5 Tips for Improving Client Relationships



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Client relationships are like any other relationship. They require effort, time, and attention to improve and maintain

their quality. When you consistently invest in relationship building, you should see a clear return, not only in the form of business growth but in how fulfilling the work is.

When you strengthen relationships with existing clients, it increases the likelihood of repeat business and referrals, which sets you and your business up for long-lasting success.

So, where do you start? Here are five tips for cultivating strong, sustainable, and more fulfilling relationships with your clients.

1. Really get to know your client.

Any healthy relationship requires consistent effort, and this is true for clients as well. In the beginning, doing your research is key to understanding their industry, goals and preferred methods of getting work done, but it doesn’t end there. Really getting to know your clients strengthens your bond and makes working together a more enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

An easy way to keep up with what’s going on with clients is through social media. By now, most brands use at least one major platform, and by following your clients’ businesses or organizations, you create an opportunity to talk about their latest news, products or success in a way that shows you’re paying attention. If your client sends email newsletters or uses a blog for company updates, these can also be great tools for digging deeper into their business.

But what about who they are as people? Yes, social media can also be helpful in learning personal details, but it comes with great risk and responsibility. Balancing the boundaries of professional and personal social media is challenging, and there are many different things to consider. However, a standard rule of thumb is to avoid personal social media connections with clients and focus your energy on learning who

they are through the organic conversations you have while working together.

Once rapport is established – for example, your client has shared details about their family or hobbies – and if you feel comfortable with it, asking about a vacation or their child's lead role in the school play can deepen your relationship and help you see the person beyond the project. Just remember, this is a client relationship, not a friendship, and creating firm boundaries for yourself will help you avoid messy conflicts.

2. Be yourself.

As you're getting to know your clients, they're getting to know you too, and it's important they get to know the *real* you. It's tempting to try and fit what you think a client wants, but if that's not what you authentically bring to the table, you're setting yourself up for disappointment in the long run. You want your clients to feel confident in their hiring decision, which is just as often based on how well they feel you'll work together personality-wise as your resume stats.

Being yourself and sharing your experiences also gives clients the chance to resonate with your story and feel more confident trusting you to help them. When they get to know you as a person, not just a service provider, it strengthens your bond and can show you aren't just phoning it in for a paycheck. Bottom line: don't be afraid to be yourself – and if you are, that's a red flag that this client might not be quite right for you.

The number one problem shared among entrepreneurs today is finding, vetting, hiring, and retaining expertise.

3. Embrace feedback.

Asking for feedback can seem scary at first, but it’s crucial to improving relationships with clients. Eighty-five percent of small- and mid-size enterprises say client feedback has been beneficial to their businesses, and this is especially true for service providers and anyone whose business depends on having clients.

Getting feedback not only shows that you’re committed to delivering the best possible work, but that you value the client’s needs and desires enough to listen. A 2011 Gallup poll showed that companies that employ regular feedback practices have a nearly 15 percent lower turnover rate than companies who don’t, and this applies to client relationships as well. The poll might be nearly a decade old but the lesson holds true: When you create the opportunity for regular feedback, you decrease the likelihood of losing that client.

But feedback practices don’t just happen, so planning is key. During onboarding, discuss whether your client prefers formal satisfaction surveys, regular status updates or informal conversations. This will help you understand your client and makes it easy for them to tell you what’s working well, and more importantly, what isn’t. And with,

The most important thing to remember about client feedback is that it means nothing without concrete actions. Having a plan in place to address concerns or criticisms shows you’re committed to improving your business processes and shows clients you listen and value what they share.

And feedback doesn’t just help with current clients. When you solicit feedback on completed projects, you make it possible to make changes that will improve your performance for future clients. Not only that, but when you take the time to truly listen to clients, you may even increase the possibility of referrals

4. Build trust by exceeding expectations.

One of top ways to improve client relationships is to deliver results that exceed your client’s expectations. You may have heard the catchphrase ‘under-promise and over-deliver,’ but your true aim should be to ‘have clear-cut expectations and consistently achieve them.’ This builds trust with your clients and is more sustainable than trying to beat every deadline or exceed every sales goal.

You can also exceed expectations by finding ways to make life easier for your clients. When you send a video call link, prepare a meeting agenda or include a summary at the end of a detailed email, it shows you value your client’s time and are someone who helps lighten their load. While high-quality work should always be your goal, these small stress-relievers are a great way to set yourself apart and build a reputation as someone who goes above and beyond.

5. Remember that the tiny, noticeable things matter.

Going above and beyond for your clients is a staple of building good relationships, and tiny, noticeable things are the best way to achieve it. Sure, you could tell your client you’re grateful for their feedback in an email, but sending them a handwritten card is ever better. It makes the client feel special, but more importantly, it adds that personal touch that’s so often missing in today’s increasingly digital world.

Other small things that can make a big difference are: sending your client an article you think they’ll enjoy, shouting out their successes or public thank-yous on social media, adding a personal note to invoices, and sending small, thoughtful gifts

just because.

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