



10 tips to build trusting relationships with your customers



10 ways to build trust with your customers

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TRUST, without it, you don't have a long-lasting relationship with your customer(s). Without it, you are transactional, always looking for that next deal and customer. Easy come, easy go.

A core component of any business development strategy is establishing trust and repour with your customers. Get your customer's trust, and you build a loyal customer base. Build a loyal customer base and you build repeatable revenue opportunities. Create repeatable revenue opportunities, and you have a practice.

But getting the trust of your customers is a lot easier said than done.

Top 10 tips to build a trusting relationship with your customers

Be understanding

Empathy is a word we often see knocked around these days, but it really is a critical component to building trust with your customers.

You can be the best subject matter expert in the world, but if you fail to deliver the message in a way your customer can relate to and you fail to convince your customer that you have their interests at heart, then you are merely an advisor and not a trusted advisor.

Listen

Two ears, one mouth. Listen to what your client is trying to tell you rather than dictate to

them what they need to be doing.

No one likes a dictator, and you will never be able to build trust with your customers if all you do is preach to them.

Keep your word

If you say you are going to do something, do it. If you say you are going to be somewhere, be there. If circumstances change and you can't do it or you can't be there, let them know why.

All too often, professional services firms promise the world and then underdeliver. Customers remember this, and it plays a significant part in the decision on whether or not to give you and your firm repeat business - so make sure you follow through and keep your word!

Be responsive

One of the biggest problems you have as a professional services provider is the competing interests on your time. As such, it can sometimes be days before you respond to a customer's call or email.

That's a mistake!

I'm not suggesting you need to immediately respond to your customers' emails or phone calls, but if you wish to build a loyal and trusting customer base you should have a table of response times built into your minimum service standards.

Don't fake it till you can make it

Richard Branson is famous for saying, "If somebody offers you an amazing opportunity but you are not sure you can do it, say yes - then learn how to do it later!" which has been widely construed as "fake it till you make it!"

That's great, but if you are trying to build a trusting relationship with your customers, we would advise that you don't take that approach.

Leaving aside the fact that your professional indemnity insurance provider will have a fit if

they find out you're faking it till you make it, being honest with your customers and setting realistic expectations will go a lot further in establishing a long-term trusting relationship than trying to wing it!

Be consistent

My mother used to say that being consistently wrong is better than being inconsistently right. While I don't wholly agree with the being consistently wrong approach, I do agree that being consistent is way better than being inconsistent and chopping and changing.

And half the battle in developing a book of business with trusted clients is consistently showing up at places where your clients and prospects know they'll be able to find you, whether that is online or in-person, and having a consistent message.

Deal with grievances quickly

You can never please all your customers all of the time. It's just a fact of life. There will come a time when you upset one of your customers.

How you then deal with this, though, is the difference between building a trusting relationship with your customer and merely having a relationship with your customer.

You can either let it linger in the hope your customer never finds out or deal with it, and deal with it quickly!

If you want to build and foster a trusting relationship with your customers, always pick the second option.

Be loyal - avoid conflict of interest

It can be difficult when a prospect comes to you with an issue. You know this prospect is in competition with one of your existing customers with whom you have trusted advisor status. There is no professional conflict, but there is clearly a commercial conflict.

In all rights, you can accept the instruction. But that would be a mistake because when/if your existing customer finds out about it, in all likelihood, they will no longer be a customer! At best, you won't have a trusted relationship status with that customer any longer!

Don't offer discounts to new customers over existing trusted relationships

One of the biggest mistakes you see professional service providers make is to offer new customers a greater discount than the amounts being paid by their existing customers.

Think about this for a second. Your existing customer, with whom you have a trusted advisor relationship, is subsidizing you to build a relationship with a completely new customer. Worse, they are not getting any business themselves from this new customer.

Now, how would you feel if you found out about this? Probably not very happy, right? At worst, you're not going to feel like you can trust this service provider going forward – right?

And the reality is, you won't make any profit from this new relationship by the mere fact that you are offering them a discount. So don't do it!!

Introduce new business opportunities

Lastly, say thank you to your loyal and trusted customers by introducing them to new business opportunities. There is no better way to create, establish, develop and foster a trusted relationship with a customer than by helping them to grow their business.

Want to learn more about implementing a strategy to build trusting relationships with your clients and customers? Get in touch with the team at GSJ.

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