

# Think Beyond the Contract

Your prospects live in a big scary world. There are people—and businesses—that have nothing but personal gain as a prime motivator. These organizations are competing against you and your solutions for business. They will try and convince your prospects to spend their hard-earned money with them.

It's going to be challenging for a potential customer to identify which organization will be the best partner for their needs. You may find it difficult to stand out in the sales cycle, because your competitors are making promises about their abilities and downplaying yours.

You're fighting for attention, and dollars, and working to establish your credibility and leadership. It's easy to try and turn up the volume and drown out the competition. But

the loudest companies are all too often the first ones we tune out.

To truly connect and move your business forward, you have to take a holistic approach to engagement. It's no longer good enough to just close a deal—you have to add value throughout the entirety of the relationship. Demonstrate your commitment to prospect and customer success, and you'll reap the rewards of loyalty and advocacy.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Start on the Right Foot
- Strengthen Your Core Relationship
- Commit to the Customer
- Pick the Best Approach



## START ON THE RIGHT FOOT

The very best companies, those that truly want to deliver successful partnerships, don't presume that the relationship will last without involvement. They see the long-term benefits in keeping existing customers happy and engaged. They want to make every piece of those relationships as pleasant and successful as possible.

So how do you become one of those companies? That friendly, committed partner that will not only provide the solution your customers want, but also walk them through implementation and check in regularly to make sure they have what they need?

### 1 Identify Good Partner Behavior

As you engage with a prospect, dig into their unique situation and ask the right questions to help them define success. What can you offer to address this company's challenges? Have you taken the time to identify the top KPIs, the metrics that matter for them?

### 2 Listen to the Answers

Adjust your discussion accordingly, and make recommendations to help them get the most out of your relationship. Don't rapid-fire features and functions without letting your prospect get a word in about their needs.

### 3 Be Interested in Their Success

Show that you are interested in their success, not just their check. Be realistic about what kinds of results you can deliver, and hold yourself accountable. Commit to tracking program success and tying it back directly to their ROI.

### 4 Stand Out From Your Competitors

An easy and effective way to do that is to send high-quality branded items or targeted direct mail through your marketing or sales automation solution. Tangible, branded materials stand out from the endless digital messages and have much more impact. A gift or dimensional mail piece in someone's hand will break down barriers to communication in a way that email never will.

### 5 Treat Them Like VIPs

Be proactive and treat your prospects like VIPs. You'll need your main contact to represent you to the ultimate decision makers, so send him a thoughtful gift before you ever ask for anything. This approach taps into the concept of reciprocity, one of the most powerful behavioral influences you can use.

### 6 Increase Effectiveness

Give something to someone and they're much more likely to respond in kind, giving something back to you. Hopefully, they respond with a signed contract.



## STRENGTHEN YOUR CORE RELATIONSHIP

Once you have the contract in hand, you need to nurture that ongoing relationship. This is the time to truly connect with your customer, to become an integral part of their success. Ask yourself, “What is the experience I would want if I were the customer?” Then, deliver on that vision.

In too many cases, this is where partnerships break. It's easy to give in to the temptation to chase new business after the contract is signed. This may add logos to your slide deck, but your customers need you now more than ever.

Rather than seeking new logos, try sending a thoughtful gift or personalized note to welcome the client into the fold. Deliver the experience you would want to have and ease the tension that any new relationship can bring.

As the expert, you are in a great position to usher in positive, impactful practices with your customer. Make sure that they are getting all the benefits you promoted during the sales cycle. Check in frequently, and ask about any issues or questions that they may have.

Have a new feature or product update to roll out? You can mail clear, step-by-step printed instructions with the phone number to call for a real live person if they have any issues. We're all just humans, so any human contact you initiate makes it much easier when you ask for more business.

“What is the experience I would want if I were the customer?”

## COMMIT TO THEIR SUCCESS

Any good long-term relationship is built on a foundation of open and honest communication. It should come as no surprise that a successful business partnership requires the same. As your customer relationships mature, avoid the trap of stepping back and taking that business for granted.

One great method for prioritizing customer success is to set up a reminder for annual reviews before your customer is up for renewal. You can go even further and complement your digital invitation for the review with a printed card and a nice branded item to recognize their business up to this point.

Surprising your customers with a gift before you ask for their time will make them much more likely to say yes—and actions speak louder than words when it comes to demonstrating your appreciation.



As the relationship matures, you need to check in and make sure they're still seeing the business benefits. Did you help solve their initial problem? Have new problems cropped up? Are there additional areas, or departments, within the business that could benefit from your expertise?

Having those conversations instills confidence in your customer about your commitment. Adding a thank you note, a personalized piece of mail, or a thoughtful gift cements the relationship and finalizes the framework for a solid long-term partnership.

## QUESTIONS TO INSTILL CONFIDENCE



## THERE IS NO ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACH

Each business relationship is different, and what works for one company or person will not always work for another. But if you take an active, committed role you will find greater customer engagement, higher customer satisfaction and more opportunity to grow your business.

Help your customer achieve their goals by identifying where you can provide the most value. And once the deal is inked, stay involved. Nothing will kill a relationship faster than one half just fading away.

Being active in the relationship will help you stand out during the entire customer journey. And if you incorporate gifts and tangible pieces into your customer lifecycle, you'll rise head and shoulders above the competition.

YOUR CUSTOMERS  
WILL THANK  
YOU FOR IT.

Solutions like SwagIQ and Tactile Marketing Automation™ from PFL will allow you to easily and effectively incorporate dimensional mail and Intelligent Gifting right into your existing sales or marketing automation platform. If you're ready to become the best partner you can be,

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## About PFL

PFL is a marketing technology company that provides sales enablement and marketing automation solutions, as well as printing, mailing and fulfillment services.

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