



An Introduction to Relationship Marketing (or the 'Know, Like, Trust' Strategy)

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*This article was written to supplement the free 30 minute audio available at
<http://www.lindaconn.com/audiolibrary.htm>*

Relationship marketing is the act of building close relationships with existing customers and prospects. It's about having an ongoing dialogue with them over a period of time.

According to Gronroos relationship marketing is a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises. It is through making promises and keeping them that trust develops, and out of trust that long-term relationships grow. Relationship marketing treats marketing as a **process over time** rather than single unconnected events.

Because it is so open ended, relationship marketing is often hard to justify. Relationship-based approaches (e.g. staging customer events, sending thank you gifts, publishing newsletters, etc.) leave you at the mercy of chance.

(from Relationship Marketing guru Micheal Katz) **Now the good news: It absolutely works.** Staying in touch with people you know; thanking people who do business with you; giving away useful information with no strings attached -- *whatever you can do to build and maintain relationships with other people* - is **hands down the most effective marketing strategy on the planet.**

Two of the most common components to making this strategy work are a relationship-oriented website and the consistent use of email to stay in touch.

Relationship-Oriented Website

The relationship marketing process starts when a visitor arrives on your website. Give them a reason to stay. The average visitor to VictoriaBusinessTalk.com is there reading for over 6 minutes. That's a long time to hold their attention.

Ask for their email address so you can send more valuable information in the future. This is crucial to your success - you must ask for their email address. Collect (opt-in) email addresses at every opportunity, and use them to establish and build relationships with your prospects and customers.

Consistent Use of Email

Once you have the email address, point your visitor toward helpful resources. Give valuable information freely and don't worry about giving too much away. Give before you get, that's the way of the relationship marketing.

So why should I give away so much you ask? When will I get paid? There is an old expression in the annals of relationship marketing. 'Give away what, make them pay for how'.

If you are emailing your local customers, sending them offers, coupons, and useful information about your business, you are more likely to get their business than some stranger out in cyberspace. And if you're sending out a newsletter, you'll be light years ahead of all of your competition, local or not!

(from By Claudia Temple)

1. Change your Perspective from "Here's what I do" to "What you need?"
3. Keep in touch If you have website, ask clients to subscribe and insert a subscription box on your site to capture email addresses of prospects who like the look of what you're doing. if you don't, at least start a database.
4. Position Yourself as an Expert. They see you as someone who has answers to their questions, and who can help solve their problems.
5. Grow to Meet Client Needs

When you offer more tools that help your clients reach their goals, you become more valuable. Build affiliations or strategic relationships with copywriters, photographers, search engine marketers, any specialist whose talents will benefit your clients.

The benefits of a relationship marketing approach go both ways. Your client views you as a valuable consultant, rather than a cost center.

I know all of this sounds like an awful lot of work... relationship marketing is time consuming and can be hard work. If it were easy - everybody would be doing it!