

What's Love Got to Do With It?

Why am I talking about love in the context of business? And no, I don't mean a passionate office romance. I'm talking about the fact that loving my clients has been a key to success in my business. It hit me several years ago when someone asked me the secret to my success...without thinking...I said "I love my clients and they know it"...and then I felt a bit embarrassed, thinking that I didn't sound very "business-like."

Now, let's clarify what I mean by "love." That little four letter word has tons of different meanings in the English language. For the purpose of today's article, let's go with "affectionate concern for the well-being of others" and "strong predilection, enthusiasm, or liking for anything."

If you want to be successful, you have to genuinely care about others. When I was a teen, I read the famous 1936 book by Dale Carnegie -"How to Win Friends and Influence People." When you're a teen, you REALLY want to win friends. It resonated with me and I immediately began to implement the principles he outlined.

Here's what he said about getting people to like you:

Six Ways to Get People to Like You

1. Become genuinely interested in other people.
2. Smile.
3. Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
4. Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.
5. Talk in terms of the other person's interests.
6. Make the other person feel important - and do it sincerely.

Sound simplistic? Believe me it's not. Watch how people talk to each other today and see if you can find people who do this well. Better yet, start practicing yourself. The practice of being curious about others (not nosy... in a way to dig up their "dirt") but rather a genuine curiosity about what makes them tick, what they long for, what are they proud of...combined with a love and enthusiasm for the service or product you provide...is to me, the most powerful business "secret" there is.

Start practicing this with the very next person you meet. If it's a brief encounter, perhaps at the market with a clerk –you can at least make eye contact, smile and say thank you. If you have more time, try asking a question that gets a person talking about one of their interests and then... LISTEN. This item four of Carnegie's list, "be a good listener," is an area in which most people need practice and reflection.

Through all the training I've invested in and received in coaching and ministry, I've had the gift of being listened to deeply and to in turn, give the gift of listening deeply to others. What do I mean by listening deeply? I mean giving them your FULL attention –when you're in person with them –looking at them, staying focused on their words AND the tone beneath the words. Keeping your mouth closed –both figuratively and literally –so many people are just chomping at the bit to respond with advice or a "that happened to me too story" or to finish the sentence with words that they think the talker is going to

say. Allowing them to completely finish what they were telling you and then to acknowledge what they've said –that's honoring them and that's a rare gift.

You can accomplish the same things on the phone –the difference is –you're not looking at them. I often close my eyes when listening to a client on the phone –it helps me stay focused and allows me to really hear what's going on beneath the words –whether there is genuine excitement in what they are saying, or some trepidation that needs to be addressed and supported...or perhaps resignation –it just might be time to let go of a direction that just isn't right.

So, what's love got to do with it? Everything. Start loving your clients/customers today and see what happens!

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Ann delivers smart, simple ways for people to acknowledge what they love to do and do more of it. Her articles, products, and books have motivated and inspired readers in numerous print and online publications. She regularly leads coaching programs, tele-seminars and live retreats, bringing the message to audiences internationally that living a passion-based life will bring prosperity and success.

She was recently selected from a nationwide search to be featured in Discover Your Inner Strength. The book features best-selling authors Stephen R. Covey (Seven Habits of Highly Effective People), Brian Tracy (Million Dollar Habits), and Ken Blanchard (One Minute Manager).

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