

Financial Forum BOOKstore

This Is Your Time: The **Great** Advisor Takes Heart
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Write these words down:

- Enthusiasm
- Certainty
- Commitment

When working with clients, a lot of technical information needs to be discussed, head to head. But, that's not where relationships develop. Relationships flourish below the neck: in the heart, *in the core*.

To nurture client relationships, communicate from *your core* to *theirs*:

- Your Enthusiasm for what you do. It will captivate clients and compel them to action.
- Your Certainty of your right to do it. That will enhance your credibility and comfort their nerves.
- Your Commitment to your clients. It will increase their trust and heighten your performance.

Advisors fight the battle for client trust with *hard side* weapons like outstanding analysis, reliable research, competitive products and stellar service. Yet those are just *table stakes*. An advisor's relationships with clients and prospects win the war. The *soft side* makes the difference.

Analysis is Not Enough ...

When important decisions are made, the intellect rules - or so some think. Yet even in a hard-sided activity like investment analysis, the soft side has a significant role. After all, analysis rarely finds definitive answers. Its function is to narrow down the area in which we guess. While reducing the unknown is critical, the final decision usually relies on intuition and common sense, not hard numbers.

When it comes to relationships, the soft side reigns supreme. Clearly, the connection between clients and their advisors is one of life's most important. Some compare it in significance to choosing a mate. So, let's look at how those who subscribe to on-line dating services pick *the one*. First, they establish profiles based on hard criteria. That is the rational process by which they determine their "consideration set." The ultimate choice rests on a softer process. It happens in the heart, in the core. Similarly, subjective factors play a significant role in professional relationships.

No doubt, facts and figures remain important. Yet, when all contenders appear equal, the soft

side becomes the distinguishing factor. That is why your success will be a function of how well you develop and declare your *enthusiasm, certainty and commitment*.

Express Your Enthusiasm ...

... for the service you provide your clients, your eagerness to serve them and your passion for your profession.

Just as one must be convinced to convince others, you must have enthusiasm to arouse others to action. Enthusiasm doesn't you be a starry-eyed optimist who leads cheers and slaps backs. That is excitement: surface stuff. Enthusiasm runs much deeper. It starts within and works its way into the world. Whether displayed in a loud or gentle voice, enthusiasm is compelling. Remember this: an advisor without enthusiasm is merely a clerk.

Creating and maintaining your enthusiasm isn't always easy. Recommendations prove wrong and world events can be disheartening. At times, your enthusiasm will have to withstand doubts and skepticism.

When enthusiasm doesn't come easily, here are a few ideas to get it moving.

- Get excited. Excitement isn't enthusiasm, but it can be a road to it. Raise your voice, move your arms and put a smile on your face. See if your heart and spirit follow.
- Expand what works. Find those elements of what you do that make you feel most positive, confident and dynamic. Then let the feeling spread to other areas of your life and work.
- Be lofty about your contribution. Ask most people what they do and they don't puff their chest with pride. Rather, they put down their chosen calling by inserting an actual or subliminal "just" in front of it: "I am (just) an accountant, (just) an engineer, (just) an insurance broker or (just) a financial advisor. Drop the "just." Acknowledge yourself and honor your contribution.

Communicate Your Certainty ...

... not necessarily as to how a particular recommendation will work out. After all, recommendations play out in the future and cannot be assured. Rather, communicate your certainty that your clients are better off with you, a fully qualified professional, than they would be on their own or with anyone else.

Medical doctors frequently face the certainty challenge. While wits will claim that M.D. stands for "minor deity," most medical doctors are acutely aware of the limitations of their knowledge. Yet they are certain that their profession is the best alternative we have.

Similarly, your clients need a professional advisor. You must be certain about the firm you represent, the products and services you offer, and, most importantly, your right to provide advice.

Articulate Your Commitment ...

... but first make sure you mean it. Commitment is no frivolous fad. Nor is it a goal, bargain or exchange. It is a binding moral choice – a promise - final and complete. There is no turning back.

The odds of having rewarding relationships with clients improve dramatically the instant you are committed to them and their needs.

As a boy, writer Frank O'Conner and his friends roamed the frozen Irish countryside. When they came to a wall that seemed too high to climb, they tossed their woolen caps over the top. Then, the boys had no choice but to follow. Toss your cap over the wall to your client's side.

Summing Up ...

Helping clients plan for their future is no ordinary job. It is a mission that requires a rare combination of technical proficiency and emotional eloquence. Success and satisfaction will come to those advisors who continuously confirm their commitment, earn and display their certainty and maintain their enthusiasm.



*To purchase Alan Parisse's book, *This is Your Time*, go to <http://www.ffbookstore.com>. For more information about Alan, go to <http://www.financialspeakers.com>.*