TRANSCRIPT
PODCAST #12: CONNECTING WITH YOUR CLIENT

VOICE-OVER: Here is this week's Raising the Bar podcast for Business To Business Magazine with Business Development Coach Robin Hensley.

ROBIN: Of all the different kinds of business relationships, the service provider/client connection offers some of the most interesting challenges. Today, the loudest voice or most outrageous claims no longer win. It's the steady, trustworthy relationship that means the most.

Hello. I'm Robin Hensley and this week's edition of your Raising the Bar podcast will show you how to win clients from a different perspective – the client's perspective!

The current market environment is all about service to the client, and the person marketing a service must know what the decision-maker needs and how that decision-maker likes to be approached.

Sustaining long-term associations is becoming an increasingly complex talent. This is true with your current clients, and it's especially true when building relationships with potential clients.

Competition is all around us, and clients are demanding more. What will help us deal with greater demands and create an environment where the relationship can be successful for all involved? There are three areas you must consider and remember, throughout the marketing process.

- The first is obvious, but don't overlook it. Earn trust by building positive interpersonal relationships.

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- The next two are a little tricky and require your powers of research and observation. Learn to interpret the client's specific hierarchy of needs and wants, and

- Identify how your client likes to receive and process information. Surely, we've all run into a client who never responds to emails, only personal phone calls, and another client with just the opposite demand. Never calls, always puts it in writing.

To accomplish these relationship-building goals, we must understand our own personal style, and then meld it with the other person's personal style. Think of it as a modern day version of finding out, "What's your sign?" Back in the day, twenty-something's wanting to find a mate or a date would try meeting someone who would complement their astrological sign. Now let's look at that same concept, only from a 2008 professional standpoint.

Since ancient times, philosophers, scientists, and business people have observed personalities that seem to fall into four large categories. Although we can call those categories by various names, I'll use the terms based on the Marston Model of Personal Style that we commonly call DISC Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientious.

According to communication consultant Dr. Beverly Langford, most of us have one controlling style. It's our default style, the one that we always fall back on, even though we tend to be combinations of more than one style.

We know that the Dominant "D" is all about results, the Influence "I" wants the spotlight and positive approval, the Steady "S" builds deep relationships and hates conflict, and the Conscientious "C" fears making a mistake and glories in details.

Which style are you? If you've been following my podcasts you'll have a pretty good idea of my own category – I'm a D – Dominant – I want results -- results! We often forget that when we're marketing a service, our clients fall into specific

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categories, too; and they may not automatically correlate with what you, personally, bring to the relationship. As painful as this realization is, don't assume your client sees the world from your perspective, no matter how on-target you think you are. As we know, in the service industry the client rules, so our job is to figure out that person's style and modify our own behavior to suit the situation.

"But Robin," you might be thinking…"You are a business development expert. How do I use these techniques when I'm at the introduction stage, say, meeting with a referred client for the first time?" Well, you are right to be concerned. We've all blown meetings where we have been blindsided by a potential client's personality.

To avoid making that mistake again, ask the person who referred you, "What kind of person will I be dealing with? Are there things we can chit chat about, or is that person just interested in the facts and figures?" Knowing things like this in advance can help smooth the way.

I know, it sounds complicated at first, but pretty soon, you'll be able to make your client assessments quickly.

Use Your DISC knowledge to spot your client's style. Atlanta-based Triaxia Partners offers a special DISC module, "Selling with Style." Although in professional services we don't "sell" to our clients, the principles are the same in business development. The module addresses how to spot the personality of a potential client. Here are a few clues to help you make the right assessment.

Anticipate typical questions clients will ask, based on their style:

High D's (Dominant) and High I's (Influential) will typically make faster buying decisions. The D will ask about quality, results, and how fast he or she can either receive the product or reap the benefits of the service.

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The I type will tend to want to know who else is using the product or service -- the more high profile the better -- and will ask questions like, “Can you offer a special deal?” or “Will you be available if a problem occurs?”

The High S (Steady) may want to know if what you are offering has a positive history and a proven track record. The latest and greatest may make the High S a bit nervous. Safety and security may be the issue.

The High C (Conscientious) may want to conduct some independent research. At the very least, the C will ask many questions about the firm’s and your own record of performance, analyzing the pros and cons of the situation before a relationship is formed.

It might help you to review a list of your clients and potential clients, deciding what personality styles you are dealing with from the short description I’ve just given you. That could help you become more attuned to noticing the differences.

Here are some Do’s and Don’ts for Business Development Success.

With a D (Dominant):
Be sure of yourself and your produce or service.
Don’t talk too much or get buried in the details.
Here’s a personal perspective as a Dominant: If you bore me, I will ignore you. Ouch! By the way, do you know the kind of person who fits into this category most of the time? Entrepreneurs and CEOs.

With an I (Influential):
Stress the new, special, and novel, and let the High I do a lot of talking.
Don’t forget to socialize and listen.

With an S (Steady):
Exhibit patience; ask and answer questions carefully.

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Don't rush or come across as pushy or abrupt.

With an C (Conscientious):
Come organized, prepared to answer questions in detail, and ready to respond fully to objections. Don't be vague, casual or dismissive, and avoid a loud vocal delivery and dramatic body language. I'll bet you have some of your own contacts in mind when thinking about this category – How about CFOs or accountants?

Designing business development strategies that consider your client's personality can make the difference between frustration and fulfillment. Of course, it gets even more complicated when you are dealing with multiple personalities, but knowing how to do this can give you an additional edge in achieving your personal success.

Well, that's our program for today. Remember, it's not about sales. It's about customer service; and knowing your client is one of the best things you can do.

Until next time, I'm Robin Hensley, with Raising the Bar, encouraging you to build your business, one client relationship at a time.

VOICE-OVER: You have been listening to a Raising the Bar program on Connecting with Your Client, with Business Development Coach Robin Hensley. For a full transcript of this program, stop by the Business To Business Magazine website at btobmagazine.com or go to raisingthebar.com.

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