



Managing Client Expectations

There are two frightening moments in the sales cycle:

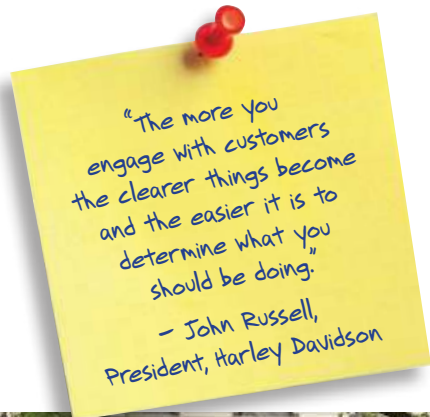
One, when they call and tell you that you got the account and you think, "Oh my gosh, what did we actually promise them?" And, two, when they call and tell you that you didn't get the account and your heart pounds heavily in your chest because you just realized how much you were going to give away to get the account.

In either case, the sales cycle and the need to win the sale can make us do crazy things. We put together offers that are too risky, don't take into consideration all of the variables involved, are

too dependent on add-on billing and a number of less than healthy business practices.

Of course, that's probably not you in your business; however, many businesses are caught in extremely competitive situations that aren't going to ease anytime soon. If you think you don't have any competition, then that's because you haven't heard about the kid in his garage who is about to go big or, worse yet, you don't know about the group of employees who are about to walk away with some of your clients.

Winning business is hard enough, which is why you really need to focus on **keeping** business by managing client expectations from day one. It's so much more expensive to **win** new business than it is to create a culture that is focused on keeping clients. Keeping clients year-over-year will drop profits to the bottom line and, combined with strong leadership, will make your business more efficient and effective.



RBF Services:

Accounting and Auditing Tax Services

Management Consulting Services

- Accounting Systems
- Business Acquisitions
- Business Startups
- Business Process Improvement
- Financing
- General Business Counsel
- Succession Planning
- QuickBooks

Personal Financial Counseling

Industry Experience:

AgriBusiness Services

- Egg Processors
- Farming Operations
- Fertilizer Producers
- Food Processors
- Silo Manufacturers

Construction Industry Services

- Aluminum and Glass Contractors
- Bridge Contractors
- Building Supply Companies
- Commercial Building Contractors
- Drywall Contractors
- Landscaping Contractors
- Masonry Contractors
- Mechanical Contractors
- Plumbing Contractors
- Residential Building Contractors
- Steel and Iron Fabricators

Healthcare Services

- Assisted-Living Facilities
- Continuing Care Retirement Communities
- Healthcare Foundations
- Home Care Nursing Associations
- Hospital Authority
- Individual & Group Medical Practices
- Medical Billing Services
- Nursing & Rehabilitation Centers
- Personal Care Facilities
- Pharmaceutical Distributors
- Pharmacies
- Sub-acute Facilities

Manufacturing Industry

- Tool and Die
- Fabricators
- Mold Extrusions
- Snack Food
- Packaging
- Aluminum Siding
- Glass and Glazing
- Industrial and Automotive Tools





Managing Client Expectations

In a recent Inc. Magazine article, columnist Michael Olguin wrote about six tips to managing client expectations:

1. Build a relationship that goes beyond client/vendor

Generally, business people enjoy working with people they not only respect, but also personally like. Therefore, we believe that developing a personal relationship goes a long way in building a stronger business relationship. Get to know the client's family situation, how they spend their free time, where their interests lie and, most importantly, what motivates them on a daily basis. When you understand what makes them tick as a person, you can translate that into your business relationship.

2. Regularly communicate and address problems directly

A lack of communication is usually at the root of most problems associated with clients. Any good client

relationship will be able to weather setbacks if you are proactive in communicating both good and bad news. When communication is direct and transparent, a sense of trust forms and helps to create a foundation for long-lasting relationships.

3. Agree on strategy, goals and timelines

Until you and your client agree on strategy, goals and timelines, you are always at risk of them not understanding what success is and how it should be measured. We always suggest creating a scope-of-work document that outlines the program details, budgets and metrics. This will alleviate any confusion over expectations and hopefully eliminate a difficult conversation.

4. Be a counselor

When you offer your client advice, direction, input and business counsel, you become a truly valuable partner. This style of open dialogue helps to establish the respect necessary to ensure better project management. Clients hire outsourced marketing services because they want an objective opinion. If you fail at giving that POV, you subject yourself to being a "yes man or woman," which will ultimately be your undoing.

5. Be a good listener

Listening is one of the most misunderstood and least used tools in managing client expectations.

JEFF BLEACHER



"Open communications is the key to all client relationships. Part of our mission statement says "We build long-lasting client relationships through personal attention, integrity and a dedicated pro-active team of professionals." We live by this mission every day and our long-term client relationships are proof positive of this."

KEN FALK



"At the heart of managing client expectations is the willingness to listen and hear what it is that the client really needs and wants. When you deeply understand the pain they are experiencing, you are able to help them in ways they may never have expected. That's when our work becomes much bigger than accounting and becomes meaningful work that impacts people's lives, not just the bottom line."

*"What is the distance between someone who achieves their goals consistently and those who spend their lives and careers merely following?
The extra mile.
- Gary Ryan Blair*



Managing Client Expectations

Many clients are unsure of what they are trying to accomplish or not very good at articulating it. As such, you must have excellent intuition and listening skills in order to identify key messages being communicated. One of the best ways to compensate for a client who communicates poorly is to repeat what you have heard and ask them to confirm the accuracy of key takeaways, which will ultimately impact expectations.

6. Budget is not a bad word

Most relationships will go south very quickly if you are not open and

honest about budgets. To start, you must be realistic about setting a clear understanding of the budget required to execute the desired program. Throughout the course of the program, you must have regular dialogue about budgets. If you don't address the client until you have an issue (i.e., operating over budget), you will not only have an unhappy client, you may also find yourself eating the overages.

At the end of the day, your ability to manage client expectations is going to hinge on how well you choose to communicate. If you leave things up to chance, chances are you and your client will both be disappointed. However, if you take the time to listen, be proactive about communicating openly and address any issues head-on, you will keep client expectations in check and be in a good position to grow your relationship over time.

To read the rest of the article, [click here](#).

JEFF GROFF

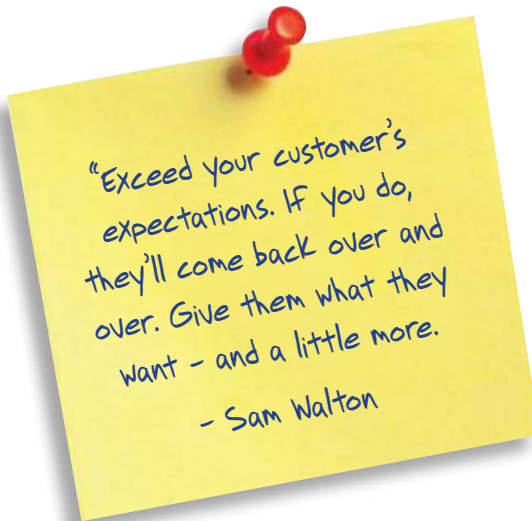


“Managing client expectations happens every step of the way in the relationship. Clients may have specific needs at the beginning of the relationship and those needs may change. Their expectations may change. When that happens, both sides of the relationship need to communicate what the new needs and expectations are so the relationship can continue in a healthy state.”

PATRICK GENDRUE



“One of our core values is to take accountability and responsibility for the work we do for our clients. As we see client expectations change, we need to keep open communications and discussions so that both sides know where the relationship is going. Sometimes we need to have budget discussions as the client's expectations change. That's just part of being accountable for where the relationship is headed.”



Disclaimer of Liability: Our firm provides this information for general guidance only, and does not constitute the provision of legal advice, tax advice, accounting services, investment advice, or professional consulting of any kind. The information provided herein should not be used as a substitute for consultation with professional tax, accounting, legal, or other competent advisers. Before making any decision or taking any action, you should consult a professional adviser who has been provided with all pertinent facts relevant to your particular situation. Tax articles are not intended to be used, and cannot be used by any taxpayer, for the purpose of avoiding accuracy-related penalties that may be imposed on the taxpayer. The information is provided “as is,” with no assurance or guarantee of completeness, accuracy, or timeliness of the information, and without warranty of any kind, express or implied, including but not limited to warranties of performance, merchantability, and fitness for a particular purpose.

Ross Buehler Falk & Company, LLP
Certified Public Accountants

1500 Lititz Pike
Lancaster, PA 17601

717-393-2700
717-393-1743 (fax)

www.rbfc.com

RBF is a Lancaster, PA CPA and consulting firm specializing in providing accounting and consulting services with the highest integrity.

