

# Do Your Clients *Really* Trust You?

## Is trust really a must?

There's a lot about trust in the news these days - in fact it seems that some governments, corporations and individuals are doing their level best to undermine our trust in them!

Research indicates that trust is a critical component of whether our customers and clients will do business with us. And it doesn't just apply to those businesses that stereotypically have something of an "image problem", such as real estate sales people, insurance agents and lawyers.

Whatever your business, trust is central to your relationship with your customers and clients, because it is at the heart of the question which is foremost in their minds: "Can I really rely on you, or should I go to someone else?"

## Trust me, I'm a lawyer!

Unfortunately, it's not that simple; we can't get someone's trust by just telling them that we are trustworthy - or assuming that they will think so. We have to earn it, maintain it and repair it, and we do so in every conversation and interaction we have with our customers and clients.

US writer Ernest Hemingway was reportedly once asked "So how did you go bankrupt?". He thought about it for a moment, and then said "Well, slowly at first, and then all of a sudden!"

It's the same with trust. We lose it little bit by little bit until "suddenly" our customer or client goes somewhere else - much to our surprise!

So what can we do about it?

## "To serve and protect"

You've probably seen the phrase on the side of a police car in a US television show: "To serve and protect". It's a useful thing to remember if we want to improve the level of trust with our customers and clients.

You see, our customers and clients expect us to "serve" them - to give them whatever product or service it is that they have come to us for. That's the minimum requirement. But it's by showing them that we are also "protecting" them - from what could go wrong in the transaction we are having with them - that we start to build trust.

Some examples:

- **Protect them from making a wrong choice** (whoever they ultimately buy from) by giving them useful information that will help them with their decision: "6 things to look for next time you buy a car"
- **Raise the issue that's *really* on their mind**. As a lawyer I learnt to talk to my clients upfront about how much it would cost them - "You might be worried that this is going to cost you a fair bit, and you're right! But let me explain where the cost is likely to be and how we might manage it..."
- **Give them choices**, so they don't think that you are just trying to "talk them into something": "Now what's your preference for...?"
- **Deal with their uncertainty**: "A lot of people who look into buying a house aren't sure whether...but we've found that if they..."

**In summary: think about what they are worried might happen, and then show them how you are trying to protect them from that.**