

Getting Serious about Trust?

Some Tips on What NOT to Do

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Being a Trusted Advisor, in the eyes of many experts, is the Holy Grail. It's what you should strive to become if you are selling a product or a service. It takes time and perseverance to develop such a relationship, but the rewards for both parties are enormous. However, be aware there are some things that will erode the relationship. Assess what follows to insure that you are doing nothing that puts this all important relationship in jeopardy.

- 1. Don't order.** Lead, but don't tell. Nobody likes to feel you are the parent telling them what to do. People respond best when you involve them in determining an action plan or next steps. Their preference is for you to give them strategies on how to think or decide. Ultimately, it is up to the client to choose.
- 2. Don't lay blame.** If things go wrong, perhaps with a delivery or an install, take ownership and do not become defensive. Concentrate on what can be done to resolve the issue and never, never lay blame.
- 3. Don't focus on winning.** While people want a subject matter expert, they don't want someone only focused on the end game. It will erode the relationship. Remember, it's not about you; it's about them.
- 4. Don't worry that you always have to be right.** You are not Yoda so relax. If you don't know the answer and you're the subject matter expert, admit it or use your network.
- 5. Stop talking and listen.** It's easier to say you are a good listener than to be one. The number one skill for being a Trusted Advisor is good listening skills. The client should do most of the talking, not you. You should not be filling blank airtime.
- 6. Don't interrogate.** Of course, ask questions but ask questions that get the client to think. A constant barrage of "fact" questions will not engage or help people to envision a new way of thinking.
- 7. Don't forget to watch the person's reactions.** Any changes in your client's body language or voice should be duly noted. If you see them looking perplexed or if you see their body language getting rigid, be sure to make adjustments in your body language. Lean in. Be more affirming. Smile.
- 8. Don't forget to show empathy.** People need to see you care. Validate their issue or problem with a statement such as, *"That must have been awful."* OR *"I am so sorry that happened to you."* Even a simple nod or sympathetic smile can mean a lot to a person when they are stressed. If you feel something is bothering your client, pay attention and acknowledge what you see. *"From the look on your face, I can see this is difficult to discuss. Am I right about that?"*
- 9. Don't forget to call back.** When there is a relationship, the customer expects you to return phone calls quickly. Even if you don't know the answer, be sure to return the call, instead of waiting. Any update means a lot.
- 10. Avoid being distracted.** Today's multi-tasking world makes it difficult to feel it is okay to do just one thing at a time. Your customer expects you to focus only on them. Never glance at email, take a phone call or watch people in the hall. Your customer will not feel valued and will become annoyed.

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11. **Don't take the person for granted.** Reach out to your client throughout the year for other than the sale. Send articles or whitepapers. Notice any trends in their industry. If you see their name in the paper, do send a note.
12. **Don't diagnose without a proper assessment.** It is easy to make quick judgments, but resist the temptation. Wait until all the information is in before making any recommendations.

These twelve tips are essential tips for being a Trusted Advisor. They will give you the pole position when your prices are not as competitive as others. You will be too valuable to lose as long as you remember what is important.

***Question:** Do any of your current customers see you as a Trusted Advisor? Which of the tips provided are hardest for you to remember? We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click [here](#) – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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