

Connecting with your patients

You have to connect with your patients if you want them to say 'yes', writes Ashley Latter

You have probably all come across the idea that people want to do business with people they like and can associate with. Thus the most important part of the sales process is building up a relationship with the client. I strongly believe in this, and would like to share a personal story with you to back up this theory.

I decided to finance a friend of mine, who is a builder, to buy a very run-down property, develop it and then sell it on. It is in a good area and the deal fitted in with my chosen level of risk taking. What I needed, however, was finance to do the deal quickly. So I contacted my existing bank, and for the purposes of this article let us call them Bank A. I also contacted a client, with whom I do business, and let us call them Bank B. I decided to ask representatives of both banks to visit me at my office; Bank A was pencilled in for 2pm, followed by Bank B at 4pm.

Two people turned up from Bank A, and they were nice and pleasant. They built rapport fairly well, although they questioned me on what I did as



a business. I had been a customer for 20 years, yet they did not know what I did for a living! They offered a really good scheme and I said that I would talk it over with my wife.

Bank B's representative, Brian, arrived on time. Brian spent the first few minutes asking me lots of questions about my business and my website, which he had visited the day before, and about some of the training I had delivered. We must have spent at least 20 minutes discussing my business and my life, and I was in my element. You see 'me' is my favourite topic of conversation. He asked me questions about what I required and presented some quotations that he had already prepared on the basis of a quick telephone conversation we had the previous day.

The truth is, I had decided to do business with Brian and Bank B before I had seen the offer he was making to me; I had probably made my decision in the first five minutes. Why? Because Brian had taken the trouble to find out all about me before he came to see me and seemed genuinely interested. We also

found several topics we were both interested in, such as football and cricket; we were connecting.

Let me now explain what happened following the initial meeting:

1. One of his associates came and collected the forms and all the necessary paperwork from me within 24 hours
2. I received telephone calls from his PA every other day, informing me of the progress of the loan
3. Once we had completed, I got a telephone call telling me the money was ready and available to spend
4. A few days later I got a bunch of flowers to thank me for my business and for choosing Bank B.


It was harder to work with Bank B, as I had to provide information that my existing bank already had; nonetheless it was still a joy to do business with them.

In life I find that for every 100 purchases/transactions I make, about 3-4% are memorable and enjoyable. The other 96% are either okay, nothing special or the service is not good; these experiences are

not enjoyable. So I am delighted when one of the 3-4% experiences comes up.

There are some key lessons to be learned about running a successful business:

1. Spend time in preparation. Learn all about your patients, read their records and have staff meetings. Remember, proper preparation prevents poor performance
2. Really focus on getting your patients to like you and 'connect' with them. It is only when you really 'connect' that a transaction takes place
3. Look the part
4. Once you have reached an agreement, do everything possible to make the experience a great one. Wow them at every opportunity, keep them updated with what is going on and thank them for your business
5. Ring the patient at home after their appointments to ask them how everything is going.

One last thought: focus on building relationships with your patients. Your success depends upon making the right connection with them. You and your team will never get a second chance to make a first impression. 

Over the last 10 years Ashley Latter has personally coached over 4,000 dentists and their team members on his two-day 'Ethical sales & communication programme'. He is also the author of 'Helping patients to say YES'. To find out more about his courses and to register for his free email newsletter, which is full of useful tips, please visit www.thesellingcoach.co.uk and click on the dental section.