



Relationship Management



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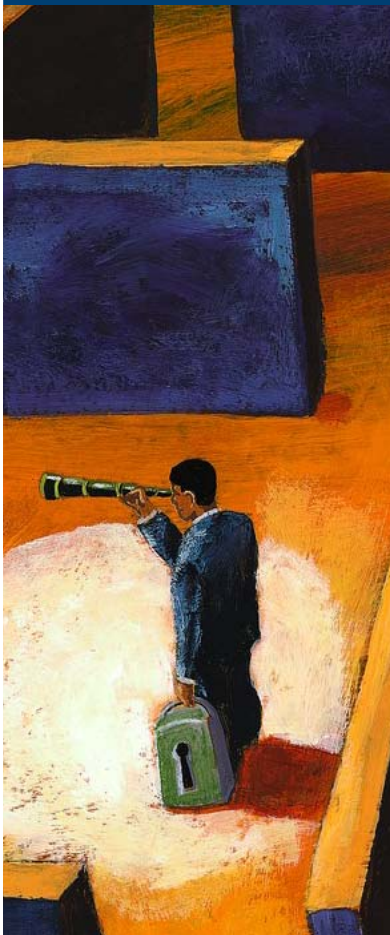
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Relationship Management

Executives buy, not because they understand, but because they feel understood. Smart sellers develop and execute proactive and deliberate strategies for building customer relationships that they can sustain and leverage.

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ABOUT CPS. Critical Path Strategies helps clients improve the effectiveness of their sales organization. Our portfolio of services addresses the strategic, organizational, and relationship issues that impact selling performance. Our powerful processes enable clients to transform their sales culture, enhance their competitive position, and accomplish strategic business initiatives. Our clients—emerging companies and members of the Fortune 500 alike—typically measure 100 to 500 times their CPS investment in revenue growth.



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Multinational
Enterprise Software
Solutions Provider



Account Team Applies Strategic Processes and Achieves 154 Percent of Extraordinary Sales Objective

To strengthen its executive-level customer and prospect relationships, this multinational software company made a strategic decision to align a myriad of sales cultures and business processes into a streamlined account management model. Company executives looked to Critical Path Strategies (CPS) to facilitate a series of process-based account planning sessions, and by the end of the year, more than 200 sales professionals had developed clearly defined milestones, value propositions, and strategic action plans designed to expand senior-level relationships within key accounts.

“The CPS planning process is the silver bullet that all sales reps hope for. It’s where the magic is.”

- Account Team Leader

With the sales teams better prepared to position the company as a thought leader in customer-aligned business solutions, the account representatives estimated that their ability to close a Tier 1 deal could jump from 48 percent to approximately 70 percent. The next step was to execute these new long-term action plans, fill the sales pipeline with qualified leads, and make the estimated close rates a reality.

Extraordinary goals yield confidence and executable plans. During the CPS-facilitated planning sessions, account teams were challenged to establish an “extraordinary goal” for each key account. For the team supporting an existing customer—a national telecommunications company—this required a huge commitment. “The sales quota for this account was aggressive already, and the thought of making the goal even larger was daunting,” said the team leader. “However, the process of setting an extraordinary goal—one that we couldn’t clearly see how to make happen—got the team’s creative juices flowing. Instead of focusing on what we *couldn’t* do, we started focusing on what we *could* do.”

Once the goal was set, CPS led the account team through a process that helped them identify the major opportunities that would contribute to the attainment of the goal. An important outcome of the planning process was the realization that although the team and the company had delivered first-rate customer support throughout the life of the account, the team did not have a solid grasp on the customer’s critical success factors.

“As we debated what we believed to be the driving force behind our customer’s business goals, we determined that our first step was to identify an executive-level IT decision maker who could provide insight into the

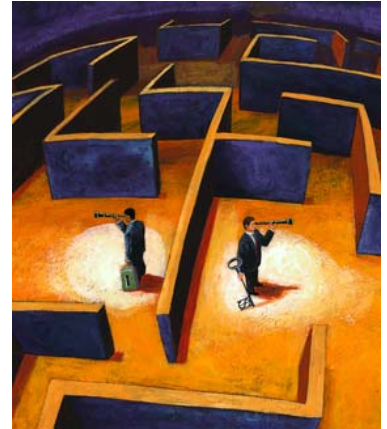


It was a win-win for everyone and we ended the sales year at 154% of our objective.”

company’s critical success factors,” said the team leader. “We immediately went about creating a relationship strategy that would help us understand the company leadership’s motivation.”

The executive they identified happened to be a man with vision who introduced the mantra of “cost, service, leverage” throughout the IT organization. What better person to explain the company’s business drivers? What began as an overwhelming experience was transformed into a series of logical, documented steps.

Account team treats the customer like a valued team member. With a plan in hand, the account team contacted the customer executive and told him that the team wanted to better understand his critical success factors in order to align its resources more effectively and become a true strategic partner. Intrigued by the notion that a vendor was interested in helping him solve the problems that kept him up at night, he agreed to the meeting. “We wanted his issues to be our issues,” said the team leader. “We had an open and honest discussion about his expectations and what it takes to be a strategic partner. This conversation resulted in his personal commitment to bring together our account team and his directors for a discovery session.”



During the first meeting, the account team listened to presentations outlining the responsibilities of each director and their most pressing, business-critical issues. The account team digested the information and invited the customer to attend a personalized briefing to outline areas where they believed they could serve as a true value-added partner. The team’s focus was on the customer’s business problems rather than product features and benefits. At the end of the session, the account team and customer representatives identified a list of Best Next Actions to help prioritize and activate the account team around a project of most value to the customer.

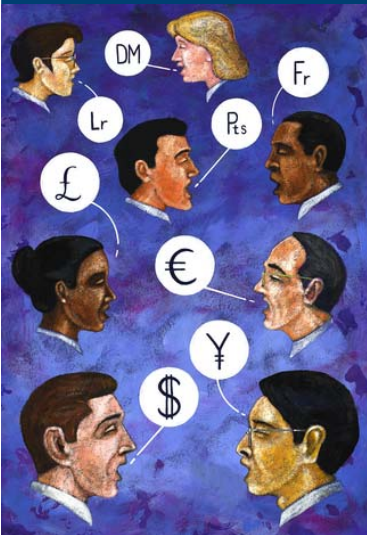
Changing a business culture from a point-product focus to a business-problem focus is challenging, but the account team worked hard to keep all team members focused on the overall enterprise view of the customer’s needs. Ultimately, the vision they created was customer based and presented as a true value statement that aligned with the company’s capabilities.

“Our account team was awarded a contract that contributed significantly to our extraordinary goal,” said the team leader. “Although this wasn’t the only deal closed at this key account, it was the first one that was created based on the account team’s ability to identify a key customer executive and follow a deliberate process to nurture a new, stronger customer relationship. The team members are ecstatic that they created a new opportunity and transformed it into a tangible, measurable value for the customer and for the company. It was a win-win for everyone and we ended the sales year at 154% of our objective.”



Customer Conversations

by Mary Ann Costello



“The quality of conversations is what moves relationships forward.”

People buy from people they know, they like, and they trust. Having high-value, customer-focused conversations plays a key role in building intentional relationships with customers that foster respect and trust. As you gain a customer’s respect and trust, you earn the right to compete for his or her business. By continuing these customer-first conversations over time, you might not have to compete for the business—because you will have earned it.

What are customer conversations? They are the interactions that we have with our customers—the phone calls, e-mails, in-person meetings, letters, proposals, and even marketing materials. There are several elements to the conversation:

Opening. How will you gain the customer’s attention in the first 15 seconds of the conversation? What value statement will you use to show that the conversation will be focused on the customer’s business issues? How will you get the customer to engage with you throughout the conversation?

Questioning. What questions will you ask during the conversation? Are they focused on the customer? Are they open-ended so the customer can talk? Are they aimed at finding out what the customer does, and “drilling down” to learn how you can help him or her do it better? Do you ask questions about the customer’s customers? Do they prompt the customer to talk about his or her business and customers?

Listening. Listening skills are perhaps the most important skills an individual can possess when it comes to having customer conversations. Are you listening to the customer with the intent to learn? Or are you “listening” while formulating what you will say next? Or do you talk before your customer stops talking? If you are formulating what you will say next, you might miss important information the customer is sharing—information that could be pivotal to your winning his or her respect, trust and, eventually, business. If you talk before the customer is finished speaking, not only are you missing valuable information but you are also projecting certain messages: “Nothing you say is important to me.” “I am more important than you.” “I don’t respect you or your business.” Think about that scenario—would you buy anything from you?



Closing. What Best Next Actions should you take as a result of the call? Have you summarized them and gained the customer's agreement that you are on target? Are there any Best Next Actions that the customer must take? Have you reviewed them and gained the customer's agreement that he or she will take responsibility to get them done? Have you set up your next conversation?



In his book, *Building a Successful Selling Organization*, Art Wilson describes the importance of getting crisper in conversations with our customers. One way to take the conversations to an extraordinary level is by helping our customers clarify their value proposition to their customers. This involves articulating how their customers validate value, how they measure it, and how they recognize it. When you get your customers engaged in this type of a conversation, they will be positive and enthusiastic about their business. They will also share things that might not be quite “perfect” as well.

Customer conversations help you learn and align to their most important issues. As you listen to what your customer is saying about his or her customers and how they define value, build your own knowledge base to help develop an extraordinary value proposition for your customer. When it is appropriate, you can begin talking about your own value proposition in terms of their business and the value they bring to their customers.

Typically, when you get customers engaged in a conversation about their customers, they get excited and it creates a sense of urgency in their minds. They are then much more open to listening to your ideas about what you can do for their company and their customers.

Make every encounter with your customers about them. Engaging them in customer-first conversations will endear you to them. These conversations demonstrate interest in what they are doing and the value they are trying to deliver to their customers. As you listen with the intent to learn, you are able to align your conversations and your value to what is most important to them—growing your relationships to a higher level.

Personal Differentiation: The Competitive Advantage

by Peggy Besand



***“It’s not about the price;
it’s about the people.”***

Your customers continue to consolidate suppliers, squeeze costs, and demand high value for every nickel they spend. Individual companies, and industries alike, increasingly commoditize, using price as the deciding factor in purchasing decisions. How can you differentiate yourself and your company from the hundreds of suppliers who want to be your customers’ partner to mitigate competing on price? Change the focus of the lens with which you view your customers from product, price, and commodity to value, return, and business relationships.

The total customer experience can vary significantly. Everyone tries to differentiate their offering with features but if those features don’t create value, the common denominator is price. “Not so” say the best of the best. These salespeople differentiate on the personal level, focusing on what their customers value at every point of contact—piece-by-piece, call-by-call, and experience-by-experience. Their conversations are wrapped around the real-time needs and success of their customer, his company, and *his* company’s customers.

Effective salespeople challenge their customer, offer creative solutions, or serve as a change agent—the end game is to make the customer successful and elevate him in the eyes of his customers. This holistic orientation—as trusted partner, ally, expert—helps them stand out from the competition. In this total customer experience, the perceived ability to contribute to customer success trumps price.

We have interviewed hundreds of our clients’ customers. They have high expectations of prospective partners. Customers that seek out high-performing partners exponentially expand their talent pool by getting what they need from selected high-value suppliers. They look to these suppliers as a value resource, with value encompassed in any or all of the following ways.

- Understand me – Be a world-class listener. Listen every day because things change. Be there.
- Be my focal point – to the outside world and to others in my organization.
- Understand my alternatives – I have responsibilities to senior management and to others in my organization. Understand my constraints. Help me select the best alternatives.
- Make me a winner – Make everyone on my team a winner. Be an important member of my team.





Consistently successful salespeople make a practice of providing extra value to the customer outside the conversations of selling. These actions differentiate the seller as someone who can consult and collaborate with the customer on ways to succeed. Here are some examples of

- Solve something small incredibly well
- Facilitate a planning session
- Be a recruiting resource
- Introduce business prospects
- Provide referrals
- Bring trade information on topics of interest
- Offer perspectives and recommendations
- Mentor customer's staff
- Invite customer to present to your peers at conferences
- Provide competitive analysis
- Provide access to insights from your R&D department
- Help with problems unrelated to business
- Offer insights about what other successful clients are doing for their

Moving forward with consistent targeted actions that respond to these needs resonates with your customers, differentiates you from your competition, and results in a tight cycle of reciprocal value for both parties.

“Executives buy, not because they understand, but because they feel understood.” How would one of your loyal customers respond to criticism for not choosing a cheaper alternative to your offering? Would they point to your ability to create value? To your creativity? To your great team of sales and marketing executives? These are the types of responses successful salespeople generate from their customers.

- The way he put his solution together specifically for us is what sets him apart. His solution will help us substantially improve our competitive position and reduce our risk.
- She will help us implement the key business initiative six months early, which more than covers the cost of her products and services and helps us rapidly go to market.
- Because of significant contributions he has made in the past, he has become a key part of our leadership team. He gets it. I can count on him.
- We cannot afford to lose her, nor for her to not be profitable. She is critical to our future.

Loyal customers will call such a seller when they have an unmet need; they will buy at a fair price, even if it is higher than alternatives. They will speak highly of the seller and the seller's company because they represent significant, quantifiable value. As the value of the relationship and the value of the offerings become more intertwined, possibilities open up for even greater collaboration. The customer can justify buying an offering at a higher price because of the additional, quantifiable value that the seller brings to the table. The seller has built a bank of institutional knowledge as well as intellectual capital—“he understands our business, our people, our process.”

So whether you are responding to a customer problem, developing and executing an account strategy, preparing for and executing a sales call, or delivering and implementing products and services, remember to always wrap yourself around the customer to cultivate truly high value.

Read more about how to differentiate yourself in *Building a Successful Selling Organization* written by CPS partners Art Wilson, Mike Morton, Mike Higgins, and Ken Evans. Please visit www.cpstrategy.com.





Serving Two Masters—Selling to Procurement and Operations

by Ken Evans

In the last decade, salespeople who traditionally sold their products or services to operations or line-of-business executives have discovered that their clients' decision-making organization map has changed. Their clients' procurement organizations have taken a prominent role in the buying process, when in earlier days they were a contractual rubber stamp. Today, effective salespeople must deal with both procurement and operations.

We have run thousands of workshops for sales teams. When we ask them to post their biggest challenges, a consistent response is, "Purchasing/procurement departments do not recognize the value we bring." Exploring these best practices to help you serve both the operational and procurement executives will strengthen your selling efforts.

What caused this shift? What are the objectives of the procurement team and how do they differ from the operations team? How do the best salespeople deal with this situation?

First, let's explore the shift. How has procurement assumed this more powerful role? In the past, and especially in strong business cycles, buying decisions for consumables were the primary purview of the procurement team. They handled commodities or inventory. Today, they are keenly involved in capex, significant solution purchases, outsourcing, and alliance arrangements. Three factors have driven this shift.

1. First of all, tough times. *Tough business cycles drive budget scrutiny by CFOs.* CFOs drive up authority levels, and personally approve purchasing transactions that had been made "in the field." They increase the authority of the procurement staff, making them a control point for spending.
2. Shared services designed to streamline and reduce organizational costs often centralize the procurement organization, increasing its role as an organization-wide buyer. *Procurement executives* have been put in place *with mandates* from CFOs *to drive down costs.*
3. The A.T. Kearneys and McKinseys of the world created a compelling value proposition for CFOs and procurement executives around *centralized purchasing as a cost-improvement strategy.* They helped implement strategic sourcing programs and processes, often guaranteeing cost savings. It worked. The processes and metrics they put in place drove demonstrable cost savings.

Increasingly, procurement teams play a larger role in the decision process. But the gap is wide between the procurement team and the operations team. Clearly, the priorities and emphases of the two organizations are different. Procurement considers a narrower range of factors based on efficiency and "best price" to reach a buying decision. The operations team considers any number of important factors that impact profits, or "prosperity of the business," one being price. As salespeople, we sell value to the operations team, but their perspective and definition of value is different than the purchasing team's. It is our job to bridge this gap.



Different mandates result in different approaches by procurement and line-of-business operations groups, but each have the same ultimate goal—getting the best deal for their company.

	Procurement	Line of Business
Metric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Unit” price reduction ▪ Cost of procurement ▪ Volume discounts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gross profit per unit ▪ Asset utilization ▪ Days on hand
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consolidate suppliers ▪ Leverage chosen few ▪ Commoditize 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growth ▪ Continuous improvement ▪ Innovation
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contract compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Six Sigma
Greatest Fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Criticism for not getting the best price 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Criticism for “missing the market,” delivering a non-competitive product or service, not making a profit
Risk Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RFP process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partner for creative solutions

Now, let’s talk about how to do this. First, we must assess and appropriately include the procurement team as part of our selling strategy. Where are they on the organizational map? What message needs to be delivered so they view us and our offerings positively, not just for the business, but for them? How can we most effectively deliver that message?

Next, we need to acknowledge that procurement people have a job to do, and often have to deliver on mandates from the CFO to drive validated savings. They are looking for creative ways to meet those mandates. These mandates are often baked into the CFO’s and the CPO’s bonus objectives. They want to be successful and recognized for their accomplishments. What can we, our processes, our company, our partners do to demonstrably help them? How might we make their team winners?

The procurement team is rarely at the business strategy table. The operations team often purposefully leaves them out of the loop. Procurement is often the last to know. The business team rarely acknowledges them for their proactive contributions. They are viewed as the quintessential “Dr. No.”

Top salespeople view the procurement organization as an opportunity waiting to be exploited and an audience waiting to be taught. Why not involve procurement in the process early on? Instead of their reliance on the traditional RFP, why not educate them about the value of a “holistic” approach to purchasing? If we can align operations and procurement early in the selling process, the procurement team can be part of the solution rather than just provide compliance oversight.

Too often, this makes us uncomfortable as salespeople. Frequently, we foster arm’s-length, don’t-ask, don’t-tell relationships with the procurement organization. As a result, we do not intentionally build trusting relationships with them. We hope our operations champion will carry the day. Today, this is a high-risk approach. Our best-practices documentation indicates that the selling team is more successful serving two masters.

Enabling win-win-win through effective relationship building and communication of value is the secret. There really is something in it for everyone. It is knowing what that value is and communicating it like our deal depends on it...because it does.





Complex solutions provided by a complex, matrixed organization are tough to deliver. These selling challenges can be addressed through best practices based on TRUST.

Managing in a Matrixed Environment

Managing across multiple businesses is a necessary process in today's business environment. We no longer have the luxury of having employees at our beck and call with enough manpower to accomplish all we have on our plate. We must not only reach out and use resources from other departments within our own company, but many times our reach must extend to resources of our business partners and customers. In this age of matrixed environments, how do we morph a diverse and dispersed group of professionals into a productive and collegial team willing to work together efficiently and effectively to collectively deliver client value?

Organizations may have evolved from vertical hierarchies to collaborative, interdependent entities, but, unfortunately, this does not mean that everyone eagerly comes together when called to serve on a special project. There are some critical factors that must be taken into account and specific issues to be addressed when managing teams of people across a matrix, especially when these teams are dependent upon other teams or lines of business.

- **Secure buy-in.** Describe context before content, strategy before execution. Provide direction and shape meaning in ways that guide team efforts and create context for action and success. Articulate value that merits the respect and willingness of your team to engage.
- **Understand responsibility of each line of business.** Avoid internal deadlocks by carefully defining critical roles and responsibilities. Integrate work across functions and manage complexity.
- **Understand where this project is in relation to others in various lines of business.** Remain vigilant about other corporate initiatives and the pressure they may exert on your project or your team members. Be sensitive to time demands placed on your team members. Remember, *customer-first* is the focus of high-performing businesses.
- **Demonstrate benefit of participation to team/line of business.** Convey to your "hand-selected" team that they have been repurposed in a strengthened organization to achieve a company-critical goal. Make sure that you and each of them know what's in this for them. Grant them the freedom, resources, and authority to do the right job.
- **Build trust among team/lines of business.** Cultivate a broad-based approach and encourage lively debate and discussion to unleash creativity residing within your team/line of business. Allow them to be innovative by creating an environment that fosters innovation.
- **Recognize team/line of business for work done.** Shower them with care and respect. Illuminate and guide them. Recognize and enable resources. Credit everyone else for doing a great job, and you credit yourself.





At the risk of being simplistic, with these six points thoroughly addressed, it is amazing what can be accomplished when you untangle an organization and focus on what needs to be achieved. Like musicians in a symphony, success demands that your team collaborate to avoid highlighting one capability at the expense of others, or of their overall performance. Each team member knows the impact of his or her actions on the others. With successful project completion, they have turned aspiration into achievement. Their personal stock has gone up, as everyone wants to work with a winner. Companies migrate to higher levels of performance when they overcome organizational boundaries and interconnect various groups. The prevailing culture becomes less about “my” and more about “our” contribution to our customers. Ultimately, the objective is to make people care more about what is accomplished than getting credit for accomplishing it. Maybe Tommy Lasorda, former manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, said it best: “My job is to make these great players care more about the name on the front of the jersey than the one on the back.”

CPS’ TRUST-based selling model prescribes a discipline for bringing together key representatives from across multiple organizations.

Operating effectively with matrixed organizations is tough. In fact, one executive, when asked why we had matrixed organizations said, “There is no other choice.” Given that fact, the opportunity to create extraordinary value is limitless with this organizational model.

T echnology	Select the right people, usually a mix of horizontal and vertical representatives sprinkled with other key functional groups. Ensure that each member is well-suited for the project at hand, and that there is minimal, if any, overlap between team member skills and responsibilities. Pick a team “owner.” At the end of the day, someone needs to be accountable.
R elationship	Create ways for team members to build relationships with each other. Convey that their collaboration will lead to significantly enhanced team performance.
U tility	Ensure that the teamwork is seamless, sustainable, and scalable so that each project does not become a Mount Everest. Create organized, disciplined processes for optimum decision-making which clearly focuses each team member on creating value for the customer. Provide a structure to manage commitments.
S trategy	Articulate clear goals and expectations. Provide a clear understanding of why each member was chosen to be a part of the team and what each member is expected to do. Clearly define the scope of the project so that everyone understands the beginning and end to enable successful project completion and, if necessary, implementation.
T eam	Help everyone feel that team success is dependent upon each member of the team. Work will move smoother and faster if everyone works together toward a common goal rather than any one individual working for their personal glory. Communicate information about team progress clearly and regularly across the organizations represented by the team members.



Trusting Your Selling Style to Your Client's Buying Style

by Cathy Groos



Selling is uniquely dependent on the existence and quality of relationships. The building up or breaking down of any sale can be a result of not our product or service, but rather the building up or breaking down of our human interactions and the trust our client has in us.

Pro-actively aligning and adapting your selling style to the buying style of your client can have a tremendous positive impact on your client's trust in your business relationship. So how do you "emphasize the similarities between you and the customer?" How do you pro-actively align and adapt your selling style to the buying style of your client? CPS recommends a 3-step process that demonstrates to your customer that their interests and success are of the utmost importance to you.

Step 1. *Commit to developing a pro-active Relationship Strategy with the goal of Trust.* As you might surmise, successful client relationships rarely occur by chance. A pro-active, well thought out, documented strategy for Relationship Goals is a critical element of obtaining your sales goals. In other words, "Plan your work, work your plan."

Trust = Credibility + Reliability + Intimacy ⁽¹⁾
Self-Orientation

With "trust" as a client relationship goal, an excellent thought process to consider is illustrated in The "Trust Quotient" as defined in *The Trusted Advisor*. Your Relationship Strategy should optimally include tactics for maximizing your credibility, reliability and intimacy, while minimizing self-orientation.

Step 2. *Utilize the DiSC® Classic Personal Profile System^{®(2)} approach to build trust by aligning and adapting your selling style to the client's buying style.* The purpose of the personal profile is to help you understand yourself and others. By having a framework for looking at human behavior, you can better understand your and your client's preferred "style" of doing business and align and adapt your style to your client's style. When focusing on your client's needs and preferences, you inherently minimize your "self-orientation." Interactions that you design to align and adapt your selling style to your client's buying style will enhance your client's perception of your credibility, reliability, and intimacy. The DiSC Classic Personal Profile System defines the four basic personal styles as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| (D) Dominant | Likes challenge, bottom-line results, makes quick decisions, takes control |
| (i) Influencing | Likes personal interaction, fun loving, likes recognition, are "people persons" |
| (S) Steady | Enjoys stability, good listener, very calming |
| (C) Conscientious | Has standardized systems, critical thinker, pays attention to details and facts |



“The toughest thing about the power of trust is that it’s very difficult to build and very easy to destroy. The essence of trust-building is to emphasize the similarities between you and the customer.”

- Thomas J. Watson,
IBM Corporation

CPS research of best practices shows that success is a result of knowing *your* preferred approach and recognizing *your client’s* preferred buying style and needs and adapting your behavior accordingly. We naturally operate from our “comfort zone,” but must realize that it is critically important to take intentional steps to leap out of our comfort zone and adapt to our client’s preferred way of doing business. This leap often can only take place through a conscience, intentional practice. Ultimately, you create an environment of a trusted relationship with your client that leads to mutual extraordinary success.

Step 3. Execute with relationship call planning and review. With a Relationship Strategy in place that utilizes DiSC to provide insights into behaviors and how to align behaviors for success, *execution* on that strategy is all that remains.

Before Each Call

- Review your Relationship Strategy and goals.
- Plan “Best Next Actions” to be executed during the client call that will align/adapt your words and actions to the style of the client. Be specific, and remember that your words and actions may vary greatly based on what your style is relative to your client’s.

After Each Call

- Review how well you executed on your Relationship Strategy and tactics.
 - > What worked?
 - > How well do you think you read your client’s “style”?
 - > What didn’t seem to align?
 - > What adjustments will you make next time?

The DiSC Personal Style Guidelines table below provides insights on how various styles interact and attain results.

DiSC Personal Style Guidelines				
Consider When	(D) Dominant	(i) Influencing	(S) Steady	(C) Conscientious
Planning for the interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their goal of their control over their environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How your product/service increases their influence & approval by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step-by-step approach to maintaining stability while improving results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance record of your product/service; be logical, accurate, & specific
Questioning / Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on questions that surface concern for desired results • Anticipate WHAT questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask open-ended questions to reveal motivations • Anticipate WHO questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions that demonstrate concern for tasks & relationships • Anticipate HOW questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions that allow them to express knowledge, strategies, & apprehensions • Anticipate WHY questions
Responding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show desire to achieve not only results, but also <i>added</i> results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to their feelings & doubts with empathy • Use testimonials of others’ success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge their feelings • Offer ongoing support • The possible need to probe for real concerns • Incremental steps toward success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond with information to the most pressing questions • Reinforce logic, providing evidence to reassure
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency & delivery as agreed upon • Follow up with evidence of results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions to spare them effort or complications • Be responsive, informal & open in your dealings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal attention, availability & repeated, scheduled follow-up to assure the stability they want 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use specific assurances for reliability • Review periodically, verbally & in writing

At CPS, we believe the essence of aligning and adapting selling styles to buying styles is summed up in what we call The Platinum Rule: “Do unto others as they would have you do unto them.” - Anonymous

Our experience has been that The Platinum Rule has proven itself to be an outstanding overall strategy for building high-value trust relationships. The top 1% of salespeople keep this rule in the forefront of everything they do. Their results of producing two to ten times the results of the top 20% speak for themselves, and speak in an extremely convincing voice.

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Maintaining and Leveraging Trust-Based Relationships



Unless you proactively strategize and plan “Best Next Actions” to take to maintain and leverage a relationship, you are at risk of leaving it to chance.

Trust takes time, effort, and repetition to build and sustain. Evidence of consistent behavior built on the best interest of the other party will allow each to succeed. Open and honest communications by both parties as to strengths, weaknesses, measures of value, and expected successes are required to sustain trust. Sellers need not always acquiesce their positions to buyers, but without trust, their position will be dramatically weakened.

Once you have “relationship traction” where trust is a component, the seller must intensify his or her focus on consistent behavior and predictable open communications. These efforts will allow for the development of strengthened positions, access to key individuals, knowledge about impending decisions, and an opportunity to exceed the customer’s expectations.

In our research, CPS has learned from buyers that what they want from suppliers is consistent quality, delivery, and service. As some have said, “I just don’t want any surprises.” To sustain strong relationships, the seller must implement their solutions in a way that the buyer can depend on, and provide open communications about the “good, bad, and ugly” of all issues.

Sustain and Leverage.

In their book, *The Trusted Advisor*, David H. Maister, Charles H. Green, & Robert M. Galford discuss at length the essential components of Trust building that include Credibility, Reliability, Intimacy, and a low Level of Self-orientation. The following tables summarize what a seller should do to reach a position with the buyer that permits a relationship to be sustained and leveraged to the benefit of both parties.





<i>Sustain Relationships</i> ⁽¹⁾	
Credibility	Reliability
Always tell the truth, but avoid injuring others, and don't position yourself for the perception of dishonesty	Meet the commitments you make and overachieve even on the small things
Demonstrate your enthusiasm with expression and passion about your offerings	Communicate meeting agendas and goals with clarity
Don't just cite your references, get them involved, and let them learn from each other	Allow your customer to review proposals ahead of decisions to minimize "surprises"
When you don't know, say so, quickly and directly	Use the client's language and formats for presentations
Provide your expertise in the form of information, not with academic credentials and or titles	Reconfirm scheduled events before they happen. Announce changes as soon as you become aware of them
Do your homework on the customer's business, their marketplace, the member's of their team, and be current and up to date	The Client should know that you would always solicit their views on how you and they should best expend energy to achieve the highest value

<i>Leverage Relationships</i> ⁽²⁾	
Intimacy	Low level of Self-Orientation
Don't be timid, creating intimacy requires courage, not just for you but for all involved	Let the client fill in the empty spaces, make it about their ideas not yours
People in senior positions appreciate candor, but candor isn't necessarily intimacy, and they value that even more	Not giving the answers until the right to do so is earned (the client will let you know when you have earned it)
Find the fun and create fascination about the value your offerings bring	Trust in our ability to add value after listening, rather than trying to do so during listening
Test and validate whether you're coming too close to the line or pushing too far, too fast	Take most of the responsibility for failed communications
One of you has to make the first move in negotiations, make sure it's you	Be respectful of all, acknowledge the feelings of the client
Practice a little. Share ideas ahead of time so the client is not put on the spot	Admit what you don't know, but find the answers and give them freely

Take Responsibility and Action.

Relationships are difficult to develop and are sometimes fragile. The most successful relationships are not typically built as a result of a single defining event, but rather are developed over time with many small incremental steps. The focus is always credibility, reliability, intimacy, and a low level of self-orientation. "Real" interest in others is strikingly simple because it is so rare, yet it offers a key to development of the relationships that will permit both parties to sustain and benefit over time. If you take the time to develop the Relationship Strategies, rally your team around these strategies, ask for the customer's input and review of ideas, make good on your commitments, and you are respectful of all involved you will have succeeded in laying the foundation for trust-based relationships that can lead to business and personal success.



⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾ Maister, Green, and Galford. 2000. *The Trusted Advisor*, New York, NY: TOUCHSTONE

Our customers can be “customers for life” if we start with the fundamental principal that the relationship will be based on trust.

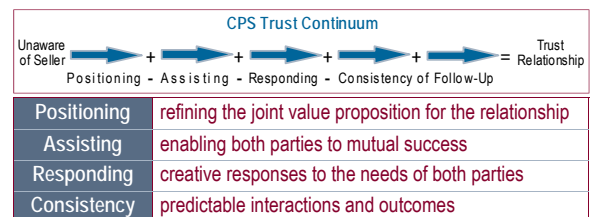


Earning Trust-Based Relationships

A relationship based on trust is easy to describe if it exists. It is much more difficult to articulate if it does not exist. There are a multitude of intangibles tied to this word “TRUST” that, if developed, help a relationship flourish with both parties being comfortable—person-to-person, organization-to-organization, teammate-to-teammate. Mike Krzyzewski, the Duke basketball coach, said in his book, *Leading with the Heart*, “The Level of cooperation on any team increases tremendously as the level of trust rises.”

When we are in a *positive* trust position, things tend to work. When we are in a *negative* trust position, we struggle. The foundation of positive trust is that there is a fundamental belief by both parties that their best interests are being served. Such a relationship is only developed over time and through effectively demonstrating personal commitment to building the positive relationship. CPS’ Trust Continuum identifies four key areas where effective execution will result in moving toward a trust-based relationship.

The elapsed time or speed of trust development will vary based on many factors and is not always moving from left to right along the continuum. At times, two steps forward may also result in one step back, but directionally we want to maintain consistent momentum. The flash point of when we are “there” is deceptive, but is usually a state where open and free-flowing information exchange is taking place as opposed to guarded statements or conditional expectations.



The Trust Measurement. In their book, *The Trusted Advisor*, David Maister, Charles Green, and Robert Galford have developed an evaluation criteria (illustrated in the Trust Quotient on the following page) that allows you to numerically evaluate the existing level of trust. This can help you develop the strategies and plans necessary to improve or maintain the optimum level of trust along the continuum toward the goal. Until positive trust is achieved, there is more to be done to clarify what might be missing, confusing, or misinterpreted that keeps us from full trust.



A Baker's Dozen

(Simple guidelines of behaviors to earn a "trust-based" relationship)

- Be an active listener
- Document and follow up on all commitments
- Be open minded and more revealing than you would expect from your customer
- Invest the time and energy to develop the relationship, but don't waste time
- Play open-handed poker; "give away ideas"
- Solve some small issues incredibly well; demonstrably set the bar high
- Provide solutions that are aligned to the business interest of the buyer, "not just a less expensive alternative"
- Show interest in the person's success (trust-based relationships are about people, not organizations)
- Discover the buyer's definition of value and success
- Don't forget—it's about the customer
- Deliver bad news sooner rather than later
- Be genuine; you can't fake sincerity over the long haul
- Do more listening to learn than telling to teach

$$\text{Trust Quotient: } \frac{\text{Trust} = \text{Credibility} + \text{Reliability} + \text{Intimacy}^{(1)}}{\text{Self-Orientation}}$$

Components Illustrations

Trustworthiness	—	"Both of us can ultimately depend on the other to do the right thing..."
Credibility	—	"I can trust what he says about..."
Reliability	—	"I can depend on her to..."
Intimacy	—	"I feel comfortable discussing this..."
Self-Orientation	—	"I can trust that they care about..."

The Trust Test. From a seller's perspective, there are three filters that should be used before you place a proposal in front of your customer in order to earn their trust. Ask the questions:

"Is this good for my customer?" "Is this good for my company?" "Is this good for me?"

If you consistently filter your proposal in this way (and in this order), you will begin to develop trust and positive response from your customers and prospects. Even though customers know that they will not always get everything they want, they must know that their interests are important to you and that it will be valuable for them over the long term to develop a relationship with you.

As CPS partner Mary Ann Costello says, "All things being equal, or even close, buyers prefer to buy from people they know, they like, and they trust. The buyers or decision makers will find a business rationale for their choice." While not every decision is based on these criteria, without the condition of trust it is certainly more difficult to have your proposal receive full consideration.

Trust is very rewarding, both personally and professionally. Open and honest communications will vary significantly based on environmental issues such as personalities, timing, complexity, pace of change, decision processes, and politics. As salespeople, we know that we are more successful when trust exists; therefore, we should work on this intentionally. Leaving it to chance or our winning smile is risky. The best formula for success is to develop a pro-active strategy and execute with Best Next Actions as you move across the Trust Continuum.



⁽¹⁾ Maister, Green, and Galford. 2000. *The Trusted Advisor*, New York, NY: TOUCHSTONE

The Customer Bear Hug

by Art Wilson



An intrinsic component of a sustainable business relationship is a sustainable personal relationship. CPS founder Art Wilson calls it the “Customer Bear Hug.”

Customers and Strategic Suppliers need to reinvest in tight relationships if they are to be successful in today’s environment. Treating the people and organizations that might be most important to your survival and success with enveloping warmth seldom pays off immediately, but always pays off over time. I call this the “Customer Bear Hug” because it most graphically describes the behavior.

Why is ingraining “Customer Bear Hug” behavior so critical in today’s environment?

The post-Y2K economic downturn, coupled with 9/11, caused an incredible impact on everyone’s business, and forced us all to step back and re-examine our priorities. After these cataclysmic events, it was interesting to watch the behavior of both sellers and buyers, personally in our own business and through the eyes of many of our customers.

On the surface, buying has become much more price-focused. On the selling side, relationship-building has become much more opportunistic. The result is that companies are much more reactive and brutal in dealing with these issues. This creates a vicious and non-productive cycle of discounting and reducing the value to the end users at a time when they need committed partnerships from outside their organization in order to be successful.

From our observations, research, and discussions with hundreds of clients, thousands of teams, and over 15,000 professionals in the buying and selling environment, there appears to be two very interesting behaviors that most differentiate the companies, teams, and individuals who have survived and are now flourishing from those who have either imploded or been acquired.

Business Model. The leadership of the successful entities that survived and are thriving, had implemented a model (either consciously or naturally), which allowed them to financially survive unforecasted difficult times. They are prepared to grasp opportunity quickly and effectively during unplanned upturns. They think strategically and act tactically, continually adjusting their road map. Those who survive have a business model and attitude for success, which assumes that the future of the business environment is no longer forecastable with any definable level of confidence. They say fundamentally that we cannot assume that we can forecast, with high confidence, the direction, duration, speed, size, or complexion of business at any level.

Process. While they have a passion for execution in all environments, at the same time they prepare for the future by behaving in a way that is substantially different than the larger group of their peers. They have an imbedded process that employs the business equivalent *of a Bear Hug* in a way that maintains employee,





Rules of Bear Hugging

- Motives for bear hugging must be unselfish
- A bear cannot hug more than three individual people at any given time; select candidates carefully—your high-value actions will change the relationship forever
- It is okay to mix business and pleasure...but do it carefully
- A qualified recipient has the prospect of providing high value to the people they serve and/or to yourself

strategic supplier, partner, and customer loyalty during difficult times. This gives them incredible differentiation from their peers—even in a seemingly commoditized environment. They employ what you might call the *Customer Bear Hug* on their customers, employees, and strategic suppliers and channels. This behavior, correctly executed with the right people, in the right way, and at the right time, can create incredible loyalty. The process prepares them for extraordinary opportunity, whether the other party is a customer or distribution channel.

In discussions with a number of senior executives of both very large product sellers and consulting firms, I asked them how long their sell cycle was on their largest, most important deals. The answer? 30 days... Why? They had already developed trusting relationships with the key decision makers and approvers. They were there when there was an unforecasted critical need, and were the logical choice. The leadership did not have time to develop the relationship with someone new. They could not risk failure.

Customers bear hug their suppliers? In a seminar focused on selling processes, Michael Hammer declared that extraordinarily successful customers of the future will treat strategic suppliers in a very similar way to the way a supplier would treat an important customer. What in the world would cause a customer to treat a supplier like that, particularly given the continuing downward spiral of value-based buying and selling seen during the early 2000s? His answer was recognition that the relationship is critical to their mutual success. How might one identify a possible partner where the relationship is “underserved”? Here are some criteria we have observed:

1. The business is a huge opportunity for us
2. We have the potential for creating extraordinary value for each other
3. There is a competitive incumbent but we believe the relationship is “long in the tooth”
4. Our people or team continuity has been weak
5. We only know a few people
6. The client has gone through business and organizational turmoil
7. We are viewed as a one-trick pony—they are not aware of all we could do
8. Our business relationship has never been strong
9. We do not really understand their business imperatives
10. Our words and actions demonstrate that we lead with price





Bear Hug Sales Process. Our experience has been that a clear process that is customer-centric is critical to creating a discipline which results in changed behavior across an organization. What Best and Worst Practices have we identified?

Measures of Success. Committing to creation of discipline, which leads to a “Customer Bear Hug” culture by demonstrating it through your behavior, is an important part of *the Critical Path to extraordinary value and sales growth through your selling organization!* You will know you have been successful when you see results in the following measures.

Worst Practices

- The Bear tries to hug everyone
- The Bear tries to initiate a hug on the first meeting
- The Bear only hugs when the bear needs it
- The Bear makes the hug a wrestling move
- Don't hug too tight until they get used to it

Best Practices

- The Bear carefully selects recipients
- Enveloping warmth for the recipient
- The Bear doesn't let go and likes giving the hug
- The Bear is always looking for an opportunity to give the hug, but does not scare off the recipient
- The Bear is available for “life”

Measures of Success	• Buys when you are clearly the high-priced seller and can explain why
	• Partners with you in creating your business strategy
	• Takes action on recommendations without looking at options
	• Personal sponsorship of you, your solution, and your company
	• Speed-dial relationship
	• Asserts your company's value in public announcements
	• Recognizes value of you, your solution, and your company
	• Accessibility



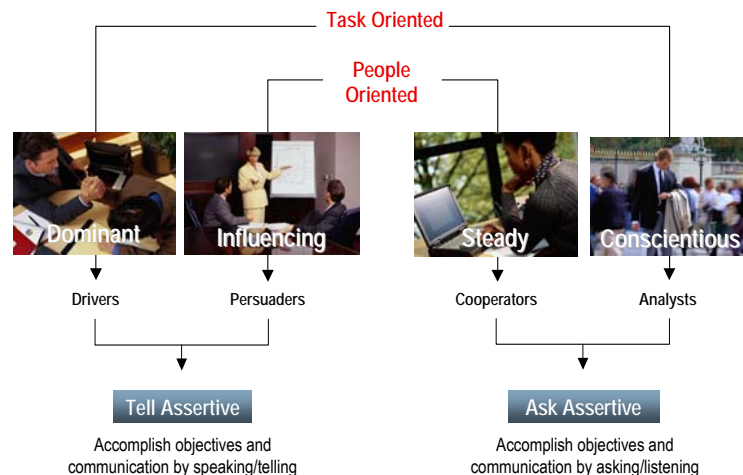
Selling Styles

by Cathy Groos



We all know the “Golden Rule”—do unto others, as you would have them do unto you—but the top 1% of selling organizations abide by the “Platinum Rule”—do unto others as they would have you do unto them. Not a bad maxim to live by in the world of selling wouldn’t you say? If not convinced, consider that the top 1% of salespeople and selling organizations in large account sales produce 2x to 10x the results of the top 20%. With results like that, it seems to make sense to delve a little deeper into the “Platinum Rule.”

Understanding Yourself and Others. The DiSC® personal profile system presents a plan to help you understand yourself and others in a selling environment. You are who you are and your clients are who they are, but if you can determine what motivates your client *and* adapt your style of selling to that motivation, your odds for success increase extraordinarily! The personal profile system divides personalities into four broad categories referred to as DiSC: Dominant, influencing, Steady, and Conscientious. The DiSC view of the world varies...Ds and Is like to “Control” the world, while Ss and Cs “Accept” the world. The old saying “opposites attract” is also true within the DiSC styles. A “Teller” is well balanced by an “Asker,” but where there are opposites conflict as well as balance might occur. Here is an illustration of the general characteristics of the DiSC styles.





The process outlined below will allow you to use the DiSC personal profile system to your advantage when selling to customer executives.

Examine Basic Traits.

The DiSC profile provides insight as to the basic traits of each of the four styles:

Dominant	Like challenge and bottom-line results; they make quick decisions and take control.
Influencing	Are “people persons” who are fun loving, enjoy helping others, and like recognition.
Steady	Enjoy stability and are very calming; they are good listeners and have a high status quo.
Conscientious	Have standardized systems and work with diplomacy; they are critical thinkers who pay attention to details and facts.

Identify Personal Styles.

You can tell what category a client fits into by looking for some of the identifying characteristics. When with your client or in their environment, look and listen for some of the following clues:

Ask WHEN	They display pictures of family facing guests and have many trophies. A big chair and a big desk dominate their office and they offer a firm handshake with eye contact. They <i>want control, fear loss of control, and are most concerned with time.</i>
Ask WHO	Photos with important people and recognition awards are displayed in their office, which has a large desk with papers overflowing. Their handshake is straight up and down. They <i>want recognition, fear being ignored, and are most concerned with approval.</i>
Ask WHY	Many family pictures are displayed in their office which has a smaller desk and chair. Their handshake is with the palm up. They <i>want a consistent environment, fear change, and are most concerned with stability.</i>
Ask HOW	They have multiple computers and filing cabinets in an office with a very organized desk. Their handshake is quarter palm up. They <i>want accuracy, fear criticism, and are most concerned with detail.</i>



Apply the Platinum Rule.

When you have determined the personal style of your client and know more about his or her wants and fears, what sales approaches should you employ that result in your best odds for success? How do you “Do unto others as they would have you do unto them?”

Dominant

- Give a brief overview first and ask how much time he/she has
- Net it out
- Let them control agenda
- Give them enough information to make a quick decision for next call of action
- Talk to the “bottom-line”

Influencing

- Demonstrate empathy, listen
- Make your ideas their ideas
- Recognize their accomplishments
- Ask open-ended questions
- Let them do most of the talking

Steady

- Provide structure for call
- Show loyalty
- Listen carefully, reinforce key ideas
- Don't push - give them plenty of time for decision
- Let them make small incremental decisions one call at a time

Conscientious

- Always bring plenty of details, analysis, and logic
- Be clear, concise, and detailed in your call
- Let them make thought-out decisions
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge, assure them that you have researched the material
- Help through decision process

You and each of your clients have variations of the DiSC profiles in your style. The key is building your business relationships on value. The top 1% of sales individuals and selling organizations deliver value by focusing on the business needs and personal needs of their client and then designing and executing on strategies to meet those needs. Executing on the “Platinum Rule” through this process will result in sales success that is extraordinary!



The Magic of Collaboration

by Art Wilson



Conventional business practices tell us that we should sell the customer what they want or, at the very least, sell them what we have—quickly. However, in today’s tumultuous business environment, this practice misses the point that both the seller and buyer may not fully understand what each party needs or wants from the interaction. Even more striking is the fact that, in the rush for a quick solution to what is often a complex problem, the resulting value is greatly minimized for both. Little has been done to understand the full range of options that may exist. The critical question that CPS asks is, “Can something be done to effectively align the interests of both the buying and selling organizations to promote the highest bottom-line value for each party?”

A customer might ask, “Why in the world would I want to collaborate with my key suppliers and help them improve their ability to sell to my company?” As for suppliers, many of these companies are no longer organized to proactively understand the needs and business drivers of their most important clients. The customers, in turn, understandably believe that it may not be in their best interest to share openly their strategies and requirements because there is a sense that their time will be wasted. Many customers will knowingly seek a collaborative relationship under stress, but seem reluctant to actively pursue one in good times.

CPS provides the interaction and collaboration necessary to eliminate what often ends up being a confrontational relationship when customers and suppliers come together. Transforming the process into a truly collaborative “win-win” approach results in some very real and clear improvements, including:

- The cost of procurement for both supplier and buyer can be decreased significantly because there is a very real cost to contentious, rules-driven purchasing.
- The cost of ownership is decreased because key suppliers have been pre-selected as partners; time and resources can be allocated to other high-priority projects.
- The ability of the buyer to take advantage of emerging technologies can permit a competitive advantage that might not be possible in a low-cost bidding environment.
- The ability of both supplier and buyer to react quickly to unknown changes in the business environment.



How do you “sell” the value of collaboration? What needs to be done? How can selling organizations build customer confidence that through deliberate collaboration, measurable value can be created for all parties? Here are some *best practices* that we have observed:

<u>Move From</u>		<u>Move To</u>
<u>Contention-based Buying</u>		<u>Collaborative-based Buying</u>
Current Offerings	→	Intellectual asset/new solutions
Respond	→	Create
Price focus	→	Cost/opportunity of ownership
Report card	→	Value measurement

Initiate collaboration. The act of open collaboration with customers is a best practice of customer-facing individuals and teams. Either the customer or the seller can initiate collaboration. However, in practice, it is not the specific responsibility of the seller to initiate such a relationship.



Focus on outcomes. Collaboration is not the same as a partnership or an alliance contract. Much energy has been invested in getting partnership and alliance contracts signed and announced, versus focusing on making them successful. Many times the two parties are celebrating success too early. The opportunity for both of parties is an alliance or partnership in fact more than a formal contract. In other words, focus on outcomes and implementation of the relationship from the beginning.

Focus on the customer's customer. Collaboration ensures that the value-based seller is focused on the ultimate value to the customer. What is the benefit to your customer's customer and how can they help you in delivering client value to your customer?

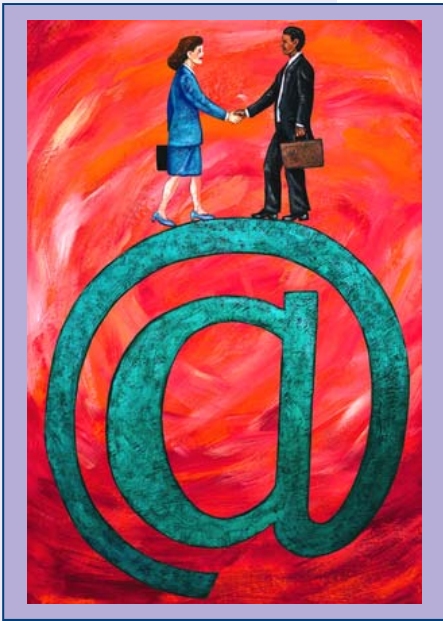
Assess the opportunity for collaboration and take action. To assess the opportunity for collaboration, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is your product/offering/solution customizable?
- Do others in your company play an important role in delivering offerings to your customer?
- Have you lost sales opportunities recently in key customers?
- Does much of your organization's daily work environment involve reacting to events?

If the scenario for effective and valuable collaboration exists, it is up to you as a leader to pursue this opportunity. Great selling leaders view open collaboration with the people they serve as an opportunity to reduce risk of failure and to identify the most effective solution for both parties.

The Foundation of Relationships

by Don Pearson

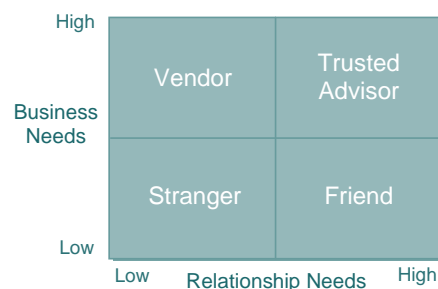


People buy from people that they like and from people that they trust. And each of us is in a position to become a trusted advisor to each of the important people in our customer's organization. To quote Dick Jackman, "By your chosen profession, you are in the business of people. And the business of people is the business of taking care of friends." A CEO once told me he looked for two things in the organizations that were selling to him:

- Someone who said, "I want to make you successful."
- People who would be there when times got tough, because, he said, at some point, times always get tough.

The people that we call on have business needs and they have relationship needs.

The following diagram represents a way to determine how we are doing in developing relationships with the important people in our customer's organization:



- If we are not meeting a person's business needs, we are a **stranger**.
- If we are meeting a person's business needs but not relationship needs, we are a **vendor**.
- If we are meeting a person's relationship needs but not business needs, we are a **friend**.
- If we are meeting a person's business needs and relationship needs, we have the potential of becoming a **trusted advisor**.



The Concept of "Gifts"

Here is an idea for elevating the value that you bring to your relationship with each of the important people in your customer's organization. *Every single time you make a call on an important person in your customer's organization, take a gift.* And the very best gifts are the ones that have no particular material value. The very best gifts are things like information, education, analysis, perspectives, recommendations, ideas, vision, being a sounding board, mentoring, introductions, referrals, problem solving, and just plain friendship.

The best of these gifts costs you nothing. And delivered with thoughtfulness on your part, one of these gifts has the power to transform a relationship. Characteristics of a great gift include thoughtfulness and an element of surprise. Think about it. Why do we wrap presents? So that there is always a sense of anticipation associated the gift.

And so, if you develop the reputation of bringing a high-value gift every time you make a call on an important person at your customer, what will be the reaction the next time you call for an appointment. It will most likely be something like, "Oh boy! I wonder what the gift is going to be this time!"

Building Relationships

One key to building relationships is investing enough time in understanding the needs and interests of another person that you can know what "gifts" will be most valuable and most appreciated. The rewards of these investments can be enormous, both in terms of business performance and in terms of our own personal satisfaction.

"There is nothing we like to see so much as the gleam of pleasure in a person's eye when he feels that we have sympathized with him, understood him, interested our self in his welfares. These moments are the moments worth living."

- Don Marquis