



# TEN WAYS

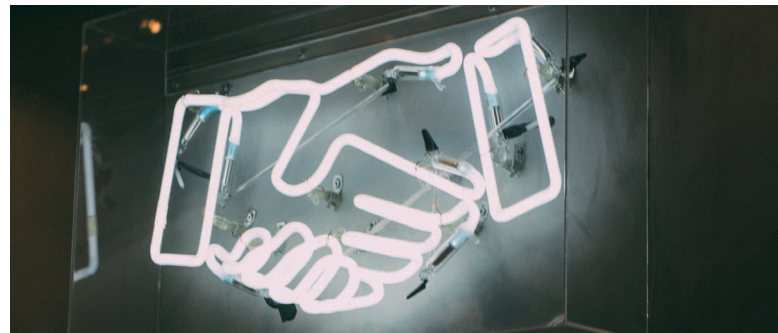
## to develop strong customer relationships.

Salespeople can so easily get hung up on price with customers. Generally, this is because they haven't given the customer enough input and value to encourage them to think about other factors. But it can be difficult to know what information to share for best effect, when you don't have the full picture of who the customer is and what makes them tick. Here are some ideas to have more meaningful relationships with clients, where price isn't always the first hurdle.

**1** Listen to them, actively and intently, right from the outset. Study the material they give you, ask questions, dig deep. Something taught in coaching courses is the use of a simple question, for example, 'Is there anything else?' until you are confident you have uncovered all the detail. Don't settle for superficial answers, keep on probing until you have the full picture and check your understanding throughout the process.

**2** In this phase of uncovering the initial information, don't just settle for a list of what they think they need. Uncover the motivation behind it. If they think they need a direct mail pack, find out where it fits into the bigger picture. What other supporting materials are there, does it form part of a campaign, have you sent it before, how well did it work? What is the required ROI this time? What in their opinion could be done better? Keep digging.

**3** What are their overall goals? What do they hope for, from both a business and a personal perspective? You won't find out if you don't ask the question, and knowing where they are headed is valuable insight for future relations. Aspiration is a powerful emotion. Inspire them with your understanding and recognition of their ambition, and use the information gained to impress in the future with innovative and creative solutions.



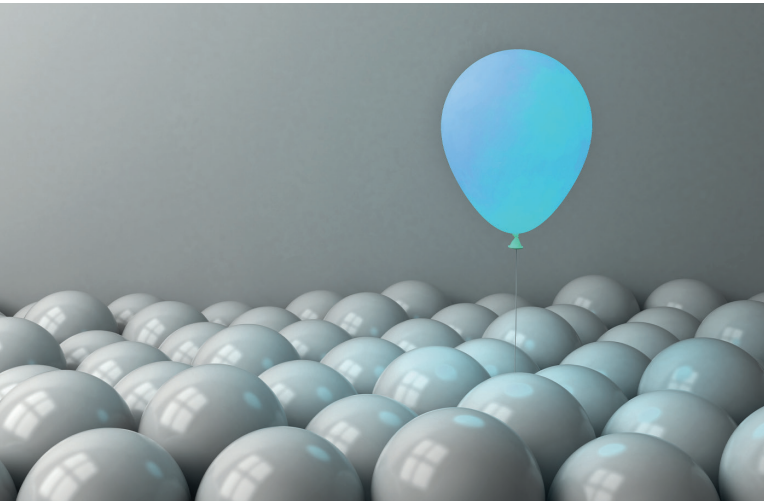
**4** As essential as understanding their goals, is to also gain a sense of what worries them. Try and uncover any factors that could sabotage future deals. It's important to examine the potential reasons they may not progress with you, and what may lead them to opt for another channel, or one of your competitors. Without this knowledge, you can't safeguard your share of their spend.

**5** Get the detail down. Make notes. Send minutes of important meetings with an action plan and schedule. Go back over points when further clarification is needed. Build an overall picture of the person and the business, and work visually, as only by building a map of a client can you spot the gaps in your knowledge. Don't rely solely on your memory, that's how important details are overlooked.



6

Make sure you know who you're competing against, and why they are being considered. Play to your strengths as much as possible, while subtly highlighting areas where you out-perform your competitors. For example, if you have multiple sites, and a competitor only one, highlight this and emphasise the importance of business continuity. If your balance sheet is strong, and you know a competitor's is less so, talk about the importance of business longevity in your pitch. Be both subtle and confident in this.



7

Don't jump too swiftly to conclusions around what you plan to sell them. Understand all angles before making your recommendation regards product or service. The best solution may be a combination of print and digital solutions, and these can take time to put together. Work swiftly, yet thoroughly, and sense check everything. It's no good noticing what you missed after the proposal has been sent.

8

Remember that your job is to recommend solutions, not to decide in advance whether something is too expensive, or not. Don't pre-judge your customer's decision. It's their budget to spend, your role is to put forward the options, even if you think they may not buy it. Outline all the possibilities, including the justifications, and explain that even though it is outside their budget, you thought it worthy of consideration, if not for now, but for the future. Then let them choose. Clients can surprise you.

i

This article is one of a series supporting the **Canon Ascent Programme**, a business development initiative for Canon Professional Print customers. If you'd like to know more please contact your Canon Account Manager or search "Canon Ascent Programme".

**"YOU DON'T ALWAYS NEED TO WIN. YOU JUST NEED TO ENSURE THE OTHER GUY LOSES."**

Dave Trott

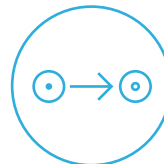
## REMEMBER...



**Play to your strengths**



**Don't pre-judge your customer's decision**



**Ask for a referral**

9

Involve the right colleagues. They might see an opportunity or an idea where you haven't. Talk it through with design, production and estimating teams. The bigger the prospect, the more important it is to show the scale of your operation. Clients can get nervous, especially with new suppliers, if they feel something is being hidden. Be open and generous with access to the relevant people in your organisation, and demonstrate how you all co-operate. Good teams win work.

10

Build in a review meeting to explore all elements of the project delivery. By examining the results together with the client, you can highlight what went well and where improvement and new ideas could have been beneficial. Understand how they have measured the ROI, and enquire if you can use the work as a case study. If they work in a large organisation ask one final question. 'Do you have any colleagues who would be interested in our services?' A word-of-mouth recommendation is the best new lead of all.