

Succeeding by doing what clients really want

Some professionals generate lots of new business and repeat business and others don't. Why? Generating business has to do with *doing what the client really wants*. That's the key to unlock success.

Don't all firms do what the client really wants? Actually, no. Every project a client undertakes has core requirements (do tasks, complete on time, complete on budget, etc.) that are similar. But every project also has unique features (e.g., happening in a particular part of an organization at a particular time) and therefore some requirements that are *very important for the buyer on this particular project*.

Most professionals don't ask, "**What has to happen on this project for it to be an extremely successful project, in your view?**"

Maybe it's avoiding particular political landmines or hitting certain milestones on time. Maybe a stakeholder has a small but vital hot button. Maybe it's having one small part handled in a certain way. A very professional construction firm that understands this got big kudos from its client -- on a project that cost more than \$100 million -- because the firm uncovered that a few not particularly noteworthy trees were important to some stakeholders, and then built the project in a way that allowed those trees to flourish despite massive construction work all around them.



So to succeed by doing what client really wants:

1. **Ask the question.** "What has to happen *on this project* for it to be an extremely successful project, in your view?" Some wise clients tell all potential providers what's critical on a particular project, even if the providers don't ask. But professionals who remember to ask the question themselves tend to pay more attention to the answer (and many clients won't think to tell you unless you ask).
2. **Listen to the answer.** It's hard to believe, but some people don't pay attention even when the client is trying to tell them how to win the deal!!
3. **Reflect the *critical issues for this project* in your proposal.** That's how the client knows you were listening and that you are responsive to their needs.
4. **Have a plan to make sure the critical issues get attention.** One way to increase the chances this happens is to post the critical issues all over the place in your teamroom at the client site, on your screensaver, etc. (assuming that they are not politically sensitive) so you are constantly reminded of their importance. Each time you make a decision on the project, you can consider how the decision will affect these critical issues.
5. **Deliver the goods.** Deliver the project on-time, on-budget, etc. That's required. But also accomplish the project-specific critical goals and you will have a very happy client.

Clients love professionals who seek out ways to be particularly valuable, listen to what they are told, adjust their approaches accordingly and deliver both the expected value and the additional value. They invite them back again and again and look for ways to use them.

Something to try this week

Do you know what will make your client feel that **your project is or will be extremely successful?**

If you do, then make sure you deliver. If you don't, then:

1. Ask them
2. Listen to the answer
3. Reflect the answers in your proposal or plan
4. Execute your plan to be sure these critical issues are attended to
5. Deliver the goods
6. Reap the rewards

What are these tips?

These monthly tips are intended to help professionals create more business and enjoy their work more. We focus on how to start relationships, how to build relationships, and how to convert those relationships into sales.