

Why professionals should consciously build relationships

You will be much more successful when you consciously build relationships, because cultivating relationships:

- *Increases your value to prospects and clients*
- *Enables both you and your clients to grow and develop*
- *Gives your clients a chance to help you*

When you have a relationship, you **become more valuable to prospects and clients**. A relationship allows you to better understand their needs and to meet those needs more often and more fully. A relationship allows you to:

1. Learn more about your client's perceived needs. When a client trusts you, they share what they think they need for their business and for themselves.
2. Better figure out your client's actual needs. When a client trusts you, they tell you what they are trying to achieve, and they tell you more about the circumstances they face. Then you can help them reach their goals and their aspirations.
3. Reduce the client's perceived risk. To build the relationship, you take small actions (valuable to them but not too hard for you) for no charge, to demonstrate your interest in their success. When they have come to believe that you have their success as your goal, they can more easily believe you when you tell them they should buy from you.
4. Minimize damage from their own self-limiting impulses. Most people are ambivalent to some degree about acting in their own interests (that's why they make but don't honor their New Year's resolutions). They tend to stop progress at critical moments – out of purely emotional or psychological reasons, even at major cost to themselves. So they stop themselves from doing something that would benefit them (for example, buying from you), even when doing it is the right move for them. Your relationship positions you to help them overcome these blocks. When you help them buy from you, they benefit.
5. Go beyond transactions to successfully partner to advance you client's interests. Partnering is a conscious commitment by you and your client to ongoing joint work toward shared goals. Successful partnering requires the creativity to find win-win ideas and the resilience to deal with changes of circumstances and people. Having a strong relationship makes creativity easier and resilience possible; a strong relationship is a prerequisite for the kind of creative partnering that can create great value for your client (and for you).

A relationship provides a chance for both you (and your organization) and for your client (and their organization) to grow and develop. As you learn more about the client's needs and aspirations, you will stretch to meet them (especially if no one else can meet them). So you'll become more capable – and you'll use those capabilities with other clients too. As you help your client achieve their goals, they will become more capable. So you and your client will be helping each of you become what you right now can barely imagine.

Over time, **a relationship provides your client an opportunity to help you**. Good relationships over time become mutual relationships, and a client wants to help you. Over time, the client comes to realize that they have a stake in your success. So they mention you positively to others, who also may become clients. Or they warn you early about

hidden political dangers. The relationship is much less one between a buyer and a seller, but rather two people (and organizations) working together for mutual benefit – with the purchase of products or services as just one element of the interaction.

Something to try this week

Identify a situation where you have been trying to emphasize with a client or prospect the value that you offer if they would buy your product or services (focus has been on how you can help them). Consider asking the person to spend 5 - 10 minutes with you telling you what they are trying to accomplish **while you listen** (focus will be on what they need -- from you or someone else). It's a way of beginning a relationship.

What are these tips?

These monthly tips are intended to help professionals create more business and enjoy their work more. We focus on how to start relationships, how to build relationships, and how to convert those relationships into sales.

Can you answer my questions about business development?

We'd be delighted. Please send any questions you have to questions@bridgewellpartners.com and we'll do our best to help you out. Or call us at 312-863-3489. Or visit www.bridgewellpartners.com to learn more about how we coach and train professionals to be better at business development and to enjoy it more.