

2010 The Year of Relationship

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The economic situation has impacted all of us, regardless of our job or industry. Many of us have seen dramatic layoffs, leaving some of us doing several jobs at one time. The pressure to succeed and exceed expectations is unbelievable. In these down times, relationships become more and more important. People need to trust others, whether the person is an outside vendor or member of a cross-functional team. When people are under the gun, they do not have the time or energy to source new relationships, unless it is absolutely necessary. However, the danger is in taking these relationships for granted.

The question is what are you doing to nurture your current relationships?

Here are three suggestions.

1. **Go above and beyond.** Don't wait for others to ask for information, anticipate their needs and provide the data. For example, run projections ahead of time. Look at trends or analyze what is different. Don't wait for the month or quarter to end. Email or fax them information on their competitors. Keep your eye on their department or company and figure out what comes next for them. Make an impact on their business. Don't just be visible. Individuals will be more likely to renew or adjust plans and policies if you have been very diligent and gone beyond what is expected.
2. **Contact them, other than to ask for business.** Relationships are often deepened over lunch or a game of golf. Take the time to get to know the people that you currently do business with. Share your interests. Tell them about yourself. Ask questions about their family, the weather, their vacation. Update them on anyone you know in common. Your warmth and friendliness will be noticed. Many of us may feel we are imposing or bothering people by our calls. The opposite is true. Moreover, people like to do business with those they feel they know on a more personal basis.

3. **Be true to your word.** Deliver on your commitments. Under promise and over-deliver. At all costs, avoid "stone walling if you don't know." Tell the truth, not just what others want to hear. Provide a consistent, attentive level of service that makes others see you in the best possible light.

2010 is certainly the year of relationships. As people hunker down, they look to those they know rather than to outsiders. Take the time to deepen your existing relationships and notice the benefits you will receive.

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