

## Starting to understand your side of the equation

Last month, we looked at the participants on the client or prospect's side you work with (or through) to deliver value for the client. This month, let's look at the people on your side. Even if you are a solo practitioner, you have other people who can be on your side (and you need to make them visible to yourself and to others).



You succeed with clients by delivering value for them. You can deliver more value when you leverage the talents and capabilities of others in solving their problem or in broadening their thinking.

### Solving prospects'/clients' problem

When a prospect shares a problem, it's a great opportunity. Now you just have to help them solve it. Although you might want to leap in, it's good to first ask, "Who are the right resources to respond to this challenge?" Maybe you should want to call in other people who are more knowledgeable, and get out of their way.

You may have colleagues in your firm who match the need. Invite them in, even if you don't know them that well (unless you really don't trust your firm's culture and hiring process). There's some risk if that colleagues won't live up to your expectations, but great rewards if they can do much more for your client on your behalf than you could.

If you are a solo practitioner or in a small firm, you can get a similar ability to leverage others by cultivating a network of allies. Know a list of good resources so you can help people solve their problems outside your specialty. When you meet potential prospects, you'll hear about their issues. If you can help them somehow with a problem, they'll respond, as blogger Clay Shirky put it, by "just get[ting] a good feeling next time they get an email from you." And if you refer prospects or clients to other capable professionals who are wise enough to reciprocate when they can, you will be rewarded over time with referrals from those professionals.

Bringing in others works well, once you decide it's a legitimate act. Most professionals find it easier to shamelessly promote someone else than to mildly promote themselves. It feels like bragging to say that "I am the world's greatest X," but much easier to say "my partner is incredibly knowledgeable about Y, and at applying it in situations like yours."

### **Broadening clients'/prospects' thinking**

You can also profitably engage others to help you strengthen your connection with a prospect or client, even when there's no pressing problem, by systematically introducing clients and prospects to people in your own network.

Here's a great example. A consultant at a big consulting firm advised the CEO of an Australian-based multinational, and did projects in Australia and occasionally elsewhere for the company. The client traveled a lot. The consultant tracked the CEO's travel schedule, and arranged for the CEO to meet a consulting firm colleague for dinner whenever the CEO was overseas. The dinners were not about projects; instead, they were designed, with the client's consent, as conversations about business in different parts of the world. As a result, over time, the client felt (because it was true) that he knew 50 partners from the firm. As another result, no other consulting firm had much chance to make inroads.

Even as a solo practitioner or member of a small firm, you can introduce your clients and prospects to other people they should know. You may not know people around the world, but you know people certain clients or prospects should meet. You can make introductions even when there is not a pressing issue. Share your connections with your clients and prospects as a way of providing extra value for them. Then clients and prospects will turn to you when they need what you do because you'll have already proven you have their interests at heart.

### **Something to try this week**

Think about who else (from your own organization or from elsewhere) you can introduce to your biggest current client. Then do it.

At a prospect you'd like to serve, figure out how you can bring in some extra resources to provide value and deepen your 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](mailto: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](http://www.bridgewellpartners.com) to learn more about how we coach and train professionals to be better at business development and to enjoy it more.