



What makes a healthy relationship with our clients? Respect, responsibility, and reliability

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Now is when we spend the time saying thank you and wishing all a Happy New Year. And with that typically comes the challenge of choosing the right gift to express client appreciation. We struggle with political correctness and varying corporate guidelines, balancing our appreciation with a need to demonstrate it in compliance with a new set of gift giving rules born from the economic restructuring of business as we know it.

Let's take a different perspective. Did you ever notice the people that go over the top in their "appreciation to clients" usually have good reason to. Perhaps it's a waning relationship, or maybe, more commonly, a new buying relationship. Did you ever look at these relationships and compare them to the insecure person that tries to impress, solidify, or even hold on to their partner?

So what makes a healthy relationship with our clients? I think balance is at the center of this answer. Specifically, Balance of a relationship's big three: Respect, responsibility, and reliability.

These are the real gifts that your clients value all year round. That token material gift, without the balance of the big three, is just a symbol with no real impression or value. However, supported by the big three, the material item becomes a reminder of all that your relationship brings to that special person and their organization.

Let's break them down:

Respect

Some believe that this word is at the very core of good and bad. No matter how it is displayed or expressed, showing respect is the first symbol of gratitude in a relationship. Mom, Dad, client, friend, are all people we respect in a myriad of ways: greetings, punctuality, communication, assistance and, most importantly, watching out for them. So the next time you take a client for granted, remember it's a sure sign of disrespect.

Responsibility

Every relationship contains varying levels of responsibility. But no matter the type of relationship, at the core of being responsible is being truthful. Relationships based on truth are always fruitful relationships. Think back in your past and reflect upon the people who have had the most positive impact on the direction of your life. The best parents, teachers and managers, are the ones who follow the laws of fairness, honesty, and truth, no matter how difficult. So remember. Always be completely honest if you want your relationships to grow.

Reliability

The last of the big three dictates that no matter what time of the day, no matter what the situation, you know this person will not let you down. They say we are lucky if we have more than two or three

true friends when our life is all said and done. Those are the people that we know we can call, whenever or whatever the situation. So think about that the next time your client is calling at 5:30 in the evening on a Friday night. And remember that sometimes just "being there" is monumental. Writing this article is certainly going to have me try harder this New Year. If my words have any effect, I hope they can take one of your relationships to the next level in 2011. I wish all of you a happy holiday and great New Year.

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