

What Clients Want!



By
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In the new millennium, clients have seen both rapid and dramatic changes in their business world as markets have grown from local to national to global. Clients are looking for suppliers who add value by exceeding expectations and providing increased profits. Technology no longer offers a competitive advantage, and clients have become much wiser about the type of supplier with whom they need to engage.

Back in the 'olden days' of the 70's and 80's, clients were happy to relate to salespeople as 'fonts of product knowledge' and occasionally someone who was interesting and could tell a good story. Clients were treated to the traditional 'Features & Benefits' approach via a variety of communication methods and an even bigger variety of *Presentations skills*. They were on the receiving end of representatives eager to demonstrate their *Selling skills* of 'Overcoming Objections' and eventually 'Closing the Sale', having delivered the same 'pitch' to each different client. The focus for representatives was '*develop better skills*' as clients wanted and treated representatives as **Vendors**.

During the 90's, clients wanted to form 'Strategic Alliances, Partnerships' and generally wanted more from their suppliers. For a successful supplier this meant they became a '**Preferred Supplier**'. In order to achieve this relationship and status, representatives became Business Development Managers or Business Advisors. Traditional selling gave way to Consultative and Collaborative selling and the focus for development managers was '*changing behaviour and learning consultative skills*'. Clients wanted answers to their issues and problems. In order to uncover these, they were asked a series of questions like "*what is the biggest business issue that keeps you awake at night?*" and sometimes suppliers listened to their answers!

Clients are now looking for partners who understand and can help them achieve their business needs, desires, priorities and aspirations. They need also to be able to help them eliminate or manage their, problems, pressures pain and fears through a deep understanding and application of empowering relationship management, they are looking for **Trusted Advisers**.

Where are you now?

Honestly look at the diagram below, where are you with your various clients, **Vendor - Preferred Supplier** or **Trusted Adviser**? Could you improve where you are now? Probably, Trusted Adviser can be a difficult relationship to achieve for any supplier.



and would want to be seen as trustworthy, but we are dealing with perception, and the other person's perception is their reality.

Trust & trustworthiness are at the heart of being a Trusted Adviser and are very personal traits. We are all born trusting, so to become mistrusting and suspicious is a learned behaviour. This change can occur for various reasons e.g., past experiences (let-downs and disappointments.) Our natural temperament also has an influence on whether we find it easy or difficult to trust and how trustworthy we may be considered. We all believe we are

What is Trust?

In order to be considered as a Trusted Adviser, two things need to happen. The client needs to be prepared to trust you, and you need to demonstrate that you are worthy of that trust, in other words, trustworthy. This does not just entail being honest and full of integrity, but requires you to be 'professionally competent' to deliver the expected outcome, consequence or result.

Trust is a currency of almost every interpersonal relationship. The deeper the relationship becomes, the more vital the part trust plays. It is unseen but it is what frees us to collaborate confidently with each other. When a client trusts you, communication is likely to be open and frequent. There is little fear in confronting issues, conflict is quickly resolved, all of which leads to a deepening of relationship.

Trust

"Being prepared to willingly relinquish control, making oneself vulnerable to another, in order to achieve a certain outcome or consequence. Trust grows as a result of positive experiences accumulated over time."

In order to understand trust better, it is good to define what we mean by trust. My definition would be: "***To trust is to willingly relinquish control, making yourself vulnerable to someone else for a certain outcome or consequence. Trust grows as a result of positive experiences accumulated over time.***" It's a sobering thought when you consider that is what we are asking clients to do with us in order for us to be considered a 'Trusted Adviser'.

Trust is...

Accountability & Responsibility

If someone considers you to be trustworthy, then by accepting that trust you become accountable for a satisfactory outcome or result. You also accept the responsibility that goes along with it. We are responsible for delivering to expectation whilst honouring the trust that has been placed in us.

Vulnerability and Risk

By putting his/her trust in you, clients can make themselves vulnerable to you by relinquishing partial or perhaps even total control for an outcome. This is not done either easily or lightly. Strong emotions are always involved when we make ourselves vulnerable, only to find that trust is broken. We feel let down and usually angry with the person who betrayed our trust. If we trust someone, we are taking the risk that for better or worse they will affect the outcome. One measure of whether we truly trust someone is whether we set up a back-up plan or not. If we do, then this may be prudent, but it does demonstrate that we do not wholly trust in the first place. If they subsequently find out about the back up, they will immediately know they are not being fully trusted.

Hard to Do

Apart from those who wish to remain independent, experience is the other main reason why people sometimes find it hard to trust. It may be that they have trusted someone in the past who abused that trust. This can lead to disappointment or even hurt. Our natural response to this is to prevent it happening again, which in turn can make us wary of trusting that person again, or trusting anyone in a similar situation. It may also be that we were trusted and let someone down. This can lead us to question our own trustworthiness, producing a crisis of confidence. Perhaps the person we need to forgive is ourselves, so that we can move on and grow once again in the area of trust

Trustworthiness defined and measured

My definition: ***“Trustworthiness is keeping one’s word and being worthy of others’ confidence: sound in principles, full of integrity, reliable and dependable.”*** My measurement is *The Trustworthiness Quotient™* defined as ‘A method for monitoring personal progress to achieving Trustworthy Adviser status’. Why measure trustworthiness?

- In order to make concepts tangible that are otherwise intangible
- To provide a methodology that enables you to construct a “Trustworthiness Pathway”
- To enable you to benchmark your trustworthiness against that of others
- To measure your own progress along the pathway

Trustworthiness

“Trustworthiness is keeping one’s word and being worthy of others’ confidence: sound in principles, full of integrity, reliable and dependable”

“The Trustworthiness Quotient™ (TTQ). Simply stated, TTQ says that Trustworthiness is comprised of several elements which can be seen below:

The Elements

Dependability

Integrity

Credibility

Empathy

Developed over Time

Have you consistently demonstrated the ability to deliver on commitments during advisory interactions?

Have you displayed personal as well as business ethics and commitment to mutual success to the client?

Has individual competence, process and methodologies for success been proven over time?

Have you demonstrated ‘buy in’ for the client’s personal and business vision that involves true partnership?

Dependent upon the degree of: (Demonstrated with each interaction)

Self-interest

To what extent do you appear interested only in your success?

Inconsistency

Does how you operate appear incongruent to the client?

Trustworthiness =

D + I + C + E

SI + IC

Let’s examine each element in turn

Dependability

In order to be considered trustworthy, you must be able to demonstrate that others can depend on you and can rely on you to do what you said you would do. It is important that this occurs not only in the ‘big’ things, but in even the ‘little’ things as this is an indicator for all things. This must also be achieved without supervision and the need for someone continually checking on methodology and progress. It is being faithful and keeping promises even when it is costly or inconvenient to do so. It is being utterly reliable, not dependent on whether your feelings have changed, or whether circumstances have changed. The more often you are able to demonstrate that you can be relied upon, the more the dependability factor will be increased. This is one of the factors important in helping trust grow.

Integrity

In order to be considered trustworthy you must be full of integrity. This means always doing what you say you will do – always speaking the truth for the other's greater good, and never intentionally misleading other people. It is honestly matching words and feelings with thoughts and actions. There can be no compromise in business dealings through seeking personal financial advantage. Integrity means that speech and behaviour will conform to a high ethical code, and truthfulness will be exercised with wisdom and discretion. It is about delivering the right information to the right person at the right time, and in the right manner. Integrity has no desire other than for the greater good of other people. It has no desire to deceive, take advantage of or manipulate. Integrity denotes having a value system of the highest order.

Credibility

In order to be considered trustworthy, it is necessary to demonstrate your credibility. Credibility speaks about your qualification to do the task in hand. It refers to your technical ability to hold the title Trustworthy Adviser. Credibility is also about your professional ability to achieve what you promised to achieve. This may start with testimonials from other people who have experience of your advisory capacity.

This does not just apply to the content of what you do but also the attitude with which you carry out your work. In content it is important to be accurate and honest, not exaggerating or making false claims – not telling lies, always the truth, even if at times this is difficult. Choosing the best time and delivering with grace are good rules for delivering some difficult truths. The receiver needs to know that you are for them – on their side – and will be more willing to receive if the truth is not punctuated with criticism. Credibility qualifies you to offer a considered solution, in a manner that instils confidence in the receiver.

Empathy

In order to be considered trustworthy, you must be able to demonstrate empathy. Empathy is the power of imaginatively entering another person's experience and conveying this to the other person so they know that you are travelling with them on this particular journey. It is showing a genuine interest in people and their views and feelings. It is being good at valuing individuals and welcoming their contributions and ideas in projects and discussions. The person, who has learned to empathise, knows how to make other people feel secure, respected, important and valued. Empathy requires both sensitivity and a commitment of time, the willingness to operate on other people's schedules rather than be focussed on your own needs. Empathy produces loyalty which says I will be for you even when others may be against you. I will defend you even when it costs me something or puts me at some kind of risk.

Self-Interest

In order to be considered trustworthy, it is necessary to demonstrate a low level of self-interest. Instead you should demonstrate a high level of selflessness. That means not always being motivated by getting your own needs met. Rather being motivated by meeting the needs of the client. Greed is often a powerful driver in self-interest. This is best dealt with by always having a desire for the client's greater good, rather than being concerned about what you stand to gain. The person full of self interest radiates the message 'I am my most important person'. They have a need to always have the answer and be in the limelight, and usually a large ego which makes it difficult for them to truly see beyond them-selves. They have not yet learned the basic fact of life that getting your own needs met is best achieved through meeting the needs of others.

Inconsistency

In order to be considered trustworthy, it is important to demonstrate a low level of inconsistency in all that you do. Instead you should demonstrate a high level of consistency. Consistency is about having harmonious responses at all times. Consistency requires that we live by principles and not by the way we feel. Consistency means that whatever the task or situation, we are prepared to analyse the facts as required and give a measured and considered response, rather than acting on a whim or impulse. It is about being there for people in bad times as well as good, not just being a fair weather adviser. It is about being considered an anchor in a storm and not someone who just reacts when you start to be blown off course. Consistency requires an even keel. Not given to being pleasant and involved one day, then cool and distant the next. Not highly motivated and enthusiastic one minute, then down in the dumps and could not care less the next. How do you measure up on all the above?

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If you would like to speak to the author or have one of our Trusted Advisers contact you, give us a call on: Tel: +44 (0)1732 462 444 – or email at: Ken.Buist@TheTrustedAdviser.com

If you would like the follow-up to this article entitled – **Tips on Developing Trustworthiness Elements**, which demonstrates how to increase trustworthiness, you can download free at:

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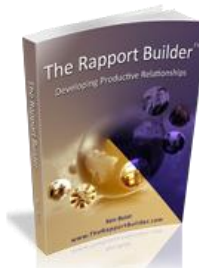
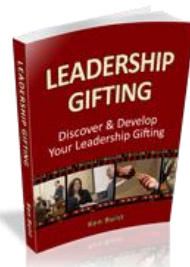
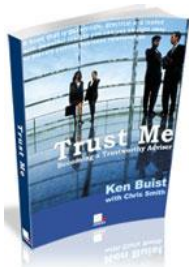
Ken Buist is an author, transformational speaker and **CEO at The Trusted Adviser, Leaders In Personal, Sales & Leadership Transformation**. Ken has presented his methodologies at seminars & workshops in over 20 countries, to individuals, teams & organisations that have to date increased their revenue by **over £100 million**.



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