

BUILDING AVENUES OF RELATIONSHIP

The bonds that tie us together



BY CAROL L. BROOKS, SR/WA

Service. Character. Commitment. These are the fundamental components of one of the most crucial strategies in business — avenues of relationship. Think about your bank. If they provide exceptional service and treat you with respect, your level of satisfaction is high. The greater your satisfaction, the more you are committed to continuing the relationship.

Right of way professionals can also establish avenues of relationship. Imagine a you are the property owner. An agency wants to discuss a roadway project that will impact your well-manicured yard that's lined with your dearly-departed Aunt Lutie's prized rose bushes. Deep down you want to work with the agency, but you have emotional ties to those rose bushes. What character qualities in the right of way agent might help you to see the project from a different perspective? As an agent, the key is to look for opportunities to establish critical pathways. Here are a few tips:

TRUST: This is the glue that binds relationships. Without it, there is no relationship. But we have to earn it and the tricky thing is, it's hard to achieve but easy to destroy. We can unknowingly ruin trust if our words aren't congruent with our body language. If our actions don't match our words, there is a contradiction in communication. When this happens, we destroy trust.

INTEGRITY: When we operate with integrity, being honest even in the toughest of times, we create an opportunity for a relationship to develop. Sometimes, we're at crossroads. We want to do the right thing, but it feels uncomfortable. When you do the right thing rather than what feels good, then it's likely you're choosing to act with integrity.

OPEN COMMUNICATION: If an owner becomes defensive, angry or unresponsive, the end result doesn't benefit either one of us. Our goal should be to alleviate their fears and anxieties

by creating an atmosphere where the owner feels safe to voice their concerns. When we identify an owner's needs and help resolve their issues, they will remember the care and effort we took. And the next time we meet them, they will likely be committed to problem solving.

ACTIVE LISTENING: One of the secrets to effective communication is listening to the whole story. If we only listen to bits and pieces and pick out what we deem as important, then we miss the heart of the owner's real apprehension. When we truly listen, we demonstrate that we care about what they care about, and they will be inclined to reciprocate. That's when we experience the power that listening plays in creating a long-lasting relationship.

EMPATHY: By staying alert to an owner's feelings, we are better prepared to empathize with them. While we may not agree, we can understand their issues. Win-win outcomes are the result of patiently helping the owner work their way toward a mutually acceptable agreement. When an owner sees how you've helped calm their concerns, then you create a space for relationship.

FEEDBACK: If an owner has made an effort to work with you, let them know how much you appreciate their cooperation. As the American philosopher William James once said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated."

When we knock on an owner's door, we rarely know what to expect. But we do know that their frame of mind can play a major role in attaining a win-win outcome. So remember the wise words of Dale Carnegie who said, "When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion." In the long run, people's attitudes may change, but what remains constant are the pathways we created with Service, Character and Commitment. 🌟



"Human contribution is the essential ingredient. It is only in the giving of oneself to others that we truly live."

-Ethel Percy Andrus



Owner of Cornerstone Management Skills, Carol is an internationally-recognized author and lecturer with over 20 years experience. ©2014 Carol L. Brooks. Visit www.cornerstonemanagementskills.com