# Broadening your base at an existing client

When you are working at a client you have a golden opportunity to broaden your relationships at that organization. You can start conversations which can lead over time to additional opportunities for you and your firm.

Each new conversation is intended to start a relationship with someone. To get the relationship off to a good start, these first meetings have to be about them and not about you and your firm. During and after the meetings, you have to help them. But how do you get in the door?

### First rule -- Do a great job on your current work

Doing a great job on your current project for your current client is the foundation. If you don't do a great job on your current project, there's no point getting in other doors. Everyone you meet will look for guidance to their colleague you are working with now -- and you want an enthusiastic endorsement.

### Reaching out to different types of people

#### *People adjacent to your project*

Many people within the client organization may sit at the edges of your project. They might be internal customers or internal suppliers of the people you are working with. Since what you do affects them, you have good reasons to talk with them. You can tell them you want to meet with them because:

> I want to make sure that we do our work in the way that makes it easiest for you to do what you do.

You should also consider expressing a broader motive:

> I'm also trying to get better a meeting other people here. I want to help people succeed in their work as best I can, and that's good for them and for me and my company. That's why I contacted you and why I want to meet with you.

When you meet, restate your motives for getting together and then ask an open ended question like: "I want to understand the processes you use in your organization and the philosophies behind them. What are those key processes?" and the conversation is off and running.

For people adjacent to the project, you can suggest a location that is work-related (such as the other person's office) or a less formal setting, such as meeting for breakfast or lunch.

### *The peers of your client*

If your client leads part of an organization (or of a unit), then he or she likely has peers who run other parts. They might report to the same person as your client does. With these people, your introduction is similar to above but focused on the business overall:

> I'm interested in understanding as much as I can about the business/function we are working with here at Acme Enterprises. I want to help people here achieve their goals as much as I and the rest of my company can. Your perspective will help me better understand where what I am doing fits with what you are doing or with how the business is evolving.

In this example, you've built the second motive above about helping people into your initial statement.

In many companies, the offices of your client's peers will be down the hall from your client's office. Poke you head in and introduce yourself, or say hello at the coffee machine. Suggest getting together for breakfast or lunch.

### *The opposite numbers in other business units of your clients*

This is the more challenging. These people do the same thing as your client, but elsewhere in the organization. They live, to some degree, in the same environment as your client, but they also face other and different circumstances and challenges. Your request focuses on tapping their expertise to compare and contrast, and your interest in sharing (appropriately) your insights:

> As you might know, I am working on W at the Alpha division of Acme Enterprises. I'm interested in learning how you are tackling W at the Beta Division. I might have some information that could be useful to you, and you might have some information that could help me do a better job for the folks at Alpha. I'm interested in learning more about how the company's view of W is changing, and although I definitely get a perspective from my client, I'd also be interested in how you are thinking about it.

With this group, you can also add the second motive above about working to get better at meeting people and helping them as best as you can.

These people may be far away. If so, you'll need to plan when to see them, and may need to try several times to make it work.

## Something to try this week

Identify the people at your client organization in these three groups:

- People with responsibilities adjacent to your current project
- Peers of your current client individual
- People with the same job as your current client individual but in different business units within the client organization

Pick *1-2 from the adjacent players* and *1 from another category*. For each person, plan and make an contact to try to set up a meeting.

## 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.

## Can you answer my questions about business development?

We'd be delighted. Please send any questions you have to questions@bridgewellpartners.com and we'll do our best to help you out. Or call us at 312-863-3489. Or visit www.bridgewellpartners.com to learn more about how we coach and train professionals to be better at business development and to enjoy it more.