

## Winning Back a Client Who Is Negative About Your Firm

### 1 Find out the actual history.

If you know what really happened, you'll be better able to identify the best approach. Was there a personality conflict? Make sure that person isn't involved with the current effort. Was it a failure to deliver? Depending on how long ago this was, you may be able to rebuild trust and reposition your firm with new faces.

### 2 If at all possible, try to meet with the executive.

It's easy to demonize people we *don't* know, and also to like people we *do* know.

### 3 Identify individuals who might influence them.

If you are trying to make nice with someone who harbors resentment against your firm, their cynical side might perceive you as self-serving or insincere. If a trusted colleague, however, tells them that they ought to give you a second chance, he or she is far more apt to be persuaded.

### 4 Consider putting a fresh team in place.

I have seen situations where the client feels the relationship manager is complacent and takes the relationship for granted, and as long as he is in place, the client won't give the firm more business. Regardless of the exact nature of the friction, it often helps to demonstrate that you are fielding a new team with new skills and a new attitude.

### 5 Rebuild trust through small, discrete steps.

This is especially important anytime there is distrust or animosity. You cannot earn someone's trust and loyalty through words or proclamations about how well you will serve them—you must do it one step at a time, through your actions. Show the person in question that you are committed to serving their organization. Make attempts to meet face to face. Invest to understand an issue of importance to them. Be gently persistent, while making them feel they are firmly in the driver's seat.

### 6 Be patient.

Sometimes, it can take months—or even years—to overcome a negative attitude.

### 7 Consider focusing on other opportunities.

If a client is intransigent in maintaining objections to your firm, then you may just have to bide your time and focus on other opportunities.