



# 16 Marketing Ideas to Help CEO Peer Group Chairs and Independent Consultants

## Keep & Attract Clients

**Ed Delia**

President

Delia Associates

CEO Peer Group Members & Speakers





## As an outsider looking in, the opportunities before you are remarkable.

The opportunity to inspire executives to be better leaders and people should not be taken lightly. As an executive you have participated in CEO Peer Groups as well as sought the advice of consultants, because many if not all executives need help and guidance as we make our way toward a brighter tomorrow. And we all develop a deep, sincere appreciation and respect for those guiding us.

## But that doesn't happen over night . . .

I'm sure every new CEO Peer Group Chair and Independent Consultant faces that harsh moment of reality: building a group or client base is hard work! Getting CEOs or key executives to commit to anything, let alone their valued time, is no small accomplishment.

Plus, as a new Chair or consultant, you find yourself in a position you probably haven't been in for some time: sales. Many Chairs and consultants have held CEO or high level executive titles themselves, which helps make them great. But, as a Chair or consultant, you're similar to a small business owner, trying to sell as you manage customer expectations, administrative affairs, and wear 10 other hats . . . short on time and even shorter on resources.







## Here's a little reality check.

Much like you, I don't have all the answers. Mind you, I'm not totally out of my league (or mind) on this. Over the years, I've had the pleasure of meeting and working with a number of CEO Peer Group Chairs and Consultants. I'm simply looking at those rolls through the sales and marketing lens.

**The following represents 16 ideas about how to fully leverage marketing, your personal brand, and digital communications to keep the member client pipeline filled. It's essentially what my approach would include if faced with the challenge of convincing 10-15 executives that they absolutely needed to give up one day per month to hang out with me, and pay me for doing so.**



# 1

## The Brand Called You.

The sub-brand to your peer group or consulting firm is the brand called YOU. A major reason why a member joins a group or retains a consulting firm is because he or she connects with the Chair or consultant. Members have a great respect for their chairs and consultants; it's something that's established early on. Draw upon your executive experience and feature most relevant achievements. Think of yourself as a brand, and market that brand consistently. Align the peer group and firm standards with your personal brand standards, because potential members are essentially buying both.

*Write down your key philosophies, favorite quotes, values and your own personal style of leadership. Make sure you define and announce those characteristics whenever marketing your personal brand.*



# 2

## Keep your personal website Simple, Powerful and Credible.

Ask yourself these questions. Does my personal website convey expertise, wisdom and leadership? Does it showcase my own commercial story and journey? Does it position me as a proven operator in business leadership, governance and growth?

Immediately after they first speak with you, prospective members will look you up online, and visit your website to gain a greater understanding of your capabilities and proficiencies as a potential leadership advisor.

Choosing a Chair or consultant is a big deal. You can expect prospective members to do some level of fact-finding not only about your organization, but most certainly about you.

*Let your website showcase who you are, what you stand for, and what type of experience potential members and clients can expect. Talk a little about the types of members or clients you have, the industry categories that are closed, and the ones that are open and would represent a good fit for your group(s). Be completely authentic in language and tone. Let them know what they stand to gain in a straight no-nonsense manner.*



# 3

## Human Touch, Online Video.

As a Chair or consultant, the number one reason for you to have an online presence is to navigate a potential member toward an offline conversation. Online Video is a great way to jumpstart that process. Offer a two-minute clip that features you and your core philosophies on leadership, your organization and the member experience. It will provide a potential member with a powerful first impression of you. Take a conversational and natural tone with your on-camera presentation. Let the closing scenes be a personal invitation to take the next step, whatever that might be.



*Plus, online video that's well-optimized for search gives you a decisive advantage from an online visibility standpoint. SEO video content inherently ranks higher in search engine results pages (SERPs) in comparison to text-based content. Plus, video content is normally indicated with a small video icon, making it stand out more in SERPs.*



# 4

## Let your members do the talking.

Provide viewers with three to five testimonial clips from enthusiastic clients or members. Display these clips in multiple formats via text, audio and visuals. “Live” testimonials are powerful, and can be the tipping point from “Maybe” to “Yes!”

*They'll also showcase your connection to executives in the region, further boosting your local “street cred.”*



# 5

## Leverage your Organization's Tool Kit.

Utilize every resource at your disposal, including, of course, your organization's tool kit. If your organization has online promo videos, perhaps take short segments and integrate them into your website and digital marketing mix. I've always found the data points showing the success of companies compared to "the rest of the world" very compelling.



*These should be part of your marketing presentation, as they demonstrate fundamental value in "belonging" to your organization's community.*



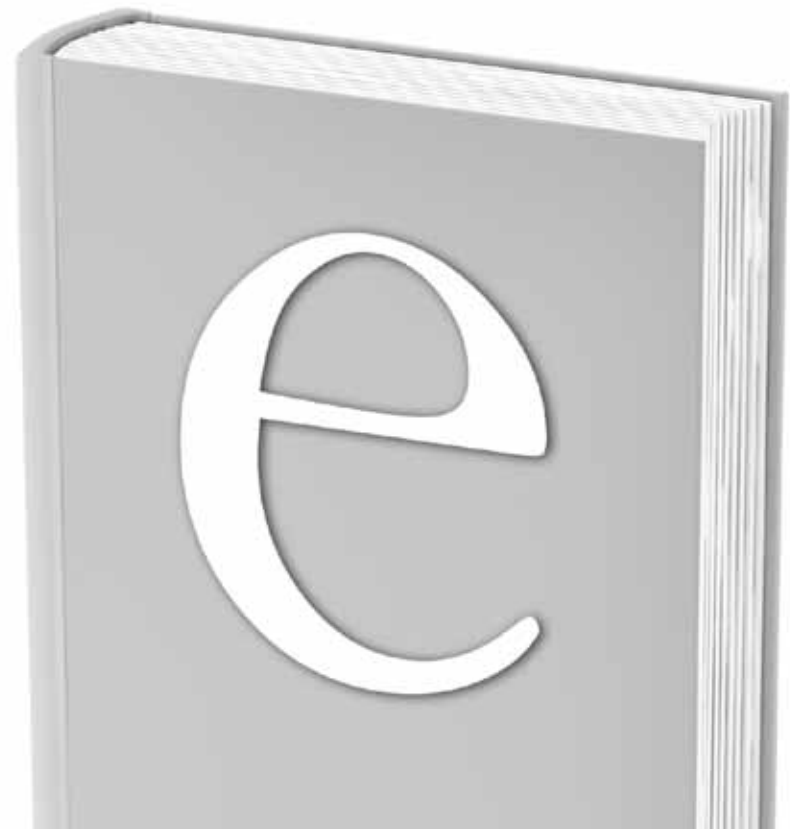


# 6

## Write a short-but-effective e-book (like the one you're reading right now).

Develop a free e-book on topics that might include: "The Top 10 Challenges That Today's CEOs Face," "Inside the Mind of Successful CEOs," "What Do CEOs Want and What Are They Afraid Of?" etc. As a Chair or consultant, you're something of an expert on the role of top executives. You can use the e-book as a lead generation source, by asking the viewer for basic contact information (name, email, company, role) as the requirement for downloading the content.

*Anyone willing to give up their information to download your e-book is, to a certain extent, qualifying himself or herself as a potential member.*



# 7

## Blog about Executive Peer Groups and Consultants.

Blogging is a great way to spark interest from your prospective membership pool. Write about topics such as “Is a peer group/independent consultant right for you?” “10 reasons why CEOs join peer groups/hire consultants.” “What to expect when joining a peer group.” You can even write about how your group or firm compares with others. If you need help with this one, call me. I’m familiar with many peer groups, CEO, TAB, Renaissance Forum, Strategic Coach and consulting firms. Writing about these topics demonstrates expertise involving the intricacies of executive peer groups and consulting firms. Again, it lends credibility. Each reason a CEO gives for not committing and the counter-point should absolutely become blog post material.

*Blogging on an everyday basis is aggressive but probably not realistic. Two to three half-hour blog sessions per week is a good way to start, and more do-able. And if you’re the type that hates to write, video blog posts are a good alternative.*



# 8

## Regional SEO – Long-Tail Keywords.

While your organization may be doing a good job of dominating several broad keyword sets, the search optimization game is constantly evolving. There's always more you can do to enhance your online visibility. Become more inventive and target more geographic locations by optimizing regional keywords so the right people will find you. The goal is not to draw volume to your site. The focus is quality; long tail keywords that are more region-specific and more specific to the types of members or clients you want to connect with. By picking the right long tail keywords, you will rank higher than your regional competitors in the search engines.

*Do a Google search for your name to make sure there isn't any publicly available information you wouldn't want a potential member to see. Purge any social media accounts or online directories you no longer use and make sure there is informational consistency across the board.*



# 9

## Online Public Relations.

Another good resource is a testimonial press release that details how a certain company CEO joined your group or retained your services, why they did it and how they benefitted. It's possible that some CEOs would refuse to consent for issues of privacy, but if they're having a positive experience, why not. Announce that you are forming a new group or seeking additional clients, and invite potential interested CEOs to an open meeting.

*Announce each new member or client that joins or special achievements realized by existing members or clients. Let them offer a quote about how you helped them achieve this goal. Use PR as a means to establish your presence as a thought leader on the CEO peer group or consulting experience.*

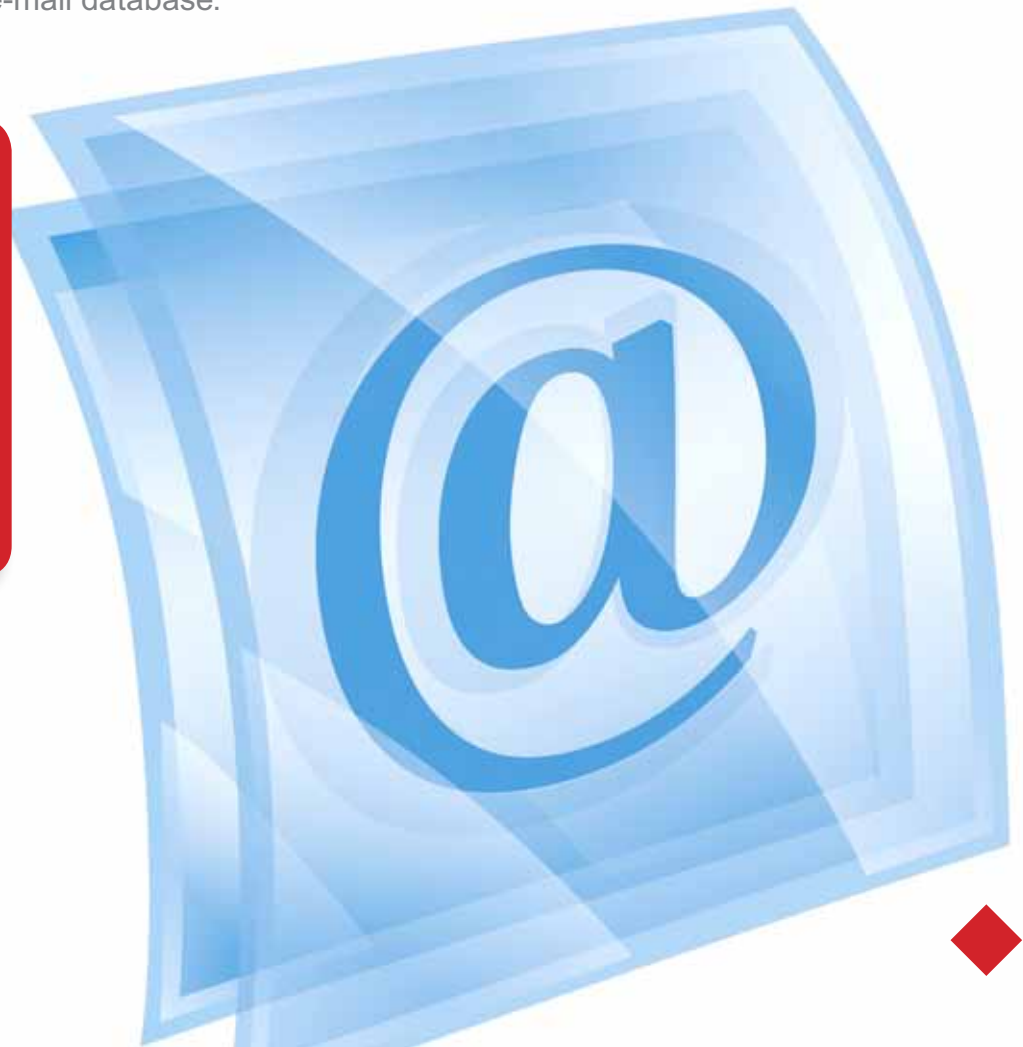


# 10

## Email Marketing.

E-mail marketing keeps your name and services top-of-mind. I would suggest featuring an important tip for CEOs at least once a month. You can also repackage and deploy recent blog posts in an e-news format. Ask current members or clients if they would consider sharing some of their contacts to help expand your e-mail database.

*Each e-news edition should link to your site for additional information and to enable a recipient to make immediate contact. Use subjects and headlines that capture attention and clearly communicate the content in order to increase the open rate.*



# 11

## Regional "Meet & Greet."

Two to four times per year, invite prospects via email and social media to attend a business social hour. Encourage current members or clients to recommend three to four possible invitees. Send a special invitation in hopes of securing a critical mass (20 attendees) and bring an expert speaker to make a 20 minute presentation. Then, as the host, you can take the floor to talk for five minutes about your organization.

You'll get as much out of it as you put into it. That's true for most of these marketing techniques, but it's especially true for this one. A poorly conducted "meet and greet" can stifle your growth as a leader, or worse, deter any prospects from committing to the program. On the other hand, one that's well run presents a powerful opportunity to make a strong, face-to-face impression.

*It's an excellent chance to give the group an idea of what's to come and the litany of benefits that can be reaped if they were to commit.*





# 12

## Social Media.

Store all of your content on LinkedIn. Social media has quickly become one of the most reliable sources of online marketing. Don't be afraid to leverage this invaluable resource to your benefit. But, don't forget to tap into your existing networks from your "former life." Leveraging the power of social media will help you connect with factions of people you never thought were possible. Connect with as many people as you can or at least as many people you think can help grow your business. There are over two billion people searches on LinkedIn every year. Make sure you are visible.

Getting the word out via social media is something that can enhance your image as a Chair or consultant. Use Twitter as a secondary delivery system. The 140 character micro blogging website has helped thousands of businesses and consultants extend and improve their brand, and it can certainly do the same for you. Leave no stone unturned. Explore every option and convey the human, personal side of your brand. But just being on social media isn't enough. Active and regular participation is key.

*Begin to follow people of interest, prospective clients, and peers. You can use [search.twitter.com](https://search.twitter.com) to find people tweeting about very specific things, or using keywords in their profile (i.e. CEO or an industry specific keyword). Directories like Twellow also help to find industry specific contacts.*



# 13

## Open Webinar.

Holding an open webinar is another great tool to utilize. Convene an open half-hour webinar twice per month for regional executives who are interested in learning more about your organization. Use the webinar to go through your organization's experience and the benefits of what membership is all about.

*Invite questions, and clearly articulate next steps with those who participate on the webinar.*

### Webinar

Web-based seminar

live online educational presentation  
viewers can submit questions  
see slides while the speaker  
interactive elements - the a





# 14

## Wear The Brand.

Maybe your organization has some cool apparel. If it does, wear these products as an opportunity to send the message that you are part of that organization. Apparel can be great conversation starters. All you need is the right CEO to ask, "What's that?" And you never know when or where that next chance encounter might be.

*Not wearing your organization's brand is simply a missed opportunity.*



# 15

## Regional Trade Associations.

Every state has regional trade associations. The members that usually turn out to them are industry leaders. This presents another opportunity to network amongst these leaders and sell yourself and your program.

*Make them understand the value that can be obtained from this program.*



# 16

## Emailing your Members

Whether you see them every month – or twice a month – dropping an additional monthly insight to your members or clients is another line of communication. It's one more way of maintaining a strong relationship (and giving a little value added). It also gives them a convenient format to “forward to a friend” or fellow business executive. Great new members often come from existing members.

*This is a subtle and unobtrusive way of “reminding” them to keep you in mind, should they ever encounter a fellow executive that might be a good fit for membership.*



**I hope this proves helpful.**

Trying to execute all of these 16 suggestions at one time can be fatal. Instead, begin by choosing a few that you're most confident you can effectively execute. Success comes from quality, not quantity. Once you've committed to a realistic plan, remember that repetition and frequency are paramount. Set aside time for marketing just like you budget time for group and client meetings, 1-to-1s and sales. And set up a "marketing machine" so that each week you're taking some action to bring in the next new member or client. We all understand that each group or organization will naturally lose a few members or clients, and gain a few. You can never stop marketing your personal Vistage brand.

**Make time now, so that you don't  
have too much time later.**





## About Ed Delia

Ed Delia, PCM\* is president of Delia Associates, a Whitehouse, NJ-based firm that helps companies leverage brand awareness and technology to achieve market leadership. He is also the author of Brand Matters, a monthly e-newsletter featuring current commentary on brand-related topics. Ed is a frequent speaker on the subject, and has delivered numerous talks on branding, creative thinking, and technology-based marketing communications. He has been a Vistage Expert Speaker since 2007.

\* PCM - Professional Certified Marketer by the American Marketing Association.



456 Route 22 West • Whitehouse, NJ 08888 • T: 908.534.9044 • F: 908.534.6856

**delianet.com**

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