

Creating trust

People buy from people they know, like, trust, and believe are competent. Trust, it is said, is built over time. But you often need to convey that you are trustworthy before someone will retain you. How can you help someone see they can trust you -- before they have worked with you?

A story about creating trust

Tom sold auto and life insurance. To the utter shock of prospects who called about auto insurance, Tom refused to provide any information unless the prospect had life insurance. He'd tell them, "I don't care where you get it, but show me you have it or I won't sell you auto insurance." Prospects asked why, and Tom told them:



"One of my first customers had a fatal accident. The car was completely destroyed. When I delivered the check for the car, his wife was sobbing, asking me how she could support her four children. Since her husband didn't have life insurance, there was little I could do. I won't put myself in that position again."

Tom was extremely successful. Prospects saw him risk a sale to make sure they did the right thing for themselves. He put the customer's interest (in being properly protected with life insurance) ahead of Tom's interest (in making an auto insurance sale); Tom wanted to sell auto insurance, but only when that was the right solution for the client.

Implications for professionals doing business development

1. Insisting on the right solution for the client is a great strategy for building trust.
2. Turning down work clearly communicates that you will put the client's interest first. You gain immense credibility by turning down work when you or your firm or your service isn't the best choice (especially with prospects who sought you out). Saying you aren't the best choice for the client *now* makes you very believable *later* when you say, on a different topic, that you are the right choice.
3. You operate in a paradox: putting a client's interest first without thinking of your own interests advances your own interests. Accepting and explaining this paradox makes prospects believe you will continue to put their interests first. Tom's clients knew that Tom insisted on

the best for them so he could avoid a situation he didn't want to be in. Putting them first was, paradoxically, grounded in his own self-interest.

You can convey how your interests and a prospect's interests overlap with statements like:

- "I'd rather not sell you the wrong thing, because then you'll never work with me again."
- "I put your interests ahead of my business interests, because that turns out to be good for me in the long run. When I do something for your benefit, you will remember me or tell others about me. I look after my own interests by looking after yours."
- "I love seeing my clients succeed. We create a lot of value together and the right clients for me don't mind sharing it. I want to be someone's partner; if you are the right kind of client for me, we'll both prosper. If that's not the case, we shouldn't work together."

You can talk this explicitly; don't assume your actions speak for themselves. Help your prospect understand the meaning they should put on your actions.

Another option for creating trust

Being helpful to the prospect also creates trust. You can provide, for free, assistance to them outside the normal scope of your professional services -- you can ask them good questions to make them think, or give them referrals to people or information that will benefit them. These actions also convey that you are on their side; these actions are less dramatic than turning down work but also easier to do. More ideas on helping your prospect are available [here](#).

Something to try this week

Think of your own statement that conveys how you see your interests and your client's interest. Try using it with a prospect you are talking with.

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.