

This document acts as a proverbial GPS helping you to see how you are positioned in your target market's mind. Your firm is likely to fall between the two extremes, but depending whether you're closer to the vendor end or the authority end, you have your work cut out for you to shift close to the authority end.

Information Technology Peddler Quiz

A Self-Administrable Test To See If Your IT Firm Is More Of A Fungible Vendor Or A Respected IT Authority

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By Tom 'Bald Dog' Varjan

“When you’re the duke, you can’t trade in coffee beans, because the bazaar dealers will always undercut your price. You should build a cathedral, because even a thousand tents can’t compete with the Notre Dame.” ~ Eric S. Raymond: *The Cathedral & the Bazaar*

In the age of unprecedented buyer scepticism, cynicism and suspicion, it’s a good idea to know how your business is positioned in your target market’s mind. Is it regarded as a fungible, replaceable vendor, making your salespeople dreaded peddlers and your products/services lukewarm technical commodities that can be haggled over?

Or is your firm regarded as a sought-after industrial authority, making your people respected experts and your products/services unique, one-of-a-kind solutions to specific business problems.

The difference is pretty drastic.

As a fungible vendor, you have to chase after the market, while the market tries to run away from you.

But as a sought-after authority, the market chases you, and you can cherry-pick who you want to do business with.

Imagine there is a continuum with fungible vendor at one end and sought-after authority at the other end.

The 36 inspection points in this table help you to define where your company is on this continuum.

Enjoy and may the profits be with you!

Fill in the quiz by putting “R” in the left-hand middle column or an “F” in the right-hand middle column.

Respected authority and trusted advisor	R	F	Fungible vendor and dreaded peddler
1. Our marketing collaterals – white papers, free reports, webinars, etc. – are informative and educational in nature in order to aid the buyer’s decision-making process.	?	?	1. Our marketing collaterals are full of self-aggrandisement, information about us, our capabilities, a list of our services, our clients and our prices.
2. We regularly create valuable content – white papers, free reports, webinars, audios, teleseminars, etc. – for our market in order to inform, educate and shift the way our market thinks about our industry and services.	?	?	2. We’re so busy serving existing clients, pounding pavements and dialling for dollars for new business, that we just don’t have time for this “content” stuff. We want to bring in money, not giving away our expertise.
3. We conduct regular business reviews with our clients and always revisit their IT strategies to make sure they are technically in top shape, and no technical disaster can come and cause them major harm.	?	?	3. Once a sale is made, it’s done. We finish what we’ve agreed and then move on. We have neither capacity nor inclination for ongoing handholding. If they have problems, they can call us and pay us to solve their problems.
4. Our website talks about qualitative and quantitative business improvements that our clients have achieved or can achieve with our help and support. It also explains why perfect buyers should hire us instead	?	?	4. Our website, similar to our marketing collaterals, it’s full of information about us, our capabilities, list of our services, list of our executives, partners and investors and

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of the competition.			our prices.
5. Our website furnishes us with preponderance of high-quality sales leads. generates multiple new leads and opportunities every week	?	?	5. Our website is like an impotent husband: Great appearance and lots of activity but no bankable result.
6. When our market types our services or other relevant keywords into Google, our firm comes up on the first page.	?	?	6. Our website is so carefully hidden that it would be the eighth miracle of the world if Google could find it.
7. We have minimum 8-12 educational case studies on our most profitable services, showing how we helped our clients to improve their businesses.	?	?	7. Our case studies describe the type of technical work (list of tasks) we have performed for our clients.
8. We have a process that helps us to demonstrate the value clients derive from our services, so we hardly ever experience price/fee objections on our products/services.	?	?	8. Our salespeople are flying by the seats of their pants and do their own unique magic to land clients.
9. Our marketing is solely focused on building our credibility and to support our sales.	?	?	9. Our marketing is about branding. It's focused on talking about us and our services.
10. We stay in touch with our market through our newsletters, blog posts and other educational materials regarding the latest advancements in technology (server room stuff) and how that technology ties into improvements in business results (boardroom stuff).	?	?	10. We contact prospects only when we smell the signed and authorised purchase orders in their hands, so we know they are ready to give us money... right away. We hate wasting time on non-ready tyre-kickers.
11. We have a systemised sales process that enables us to convert 80% or more of our prospects into paying clients.	?	?	11. It's up to individual salespeople to land clients in any way they want to.
12. We have a marketing programme in place, with at least five (orchestrated referral plus four) lead generation channels, that consistently and predictably lands us perfect prospects based on our perfect client profile.	?	?	12. It's the salespeople's job to do their own prospecting and find leads for themselves in any way they want to. That's what we pay them for.
13. Client acquisition is not a numbers game, but a strategic game. The smarter we position ourselves, the more we sell.	?	?	13. Client acquisition is a numbers game. The more salespeople hustle, the more miles of pavement they can pound; the more numbers they call, the more they can sell. Simple.
14. We have a very particular multi-step client on-boarding process.	?	?	14. We have a one fell swoop sales process.
15. We have a very particular client off-	?	?	15. We just finish the work and move on to the

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boarding process.			next project.
16. We wouldn't even consider responding to RFPs and competitive bidding.	?	?	16. We acquire most of our clients through RFPs and competitive bidding.
17. When discussing business, our people meet only real decision-makers with authority and budgets.	?	?	17. Our salespeople work mainly through purchasing agents and lower-level skills who relay our offers and proposals to real buyers.
18. We require clients to provide us with 18 months of post-project metrics, so we can recommend tweaks.	?	?	18. When we are done, we are done. Finito. We're off to the next project.
19. We reinvest at least 10% of our revenue in our marketing and client generation.	?	?	19. We spend a pile of money on branding, but client generation and its cost is up to each salesperson.
20. We accept only those prospects that match our perfect client profile. Our marketing system disqualifies everyone who is less than a perfect prospect.	?	?	20. We accept anyone and everyone with a signed and authorised purchase order. We can't afford to be picky at this stage of our operation.
21. Our marketing differentiates us from our competitors, and when asked, all our people can clearly articulate in what way we are different from our competitors.	?	?	21. Our marketing is the marketing department's job. There is no point in burdening others with marketing stuff. They have their work to do.
22. Our people use the phone only to take incoming calls from self-qualified prospects who are already in our sales funnel.	?	?	22. Our salespeople are required to make a set number of cold calls every day.
23. Our company has virtually zero attrition. People join our company, love the way things work around here and stay.	?	?	23. Our salespeople are constantly coming and going. One joins our company, stays a little bit and moves on to one of our competitors.
24. Our marketing is systemised and automated such that it does all the heavy lifting of qualifying and pre-selling our solutions. Most of our time is invested in working on existing projects with paying clients. Besides that, we meet only those prospects who've already jumped through our hoops of qualification.	?	?	24. Our marketing presents our image to the market, but qualifying prospects is up to our salespeople. Marketing is marketing. Selling is selling. And we prefer to keep the two separate.
25. We have a waiting list of clients.	?	?	25. We have a waiting list of idle subject matter experts; waiting for new work.
26. We have a multi-step qualification process, and the smallest non-compliance disqualifies prospects.	?	?	26. Our qualifying criteria are pulse beat and wallet.
27. We have no sales force. Our subject matter experts, using our systems, land new business and then do the work.	?	?	27. We have a large sales force. It's up to our salespeople to do whatever they can to land new clients.

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28. All our people, just like all professionals, are paid salaries and bonuses based on long-term company-wide performance.	?	?	28. Our salespeople are on a small base salary plus commission, based on short-term individual performance.
29. Our people are farmers and diagnosticians. They “grow” clients and then facilitate the decision-making process by diagnosing prospects’ situations.	?	?	29. Our salespeople are hunters and closers. They hunt down new deals, present our solutions and close the sale whatever it takes.
30. Not closing a sale is part of life. We respect our prospects’ decisions and don’t even bother to handle objections.	?	?	30. Our salespeople make every effort to close the sale. Otherwise they can be reprimanded and even fired for losing prospects.
31. Our subject matter experts provide prospects with unique project proposals with three high-ROI investment options.	?	?	31. Our salespeople provide prospects with competitive price quotes.
32. Our project fees are based on our clients’ perception of the value that they can derive from our solutions.	?	?	32. Our price quotes are based on our time, effort and materials that take to complete projects.
33. We build long-term relationships with the cream of the crop of our market.	?	?	33. We “hit” on the prospect, make the sale and start chasing the next prospect.
34. Some 80% of our marketing is inbound. That is, buyers find us on their own volition and request our help.	?	?	34. 100% of our marketing is outbound. We find buyers whom we convince to buy from us right away.
35. Our business development crew is a tiny cohesive team of well-fed farmers and gardeners.	?	?	35. Our business development crew is a wolf pack of hungry and aggressive hunters.
36. Our people wait for prospects to request appointments, and, if they like what they see, prospects have to ask for the purchase. And if they qualify, we accept them as new clients.	?	?	36. Our salespeople proactively seek appointments and ask for the sale. Then they use everything in their power to convince buyers to buy from us.

And now count how many “Rs” and “Fs” you have. There is no need for evaluation. You’re smart enough to see where your Firm stands and what needs improving. Hope it helps a bit.