

# SALES MASTERY



THE  
**GET REAL**  
PROJECT

## Hello!

If there's one thing that has become crystal clear to me over the last decade, it's that conventional business wisdom is seriously overrated—especially when it comes to sales and influence.

You know the old saying, like “always be closing.” Well, here's a different take: Stop selling; start helping. Don't try to convince anyone to buy from you. Focus instead on helping them make the best decision for them right now, even if (gasp!) that doesn't include you. Do this genuinely and you'll win appreciation, loyalty, and (paradoxically) more sales.

At **The Get Real Project**, we believe that getting unconventional gets results. That's our bottom line. And in the words of Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, a journey of 1000 miles starts with a single step, which is why we've published this eBook. It includes thirteen thought pieces excerpted from our **Weekly Tips series** in the critical categories of:

- Mind your mindset;
- Kick conventional wisdom to the curb;
- Play the long game.

Each is accompanied by a “make it real” challenge for you—a single step towards a different kind of working world.

Imagine what would be possible if salespeople and influencers around the globe demonstrated the everyday behaviors that we believe in. Aspirational? Yes. Challenging? Without a doubt. Worthwhile? We think so.

Especially since there's never been a better time to get real.



### **Andrea P. Howe**

Founder of The Get Real Project and  
co-author of *The Trusted Advisor Fieldbook*

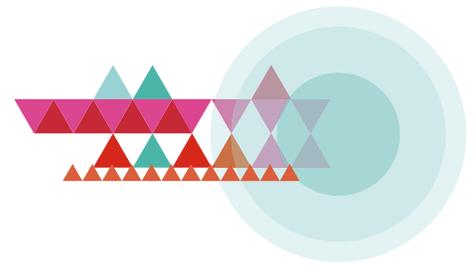


**THE  
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## Five best practices to transform your “sales”

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The sales topic is germane no matter what title your business card indicates (every single one of us is selling ideas). Unfortunately, there’s a lot of really bad advice out there about how to do it.

Most of us face a **conundrum** because (1) we hate what we have come to associate with selling and (2) still, we have to do it. I have routinely proposed a ridiculously simple antidote—so simple that I caution you not to dismiss it: Stop selling; start helping.

Here are five best practices for doing exactly that:

1. **Get your mindset right.** Remember, the goal of trust-based selling is radically different from the goal of traditional selling: it’s to help them *do what’s right for them*, not to convince them to buy from you. The difference is huge. Helping is other-focused, non-manipulative, and trust-building. Get your intentions aligned and all the right behaviors will naturally follow.

2. **Understand their motives.** **Take the time to listen** until you understand where they’re coming from. Focus less on the answers, and more on empathy and understanding. When someone is willing to be influenced by you, it’s not because he has been persuaded by your stunning intellect and your perfectly-articulated points; it is because he feels emotionally comfortable with the decision.

3. **Let go of any one particular sale.** While doing the right thing for your buyer may cost you an immediate sale, it will surely gain you at least as many initial sales, more repeat sales, and far more referrals in the long run.

4. **Keep your personal needs out of it.** Don’t push for a commitment because of your own incentives, passions, frustrations, or desires for closure. Instead, follow her lead. Work from her timetable.

5. **Stop thinking/talking/acting as though you need to “close” something.** An over-emphasis on closing usually leads to fewer sales. Think about it: If you’re focused on closing, you’re focused on yourself. You’re not helping them decide. You’re not building a relationship.

When you sense it is time for committed action, simply ask questions like:

“What needs doing next?”

“Where should we go from here?”

“What makes sense now?”

Then have a candid discussion about the answer. If five is too many best practices to remember or apply, then winnow it down to just one: get your mindset right. Paradoxically, you’ll generate many more “sales” when you stop trying to sell. Yes, it really is that simple.

## Three critical insights about your buyers

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One thing I find to be universally true with the consulting profession is that efforts to be more effective with sales/business development never focus enough on the *psychology* of buying/selling. This article aims to tip the scales with three important insights.

By psychology I mean “the scientific study of the human mind and its functions, especially those affecting behavior in a given context” (thank you, Google)—in this case the mind is your buyer’s and the context is professional services. That’s an important and distinctive context, by the way, because professional services are uniquely complex, intangible, and personal. It’s far harder to hear a buyer’s lack of unbridled enthusiasm when what they’re rejecting isn’t a widget, but *you*.

In the past twelve years that I’ve studied the buyer/seller dynamic, here are the most important lessons I’ve learned so far:

**1. Your buyers are naturally skeptical.** People universally love to buy yet hate to be sold. That means your buyers are on alert for any interaction, or part thereof, that feels salesy, and they’ll instinctively respond with pushback/reservations/doubt/negativity—whether subtly or obviously. Most consultants aren’t trained to hear this in the first place; we’re trained to lead with confidence and positivity, and therefore block out other cues. Further, we’re most definitely not trained to meet this skepticism with the

unconventional approach of *leading with our weaknesses*, even though social psychology teaches us that’s precisely the most effective strategy when skepticism is present.

**2. Your buyers are dealing with their own fears.** We sellers aren’t the only ones whose *ineffective patterns are driven by fear*; buyers are riddled with fear too, and for good reason. Take a moment to think about just how vulnerable it is to spend thousands/millions on consulting services to fix problems with your organization and your leadership. So, the onus is on us to listen carefully for the wide range of signs that fear is present, from slight hesitations to persistently false bravado. Genuine empathy is a much-needed tool here, as is a willingness to share our own vulnerability—the latter being one way to level a decidedly unlevel playing field, and to connect *human to human*, rather than seller to buyer.

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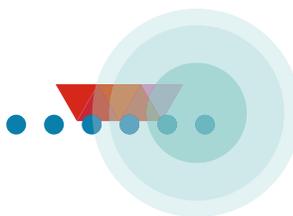


## Three critical insights about your buyers [2]

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3. Your buyers' decision-making process is largely emotional (and by the way, the same is true for you). We all love to believe that buying decisions are made based on logical, rational reasoning. Too bad it doesn't work that way. "People buy with their hearts and rationalize with their heads" is an age-old sales adage, and **findings in neuroscience** back this up. That means we have to listen masterfully to understand what buyers really *want* (security, recognition, peace of mind, etc.), not just what they need (strategies, systems, data, and more), so that we can discover whether or not we can make a genuine connection to those wants. We also have to consistently and courageously **sell by doing**, rather than by telling, so that our buyers get a real experience of working with us. Test: Are your sales meetings and oral proposals routinely more like working sessions than presentations? Probably not. Certainly not enough.

While you don't have to be a psychologist to be a trustworthy salesperson, you do have to understand buyer psychology, and then navigate accordingly.



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Efforts to be more effective with sales/business development never focus enough on the psychology of buying/selling. This short article aims to tip the scales with three important insights: [#getreal #sales https://thegetrealproject.com/2018/06/three-critical-insights-about-your-buyers/](https://thegetrealproject.com/2018/06/three-critical-insights-about-your-buyers/) via [@AndreaPHowe](#)

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# MIND YOUR MINDSET

## How people \*really\* buy

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I owe this insight to my co-author, **Charlie Green**, and the great thinking he's done on how buyers actually buy professional services.

It sounds obvious: **almost all buying of services happens in a two-step process, screening and selection.** Ho hum, two steps, you already know this, right? Here's the catch: most people in professional services make a critical mistake with these two "simple" steps.

**The screening step** answers the question, "*Can they do it?*" Answering it is a largely analytical process that requires research but very little direct interaction. Buyers collect data about you and other providers: expertise, scale, geography, and more. They mostly judge *your organization* by the more rational and logical variables of **the trust equation**: credibility and reliability. They create a short list of providers who move onto the selection step.

**The selection step** answers a very different question: "*Do we want to work with them?*" It's a much more emotional question, even though buyers may not realize it (or admit it publicly). Answering it requires personal interactions, where buyers are mostly judging the *people in your organization* by the more emotional and psychological variables of the trust equation: **intimacy**

and **self-orientation**. You don't emerge from the selection process on top because of competence; you get there because of *fit*.

When you move from screening to selection, it gets personal. That big mistake most people in professional services make? Treating the more personal selection step as if you're still in the more analytical screening step. You continue to market your organization, rather than selling the people in it.

Here's a test: Open the PowerPoint deck you used in your last oral proposal. Are your opening slides all about you: your expertise, scale, geography, and more? If so, you're leading with your qualifications, despite the fact that you've already passed the screening process. Even if your buyer starts off with, "So, tell us about your firm" ... *don't*. Turn the conversation to them. Be open, honest, curious, passionate. Give them an experience of you, not a recitation of your expertise. Treat the oral proposal like the first meeting *after* you've won the job.

It's kind of like dating. Does your dinner companion want to hear how great you were on your last 17 dates? No. And neither does your client.

## What a jockey can teach us about great sales

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While I'm not much of a sports fan, I couldn't help but get at least a little caught up in American Pharoah's Triple Crown win in 2015.

I was even more struck by **comments Victor Espinoza made** after the race. Espinoza is the jockey who rode American Pharoah to victory. Here's what he's quoted as saying:

"I tell you, the first turn, I had the best feeling I ever have. ... I didn't even know what pole it is, half a mile, 5/8ths, I was just having fun."

Maybe those are just the words of a man for whom victory was so close he could taste it (which naturally would be a lot of fun).

Or maybe those are words of a man who understands that the best way to ensure victory is to be in the moment. *Enjoy* the moment. Never mind the outcome; it's in the future, and it will be what it will be. For now, immerse yourself wholeheartedly in the race of a lifetime. Above all else, have fun in the process.



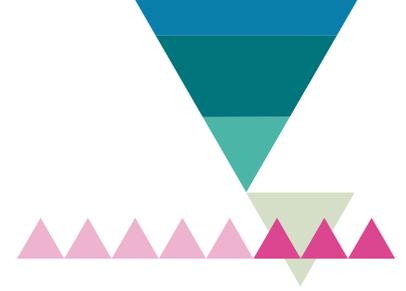
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#Keepingitreal with your clients and having fun too... some lessons form a #triplecrown winner <https://thetgetrealproject.com/2015/06/what-a-jockey-knows-about-great-sales/> via @AndreaPHowe

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# KICK CONVENTIONAL WISDOM TO THE CURB



## Use this guide to grade your sales stuff

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I've always said the best litmus test for the true effectiveness of any sales training—or sales methodology or process or whatever—is to imagine your clients being privy to everything that's communicated.

E-v-e-r-y-t-h-i-n-g.

Try this simple test to see how you fare.

- **Consider your sales training materials and programs.** What if you were sitting in a classroom and you turned around to find five of your best clients listening from the back of the room? Would this be a banner day or a bad day? So much of **what's taught in conventional sales training** is trust-neutralizing, if not downright trust-degrading. You may not realize to what extent your curriculum objectifies clients, and/or teaches you how to manipulate them (even if it's "benevolently"), until you examine the content from their point of view.
- **Consider the decks you use at internal meetings.** Specifically, take a peek at what you document in terms of accomplishments and goals. How would it feel for you if some or all of the slides landed in a client's inbox? How would it feel for *them*? I still recall a slide belonging to one global client that defined

their primary annual goal as dominating the market, with a secondary goal of providing exemplary client service. I suggested they switch the order to pass the trust-building test.

- **Consider the everyday language you use internally.** Do you routinely talk about "suspects" and "targets" (as in, "She's a target")? Do you coach each other on how to "get so-and-so to sign on the dotted line?" Ask yourself whether *you* would like to be spoken about in these ways. So many well-intended sales professionals (along with professionals who simply think they should be more sales savvy) use language every day that hurts the very relationships they are trying to build. Language matters—even if we only use it internally—because the words we choose both reflect and shape the way we think about things, including how we think about the very people we're trying so mightily to serve.

Be a hard grader on your team and your organization. How much of what you find is cringe-worthy, a source of pride, or somewhere in between? If trust-building is your aim, then do what needs to be done to pass the litmus test.



## How (NOT) to turn “suspects” into “prospects”

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I've borrowed the title of this article (“How (NOT) to turn ‘suspects’ into ‘prospects’”) from the title of a recent article shared by a well-respected sales training organization. I added the “NOT” and some choicely-placed quotation marks as an act of rebellion against the words they chose. Why the fervor? Because so many well-intended sales professionals (along with professionals who simply think they should be more sales savvy) use language every day that kills off the very relationships they are trying to build.

OK, “kills off” might be the most extreme, although it happens. For sure it's language the draws down on trust. Language matters because the words we choose both reflect and *shape* the way we and others think about things, as well as people—including the people we're trying so mightily to serve.

I learned long ago from [Charlie Green](#) to not only stop using the word “objections,” but to stop even *thinking* in terms of objections. Same goes for “[closing](#).” I'm officially adding “suspects” and “prospects” to the list. Let's get “target” on there too, which is all-too-often used by partners in one of the biggest global consulting firms in the world (until they've been to one of our trust-based selling workshops).

Here are three general guidelines for the words you choose, in a sales context or any context for that matter. Don't use language that:

1. Refers to others in ways you wouldn't want to be referred to
2. You might be embarrassed or uncomfortable if they knew you were using
3. Objectifies them in any way.

I realize that annihilating “suspect”/“prospect” poses a challenge if you're trying to communicate your relationship stage. Fine, then how about simply using “desired client”? Personally, I'd feel good if I knew I was being referred to as a “desired client,” even if you weren't a desired provider. Who doesn't want to be desired? If that's too creepy, then how about “future client”? I might appreciate the confidence conveyed in that. If that's too presumptuous, then how about “possible client”? I don't mind being part of your possibility.

Just please don't make me a “suspect,” and I definitely don't want to be your “target.”

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How (NOT) to turn “suspects” into “prospects”: <https://thegetrealproject.com/2016/10/not-turn-suspects-prospects/> via @AndreaPHowe

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## Is this slide lurking in your decks, too?

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I made my way back up the aisle of an airplane not long ago, and caught a glance of a laptop screen with an all-too-familiar display: a presentation slide with about 20 logos on it. Ah yes, the picture that's worth 1000 words, meant to convey, "We work with organizations like yours, or organizations that should impress you, or both." I assumed it was part of a pitch deck and immediately wondered how far into the deck this slide found itself.

Do you know where your variation of this slide appears in your decks? Do you know where it *should* appear? Hint: The answer is not, "Early on."

"But wait!" you say, "We have to create context. We have to build our credibility. We have to be responsive to their request to tell them about us!"

All true. Only not up front. And not nearly in as many slides as you usually dedicate. Early on should be all about them, not all about you. That's because everyone's favorite subject is ... not you. Besides, if you're pitching, **you've presumably passed the screening process and moved into the selection stage**, so stop leading with your

qualifications. Turn the conversation to them. Be open, honest, curious, passionate. Give them an *experience of you*, not a regurgitation of your expertise.

"But wait!" you say, "What if this isn't a pitch, but one of our first interactions? They need some background. They need to know who we are. We need to tell them why we're worth their time!" To which I say all true. Only not up front. And almost certainly not with a deck, unless you treat it as a leave-behind.

I believe my exact words in my passionate plea during a workshop a few weeks ago were,

*"Scrap the freakin' deck."*

If that seems too extreme, then at least make some serious modifications to get your focus where it should be.



## Why you should stop “overcoming objections” (and how to do it)

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There’s yet another problem with conventional sales/influence training: a plethora of bad advice about how to “overcome objections.”

Many years ago, Charlie Green taught me to beware that the word “objection” is adversarial, at root. The Microsoft Word dictionary I’m using right now lists the following synonyms: “opposition,” “protestation,” “hostility.” Not the best mindset to adopt when your aim is to work from trust.

The implication of the phrase “overcome objections” just makes it worse. The phrase suggests that whatever resistance you get from the other party should be handled/managed/tackled. Who wants to be handled/managed/tackled? Not I, not you, and not your clients. Personally, I’d rather you try to *understand me*, all-the-while making it clear that you’re the kind of person with whom I can freely share *all* of my concerns because you’ve made it clear you have my best interests at heart.

If you want to transform how you “overcome objections,” do three things:

**1. Think about “objections” the right way.** An objection is simply the client giving you information. It’s a hint—or maybe even a crystal clear communication—about concern, hesitancy, curiosity. It also sometimes a way of saying, “I like what you have to say,

I just have to find a way to justify it.” Either way, it’s an invitation to engage. Once you change your thinking from “objection” to “invitation,” you’re free to get down to the business of **helping your client**.

**2. Pursue their concerns wholeheartedly.** List them. Say things like, “Ah, I see, so you have a concern about ...” Shine a light on them. Explore them. Ask to hear more of them. Lean into them. *Suggest them*.

**3. Meet emotion with emotion.** Say (genuine) things like, “I can see why that’s troubling. You’re hesitating because \_\_\_\_\_. And that makes sense, since \_\_\_\_\_.” Not only are you likely to learn more (and can therefore do a better job of helping), you also prove you’re really listening and that you actually ... drumroll ... *care*.

In the end, if you can successfully address all of your client’s concerns, great; you’ll get a sale. If you can’t, it probably means that what’s on the table is just not the right thing right now—in which case there’s only one thing to do: back out gracefully. Then you’ll not only build trust, you’ll dramatically increase your chances of making the sale when your offer *is* the right thing. You can see it’s a world apart from the usual, “If I could X, would you Y?”

Here’s the two-line version of this entire missive: Stop handling objections. Have conversations that help your clients instead.

### “Learn TIPS and TRICKS to CLOSING MORE DEALS” (or not)

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I've once again borrowed the title of this article (“Learn TIPS and TRICKS to CLOSING MORE DEALS”) from the subject line of an email I once received. When I read it, I let out a very loud groan.

On the one hand, I get it. I get the very real desire to figure out how to be more successful as a business developer or salesperson by learning practical actions you can take to cross the proverbial finish line. And I get that someone who's selling sales training wants to connect with their audience by promising just that.

On the other hand, the subject line in-and-of-itself is a brilliant illustration of exactly what's so wrong with sales training and sales approaches today.

Your clients love to buy. They don't like to be sold. And they almost universally hate to be “closed.”

The same is true for you. Think about the last time someone tried to “close” you. It probably left a bad taste in your mouth. And for good reason.

Yet sales lingo continues to focus on closing—that dramatic end point to a transaction, when, in theory, the salesperson overcomes any lingering objections and convinces the client to finally “sign on the dotted line.”

With trust-based relationships, the close isn't the end or the goal; it's just another point in an ongoing relationship. Attempts to close actually close down the conversation. They're seller-centric, not client-centric. They make for really big trust problems.

If you're reading this, the chances are better than good that you're not a smarmy salesperson. You're very likely a professional with good intentions and something valuable to offer. The problem is, if your mindset is off, your buyer is going to sense it—subtly or overtly. If you do or say or think anything that smacks of, “I want to get them to \_\_\_\_\_,” where the fill-in is about you, you're screwed.

What's the antidote? Wrap your head around one simple goal, which is to help your client make a good decision—one that may or may not involve you. That's it. It really is that simple. Change your intention and all the right behaviors will naturally follow.

Here's my simple plea: Stop closing. Stop using any variation of the word. Stop looking for “tips and tricks” for how to do it. Instead, make things better for your client, whatever that looks like.

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“Learn TIPS and TRICKS to CLOSING MORE DEALS” (or not) <https://thegetrealproject.com/2015/10/learn-tips-and-tricks-to-closing-more-deals-or-not/> via @AndreaPHowe

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## Why “one of the most common closes used” is also one of the worst

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I was shopping for a Halloween costume one year and I was reminded of a big sales no-no in the process—that is, if you want to sell the trust-based way. And while my experience was in the realm of retail, it’s also a cautionary tale for anyone in professional services.

The store was collecting donations for a charity benefitting kids, or so I learned when I presented my credit card to pay and was asked, “How much would you like to donate to XYZ today?”

My immediate and unfaltering response: “None.”

Funny thing, though, because I just about always make at least a small donation when I’m asked at checkout, as is often the case these days at the grocery store and the pet store. *How* I’m asked makes all the difference:

**Q:** “Would you like to donate to the ABC fund to help with DEF?”

**A:** “Sure.”

**Q:** “How much would you like to donate to XYZ today?”

**A:** “None.”

Those two little assumptive words at the beginning of the second example (“how much”) are anathema to trust.

I Googled “assumptive close,” assuming (hoping) I would find long outdated sales

wisdom. No such luck. Web pages authored this year still extoll the virtues of the technique—the same web pages, apparently, that the Halloween retail store I patronized has been using to train its cashiers.

One site, dated February 2017, asserts that, “while your assumptions may be completely wrong, your confidence can be contagious.” Another, dated May 2017, refers to the assumptive close as a technique that “makes you come across as pushy and self-serving” (thank you!), then goes on to suggest 18 alternative closing lines, all of which make my skin crawl. No wonder, as they’re all positioned as “non-aggressive closing questions to make the buyer feel comfortable—without completely taking off the pressure.”

Let’s be clear: pressure plays no role whatsoever in any trust-based conversation.

Here’s the point as it relates to anyone in professional services: You probably know better than to apply an assumptive close with your clients. Beware, though. You might be over-eager at times, thinking your confidence will be contagious. Or you might not realize that asserting a point of view prematurely can trigger the same kind of knee-jerk reaction I had at the Halloween costume store (“Heck no!”) simply because people don’t like to feel pushed in any way.

Pushy: bad. Positive: good. Trustworthy: best of all.

## Pretty please: Separate the ask from the acknowledgment

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I once got a call from a volunteer at one of the charitable organizations to which I regularly donate. It was decidedly different than the usual solicitation call. It started off so much better. And then it got so much worse.

To the volunteer's credit, it was clear from the get-go that he wasn't reading a script. Or if he was, he did a great job of making it sound like he wasn't, **unlike so many**.

Also to his credit, he spent a good several minutes acknowledging me for being a regular contributor, and **telling me in detailed, concrete terms**—and with what seemed like genuine excitement—the difference that my contributions make. It was much more than the typical and gratuitous, “Thanks for your past support.”

Oh how I wished he had stopped there and simply said thanks again and goodbye. Imagine how great I would have felt—about myself, about him, about his organization. And how impressed I would have been by the call with no agenda other than to say “thank you.”

Alas, he didn't stop there.

He continued and said what I feared he was going to all along (and what had me distracted with anticipation during all the great things he was saying): “Would you increase your donation amount?”

It was a fair question to ask.

The problem with his request was it left me feeling like all the nice stuff he had said prior was a load of crap—a flowery lead-in to the real reason for his call. This created a disconnect for me because he had seemed so genuine when he was speaking.

Here's the problem, as I see it: He collapsed the two conversations: the acknowledgment and the ask. As a result, the ask essentially erased the acknowledgment and left me feeling ... blech. (For the record, I also promptly said “no.” I might very well have said yes had the ask just been an ask.)

I think getting real means being willing to offer real acknowledgments that are unencumbered and left to stand on their own.



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Pretty please: Separate the ask from the acknowledgment. #getreal #communication <https://thegetrealproject.com/2016/01/pretty-please-separate-the-ask-from-the-acknowledgment/> via @AndreaPHowe

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# PLAY THE LONG GAME

## What baked goods can teach us about lasting client relationships

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Some years ago I was surprised by a knock at the door—an unexpected delivery of baked goods from a local sweet shop. The package included a hand-written note from Kacy, the office organizer I had hired exactly one year before. The sweets were to commemorate my first anniversary in my new home office, with a reminder that she was available should any lingering piles be in my way, and a no-obligation request to tell others about her services if I was so inclined.

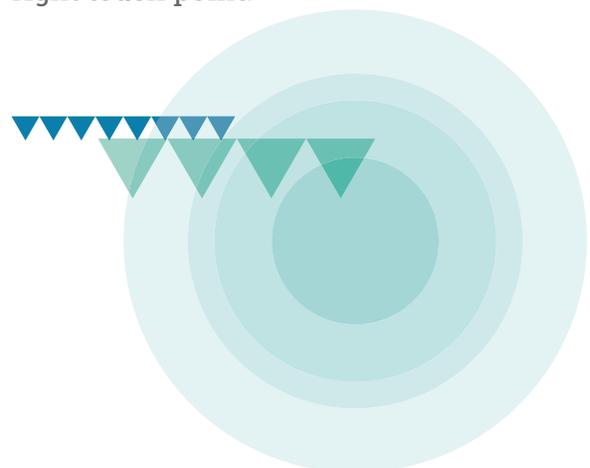
I immediately logged onto Facebook (well, by “immediately” I mean right after I ate a cookie) and posted kudos for Kacy, along with a link to her web site. (And I’ve referred her many times since. For years.)

While this might seem like a great marketing story, don’t be fooled; Kacy’s actions are as much about deepening client relationships as they are about marketing. And anyone in any role can learn and benefit from her best practices.

In the parlance of the **trust equation**, Kacy’s gesture was a clear demonstration of high intimacy and low self-orientation, with a little dash of credibility in the mix as well:

- Kacy acknowledged me, in a very personal way;
- She let me know she cared about me—enough to keep track of, and commemorate, the anniversary of our work together;
- Kacy was generous, without expectation of return (which, by the way, is why I felt inspired, not obligated, to refer her);
- She had the confidence to ask for more work.

Plus there’s one other great lesson here: Being in touch with clients takes focus and effort, not time. One touch-point in a twelve month period might be plenty, if it’s the right touch point.



## PLAY THE LONG GAME

### Are you willing to go this far for your clients?

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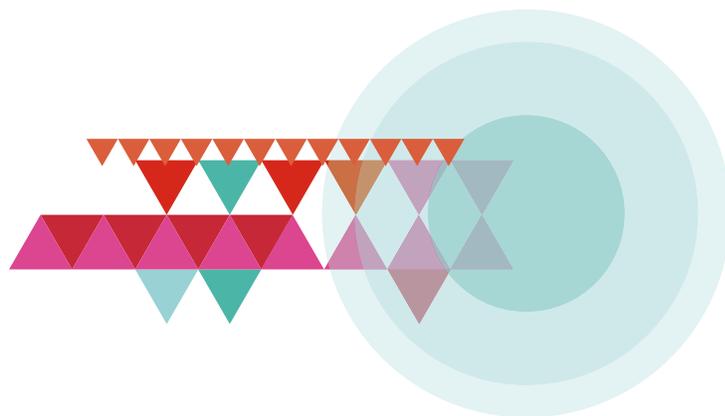
I'm a big fan of stories as vivid illustrations of things that matter and make a difference when it comes to trust-building. Consider this short and compelling one from *The Trusted Advisor Fieldbook*. It's told by a savvy private wealth manager in Canada and it reveals the extent of the long-term view he takes with his clients:

“ I once offered to do some free investment planning for a client's 12- and 14-year-old children. My co-worker was confused why I was wasting my time with children.

“ That's easy! I regularly meet with clients' children and explain the concept of saving, investing and risk. Even at the ages mentioned I have had success in making the experience relevant for the children and ultimately appreciated by the parents.

“ I believe in long-term focus and relationships. While working with clients' children has resulted in referrals (which is a happy outcome) that is never our primary intent. Our purpose is to build long-term relationships by continuously delivering a 'remarkable experience' for our clients and their families.”

Kinda makes you think, doesn't it? Just how committed are you to **delivering a “remarkable experience”** to the people you serve?



# MAKE IT REAL

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We're a big fan of running experiments here at The Get Real Project: a defined set of time when you try out a new behavior or practice. An experiment can last a day, a week, or a month. The key is it's finite, which means you don't have to commit to a lifelong change. Somehow, this makes it more palatable to just try it out for a bit, and ironically makes it more likely you'll actually make a lifelong change.

Here are 13 "make it real" challenges for you, one for each article in this collection. Choose the ones that grab your attention and interest, and then make an experiment for yourself or your team (or both).

**Five best practices to transform your "sales".** Bring to mind a time when you did not successfully "close a sale." To what extent did you apply the five best practices to transform your sales (get your mindset right, understand their motives, let go of any one particular sale, keep your personal needs out of it, and stop thinking/talking/acting as though you need to "close" something)? What will you do differently next time?

**Three critical insights about your buyers.** Sit down with your team and examine a past sale/proposal gone wrong. In what

ways did you fail to recognize one of these three insights: your buyers are naturally skeptical, your buyers are dealing with their own fears, and your buyers' decision-making process is largely emotional? What could you do differently next time?

**How people *really* buy.** Practice a 20-second response when people ask you to tell them more about you. Or better yet, start with, "What would you like to know?" and then keep it brief and other-focused. What happens when they're a more active part of the conversation?

**What a jockey can teach us about great sales.** Make it a goal to have fun during your client interactions—especially when the possibility of new business is on the table. What's fun about what you do? What's fun about what you sell? What's fun about your clients? Put your attention *there* and see what happens as a happy byproduct.

**Use this guide to grade your sales stuff.** Gather some samples of your sales training materials and programs, the decks you use at internal meetings, the everyday language you use internally, and do a little hard-grading. What do you discover?

### **How (NOT) to turn “suspects” into “prospects”**

Watch your words. Notice the terms you habitually use, even with the best of intentions, that could be negatively impacting either your mindset about relationship-building, your actual relationships, or both.

**Is this slide lurking in your deck, too?** Open the PowerPoint deck you used in your last oral proposal, put yourself in your clients' shoes, and be a hard grader on your first five slides. What edits do you see to make? By when will you make them?

**Why you should stop overcoming “objections” (and how to do it).** Notice any tendencies you have to overcome/handle/manage when someone expresses something that sounds like an “objection”—in any context, not just a “sales” situation. Catch yourself in the act. Bonus: Try a different kind of response and see what happens.

**“Learn TIPS and TRICKS to CLOSING MORE DEALS” (or not).** Replace closing language with action language—in any conversation, not just a sales conversation. When it's time to focus on next steps, ask questions like:

“Where should we go from here?”

“What makes sense now?”

“What needs doing next?”

Then have a candid discussion about the answer.

**Why “one of the most common closes used” is also one of the worst.** Be an observer: notice when you or others around you try to push people in a particular direction. What happens as a result?

**Pretty please: Separate the ask from the acknowledgment.** Practice acknowledging people for the sole and simple purpose of acknowledging them. Be genuine and agenda-free. (And if you can't be agenda-free, at least be honest about it.)

**What baked goods can teach us about lasting client relationships.** Think about clients with whom you'd like to stay in touch. Make a list. What meaningful milestones might you track and acknowledge? What gesture might you make that's distinctive, genuine, and simple?

**Are you willing to go this far for your clients?** Consider what *your* equivalent of financial discussions with children would be. Stretch your thinking. How might you make a difference for your clients' families or others in their lives who matter to them? Then, if you're inspired, take a small step towards whatever you discover.

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# CURIOSITY IS KING.

STOP SELLING; START **HELPING**.

BUSINESS IS PERSONAL.

**HUMOR AND LEVITY DO MORE THAN BREAK THE ICE.**

TRUST IS NON-LINEAR AND PARADOXICAL {EMBRACE THE OPPORTUNITY.}

BE QUIET AND **LISTEN** IF YOU WANT TO BE HEARD.

**MISTAKES ARE INEVITABLE; HOW YOU HANDLE THEM**

**REVEALS YOUR TRUE CHARACTER.**

**BEING** *vulnerable* TAKES CHUTZPAH.

**THE SOFT STUFF IS THE HARD STUFF—MASTER IT.**

CONTROL IS AN ILLUSION;

THE BEST MOMENTS ARE USUALLY **IMPROVISED**.

**NO** *RISK*, **NO TRUST, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.**

IT'S YOUR JOB TO *get comfortable*

WITH BEING UNCOMFORTABLE.

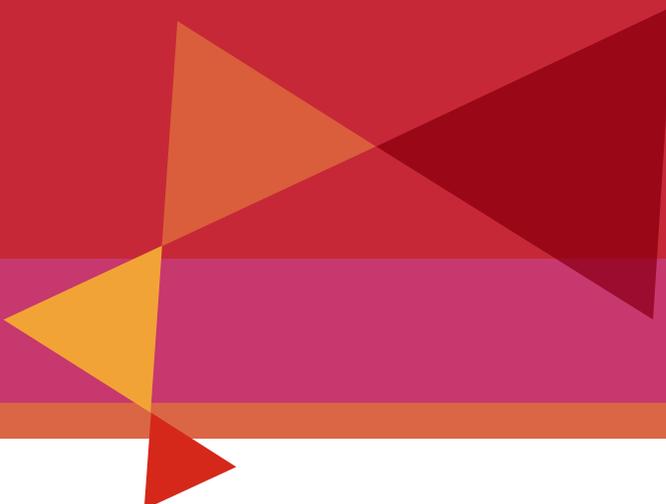
**YOU GET WHAT YOU** *GIVE*.

BE HUMAN, PLEASE. **CHANGE BEGINS AT HOME;**

**WORK ON YOURSELF FIRST.**

IF YOU CAN'T **BE YOURSELF** CHANGE JOBS,

OR HIRE A THERAPIST, OR BOTH. **KEEP IT REAL.**



## ABOUT THE GET REAL PROJECT

The *Get Real Project* is a platform for founder *Andrea Howe*'s mission: to kick conventional business wisdom to the curb and transform how people work together as a result.

Andrea is the co-author, with Charlie Green, of *The Trusted Advisor Fieldbook: A Comprehensive Toolkit for Leading with Trust*. A recovering IT consultant, she has been dedicated since 2006 to teaching people in consulting and sales how to reap rewards by mastering the “soft stuff” and getting relationships right.

Andrea and the Get Real team are best known for their *signature programs* on *Being a Trusted Advisor*, *Trust-Based Selling*, and *Trust-Based Consulting*—thanks to their close and special partnership with Charlie and his company, Trusted Advisor Associates. They also teach professionals how to be great off-script by applying the best practices of improv comedy to everyday work situations.

## Getting Real Just Got Easier

Want to take your client relationship skills to a whole new level of mastery? Here are some (free) places to start:

- Get our **Weekly Tips** delivered to your virtual doorstep, or access 200+ from our archives
- Download **eBooks, recordings, and more**
- Print your own copy of the **Get Real Manifesto**.

You might also benefit from *Trusted Advisor 24x7: The Video Series*, a 29-lesson set covering the essentials of trust-based business relationships (not free, but easy on the wallet).

And by all means contact us directly if you'd like:  
[hello@thegetrealtheproject.com](mailto:hello@thegetrealtheproject.com) or 1.800.946.4395.

We'd love to get real with you.

