

Presenting Your Best Self:

Tips for Successful Client Relationship Building

Networking, delivering presentations, and writing emails- what do they all have in common? They all involve you and they all involve an audience. Can you recall those times at a networking event where you had a hard time connecting with someone, even perhaps the very person you wanted to meet? Or a time when you delivered a presentation and you didn't get the buy-in from your audience that you envisioned? These moments can feel uncomfortable and can even negatively impact a potential client engagement.

As professionals, our tendency is to want to communicate information that is more relevant to us than to our audience. Our comfort zone resides in sharing ideas that are a priority for us because we are most confident about our own thoughts and experiences. However, when we start to focus our attention on our audience and their interests, we are more likely to build a connection and influence them more effectively. You can think about the following questions to help focus more on your audience or clients in any number of settings: What are their interests? What are their business issues? Can you help this person in any way? Answering to your audiences' needs can make you a hero in their eyes!

Networking

At a recent networking event I attended, I didn't know anyone in the room. I was seated at a table with seven strangers. Does this scenario sound familiar to you? Of course I felt a bit uncertain about how things would go. The first thing I did, though, was to listen to the conversations going on at the table. One woman was talking about buying a new home. Another person was sharing about opening his business in North Kingstown. After a while, I asked questions to learn more about their respective topics. Questions that begin with "what," "how," and "why" are open-ended and give a person a chance to share more. It's like a magic wand- simply by asking relevant questions you can get a person to talk more with you! When I found an opportunity to respond to the individuals at my table, I found myself engaged in conversation. Try this approach the next time you are meeting new people!

Presenting and Public Speaking

Similar to networking, delivering an impactful presentation will more likely occur if you focus on your audience. Once you craft your main message or your main recommendation, think about the benefits your audience will receive should they follow your ideas. It can be challenging to understand the mindset of your audience. Doing some basic analysis can help.

Consider the following questions: Who is your audience? What do they need to know? How do they like to receive information? If you are delivering to an international group, you should consider cultural factors as well. For instance, I have worked with a group that needed to present to a Japanese team within their company. By understanding the Japanese business etiquette and the type of information they wanted to see in the presentation, the US group was able to generate agreement faster because they adapted to the preferences of their Japanese colleagues.

Emails and Reports

Writing emails that your colleagues and clients want to read also means that you need to incorporate information that is important to them. Watch out for the 'data dump' tendency, which is to write a lot of detail that is simply not significant to your reader. They don't need to know everything you know about a topic; they only need to know the information that is going to help them in their roles. Also, create a clear main message in the first paragraph so your reader knows what to expect from you in the email. Listing items in order of importance throughout the body of the email will also help ensure that your audience reads the most significant things first.

Being authentic and audience-focused with your communication can really enhance your networking experiences and your client relationships. Since we are all communicating on a daily basis, there are plenty of opportunities to make some adjustments with your approach and notice how people enjoy engaging with you!