

How to Become a Trusted Advisor

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What business person wouldn't covet being thought of as a trusted advisor! Obviously, customers would act on your recommendations and refer you to other business acquaintances. They would turn to you first to improve the quality of their business and sign contract after contract, earning you a lot of money and respect.

Many people assume what it takes to being a trusted advisor is having "good advice" to offer. It's a lot more than that! It first means earning some one's trust so that they share their problems and seek you out for guidance. To be a trusted advisor, you have to know how to earn trust.

Trust is not instantaneous. It is earned over time through a series of small steps. It can easily be lost if one cares more about the transaction than the relationship. It is impossible to be a trusted advisor without a strong relationship with the other party.

At the heart of being a trusted advisor is a focus on the other person, rather than one's self. This is often demonstrated by being an attentive listener. Simple rapport-building techniques, such as looking for commonalities or acknowledging the individual's way of thinking demonstrate you are paying very close attention.

Instead of judging or quickly prescribing a solution, attentive listeners ask lots of questions that get the individual to analyze and evaluate past events or to envision the future with the removal of certain constraints. Through their questions, they demonstrate they know and understand the client's business and business issues. They have done their homework and are prepared to answer any tough questions the client has.

When advice is finally given, it is after recognizing and responding to the client's emotions. Without considering the sensitivities of the situation or the individual, the advice may not be heard. The good trusted advisor weighs his words carefully and expresses his ideas with the utmost respect.

He often turns assertions into questions to sound less prescriptive.

Obviously, the real role of a trusted advisor is to guide the individual's decision-making process by helping the person to understand the various options and their consequences. Only after lots of input from the individual should the trusted advisor make a recommendation.

Finally, great trusted advisors always tell the truth, even if it is bad news. They also keep their word. Any commitments offered must be fulfilled in a timely manner.

When clients feel you have their best interests at heart because you have demonstrated time and time again your focus is on helping them to grow their business or to solve problems, they will see you as a trusted advisor. They will hold your relationship close and value it.

For further insights into being a Trusted Advisor, read the book, *The Trusted Advisor* by Daivid Maister, Charles Green and Robert Galford published by the Free Press.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our website, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.