

# From Pest to Guest

In a competitive market, effective sales strategies can give small business owners and entrepreneurs the thrust they need. Presenting at the Illinois Small Business Development Council at Harper College sales trainer Jim Mattei gave this advice on going from initial contact to client without being a pest. While he talked mainly about human interaction, I impose some questions extending his ideas to Internet businesses.

## **Build bonds and relationships**

*Keep your look and feel within the potential client's comfort zone.* Fifty five percent of people respond to physiology first; 38% to tonality and only 7% to the words being used according to the Neural Linguistics Program, a methodology originally designed for therapy but adapted by sales gurus and influencers. Does physiology extend to a company's website? Is tonality perceived in email?

*"Match and mirror"* is based on the idea that we like and trust people who are similar to us. If physical presence is not possible, might content and credibility become main factors? Mattei advised using the match and mirror principle in electronic correspondence as well. "If you get a three sentence email, don't send a five paragraph response."

## **Observe behavior**

Identifying a person's behavioral style can also help develop rapport. Mattei referred to the DISC model which lumps all people into these four categories (from Wikipedia):

- **Dominance** – relating to control, power and assertiveness. Very active in dealing with problems and challenges.
- **Influence** – relating to social situations and communication. Influence others through talking and activity and tend to be emotional.
- **Steadiness** – relating to patience, persistence, and thoughtfulness. Want a steady pace, security, and do not like sudden change.

- **Conscientiousness** – relating to structure and organization. Adhere to rules, regulations, and structure.

An easy way to determine a client's style is to ask them for directions, says Mattei. Can these behavior styles be detected in online forums?

### **Use upfront contracts**

When meeting with potential clients include time parameters, a defined purpose, an agenda, and outcome. On the phone leave a short message first and then your name. When clients respond, thank them for inviting you in. You become a guest, not a pest. If clients don't respond over time, tell them you will be closing their file. "People don't like endings. It gets them off the fence with no pressure," Mattei says.

### **Be real**

Don't pester. If it's not a good fit on either or both sides just say no and move on.

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