

Print Solutions

JANUARY 2013 | VOLUME 51, NUMBER 1

Eyes on a Bright Future

Changing Industry Landscape Offers Ample Opportunities in 2013

PAGE 26

DOES SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING REALLY WORK?

Understand How Online Platforms Can Affect How You Do Business

PAGE 40

PERF-ECTION!

Learn More about the Mission and Benefits of the Print Education & Research Foundation

PAGE 58



ED VERT 2%

Customer Ser

SATISFIED

our overall experience
the overall quality of service prov
as you wanted with our

□ UNSA

■ VERY

vice

D

vided

company

How to REALLY Put Clients First: 11 Steps that Will Change Your Business for the Better

It's not easy to stop thinking about your own needs and start thinking about the client's. In fact, it goes against the grain of human nature. And yet, it's the magic bullet that makes everything else fall into place. This article explains precisely how to make the shift.

BY JOSEPH CALLAWAY AND JOANN CALLAWAY

We put the customer first. We've heard it (and probably said it) so many times it's become a cliché. And yet, while we pay lip service to the idea, few companies truly put it into practice. The fact is, we're so concerned with bottom lines, profit margins and paying the bills (at work and at home!) that we instinctively put ourselves first. But, as counterintuitive as it may seem, that anxious sense of self-preservation may be exactly what's holding you back.

When you *really* put the customer first, and put your own needs second, a whole lot of other things naturally fall into place. Tough decisions practically make themselves. Since you're no longer pitting the client's needs against your own, relationships are based on transparency and honesty. People like and trust you, and referrals flow freely.

If there is a magic bullet, putting clients first is it. It has the power to change your life, to transform your business and to bring about financial security.

But what does putting clients first *really* look like? Read on for all 11 parts of our transformative Clients First principle.

Step One: Make the Commitment.

For many people, “commitment” is a scary word — and for good reason. It implies that you have accepted responsibility, that you are “locked in” and, sometimes, that you have given up an aspect of your freedom. For all of those reasons, and many more, most commitments should not be taken lightly. But here’s the good news: Because sincere commitments require you to step up and take a stand, they often lead to great things.

If you’re comfortable with your current level of success, are satisfied with the way you do things now, or don’t really have a desire to be more involved with your customers, Clients First is probably not for you. Saying “yes” to Clients First will change the way you think and interact, and initially you might find this shift difficult. But, in the end, your new way of doing business will make everything else easy.

HOW-TO HINT: Give yourself a week to think it through before you decide. A “no” is better than a quick “yes” and a shallow commitment. Ask yourself, “What will my life really look like when I put customers first? Will I have to work late more often? Take client calls at home? Have conversations that veer away from business and into ‘personal’ territory?” If you don’t like what you envision, don’t make the commitment.

Step Two: Speak the Commitment.

Step one — making the commitment — won’t ultimately mean much if you don’t share your intentions with others. If you say nothing, your commitment will begin to wither like a potted flower that isn’t watered. However, speaking your commitment gives you strength, and it’s instrumental in affirming (and reaffirming) to yourself what your goals are and why.

We found that sharing our intentions to always put clients first with our employees, with colleagues and with clients themselves made them “real.”

It keeps us on the proverbial straight and narrow. Unless we want to prove ourselves to be liars, we *have* to “walk” what we “talk.”

HOW-TO HINT: If you get a negative reaction when you speak your commitment, channel David Letterman. The late-night TV host often reads jokes from index cards. If one happens to fall flat, he simply flicks the card away. This flicking gesture protects him from rejection. If someone dismisses your spoken commitment (or worse, mocks it), make a flicking gesture and move on.

Step Three: Keep the Commitment.

Some days, you’ll want to say, “To heck with this difficult person! He can fend for himself from now on!” Or you might just be so tired and overwhelmed that you’re tempted to cut some corners and let some nonpriorities slide. You must try as hard as you can to resist the temptation.

Clients First is something you must consciously recommit to every day. Remember, it’s usually not the big things that trip us up; it’s the little steps we miss. One day you let an aggravating client get to you, for example, and the next you’re prejudging a potential client. Eventually, though, keeping your commitment to Clients First becomes easier. It’s a habit that will become hardwired into your life. And, by that point, the benefits, rewards, satisfaction and success will be rolling in — and you’ll be proud of the person you’ve become.

HOW-TO HINT: Remember the Napoleon Hill story from his classic “Think and Grow Rich.” A miner worked a claim for years before eventually giving up and going back home. A few years later, an amateur visiting the area found a pickaxe and gave a promising wall a try. In less than an hour, he discovered one of the West’s richest strikes. Don’t stop three feet from gold!

Step Four: Get Out of the Way.

When it comes to being successful, having a healthy ego can be a blessing and a curse. Yes, you need a strong sense of self in order to avoid being trampled on and marginalized by competitors *and* by clients. But when you start to believe that

winning, recognition and accolades are “the point” of what you do, you’ve veered off onto a destructive path.

Everybody is different, and everybody will develop different ways to redirect their egos. What’s crucial is that it happens — that you get out of your own way. Remember, your job is to be a champion for your clients, to solve their problems and find them satisfying solutions. Your job is *not* to be the most important person in the room or to put others down. Believe me, when you take care of your clients first and foremost, they will take care of you through their loyalty and appreciation.

HOW-TO HINT: Notice how often you bring the story around to yourself. Stop doing that. Many people think building rapport is a matter of finding a common interest. They then dominate the common interest discussion by talking about themselves. Don’t. This is a form of arrogance and it takes your focus off the client.

Step Five: Set the Monkey Down.

The monkey that’s riding your back in the form of responsibility and pressure, that is! If you’re like most people, you probably feel burdened with myriad worries, fears and obligations. You assume that “it’s all up to me,” and you might even lie awake at night fretting over what isn’t right and what could go wrong. However, if you want to successfully care for your clients, you can’t be expending the majority of your mental energy on yourself.

HOW-TO HINT: Every time you find yourself fretting, do something for a client. Spend an hour solving a client problem you’ve been avoiding. Connect one client to another who might be able to help him. Email him a link to an article you know would interest him. Worry thrives when you procrastinate and handwring. Action is the antidote, so do something — anything — to back up your commitment to your clients.

Step Six: Put Your Faith in Others.

This has two meanings: serving others and then letting others serve you. Serving others means separating the service you



render from the paycheck you receive. No, don't give your services away for free, just make sure that padding your bank account isn't your primary motivation. In other words, do your job because you genuinely want to help your clients, and don't worry about what you'll get in return. (When you have this mindset, you'll probably find that your clients feel just as strongly about compensating you fairly!)

The second aspect of putting your faith in others is allowing them to help you by delegating tasks or leveraging others' talents. No matter how good you are, you can't do it all. And when you trust others and give them the freedom they need to do their jobs, you'll usually be pleased with the results.

HOW-TO HINT: *Practice going first.* The next time you find yourself in a position to serve someone — a boss, an employee, a client — take the leap. Don't wait for them to do something for you. Don't think about what you're going to get in

return. Going first is a way of putting your faith into action.

Step Seven: Trust the Truth.

If someone accused you of not being honest, you'd probably have the same reaction we did before discovering Clients First: "How can you even ask that? Of course I'm honest!" And by most people's standards, you probably are. But it's also likely that you aren't being totally, completely authentic in the way you handle relationships and do business.

HOW-TO HINT: *You know that thing you've wanted to say for a long time? Go ahead and say it.* Don't worry about the fallout. Bravely take the leap. You'll find that most people want the truth. Give it to them and you'll be joined together in a bond that never betrays.

Step Eight: Let the Work Be the Reward.

In the real world (and especially in a tough economy), you can't always follow the popular graduation day advice and

"do what you love." But what you *can* do, regardless of how you spend your nine-to-five hours, is choose to take pride in your work. When you consciously decide to put forth your best efforts, you'll experience greater rewards and you'll get better at what you do!

With Clients First, this step is fairly easy, because you focus on the work and often forget about money, time and perks. You care about doing the job right for your clients, and you feel wonderful when you know you've accomplished that. Having any other attitude will only make you miserable and drive clients away.

HOW-TO HINT: *At least once a year, do something that will help you get better at your job.* Maybe it's going to a seminar. Maybe it's asking the client how you can serve him better. Maybe it's shutting down your email so you can better concentrate on the task at hand. The better you get at what you do, the more rewarding it will be.

As you're implementing each step, remember that Clients First — like life itself — isn't so much a destination as it is a journey. If you commit to it, it is a path you'll be traveling for the rest of your life.



Step Nine: Learn to Like People.

Even if you already consider yourself to be a people person, chances are, you still need to learn to like them more. To truly put clients first, your No. 1 goal at each meeting should be to invite them within arms' length and make them less of a stranger.

People want to do business with individuals they like — and they like people who like them! Now, I'll admit, sometimes this can be difficult. But if you get out there and engage, you'll find that most of them are just like you: filled with worries, hopes and dreams.

HOW-TO HINT: Every time you meet with clients, ask at least one question that has nothing to do with business. Ask about their kids. Ask about their pets. Ask about their favorite food, or movie or vintage car. The conversation will likely develop in a surprising direction. As you hear their stories and get to know their joys and sorrows, you'll start liking them. And you'll find it more natural to put them first as clients.

Step 10: Turn It Around.

You, not the customer, are the expert on your business. You are the one who knows how to do what you do. But does that mean that yours is the only opinion that matters? Of course not. You should always *turn your viewpoint around* and make a sincere effort to see yourself and your business as your client does.

HOW-TO HINT: Call up an ex-client and ask her how she sees your business. Assure her up front that your goal is

not to win her back. You just want the truth about how she perceives you and the truth about what she as a customer really wanted from you. If you are willing to do this (and make no mistake, it's hard), you'll learn a lot about what needs to change.

Step 11: Give to Get.

We've all heard the expression, "The more you give, the more you get." And we understand its meaning when it comes to things like love, smiles and kindness. But how does it relate to business? You can give your clients honesty, competence and care, and hope to get those things back. But if you give away your expertise, time, energy and (gasp!) money, won't you just go broke?

Not necessarily. I remember being apprehensive about donating a large sum of money to build a Habitat for Humanity house as a Christmas gift for our clients. I thought I'd never see that money again. But, in the years since, I've learned that new clients chose us because they had learned of that donation. Now, you might not always give and get on such a large scale. But the principle works for all amounts of money, and it also works when you're giving over-and-beyond service.

Understand that giving to get isn't like a financial transaction where you give and get right there and then. There is no upfront agreement on what you'll receive or when you'll receive it. It may take time. But, rest assured, whatever you give will come back to you with interest.

HOW-TO HINT: Look for something to give away. (And don't be cheap about it!) No matter what you're giving, you make them feel special. This will keep them coming back.

As you're implementing each step, remember that Clients First — like life itself — isn't so much a destination as it is a journey. If you commit to it, it is a path you'll be traveling for the rest of your life. It will fill you with pride, clarify your perspective and promote your business's prosperity. Most of all, your clients will love you for it — and you will love them! 📧

Joseph Callaway and JoAnn Callaway are co-authors of "Clients First: The Two Word Miracle" and founders of the real estate company Those Callaways. To learn more, visit www.clientsfirstbook.com.



DELIVERING THE POWER OF **PARTNERSHIP**

DISTRIBUTOR SOLUTIONS EXPO

May 8-9, 2013 • Navy Pier, Chicago • psda.org/2013

PSDA's Annual Event Has a New Name – And More!

- Focused schedule that allows for maximum impact whether you come for one day or two
- Re-designed exhibit floor featuring “Solution Zones” showcasing new product and service areas
- Education program developed with direct input from past attendees that is tailored, easy to consume and emphasizes areas of opportunity and growth

Registration is open and group rates are available.