

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Part 1: Clients

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Something that has kept Clientek successful, producing value for our clients over more than 28 years, has been our focus on continuous learning. We are constantly trying to improve how we do things, what our client's value, how to retain key employees, and how to give back to our community. Some of that comes from active research, formal training, and other educational resources. But much of it comes from more interesting sources. Over my next four posts I will write about each, beginning with "clients".

Professional service firms offer specific kinds of assistance based on specific areas of expertise. Accounting, finance, law, human resources, payroll, and information technology are a few. Each firm concentrates on delivering those services via skilled practitioners. It might seem counterintuitive to think of clients as a source of learning. After all, aren't we bringing the experts?

I know that in nearly every engagement we learn as much from our clients as they do from us. Not just the details of their specific business challenges, fascinating as they are, but about better ways to run our own organization. Here are some examples:

- **Attention to detail.** I am frequently amazed at the ways our clients find to pay close attention to detail. I come away from discussions thinking "I hope we are doing that well". The claim that large organizations are ponderous and slow moving has never been proven by our clients. While those large organizations might be slow to change, they are not slow to deliver value to their customers. Take a look at your own deliverables. Are you proud of every page, every result? If you are paying attention to detail, then that's an easy answer.
- **Respect for individuals.** Another big-company myth: that employees are just numbered cogs –



on great gears of industry. Can you honestly say that you respect each employee, their ways of achieving high performance, and their needs in the workplace? We have clients who have shown us, over and over, many ways to achieve that and to maintain it. Look at your favorite customer. How do they treat their employees? Do you do as well? Achieving the nirvana of a mutually trusting business relationship is on your shoulders and starts with you. To be trusted, trust.

- **Passion for the mission.** I will admit that this was one area in which I was sure our company couldn't learn a lesson from anyone. Of course we love what we do. But "loving what you do" is not exactly the same as "passion for the mission". I was taught that years ago by a favorite client and received a very welcome reminder quite recently. What is your mission? How much passion do you display? Love your job, for sure, but love your mission just as much.
- **Giving back.** While I have always believed that it is important for companies to give back to their communities, I've been shown what that really means by several clients. In short, give back because you truly believe, and do it in a way that matters to the recipient. Give back purposefully.

This list could be much longer, but these are some highlights sparked by recent experiences. I've come to love these opportunities for insight, new points of view, and improvements Clientek can make to itself...sparked by the things our clients do so well.