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Building relationships by being helpful

Helping a client or prospect on a voluntary, unpaid, unrewarded basis will propel your relationships forward. When you help someone unilaterally, with no immediate benefit or reward for you and no obligation for them, you convey your commitment to their success and development, and you encourage them to trust you.

You can provide many kinds of help. Particularly useful for relationship building are actions that are easy (and inexpensive) for you to do, and very valuable for the other person. You can develop your own catalog of such actions. Some examples might include:

Trust building actions that help someone with their work, e.g.,

- Bringing them a customer
- Introducing them to someone they should know because that person can help them solve a problem or find and capture an opportunity
- Sending them some valuable information, e.g., emailing them an article that would be valuable to them or telling them something you have learned about their market or about their competition that would be useful to them.
- Sending them talented potential employees
- Reading a draft of a speech or presentation they are going to give
- Suggesting a book for them to read that would be helpful to them in their business (and offering to discuss it with them when they are finished)
- Helping them with an unrelated issue (not your professional expertise but something you know about) e.g., how to use a software program or piece of electronics, that will make it much easier for them to achieve their goal
- Just listening to them. Being a sounding board for their discussion (out loud) about a problem that is outside your professional expertise but where attentive listening would be very helpful
- Diving in at a time of crisis and be available (at no charge) to do whatever needs getting done.

Other trust inspiring actions involve them personally outside of work, e.g.,

- Supporting a charity that you believe in and that they support
- Suggesting a good book for them to read
- Making referrals for them if they need help with other personal matters (e.g., medical)
- Sponsoring them for entrance into organizations they'd like to join, e.g., private clubs

You can also help them by helping people in their family or whom they know and care about. Examples include:

- Assisting a member of their family with learning about or getting into a school
- Helping someone in their family find a job
- Providing information that would be helpful for their children or others in their family

Building trust through specific acts is so special because the precise thing you do – the value you deliver in these acts – is something that only you, by virtue of history and circumstance, can do. Others might offer something else, but only you have the combination of background, experience, and connections to make your specific offer. It can only come from you. So each action demonstrates both your value to the other person and your commitment to them (because it is offered with no charge and no obligation!!).

Long and productive client relationships have been built on even single acts of trust building, and great relationships have been started with a timely favor. The sooner you are willing to help, the sooner they will be willing to trust.

Something to try this week

Think about what you have done that has been helpful to a client or a potential client outside the normal scope of your work. Think about their response to your action.

Make a list of ways that you could be helpful to people you serve or aspire to serve. Put it somewhere where you can see it, and look at it before you begin each of your conversations.

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.