



Sell more to clients

Being retained for a piece of work at a client is a great first step, but is only a first step. Regardless of the kind of services you and/or your firm provide, there will almost always be opportunities to do additional work for a client organization if you can build on the start you have. You may be able to:

- Do more work for the people you are already working with
- Leverage your project to begin and build new relationships that will lead over time to work
- Target people in the organization you could help

Do more work for the people you are already working with

Do a great job

Doing a great job on your current project for your current client is the foundation. If you don't do a great job on your current project, there's no point getting in other doors. Everyone you meet will look for guidance to their colleague you are working with now – and you want an enthusiastic endorsement.

Build the relationship and become more valuable to them

The work you are doing with a particular individual provides a reason for being in contact with them. Continue to take the steps that build a relationship with someone (i.e., being committed to their success and development, listening to them, being helpful to them when you can, looking out for and dealing with their pushaway reactions, and staying in touch). Use every opportunity you have to better understand them and how they work, in addition to doing a great job on the content of the work. Inspire them to want to keep you around.

If you attend to both building the relationship and doing an outstanding job on the project, you will find yourself taking a second lap around the “growth cycle” – a process through which progressively stronger and more valuable relationships are built. To reach the point of beginning to work with a client, you have likely begun the first loop around the cycle – you



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have created some trust, listened deeply, been given important information (while you were trying to obtain the work) and were able to craft what the client viewed as an approach that would benefit them. At the same time, it benefits you.

Doing the project successfully will create profitable revenue for you (that is, a project that you are happy to have because it has good margins) and will also create a satisfied customer. This will increase the trust above where you were at the start of your engagement, which will enable the client to be even more thoughtful and forthcoming when you listen to them. This will yield more opportunity for you to create additional win/win projects.

You can also put together a list of questions about the client and their organization to which you'd like to learn the answers over time. As you meet with your client, or have a meal with them that is part business and part social, you can work 1-2 of your questions into the conversation. Over a few months, you will learn a great deal about them.

Leveraging your project to meet new people

In the course of doing your work, you will (or you can) meet other people in the client organization and begin relationships with them.

People adjacent to your project

Many people within the client organization may sit at the edges of your project. They might be internal customers or internal suppliers of the people you are working with. They might be people who are providing data for you or who show up at some meetings because someone else invites them. Since what you do affects them, you have good reasons to talk with them. You can tell them you want to meet with them because "I want to make sure that we do our work in the way that makes it easier for you to do what you do." When you meet, you can say something like "As I do my work, I'd like to do it in a way that supports what you are trying to do, if possible, and avoids inadvertently making your work more difficult. It will be easier for me to help and to avoid harming if I know what you are trying to do."

For people adjacent to the project, you can suggest a location that is work-related (such as the other person's office) or a less formal setting, such as meeting for breakfast or lunch.

The peers of your client

If your client leads part of an organization (or of a unit), then he or she

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likely has peers who run other parts. They might report to the same person as your client does. With these people, your introduction is similar to above but focused on the business overall:

I'm interested in understanding as much as I can about the business/function we are working with here at Acme Enterprises. I want to help people here achieve their goals as much as I and the rest of my company can. Your perspective will help me better understand where what I am doing fits with what you are doing or with how the business is evolving.

In many companies, the offices of your client's peers will be down the hall from your client's office. Poke your head in and introduce yourself, or say hello at the coffee machine. Suggest getting together for breakfast or lunch

Walking the halls/ reading the walls

When you can be physically present at a client site, take advantage of the opportunity to get out and meet people. The coffee bar and the cafeteria provide an opportunity to meet people you don't yet know. You can find out what they do, and try to be helpful to them. Publicly posted information – such as job postings and meeting announcements – can also help you understand what is happening in the organization

You can also continue to do your research about the company, its competitors and its industry. This provides you with additional information about what is happening, grist to start conversations with people in the organization and evidence for them that you are not just doing a task but are interested in what happens to them.

Go to breakfast or lunch with people because you want to meet them

It takes some courage to contact a stranger and just ask them to breakfast or lunch, but it's easier to do when you already will be nearby. You can just ask anyone you'd like to meet at a company (except perhaps your client's boss, if your client minds!) to get together. The worst that can happen is that they turn you down repeatedly.

Helping your client with other tasks (that involve other people)

Your client likely has other responsibilities besides what you are working on. As you learn more about them, try to be helpful in small ways. As you prove yourself valuable, you may have the opportunity to interact with other people who are working on these other tasks with your client. These are more new connections for you.

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Target people in the organization you could help

When you've successfully served one part of an organization, you may be able to convert that initial success into a broader footprint. You can do it with a simple version of an account plan

Know the company's critical issues, and the issues faced by each prospective client individual



Begin by understanding the overall organization's most critical issues and the most critical issues in each part of the organization. No matter what service you provide, presenting yourself as part of the solution to a challenge they've already identified as critical list is a good idea. If an issue isn't one of their highest priorities they'll likely not get around to working on it – no matter how valuable working on it might be for them. The company has its priorities and so do individual business leaders.

Identify your client-specific value proposition

The work you've already done for the organization strengthens your value proposition for that organization. You now have company-specific knowledge – about their business, about the way that they work, about what it takes to complete an assignment there in a stellar way. You've established relationships that can make you more effective; you know your way around and know people inside who can help you do a good job on your next project for the company. Your company-specific skills and knowledge provide additional reasons to work with you instead with your competitors (who include “do it ourselves” and “don't do anything”).

Identify your champions (and your detractors, if any)

Figure out who in the organization will be your references. You have happy clients – and you need to understand what each would say when they are asked about working with you, because they will be asked. You also should understand what any detractors might say, because they will likely be asked too.

Ask for introductions or make them yourself

It's nice when the individual client who loves your work is close to the person who needs you next, but that doesn't always happen, especially in large organizations. If your champion believes that they can make a good, warm introduction, then definitely ask them to do so. If they don't think they can or they don't want to, then figure out how you will introduce yourself to people in the organization you want to meet. You might make

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a phone call, or stop by their office to talk with their assistant (if you are already on site) or send them a note. You may need a strategy with several steps in order to get to the person you want to reach. Referencing your work at their company greatly strengthens your approach.

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