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a d v i s o r s

**Client Account Planning:
*The Six Critical Questions
You Must Ask***

By Andrew Sobel

Client Account Development: Key Questions

This worksheet poses six fundamental questions that you should try to answer for all of the significant clients in your portfolio. These are meant to complement your account plans and encourage you to take a client-centric (versus product-centric) view of how to grow and deepen the relationship. There are many areas this list does not cover—for example, the competition—and this is by design. This short form focuses on the most essential dimensions of client relationship development.

The six questions are:

1. **Current Assessment:** What is your current position with this client, and how would you describe the central challenge you face in developing and managing the relationship?
2. **Client Agenda:** What is the client's agenda of essential goals and priorities?
3. **Your Aspirations:** What are your aspirations for this relationship?
4. **Major Opportunities:** What are the most promising opportunities to deepen and grow this client, given their goals and priorities?
5. **Key Relationships:** What senior executive relationships must be developed or deepened to capture the opportunities in (4)?
6. **Resources:** What internal resources and people do you need to leverage in order to capture the best near-term opportunities and reach your ultimate aspirations for the relationship?

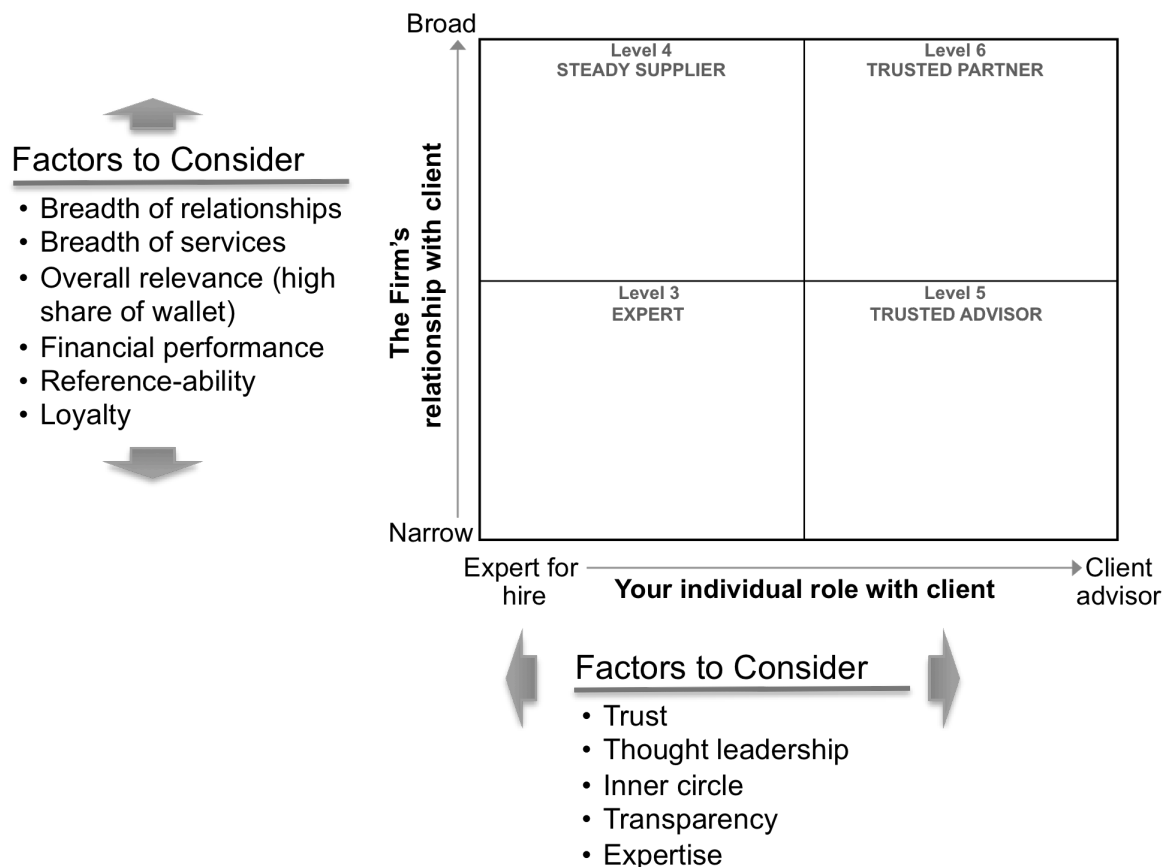
Each of these questions is explained more fully on the next several pages. The last step is to create an action plan listing key tasks.

Client Name _____

1. Current Relationship Assessment

1-a: What is your current position with this client, and how would you describe the central challenge you face in developing and managing the relationship?

Please position this client in the Client Development Matrix, below. Think about the criteria that are listed as you decide where to place the client along the X axis (individual role you play with the client) and the Y axis (the institutional relationship with your firm). Base your judgment on an overall assessment. Pages 4 and 5 (next) provide more detail on these definitions should you need them.



1-b: How would you describe the central challenge you face in developing and managing this client relationship?

The six levels of client relationships

LEVEL	WHAT A CLIENT MIGHT SAY
1: Contact	We've met once or twice.
2: Acquaintance	I've known him for a while — we have some things and people in common.
3. Expert	They have done a few transactions for us. They did a very good job. In those areas they really know their stuff.
4. Steady Supplier	They consistently deliver, and are the provider of choice for this type of work.
5. Trusted Advisor	She's superb at what she does and has great business sense. I trust her judgment and use her as a sounding board for tough issues.
6. Trusted Partner	They are a long-term partner in growing our business. They always put our interest first, and add great value. We get the best they can offer, globally.

2. Client Agenda

What is the client's agenda of essential goals and priorities?

Think about two levels of agendas: The overall corporate agenda, and the agenda for your principal (individual) client in the organization.

Corporate Agenda

What are this company's 3-5 key strategic goals or priorities?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Individual Executive Agenda

What are the 3-5 most important priorities for your key executive client at this company?

NAME & TITLE: _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

3. Your Aspirations

What are your aspirations for this relationship*?

Where would you like to take this relationship? What are your aspirations? State these briefly.

4. Major Opportunities

What are the most promising opportunities to deepen and grow this client, given their goals and priorities?

What are the most promising opportunities to deepen and grow this client, given their goals and priorities?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. Key Relationships

What senior executive relationships must be developed or deepened to capture the opportunities identified in question 4? List the 3-5 most critical ones below.

Executive Name	Title	Who Should Take the Lead from your organization?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

6. Resources

What internal (or external) resources and people do you need to leverage in order to capture the best near-term opportunities and reach your aspirations for this relationship? List the 3-5 most critical people or resources that you must rely on or collaborate with.

Resource
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Action Plan

Who is going to what, when?

Action Step	Who is Responsible?	When by?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		