to speaking with you soon!

Best,

(Your Name)

(Your Phone Number)

Assign Homework

I STRONGLY recommend that you assign homework before the Comp Consult. You can then use the homework questions as the foundation of your coaching component during the session with your client.

Implementing this one strategy can literally double your consult conversion ratio! Here's why:

- It provides value before you even start delivering your service. You'll hear things like, "Wow, I've never thought about this before."
- The person takes the call more seriously.

- It shows your professionalism.

- It shows your interest in them.
- It gets the person mentally prepared.
- It gives you a foundation for the coaching component of the Consultation.

The Homework Questions

As with all of this business-building system, I encourage you to take my core structure and customize it to fit your unique style, personality, target market, etc.

I recommend that you craft three homework questions that are customized to your *Who* and *What.* Your questions should address the following three main points.

1. Identify What They Want

First and foremost, you want to help the prospective client connect with what it is that they really want. For example, if you are a life coach who helps divorced parents have a better relationship with their teenagers, your first question might be something like this:

> ***Example Homework Question #1:***
>
> Describe for me in vivid detail what a really great relationship with your teenager would look like.

2. Identify How They Will Feel When They Get What They Want

Next, you want the prospective client to connect with the reasons WHY they want what they want and how they will FEEL when they get it. A second question for this same coach might be:

> ***Example Homework Question #2:***
>
> What are some of the ways that having a better relationship with your teenager will impact you and your family? How will you feel when you have this type of relationship with your teenager?

3. Identify How They Will Feel If They Don't Get What They Want

Finally, you want to help the prospective client realize what it will cost them if they don't make a change in this area.

Some ways to ask this are: "How will you feel if…?" "What is it costing you to…?" "What are you missing out on by…?" "Where will you be a year from now if nothing changes, and how will you feel if that happens?"

A third question for this same coach might be:

Example Homework Question #3:

> What are some things that keep you and your teenager from having the type of relationship you desire? How will you feel if your relationship doesn't improve and it continues the way it is now for the next few years?

As you may have noticed, these questions are based on Anthony Robbins' pain/pleasure principle. You are helping the potential client identify what it is that they really want, how they will feel if they get it and how they would feel if they don't.

This is an incredibly powerful assignment and can provide tremendous value to the prospective client before your phone even rings.

Perhaps you can imagine how this provides for a great foundation upon which to build during the coaching component of the Comp Consult. More on that later!

Comp Consult Structure

There are 7 main components in the Comp Consult. Below are the recommended amounts of time to spend on each component and also a description of each section.

1.	Build rapport/make a connection	*1-3 minutes*
2.	Review call structure	*2-3 minutes*
3.	Overview of your industry and specialty	*3-4 minutes*
4.	Coach!	*20-30 minutes*
5.	Explain how you can help them	*3-4 minutes*
6.	Ask for the person's business	*1 minute*
7.	Handle objections/close the sale	*5-15 minutes*
	TOTAL	***35-60 minutes***

1. Build Rapport/Make a Connection

The key for this part of the Comp Consult is to keep it short! You are a professional, and Comp Consults are an important part of your business. Of course you want to build rapport and make a connection—just don't spend too much time doing it! Your time is valuable, and the consultation is not just a chat. How you conduct yourself during the first five minutes sets the tone for the rest of the call!

2. Establish Call Structure

Next, you want to share how the call is structured and what the prospective client can expect. In particular, it is <u>very important that you let them know up front</u> that if you think there is a fit and that you can help them, **you are going to ask if they would like to hire you.** This is crucial for the success of the Comp Consult!

The exact words you use are not as important as the message you convey. You want to inform the person that the Comp Consult is part of your sales process and at the end you have reserved some time to have a discussion about whether or not your service is the right investment for the person.

Establishing this in the beginning is critical to the success of the Comp Consult. **Do NOT skip this step.** Having this type of structure shows your professionalism and typically takes away any nervousness the client may be experiencing. It also answers the question they are thinking, "When is he/she going to 'sell' me?" When you address this up front, it helps build trust and lets them know they are in good hands!

There is another benefit of telling the person up front that you're going to ask them at the end if they want to hire you. It mentally prepares you and sets you up to ask for the business later on—no chickening out!

Example:

Coach: Do you mind if I spend a few minutes going over how I typically structure these consultations?

Client: Not at all. That sounds great.

Coach: Super! First, I'd like to share a little bit about the coaching profession, my specialty and answer any questions you may have.

Next, I'll spend about 20-25 minutes coaching on the homework you did. My goal is to provide you with some real value, give you an experience of what coaching is like and have you be at least a little better off than before the call.

After the coaching component, I'd like to share a little about how my coaching works.

Then, if I think I we both enjoyed the call and that you could benefit from my coaching, I'm going to ask if you would like to hire me to be your coach. How does that sound?

3. Overview of Your Profession and Specialty

Depending on the prospect's knowledge of your business, I recommend you provide a brief overview about your profession and your specialty in particular. Your goal is to establish credibility and diffuse any misperceptions the prospect may have before you begin providing service.

Example:

Coaching is a growing profession and a tool that more and more successful people are using to help them be their best. I'm a member of the International Coach Federation, the governing body of my industry. There are approximately 15,000 professional coaches worldwide.

My favorite definition of coaching is that it is about helping successful people achieve their goals faster and easier than if they were working on their own.

My specialty is working with (insert your *Who*) just like you to (insert your *What*). (Example: My specialty is working with divorced single parents just like you on improving their relationship with their teenagers. I am currently working with eight single parents, and the changes in their relationships with their teenagers have been amazing!)

4. Coach!

Now, let's cover the coaching component of the call. For maximum effectiveness, keep the following points in mind when coaching during the Complimentary Consultation.

A. Coach on the Homework Questions

This is essential for the coaching component of the Comp Consult. You should spend 20-25 minutes on the three questions. Have them elaborate on:

- What it is they really want.
- How they will feel if they get it.
- How they will feel if they don't.

This is the pain/pleasure principle. Don't shy away from the pain! You are doing them a favor by helping them connect with what they don't want, so they can take action now to make sure it doesn't happen!

B. Keep Track of What They Need and How You Can Help Them

As you are coaching the prospective client on the homework questions, make sure you help the potential client identify what obstacles or challenges are keeping them from achieving what it is that they really want. Make notes of this during your coaching! When you get to the next component of the Comp Consult, you will refer to these items when you explain how your business works.

C. Provide Value

Do not try to "solve all of their problems" on this call. All you need to do is provide one solid "nugget" of value.

Here are some ways to provide value during the Comp Consult.

- Affirm the person.
- Give them the gift of deep listening, of really being heard.

- Help them clarify what is really important.

- Recommend a resource (book, website, article, referral, etc.).
- Have them commit to taking an action that will move them in the direction they want to go.

D. Coach and Consult With the Person

Treat the person as if you had been working with them for six months. While this isn't always easy, it is possible! Focus on being yourself. Don't try too hard. Have fun, and don't be attached to the outcome.

5. Explain How You Can Help Them

Once you have completed the coaching component of the consult, get their feedback and explain how you work with clients. This is where your *How* comes in! (If you haven't already, see "Lesson 2B: Create Your *How*" for details on identifying and articulating your unique service proposition.)

Note: You are simply giving them an overview. This should take about 3-5 minutes. Do not overwhelm them. Remember, it is more important that you "have a *How*" than exactly what your *How* is!

Your goal is to help them have confidence in you and your service. You want them to know that they are in good hands, that you have a structure and methodology to delivering the desired benefit or solution.

When sharing your *How*, customize it according to the notes you took during the call on what they need and how you can help them. Also, be sure to ask questions and get them to participate when you are sharing your *How*.

Example:

Coach What part of my call today did you find most beneficial?

Client Well, for the first time in years, I now actually feel like it might be possible to have a really great relationship with my son.

Coach I'm so glad you experienced that. Having that kind of realization is what helps spur us into taking action and is a big part of what coaching is about.

Would it be okay if I spend a minute or two and share a little about what I would be doing during my coaching calls if you decide to work with me as your coach?

Client Sure, that sounds great.

Coach The first thing I would do is (insert your *How* here)! For example:

The first thing I would do is have you get crystal-clear on exactly what an ideal relationship with your son would look like.

The second thing I would do is work on building your belief. You mentioned earlier that this is an area where you struggle. Do you agree that your level of belief is critical to achieving a great relationship with your son?

Client Definitely. Up until now, I've had a hard time believing it can happen.

Coach I can understand why your belief would be challenged. And I have some powerful exercises that we would work on together that will really help you believe and "see" that ideal relationship.

Next, I would identify things that you can start doing right away to make the time you do spend with your son more enjoyable for both of you.

Coach So, how does that sound?

Client That sounds pretty darn good!

Do you see how you are sharing your knowledge and expertise while getting them involved and customizing your *HOW* to what they said during the consultation? This is very powerful and critically important for the potential client to feel confident in hiring you. They need to have a sense of what will happen in your working relationship!

6. Ask for the Person's Business

Assuming that the call has gone well, that you believe the person could benefit from your service and that you would like the person to be your client, the only thing left is to ask!

Examples:

- So, what do you say? Would you like to hire me to be your coach?
- So, are you ready to get started? Would you like to work with me as your coach?

7. Handle Objections Effectively/Sign Them Up

The next lesson you will be studying in this business-building system is dedicated to this concept. I highly recommend that once you complete the work in this lesson, you proceed to "Lesson 3C: Handling Objections Effectively"!

Assignment Preparing for the Comp Consult

Are you excited to begin Mastering the Comp Consult? I sure hope so! Use the worksheet below to get started. See the sample questions and explanations in this lesson, and customize your questions to make them congruent with your *Who* and *What*. Create questions that are specific to what your prospects want, how they will feel when they get it and how they will feel if they don't.

Determine the three homework questions you will send to your prospective clients.

Question #1 (helps prospects clarify what they want)

____

____

____

____

Question #2 (helps prospects identify why they want it and how they will feel when they get it)

____

____

____

Question #3 (helps prospects identify the cost of not getting what they want)

____

____

____

Create Your Comp Consult "Cheat Sheet"

Many of the business owners who have experienced the most success using this method of doing the Comp Consult have taken the core structure that I provide and then customized it to fit their own personality, style and target market. I recommend you write out a "cheat sheet" or note cards on the different components of the Comp Consult using your own language. Of course you don't want to sound like you are reading from a script during the consultation, but having written guidelines in your own words makes learning this structure a lot easier!

I am committed to creating my own customized version of the Comp Consult structure. Therefore, by the following date, I will work for the specified amount of time, and I will take the following specific actions:

Date: ___________________________ Duration: ____________________________

Actions: ____

Practice is KEY!

I strongly recommend that you schedule some "practice" Comp Consults to learn and feel comfortable with this format.

I am committed to practicing delivery of the Comp Consult. Therefore, I will contact the following individuals to schedule a practice Comp Consult:

Contact name: _______________________________ by (date): ___________________

Contact name: _______________________________ by (date): ___________________

Summary

So, is this method for conducting the Complimentary Consultation different from the way you were doing it? Most business owners tell me that my methodology is very different, primarily in the areas of homework, structure of the call, the focus of the coaching component, informing the potential client up front that you will ask for their business and communicating how you can help them…essentially the entire Comp Consult!

It is critical that you "Master the Complimentary Consultation" if you are going to grow your business. I urge you to read this material several times. Then start using this format! Schedule some "practice" Comp Consults with friends, family or associates. After a couple of times you will be a lot more confident, and it will feel very comfortable, natural and easy to conduct the Comp Consult using this format.

Also, remember to complete "Lesson 3C: Handling Objections Effectively" next because it outlines how to handle any objections or questions the prospective client might have.