

Being a Trusted Advisor Requires Communicating Like One!

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Trusted advisors are priceless, particularly to key decision makers. When they need to reach a decision, they dial. They give their TA entree into all parts of their organization. Because they know their trusted advisor has a great deal of knowledge, they usually accept and act on the person's recommendations. The benefits to being a trusted advisor, versus the person who fixes or sells something, obviously are enormous. You are too valuable to let go, even if there has been a snafu or price increase. The key to being a trusted advisor has a lot to do with how one communicates. If you aspire to being perceived as a trusted advisor, four skills are necessary.

Good listener

First and foremost, you must be an excellent listener, and that takes work. It requires staying in the moment - not jumping to conclusions. Good listeners pay full attention to what the person is saying at all times. They periodically summarize what they hear to make sure they correctly understand. When they hear a need, they acknowledge it and comment on its importance. They also look for opportunities to link what the individual is saying to a point they want to make or clarify. When the speaker is not clear, they ask some questions so that they aren't prescribing without diagnosing. They resist the temptation to offer a solution or lecture. Finally, they do not interrupt or talk over the person.

Challenging questioner

Trusted advisors also ask challenging questions. They get the individual to think out-of-the box with broad-based, non-fact questions. Their questions help the individual analyze and evaluate perplexing issues or to think about the implication of either adding or removing a constraint. Additionally, they separate logic from emotion and uncover faulty assumptions. While they ask questions, they don't an-

swer them. They leave that up to the individual. As a consequence of their questions, trusted advisors enable people to reach difficult decisions on their own.

Subject matter expert

Trusted advisors have a lot of knowledge and experience. People look up to them. They call upon them when there are problems. These individuals have a reputation for readily sharing what they know, whether it is industry information or product knowledge in clear, simple terms. They are masters at finding the right words to convey a point in a positive manner. They give reasons, not orders, and are approachable and readily available. They only give advice when asked. They understand their role is to influence and guide the other person into making a decision on his own.

Real friend

Trusted advisors have earned people's trust over a period of time by being a real friend. They do the right thing for the right reason and keep their own interests in check. Others describe them as moral and ethical. They are supportive and have a deep understanding of the personalities involved. Based on the way they communicate, whether it is tone of voice, facial expression, or other non-verbals, they convey confidence and have a calming effect.

If you wish to be a trusted advisor, consider whether these are skill sets you currently possess. If they are not, determine what you must do to demonstrate these qualities on a consistent basis.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.