MAY-JUNE 2022

Customer Connections

As with personal relationships, successful business relationships are built over time, with a series of meaningful engagements that build trust and rapport. In fact, says Aaron Tigert, Regional Vice President of Core Markets for Compeer Financial, it takes more than six high-value interactions to sign on a new customer.

"We analyzed our sales process and calculated how many times we met or talked with a new prospect before they agreed to finance with us," says Aaron. "When you're selling a commodity like money, it's this relationship building that differentiates you and builds the trust necessary to do business together."

For sales professionals, relationship building skills are essential, but these skills are also important for other professionals, enhancing networks, team collaboration and customer support interactions.

"Any time an employee interacts with a client or prospect, a strategic or industry partner, or a community leader, it's a reflection on the organization and its brand," says Stephanie Barton, FCCS VP Marketing. "It's the responsibility of each team member to be an ambassador for the brand and represent the organization in the best light possible and that happens through relationship development."

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> — **AARON TIGERT**
> REGIONAL VP OF CORE MARKETS, COMPEER FINANCIAL

The key to building genuine relationships is having an authentic desire to help clients and colleagues accomplish their goals. In sales, it's about developing a mindset that isn't about closing a deal, it's about genuinely helping a prospect identify the right solution for them – whether that solution comes from you or somewhere else. Over time, this engenders the trust needed to eventually transition the prospect to a client, but even if a sale doesn't result, the relationship can deliver benefits in terms of referrals and recommendations.

"Achieving the trusted advisor status we all strive for is an ongoing process that should be a focus of every interaction," says Aaron. "This is relationship selling rather than transactional selling, putting the focus on delivering value outside of the actual product or service."

Aaron advises engendering genuine curiosity about your client or prospect, getting to know them as both people and as professionals. Throughout this perpetual discovery process, look for opportunities to share insights, especially proprietary intellectual property and market intelligence, and explain how it applies to them.

"Beyond any business model, delivery channel or product or service at your organization, it's each individual relationship manager who determines their own success," says Aaron. "Show up every day with a mindset of helping your clients and improving the value you deliver to them, and the business relationships will follow."

You can hear more about relationship selling from Aaron's recent Future Forward Podcast, and at his session at the upcoming FORUM for Ag Lending, September 27-29 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Learn more and register for the conference.

Top Tips for Relationship Selling

- Routinely ask open-ended questions about your clients' or prospects' goals and current concerns.
- Have three pieces of insight ready to share with clients at all times around topics relevant to them.
- Understand that a strong relationship needs to be built on trust and take the time required to develop it.
- Build and refine a client-specific strategy that positions you to help them achieve their goals.

FCCS CONSULTING NETWORK CONNECTIONS

Every year, we survey our customers to get feedback on a range of topics from the value of our insurance to the friendliness of our team. This connection point also includes open-ended questions for deeper feedback, including about how we can better serve them.

— **LISA PARRINELLO**
DIRECTOR, UNDERWRITING & INSURANCE PROGRAMS

Leaders with a team member in our Leading Others leadership journey receive a short video from me after each session, keeping them updated on their investment and how they can specifically support their team member. This connects leaders directly with their team members' development.

— **JEANNIE CLINKENBEARD**
DIRECTOR & SENIOR LEADERSHIP CONSULTANT

We connect individually with Governance Series clients who aren't able to attend the annual meeting to ensure they have the same opportunity to receive updates and give us feedback about their needs and how we can better support them. This assures them of their importance to our programs.

— **LESLIE HILTON**
VICE PRESIDENT, BOARD GOVERNANCE & DEVELOPMENT

Customer service is equal parts empathy and education. You need to empathize and understand the customer's needs, as well as educate them on what you're able to provide.

— **NAOMI BAUMANN**
DIRECTOR OF CLAIMS & LOSS PREVENTION