

Commitment is the Key

Elena found herself in an extremely difficult situation. After making the decision to change the dynamic of a relationship with a long-term supplier, she realized it would be a tough sell. Elena wanted to alter the connection because she had noticed a degree of mistrust in her dealings with the supplier, and she thought she knew why.

Elena had completed “Relationships for the Intimately Challenged” and decided to seek consultation from me in order to improve her business relationships. Particularly interested in examining relationships, Elena had discovered when interactions are viewed as 50/50 someone is always in a state of reaction and someone is always keeping score.

“It is impossible to maintain a true attitude of trust and service if both parties view the relationship as 50/50,” Elena explained, adding “I knew this supplier viewed us with a degree of paranoia. From their perspective, they believed if a problem ever arose, we would simply take their expertise and find a cheaper alternative to rectify the problem.”

Because Elena was aware of the supplier’s fears, she came up with a simple plan.

“I knew that I would need to be very clear in the explanation of my company’s commitment to their service,” Elena said. “I worked very close with the supplier to create some shared objectives, which I knew would illustrate that we were partners and show my 100 percent commitment to our shared success.”

This relationship included several components, such as equipment, processes and maintenance. Several people were involved. However, my client knew if the department heads were on the same page and dedicated, they would be able to work together.

The first time there was a major problem – an equipment breakdown – these new commitments were put to the test. The knee-jerk reaction was to start finger pointing and determine who was to blame. Was it the supplier’s responsibility for providing faulty

equipment or systems? Was it my client's company's fault as a result of poor maintenance?

Of course it was important to figure out where the problem started, but both sides realized that in order to have a true partnership they must work together to identify the problem and develop a solution.

“The initial conversations were a bit contentious,” Elena said. “But, because I was aware of the supplier's fears, I was able to reiterate my commitment to our relationship. I realized it was a little difficult for the supplier to completely buy what I was saying, so I put it in writing and sent it to him.”

Elena believed it was important to shift the nature of the relationship and create a system of accountability. As a result of her clear assurance, the supplier was able to relax. But the supplier's change didn't stop there.

“After receiving my written explanation, the supplier was a little blown away,” Elena explained.

“They were so impressed that they agreed to replace the equipment at a reduced cost and provide additional support. I wasn't necessarily seeking this kind of solution, but I certainly took it!” she continued.

This story illustrates the importance of viewing any relationship as a commitment. Although Elena would have been disappointed had the partnership dissolved, she would be able to walk away knowing she did everything in her power to make it a success.

Because of Elena's commitment, the supplier was able to build trust, which made the supplier willing to go the extra mile to provide quality service.

Always be aware of your level of commitment in a relationship. When you focus on your value, commitment and strength, you will create an atmosphere of trust and mutuality. In the end, everyone is a success.