

Giving Value or Reciprocity? How Do You Use Both Ethically and Effectively in Business?

These concepts are not clearly distinct in the minds of most people. What is the difference? The premise of giving value in business is to grow relationships whereas reciprocity is only interested in acquiring clients.

Giving Value

Only focus on the best potential clients and existing clients you would like to work with and invest in them. Find ways to show the client how you think and the type of work you are capable of doing. If you are delivering value to grow the relationship, then when the timing is right there is no uncertainty as to whether you can do the work that becomes available.

If you follow the above thinking, your actions will testify to two things:

1. You can deliver value.
2. You care about a quality relationship with the client.

Put yourself in the shoes of the client. If someone invests their time to communicate something of value to you, you will make yourself more accessible to them since they have proven that their interests are your interests.

Reciprocity

One of the basics of human culture is the reciprocation rule. Reciprocation requires one to repay what is given to them by others. By obligating a person to repay in the future, reciprocation allows one person to give freely to another with the confidence that nothing will be lost. The sense of obligation that the rule creates makes possible various continuing relationships, transactions and exchanges that are good for society. In addition, all members of society are indoctrinated from childhood to obey the rule or suffer being looked upon as a scoundrel.

The very rule is sometimes used in business in an exploitative manner and certainly not in the client's interest. Clients many times will accept uninvited favors and relinquish control over who they wish to owe. The rule can also generate unequal exchanges. In order to get rid of an unwanted feeling of indebtedness, a person will often agree to a request much larger than the favor received.

How Do You Use Both Ethically and Effectively in Business?

For example, tickets to a sporting event. First, you should demonstrate through your actions that you care about the client's business and want to help make it better. Tickets to a sporting event do not do it. A wise client will be wary of a relationship that begins with favors like this one. The client should look for concrete actions of what you can do for them first. In the medium-term a ball game is okay as long as there is some relationship building going on to understand the client better. In the long-term if there is a track record of delivering value to the client and that you care about making the

client's business better the tickets can actually become an affirmation of the depth of value and quality of the relationship.

Closing Thoughts

Reciprocity has its place in business and the focal point must be on delivering value to the client.

While it may seem like common sense, the best clients will choose to work with the person who goes out of his/her way to deliver value rather than the person who delivers donuts on a Friday morning.



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