**How to Win a Client in 10 Days (Part 2)**

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In a world of highly sophisticated, knowledgeable clients, and ever-eager competition, how do you consistently distinguish yourself? This issue of Client Loyalty presents part II of "How to Win a Client in 10 Days." If you're missing part I, with days 1 through 5, just drop me an e-mail and I'll forward it on to you. The first five days, in summary:

**Day 1: Drop all the paper and start having a conversation with your client**

**Day 2: Use a hook to engage your client and earn the right to ask questions.**

**Day 3: Pretend you're independently wealthy.**

**Day 4: Start acting like a deep generalist rather than simply an expert-for-hire.**

**Day 5: Ask questions and listen--develop your empathy.**

**Day 6: Help your client see the big picture**

Another difference between the expert mindset and the advisor mindset is a focus on the big picture. Experts are great at analysis, but client advisors go furtherâ€”they help their clients prioritize the issues, they see patterns in the data, and they ask thoughtful questions that can reframe the problem. The best way to get good at synthesisâ€”big picture thinkingâ€—is to become a deep generalist who has a core specialty but also a broad knowledge of markets, industries, and the overall environment your clients operate in. Research on creativity, and my own studies of great client advisors, also show that reflection is critical here. Our best ideas come during a period of rest and reflection following intense work. Every so often you have to pull yourself out of the details and reflect. It could happen while listening to a concert, or even while taking a long shower. Einstein, commenting on the sources of his great ideas, said, "The solitude of the countryside stimulated my creative thinking."

**Day 7: Develop greater personal trustworthiness.**

For my most recent book, Making Rain, I interviewed a number of executives who started the conversation by saying, "Nowadays I'm wondering, whom can I really trust?" You need to gain a client's trust in your expertise, but that's just the start. Trust is based on four key factors. First, it requires integrity, which includes honesty, and on a day-to-day basis, consistency and reliability. Second, trust is based on competence. That may sound obvious, but the key word here is perceived competence. So, a client's trust in your or your firm's ability to tackle a particular problem will be in part based on how well you educate that client and position yourself. Third, a client's trust will depend on your orientation: Are you focused on yourself and your agenda, or on the client, and his agenda? Finally, face time is critical to allow trust to grow. E-mail and conference calls are fine once you know someone, but they don't build trust the way face to face contact does.

**Day 8: Build a closer relationship through the key dimensions of likeability: PASFOR.**

A great deal of scientific research has been done on why we feel comfortable with one person and not with another.

Briefly, here are four of the six key drivers of personal comfort: 1: Praise. Everyone responds to praise, including our clients. Start out with what's right, and only then talk about what needs to change! Reflecting this aspect of human nature, a Hollywood comedian once quipped, "My wife tricked me into marrying her by telling me that she liked me!" 2: Positive association. Clients will view you more positivelyâ€”or negativelyâ€”depending on the associations with you and your firm. This is, of course, what's behind high-paid celebrity endorsements. 3: Similarity. We are drawn to people with whom we feel we have things in common. So always be searching for common ground, whether it's the college you and a client went to or the simple fact that you both have pre-school children (you can commiserate about the crayon drawings on the new wallpaper). 4: Familiarity. This ties back to face time and trust. We tend to like people and things we are familiar with. That's why it's important, even if you successfully conduct most of your business by phone or e-mail, to periodically meet face-to-face with each of your key clients.

**Day 9: Add core value, surprise value, and personal value.**

Core value is what the client formally contracts forâ€”your "deliverables" or "outputs." And you have to, well, deliver. But you need to go further, and provide what I call surprise value. The nature of this surprise value will of course vary depending on your profession and the type of contact you have with your clients. You might give your client some suggestions about motivating and managing his executive team. You might identify a cost issue the client was unaware of. You might provide the client with important, proprietary market information, or make a valuable introduction. Then there's personal value. Every client who works with us is getting something personal out of the relationship. One client might be interested in learning about your methodologies. Another might need an introduction to someone in the local community that you know. A third might have a high school senior who wants to go to your alma mater. Clients really stand up and take notice when you go beyond "deliverables" and provide this surprise and personal value.

**Day 10: Treat your client like it's day 1.**

Baltasar Gracián, who was a famous 17th century Jesuit priest and advisor to Spanish noblemen, wrote a book of sayings called The Oracle. In it, he says, "You will be esteemed as long as you are new. Novelty pleases everyone because of its variety. A brand new mediocrity is more highly regarded than an extremely talented person to whom we have grown accustomed." How little human nature has changed in the last 400 years! If you want to keep your clients for life, you have to bring the same excitement, enthusiasm, and new ideas to the one-hundredth meeting that you brought to the first meeting when you were wooing him. If you don't, why would a client stick with you? One way to think about this is to pretend you are your competitor, and you want to steal this client away. What would your strategy be? Now, implement that strategy yourself.

I've sometimes thought that if married couples treated their spouses like newlyweds, the divorce rated would plummet! Complacency is the enemy of long-term client relationships.

Well, we've managed to rush through ten days in less than ten minutes of reading time! I'll leave you with a final quote from Gracián, that well-known 17th century advisor, that captures the spirit of the advisor mindset I've been trying to get across to you: "Princes like to be helped, but not surpassed. When you counsel someone, you should appear to be reminding him of something he had forgotten, not the light he was unable to see."

Andrew Sobel is a leading authority on client relationships and the skills and strategies required to earn enduring client loyalty. He is a consultant and educator to major services firms worldwide. Andrew is the author of the business bestsellers *Clients for Life* (Simon & Schuster) and *Making Rain* (John Wiley & Sons). He can be reached at andrew@andrewsobel.com (Tel: 505.982.0211).