

A Dream Come True

The ins and outs of starting your own consulting service
By Nichole L. Torres | [Entrepreneur Magazine](#) - May 2003

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Whether you've been laid off from your corporate job or you're just ready to strike out on your own, you're not alone if you dream of starting a consulting business. To make that dream a reality, Joseph Riggio, CEO and president of [JS Riggio International Inc.](#) in Mahwah, New Jersey, has developed a program to help aspiring entrepreneurs launch consulting businesses.

First, says Riggio, pick a point of entry where you already have expertise and familiarity. What are you passionate about? "The more specific, the better," he says. "Think about it as though you're entering a funnel from the small end." Be tightly focused and position yourself in that small area—you can't be all things to all people. Use your specific expertise to persuade your first few critical clients to take a risk on you; only then can you expand your horizons a bit.

Second, present benefits that are recognizable and tangible to your potential clients. Whether you're a weight-loss consultant or a small-business consultant, make it personal. "If I can say to [a client], 'I'm going to show you how to lose weight or how to stop smoking or how to make a million dollars,' [the client] can understand that," says Riggio.

When it comes to the practical side of pricing your services and marketing yourself to the local community, Riggio suggests finding out what similar consultants charge. If there are no similar consultants in your area, price yourself according to what local therapists charge per hour.

Finally, get your name out there—establish your expertise as a speaker with local business associations, the chamber of commerce and colleges. "Talk to everybody you know and everybody you meet about what you're doing," he says. "If you're not talking to everybody, you're not going to get the business." For more information about Riggio's program, log on to www.jsri.com.