

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Part 3: Trusting

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Trusting


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Over the past few weeks, I've been sharing some observations sparked by a compliment paid to Clientek by one of our clients: "What I like about Clientek is that you have people as clients, not companies." My first two posts covered "[caring](#)", then "[listening](#)". In this, part three, "trusting".

Every professional services organization eagerly seeks that moment when the client truly trusts them. We often talk about becoming a trusted advisor. Any kind of sustainable relationship must be anchored by shared trust. How do you get there? Simple. To be trusted, you must trust. Until you clearly exhibit trust, demonstrating that you are willing to take that first step, you cannot expect it in return.

Let us review some of the opportunities to demonstrate trust so that you can get the process of establishing mutual trust started on the right foot.

- 1) *In your pitch.* I previously wrote about [listening](#). That becomes an important key when beginning the establishment of trust. Trust your prospect to open-up to you about what they are looking for. Listen closely and do not jump to second guessing. Reveal details about yourself and your organization. Give away some valuable information, insights, or advice for free. If you have things to hide, rethink your business model.
- 2) *In your proposal.* Leave small-print details out of your proposal. Don't put an expiration date, conditions, or exclusions in your presentation. Always provide enough information to allow your prospect to make an informed decision. Don't assume they will steal all your best ideas only to "get them done in house". Teasers and other hints at future value are fine – a normal part of the sale process. Trust you will be taken seriously.

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- 3) *In negotiation.* Exhibiting trust during negotiation is the hardest and most important of these. You must remember that everyone wants a good deal; getting great value for their money and risk, just as you do. Try to remember that almost no one genuinely wants a one-sided arrangement. When you hear things that sound unfair, assume that you are misunderstanding the intent. Most likely, that is the case. Don't forget to [listen](#).
 - 4) *In your contract.* Contract language is unfriendly by nature, but it should not be insulting nor displaying clear assumptions about evil intents. There are no evil intents. If language that protects your organization makes sense, then, why not make it reciprocal? It probably makes sense to your client as well. If you wish to bind your client to certain terms, be sure you would be willing to be bound as well. Make your contract fair, balanced, and clear.
 - 5) *In your continued conversations.* Throughout the course of the engagement you will have many chances to demonstrate trust. Transparency is key. If problems arise, address them quickly, efficiently, and with complete transparency. Your client cares about the outcome, [you must do the same](#) in clear and unambiguous ways. Report status often and be completely honest.

Achieving the nirvana of a mutually trusting business relationship is on your shoulders and starts with you. To be trusted, trust.