COWORKING by Corro

A community to help you grow, scale and thrive.

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Keys to Effective Communication with New Clients

Even if you are a veteran in your field of expertise and a gifted speaker, before you go into a meeting with a prospective client, you should be properly prepared in order to make the best impression, have an effective exchange of information, and engage in meaningful and comfortable negotiations.

Not every client is the same. Their needs and personalities vary and so do their motivations, questions, concerns, and objections. Research will help you to recognize these differences.

The information you garner in your research will be advantageous in planning your meeting or presentation, and it will be invaluable in the tight spots when you may be required to think on your feet, use your business instincts, and make a quick adjustment or decision.

Your research goals should be targeted to know the following:

- Know the Business
- Know the People
- Anticipate Questions, Concerns & Objections
- Figure out the Reasons Why a Client Might Say No
- What Will Make a Client Say Yes

Carefully prepare for the following:

- Coordinate Meeting Plans
- Plan a Thorough and Powerful Presentation
- Be Alert to the Atmosphere of the Room
- Prepare for Handling Questions
- Dealing With Interruptions
- Communication Do's and Don'ts
- Follow-Up

Know the Business

Research the history of the business, its successes and failures. Familiarize yourself with the products, services, promotional campaigns, financial situation, and its current affiliations with other businesses, contractors or agencies.

- Study annual reports, publicity material, position descriptions.
- What are their immediate and long-term challenges or problems?
- What are their goals?
- In what areas are your businesses compatible?
- How do your ideas or products help them meet their challenges or solve their problems?

The more you know, the better you will understand your client. Knowing the answers to the questions above will guide you in planning your approach, developing a strategy to cinch the deal and negotiate the business arrangements.

Know the People

Learn all you can about the people who influence decisions and those that have the final say:

Find out with whom you are meeting?
What is their level of involvement in the business?
What is the education level of the individuals?
Who is the decision maker?
Will the decision maker be in attendance?
What is taboo with them?
What information or style is likely to get their attention?
How well do they know your business or you?
How much work will you have to do to prove yourself before being accepted?
What are their needs, values, beliefs, likes, dislikes, attributes?

Gain insight into the business owner's mind. Is he or she an individual that:

- Seeks challenges – is known for initiating activities.
- Takes risks – has nothing ventured, nothing gained attitude.
- Is goal oriented or driven by results.
- Has a big ego.
- Has high energy.
- Wants to win - has an inherent dislike for losing or failure.
- Works hard and long to be successful.
- Seeks their own solutions to problems; in this way their independent nature comes into play.
- Is creative and has an active minds.
- Is a visionary.
- Challenges people who volunteer their opinions.

The more you know the more likely it is that you can determine a successful strategy for presenting your ideas. Approach your sales pitch or presentation from your client's perspective, not yours.

Anticipate Questions, Concerns, and Objections

Anticipate questions or concerns. Brainstorm with colleagues and coworkers to analyze questions that could be asked, and to determine the best answers and how to present them.

Prepare answers with examples and/or visuals as added support. Do not underestimate the value of some human interaction during a question and answer session. However, do not rely on that to sway influence or determine how you will handle objections. A well-prepared presentation is impactful when it answers questions before they are asked, identifies challenges or potential problems, and offers sound solutions – a solid indication of the depth of your thinking and capabilities, while highlighting the value of doing business with you.

Know Why a Client Might Say "No"

When you know the reasons a client might say no, you can decide ahead of time how you will preclude or handle those objections. A client might say no for the following reasons:

- Do not believe the hype – they they've been burned before.
- Unable to perceive cost/benefit - think the perceived pain outweighs the expected benefit.
- Perceive they lack the time.
- Think they already have the answers – they tapped their staff/co-workers knowledge base.
- View this as another "reengineering" program to take them back to “ground zero”.
- Do not trust the individual selling it – lack of relationship and credibility.
- Think their key staff is already doing it.
- Apprehensive about risking the "time" even if they have a satisfaction guarantee.
- Afraid to risk embarrassment.

Your research should help you determine what if any of these objections is plausible or why the decision maker perceives them to be legitimate concerns. When a company has a bad experience, it makes their people fearful and hesitate of new ideas or trying again. It means you may have to delve into what happened so you can address those concerns directly. If you sense that reluctance ahead of time you could ask to sit down with their key people to do an autopsy of a previous campaign to determine what didn’t work and why. It gives you a better opportunity to show them how you and your team are equipped to fix problems that existed the last time around.

What Might Make a Client Say "Yes"

Be proactive to understand what motivates a client so you can show them concrete examples of the extent of your knowledge, the depth of your abilities and commitment, everything that makes you different and reliable from your competition. A shrewd business person, like yourself, with proper research and planning, can influence a client to say "Yes". Organize your presentation to build in credibility, highlight your strengths, and show what you have done to eliminate your weaknesses. If you can positively show that your business fits with the client's in the following seven areas of concern you will have your client saying "Yes".

- Affordable – time and money. Time may be more important than money.
- Easy – easy to understand, easy to implement. Differentiate easy from simple. Your suggestions or solutions should not seem too unfocused, complex, or time consuming to realize results.
- Trust – you or your product or service have credibility, maybe a reputation for success
- Perceive results – you have drawn them a clear picture.
- Companies measure themselves against their competitors. You can use this to your advantage.
- Long term benefits – provide strategic rationale for the investment and potential ROI.
- Knowing that you will share in the risks and successes based on results.

You have an opportunity to show the client that your aim is not just to get the business, but be a valuable partner for their organization.

Coordinate the Meeting Plans

You can eliminate problems if you manage the logistics of the meeting in advance. Determine how much time you will need when you set the date and time for the appointment. Ask your client to allow for that amount of time. Find out if the client prefers to meet at your office or theirs. A client might prefer to see your working environment or how you and your people interact with each other. This is an opportunity for showcase your work and set up an impressing atmosphere that adds to your credibility.

If neither yours nor the client's space is suitable or can accommodate the numbers, you may have to reserve meeting space that serves your purpose and allows you the ability to control some aspects, such as adding some personal touches and putting up displays ahead of time.

If the client is coming to your office, you will have much better control of the meeting.

- Choose a comfortable environment where constraints can be loosened.
- Make sure the meeting area can be isolated from distractions and interruptions.
- Have adequate lighting, temperature control, and comfortable seating.
- Arrange seating so that everyone can hear and participate.
- Where possible have the refreshments available – supply plenty of fresh water, napkins.
- Prepare the room in advance.
- Check the climate control at least an hour before the meeting.
- Meet with your staff in advance to make sure they are available and ready.

If you are meeting at the client's offices:

- How much time will you have?
- How many of their people will attend?
- Who are they and what is their position with the company?
- Will you need more than one meeting to finalize the deal?
- In the allotted time frame what areas of the business meeting do you have time for? Is it enough to allow for the presentation, questions, discussion, negotiations and decisions?
- Don't forget to plan for bathroom or coffee breaks.

If you are visiting the client's facilities you will have coordinate with their staff to make sure your presentation does not meet any stumbling blocks.

- Where possible find out what kind of room you will be meeting in.
- How much floor space accommodates your kind of presentation?
- Does your client know how many individuals are coming with you?
- Tell them what equipment (ie. visual aids) you may be bringing so they can select and set up the right environment.
- Do you have any special needs – a power outlet, podium, microphone, table?
- Would you like to have some extra time before the meeting to set up your equipment or distribute presentation packages?

Plan a Thorough Presentation – Prepare to Streamline

You have done your research; you know the client and what he or she needs. You believe in your business and yourself. You know that you can help this client achieve success. Say all of that in a clear concise presentation that is tailored to the client's needs.

Successful business owners usually want to work with individuals who have demonstrated success and have credibility. Tell them what you did and why. Clients want to work with someone who can help them take steps to measure change, rather than allowing change to measure them – individuals who can help make the process of change more predictable, who will help transfer knowledge and capabilities to their people. Your presentation should show that you are all about helping a client's business to grow, be competitive, successful and remain strong and profitable. You know what you can offer a client - tell them about it.

People tend to remember and believe statements that are to the point and true. You want to deliver your message with conviction and enthusiasm. Practice what you will say and how you will say it.

Where possible be brief. However, to save time never leave out what is important or never talk to fast. If you know that your presentation may be long you can do a few things to make it appear shorter:

- Incorporate a timely break or two that does not interrupt the flow of your presentation.
- Allow for questions during the presentation – it will appear like you are doing all the talking.
- Include humor in your presentation – a little laughter will help.
- Interact with the listeners or participants. Ask them questions, opinions.
- Intersperse visuals and sounds where possible.
- If it is very technical presentation make sure your listeners are following you.
- You might decide that the package you leave behind for a client's review contains more details.

Corro's Performance Tuning Library
How to Prepare a Powerful Presentation –
get theclient's attention, hold interest and persuasive

Be Alert to the Atmosphere of the Room

No matter how well organized your presentation is, you should be prepared to alter it or adapt to the people and surroundings. Be alert to the atmosphere in the room. Assess the mood of the participants. Enlist the assistance of one of your colleagues - he or she can signal you if it is necessary to make a change.

No matter what happens that might interrupt you, keep your cool and above all be courteous and friendly. Do not shy away from audience questions or comments. Regard them as a sign that your listeners are interested in what you are saying. Consider yourself the expert - your listeners want your guidance and want to be involved in the presentation. View questions as opportunities to reinforce your ideas.

Handling Questions or Interruptions

You should think about how you will handle things that can occur to interrupt your presentation.

What will you do if the people at the meeting interrupt your presentation?
Can you accommodate an early question that the client is chomping at the bit to ask?
Can you keep your presentation flowing and still be cognizant of what's happening in the room?
What happens if the power fails?
What do you do if the people do not understand what you are saying, or cannot hear you?

Questions: Be prepared to answer questions.

- If someone makes a comment or asks you a question the most important thing you can do is listen.
- Look at the person while he or she is speaking.
- Make sure you understand the question. Repeat it.
- Think before responding.
- Use the same manner and tone of voice as you were using before the question.
- When responding you should look first at the person who spoke to you and then involve the whole audience in your response.

Difficult questions: Is the question or client wrong? Is the client wrong to begin with? Is the question a step in the wrong direction?

> Just because you do not approve of the question or the manner in which it was asked or what it might insinuate, does not mean you cannot use it to your benefit. Train yourself to be completely objective, humble, and turn the question into something you can work with. Again, these types of questions can be anticipated in your preparation and you can brainstorm ways to make difficult misleading questions into selling points.

Mishaps and emergencies are infrequent, but do happen. When they do, remain calm and stay in control.

- Deal with it right away
- Be prepared with plan "B"
- Concentrate on the other people in the room, not on yourself

Critics or hecklers: If you are reacting to an interruption that is off the subject, stupid or hostile it is imperative that you do not show anger or react unprofessionally. Make sure that you are not dealing with someone who is unskillfully trying to open a dialogue. Do not want to risk offending your client.

- Maintain your perspective.
- Manage your emotions and stay in control. Don’t let it become personal
- Do not embarrass anyone in front of the others.
- Be gracious and use humor where appropriate.
- Be assertive, but do not make direct eye contact, which can be an invitation to continue.

After any interruption, get back on track as soon as possible.

Communication Tips

Here are some tips to communicate more effectively:

- Provide questions, alternatives and choices to allow the client to make their own decisions
- Be specific and leave nothing to chance.
- Demonstrate that you appreciate a client's involvement.
- Identify the positives – what you see as strengths in the client's business.
- Suggest possible negatives in a business, as you perceive them, but do not go overboard in explaining or dwelling on them. The client may not see them as negatives.
- Provide suggested systems for them to follow
- Where possible be isolated from interruptions.
- Come prepared with all requirements, objectives and support material in a well organized package
- Be yourself
- Be the entrepreneur, the professional, the expert, but show your humanity
- Let the client know that you will share in the risks and successes based on results.

Tips for wording questions: When you ask specific questions to guide the client to make their own decision, use "what" questions.

> Why questions are unproductive because they tend to focus on a errors in judgements or a mistake. You do not want the client to start thinking critical thoughts. Highly self-aware people ask, "What?" because it provides more productive focus on objectives and future goals rather than mistakes. Asking "what" guides a person to recognize factors that may not have been considered before. This leads to you being able to strategize how to fix situations.

Follow-Up

When you meet with clients, it's always a good idea to follow-up fast with a memo that recaps your discussion and your perceptions while the meeting is fresh in your mind. Prompt follow-up – maximum 2 days – communicates that you view their business as a priority. It can help prevent confusion and problems later, especially when it comes to spelling out what is expected of the participants.

- Confirm any action you may have to take and when the client can expect it.
- In your follow-up, clearly list the next steps needed to get the sales process moving.
- When no commitment has been made, do not forget to ask if there is anything you can do to make the deal move forward and get commitment. Be attentive, but not desperate.

Make the follow-up process as easy as possible for your client to take the next step to firm up plans or finalize the deal.

Inspired and Committed, We Celebrate Your Journey

At Corro, we believe in the power of people. We are inspired to expand humanity's capacity for wisdom, compassion, and courage.

In our commitment to helping you achieve long-term personal development and use your organizational platform for positive impact, we celebrate the journey of lifelong learning while fostering an all-inclusive community driven environment of meaning, personal connection, and fun.

Corro is not just a Work Space – Our Aim is Helping the Community Thrive through People Success