



Case Study

A HR Consultant in the SME Market

Overview

This case study follows the journey of a qualified HR consultant transitioning from corporate employment into running an independent consultancy focused on serving small to mid-sized businesses (SMEs).

With a background in workplace wellbeing, compliance, and performance management, the consultant had deep expertise, but she felt frustrated and confused because she wasn't getting clients. Doubt and fear had begun to creep in. Even though she had a strong track record, she lacked a clear strategy for attracting and converting new clients beyond her former network.

Together we created a clear, consistent system to grow her business confidently. Over 18 months she secured 13 SME clients across industries including recruitment, tech, and professional services. Importantly she achieved 50% repeat business, with several clients extending short "trial" projects into long-term contracts. Her client focused approach increased average client lifetime value (LTV) by over 40% through upsells and contract renewals.

Her transformation wasn't just in numbers: it was in mindset, positioning, and control. She went from feeling invisible and unsure to confidently leading sales conversations, communicating her value and building a business that works.



Background and Motivation

The client is a highly qualified HR expert with over a decade of experience in human resources, employee engagement, and organisational development. Having worked in-house across several mid-sized organisations, she built a strong foundation in workplace compliance, performance management, and talent development. Her career was marked by a commitment to building healthy, high-performing workplace cultures.

After leaving full-time employment, she launched her own HR consultancy, aiming to help small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs) implement proactive, people-focused HR strategies. SMEs often lacked internal HR expertise but need guidance—especially when facing growth pains, compliance issues, or retention problems.



Her motivation was clear:



To improve the working lives of more people by influencing entire organisations, not just individual teams.



To solve deeper systemic issues like high turnover, poor hiring decisions, and lack of leadership capability.



To build a more stable, scalable revenue stream than what ad-hoc referrals could provide.



To stretch her professional capabilities and meet the challenge of marketing and selling her expertise independently.

The appeal of this market was strong:

Larger reach and greater impact

Helping SME leaders shape entire organisations, not just react to HR problems.

Higher-value engagements

With the right offer, SME clients were willing to invest in multi-month retainers or multi-phase projects.

Reputation-building opportunities

Success stories with growing businesses built her visibility and credibility.

Long-term partnerships

Many SMEs, once supported effectively, were open to longer-term contracts, making client lifetime value (LTV) more predictable and sustainable.

However, despite her motivation and expertise, she lacked the structure and strategy to turn this vision into a thriving business. Her early efforts—mostly based on word-of-mouth and sporadic outreach—yielded little traction. She knew she needed to treat her business with the same strategic thinking she applied to HR problems. That's when she reached out for support.



⊗ Initial Challenges

Despite her strong background in HR and a successful track record within employment, the consultant encountered several significant hurdles when stepping into the B2B SME consulting space.

1

No Prior B2B Contacts or Experience

Her professional network was largely from her in-house roles—many of whom were not in a position to hire external consultants. She lacked direct connections to SME owners or HR decision-makers, making lead generation feel daunting and unfamiliar.

2

Unclear Unique Value Proposition (UVP) for the SME Market

While she knew she could deliver exceptional results, she struggled to clearly express why an SME should hire her. She found it difficult to translate her HR expertise into a compelling value proposition that would resonate with business owners and directors.

3

Difficulty Identifying and Reaching Decision-Makers

With no experience she was unsure how to reach the right people—let alone start meaningful conversations with them. She also didn't know how to distinguish between a gatekeeper, influencer, or final decision-maker in a smaller business setting.

4

Limited Knowledge of SME Procurement and Needs

Coming from structured corporate environments, she initially underestimated how informal, urgent, and budget-sensitive SME buying decisions could be. She wasn't sure what SME clients valued most, how long sales cycles should be, or what kind of offers would feel "safe" for a first engagement. Her early attempts to pitch comprehensive HR packages were often met with silence or polite declines.

5

Fear of Blending In and Being Overlooked

The HR consulting market is crowded with generalists offering similar services. Without a strong brand, strategic positioning, or visible proof of outcomes, she worried she would be seen as just another freelancer. She knew that simply "being good at what she does" wasn't enough—she needed to become known for solving specific problems in a way that stood out.

These challenges created a cycle of hesitation and low visibility. Without clarity on how to approach the SME market—or confidence that her value was understood—she hesitated to put herself out there. And with no visibility, no new clients came in.

It was at this point that she decided to take a structured, strategic approach and began working with Business 737 to turn things around.

737 Business Growth Program

We implemented a structured approach combining business model clarity, marketing and sales strategy and ongoing mentorship. Every element was designed to work together to remove uncertainty and create consistent growth.



At-a-Glance: What We Did

- ☐ **Business Model Review:** Clarified offers, set goals and built a realistic plan.
- ☐ **Marketing & Sales Funnel:** Step-by-step system to attract and convert clients.
- ☐ **Clarity Mentorship:** Prioritised actions and decisions for consistent focus.
- ☐ **90-Day Growth Plan:** Quarterly targets, weekly actions and accountability.
- ☐ **Website & Brand Audit:** Strengthened messaging and credibility.
- ☐ **Proposals & Programs:** Refined pitch, pricing, and value messaging.
- ☐ **LinkedIn Strategy:** Increased visibility, network, and lead generation.



We addressed the challenge of stalled growth by aligning her business model, offers, and outreach. The result is a structured system that drives client acquisition, strengthens her positioning as an expert, and supports predictable, sustainable growth.

Business Model Review

We analysed her existing model and drafted a realistic, actionable business plan.

Revenue goals, pricing structures, and offer types (retainer, program-based, tiered) were aligned with her strengths and market demand.

She gained clarity on what to focus on and what not to do, eliminating wasted effort and indecision.

Marketing and Sales Funnel Development

We built a step-by-step marketing and outreach system designed for SMEs.

Focus was on relationship-building, collaboration, and demonstrating value, not just selling.

Messaging was rewritten to clearly articulate outcomes, positioning her as an expert who delivers results.

Clarity Mentorship

Every session included guidance on prioritisation, decision-making, and actionable next steps.

Growth plans were broken into quarterly targets, with weekly actions and accountability.

She developed a clear sense of direction and could make decisions confidently without second-guessing.



We solved the key obstacles of visibility, client attraction, and decision-making uncertainty. Through structured growth plans, marketing, and mentorship, she now operates with clarity, builds relationships effectively, and grows her business with measurable results.

90-Day Growth Plan

We mapped her business objectives into a clear, actionable 90-day roadmap.

Quarterly targets were broken down into weekly actions, providing structure and focus.

Progress tracking and accountability mechanisms ensured consistent momentum and measurable results.

This approach helped her prioritise high-impact activities, avoid distractions, and maintain clarity on what truly drives growth.

Website and Brand Analysis

We reviewed her website and overall brand presence to ensure messaging reflected expertise and delivered value.

Brand positioning and tone were refined to communicate outcomes clearly, building credibility with SMEs.

Content and design adjustments were recommended to strengthen clarity, consistency, and engagement.

The audit highlighted opportunities to reinforce her authority, making her digital presence a tool for attracting and converting ideal clients.

Proposal and Program Analysis

We refined pitch, offer structure and pricing to focus on ROI, outcomes, and proof of impact.

Services were hyper-personalised and collaborative, demonstrating how she could solve specific client problems.

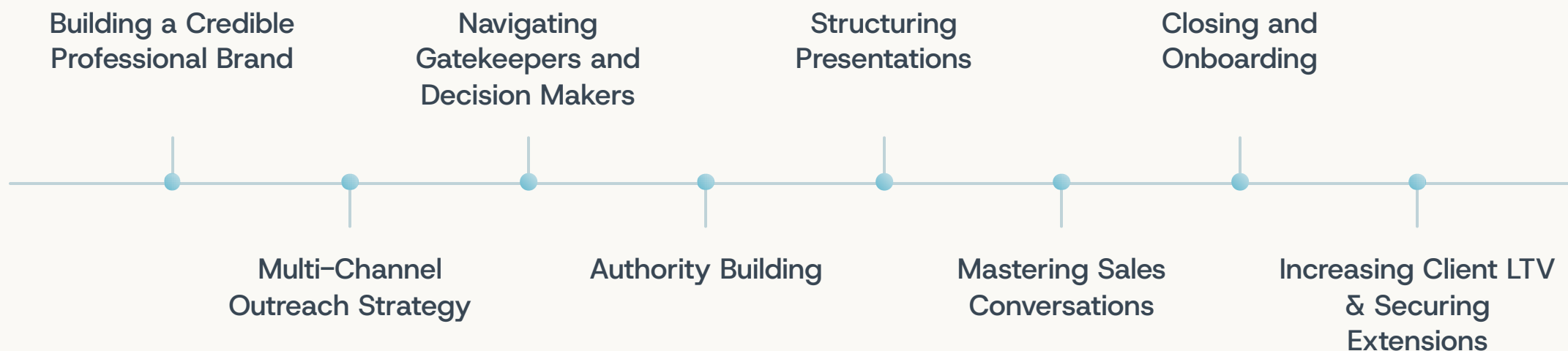
LinkedIn Strategy and Optimization

Strategically built visibility and credibility through developed content, outreach and engagement.

LinkedIn became a platform for network-building, collaboration, and lead generation, complementing other acquisition efforts.

Key Skills Acquired

These skills resolved key business hurdles—generating leads, securing clients, and creating predictable growth—while giving her clarity and confidence in every step.



These outcomes have shifted her business from reactive and uncertain to proactive and strategic, allowing her to focus on growth, impact, and long-term success.

Results

What began as a pivot from piecemeal HR contracts into the B2B consulting space evolved into a high-trust business with growing demand from SME clients. Results were significant and sustainable.

13

Corporate Clients

Over 18 Months

50%+

Extended Engagements

7 of those clients commissioned
extended engagements

☐ Increased Professional Visibility + Recognition

☐ Clarity and Focus

☐ Confidence in Client Conversions

☐ Business Growth

☐ Structured Systems in Place

☐ Stronger Positioning

"We didn't know how much chaos our HR approach was creating until she mapped it all out and helped us clean it up. We're now hiring faster, retaining longer, and sleeping better."

— Founder, Healthcare Group

"She brought structure and sanity to our people processes. What felt overwhelming now feels manageable. Our managers are finally stepping up with confidence."

— COO, Tech Startup

"We used to see HR as admin. Now we see it as a growth enabler. Her workshops were clear, engaging, and sparked lasting changes in how we lead."

— MD, Creative Agency

Internal Transformation and Confidence Growth

Her transformation was as much mindset and operational. She moved from confusion and uncertainty to having a clear, actionable plan and the confidence to execute it.

The combination of niche positioning, value-based messaging, consistent outreach, and structured conversion methods allowed this HR consultant to build a sustainable business foundation. She moved from reactive work to proactive growth: supported by a clear strategy, measurable progress, and increased recognition in her chosen market.



Lessons Learned and Key Takeaways

This engagement revealed several core insights about successfully transitioning into and thriving in the B2B consulting space—especially when working with SME clients who operate with lean teams, tight margins, and high expectations.



SMEs Don't Buy Services — They Buy Solutions to Painful Problems

What resonates is ROI-focused messaging & offers that connect directly to business outcomes such as:

- ☐ Reducing staff turnover (which lowers recruitment costs),
- ☐ Improving leadership skills (which boosts productivity),
- ☐ Resolving conflict (which protects team performance), or
- ☐ Building resilience (which prevents burnout and sick leave).

In the SME world, success is measured in hard metrics—especially EBITDA. Every recommendation, intervention, or proposal must help move the needle on:

- ☐ Cost reduction,
- ☐ Revenue enhancement,
- ☐ Operational efficiency
- ☐ Risk Mitigation



Tailored, Collaborative Solutions Win Over Generic Offers

Generic service menus and pitch-heavy approaches were met with resistance. What worked instead was a collaborative, consultative approach:

- ☐ Listening deeply to understand the root challenges,
- ☐ Designing custom interventions that align with their strategic goals,
- ☐ And positioning the consultant as a problem solver, not a service provider.

This shift changed the dynamic from "vendor" to "trusted advisor."



Strategic Outreach and Persistence Pays Off

Breaking into a new market — especially without prior B2B experience — takes time, strategy, and consistency.

- ☐ Cold outreach alone wasn't enough — it had to be supported by credibility-building activities
- ☐ Follow-up and relationship nurturing proved more important than a perfect first message.
- ☐ The consultant learned to treat sales as service — where persistence is a form of care, not pressure.



The Power of Guidance and Structure

Having a structured client acquisition system made a profound difference. Without it, growth would have remained inconsistent and reactive. The 3-Pillar framework brought:

- ☐ Clarity on who to target,
- ☐ Confidence in what to say, and
- ☐ Capability in how to close.

This process eliminated guesswork, accelerated learning, and provided a repeatable roadmap for growth.

Summary Takeaways

- ☐ SMEs value clarity, outcomes, and results — not complexity or fluff.
- ☐ The right positioning turns expertise into revenue.
- ☐ ROI is the currency of credibility.
- ☐ Consistent action is crucial
- ☐ Structure transforms hustle into a sustainable business.

✓ Advice for HR Consultants

Whether you're an established HR professional looking to pivot into consulting, or you're already running your own practice but struggling to attract SME clients, the following advice stems from real-world lessons and proven strategies.

1

Don't Just "Do HR" — Solve Business-Critical Problems

Too many HR consultants try to sell generic services: "We offer training, compliance, employee engagement." That's not enough. SMEs want to know:

- ☐ How will this impact my bottom line?
- ☐ How will this fix a burning issue affecting my team or growth?

Frame everything through the lens of value creation. Your expertise needs to translate into tangible outcomes like:

- ☐ Improved team performance,
- ☐ Lower staff turnover,
- ☐ Reduced absenteeism,
- ☐ Better leadership alignment, or
- ☐ More efficient hiring processes.

i Tip: Always link your work back to cost, growth, risk, or performance. Speak their language — financial impact and strategic benefit.

3

Adaptability Is a Superpower

Unlike corporate HR roles with predictable processes, SME consulting requires agility. You might wear multiple hats — trainer, coach, strategist, or mediator — often in the same engagement. Be ready to:

- ☐ Adjust your delivery to fit lean teams,
- ☐ Offer both short-term and long-term solutions,
- ☐ Work with founders who may not fully understand HR — but deeply value outcomes.

i Tip: Package your services in ways that make decisions easier — clear pricing, measurable results, and flexible delivery options.

2

Explore Diverse SME Needs — and Stay Curious

The SME sector is incredibly diverse. A one-size-fits-all offer won't work. Take time to:

- ☐ Study different industries (e.g., tech startups vs. manufacturing vs. creative agencies),
- ☐ Understand their operational pressures,
- ☐ And tailor your solutions accordingly.

Be curious. Ask questions. Learn about what keeps business owners up at night.

i Tip: Consider niching down temporarily — become the go-to expert for leadership development in scale-up tech firms or conflict resolution in healthcare SMEs. Start narrow to grow strong.

4

Commit to Continuous Learning and Repositioning

What got you here won't get you there. If you're entering the B2B space:

- ☐ Invest in learning how to sell to business buyers,
- ☐ Understand sales cycles, proposal writing, and ROI storytelling,
- ☐ And keep refining your positioning and message as you get more feedback.

i Tip: The biggest competitive advantage is clarity on your value and confidence in how to communicate it.



Conclusion

The HR consultants who succeed in the SME space aren't always the ones with the most credentials – they're the ones who:

- ☐ Solve the right problems,
- ☐ Communicate with clarity,
- ☐ Show measurable results,



Solve Real Problems

Focus on addressing the specific challenges that SMEs face with their HR needs



Communicate Value

Clearly articulate how your services translate to business outcomes and ROI



Measure Results

Demonstrate the tangible impact of your work through metrics and testimonials



Continuous Learning

Stay committed to improving your business skills alongside your HR expertise

If you're willing to rethink how you position your services – not just what you deliver – you can build a fulfilling, impactful, and financially rewarding consultancy.

What began as a challenge – no corporate contacts, no defined offer, and no clear sales strategy – evolved into a strong, visible consulting brand capable of delivering high-impact HR solutions to growing businesses. The consultant's ability to adapt, position her value effectively, and speak in the language of strategic outcomes played a central role in this success.

Final Thoughts

The Opportunity for HR Consultants in the SME B2B Space

👉 SMEs need expert HR support more than ever — especially as they scale, manage talent pressures, or navigate leadership, wellness, and compliance challenges.

What they don't need are vague services or fluffy promises. What they do pay for are:

Solutions to High-Cost or High-Risk People Problems

Strategic Insights Aligned with Growth Objectives

HR Interventions that Directly Improve Performance

For HR consultants willing to learn the language of business, lead with value, and follow a structured approach to positioning, outreach, and conversion — the opportunity is wide open & underserved.

With the right support, mindset, and systems in place, HR consultants can thrive in the B2B space — not just as service providers, but as trusted strategic partners who drive measurable change.

Business 737

