



## Special Report on Mastering Relationships

So what does it mean to master a relationship?

The dictionary defines Mastery as “being in control” and Relationships are defined as “connections”.

So we have a definition here that essentially means being in control of the connections we make.

Not being a qualified psychologist or marriage guidance counsellor I will exclude one-on-one personal relationships from this report.

However, what I really want to share with you are ideas on mastering relationships that can give you positive results in your business.

So here are ideas that have worked for me. The emphasis here is on the word work. No matter how many ideas I share with you unless you put them to work there will be no results.

The Key elements are.....

1. Establish Trust.
2. Build Credibility.
3. Treat people the way they want to be treated.
4. Make a habit of acknowledging people.
5. Remember important dates, events and significant happenings.
6. Be prepared to invest time.



## Number 1.

### **Establish Trust.**

This is a given in any type of relationship. Without trust there is no relationship..... at least not one that is going to return profitable things to you.

So first let's establish what we mean by the word trust?

The Changing Minds organisation describes trust as both an emotional and a logical act – see [http://changingminds.org/explanations/trust/what\\_is\\_trust.htm](http://changingminds.org/explanations/trust/what_is_trust.htm).

Emotionally, it is where you expose your vulnerabilities to people, believing they will not take advantage of you.

Logically, it is where you have assessed the probabilities of gain and loss and concluded that the person in question will behave in a predictable manner.

In practice, trust is a bit of both. I trust you because I have experienced your trustworthiness.

So how can we establish trust and what does this mean to us in a business sense?

So here are some things that you **will** need to do to establish trust.

1. Firstly, to receive trust the best thing you can do is give trust. By this I mean issue an ounce of trust by doing something that may put you at a small risk.

Jeffrey Gitomer, a well known speaker, tells a delightful story that demonstrates trust.

It appears he was in the airport in Dallas, Texas when he noticed a man that he had met once before getting irate with an ATM that had taken his card. He approached, asked if he could help and ended up lending the man \$100 so he could cover his expenses in getting home. Two days later he received a thankyou note and the \$100.

Nothing unusual at this point except that he lent \$100 to someone he hardly knew.

Two months later he received a call from the same man asking Jeffrey would he like to tender for a project..... that resulted in an order for \$750,000 to Jeffrey's company.

Was there a risk here for Jeffrey? Of course – he could have lost \$100.



Was the risk worth taking? Most definitely!

He extended trust and received it back.

So what things can you do to demonstrate trust?

Who in your network can you extend trust to?

Giving referrals is one of the best ways I know. Yet simply by being open to ways of extending a helping hand to someone in need – without expecting anything in return – is the easiest way to start extending trust.

2. Secondly, let people know what your values are and demonstrate that you stick to them.

Let me start here by asking you a question!

Do you have a code of ethics..... and do your clients know about it?

Many business organisations have a code of ethics and this is excellent. We demonstrate something about ourselves and our trustworthiness by belonging to such organisations.

So why not develop a personal code of ethics?

Then have it printed and distribute it with your promotional material, have it shown on your website and include it with all quotations.

Here is a way that you can not only master your relationships but also stand apart from your competitors.

After all, who would you rather deal with? A person who has a code of ethics **and is so proud of it that they promote it**.... OR someone who does not?

3. Meet with people regularly. It is simply not possible to build a trusting, long term relationship with someone unless you meet with them – face to face – on a regular basis.

And when you meet with them demonstrate that you are interested in building trust by showing interest in **them** first before you ask them to show interest in you.



I have lost count of the people who, immediately on meeting you, begin to tell you about themselves and their product/service in such a manner that they obviously are only interested in one person – themselves.

So start by asking **them** about **them**!

Yes it is important to know about their business. Yet it is so much more important to know about the person. After all, people do business with people, not companies.

Be prepared with a list of questions to ask that will demonstrate genuine interest in them.

One of the best tools is the GAINS profile developed by BNI®.

Take notes during the interview – this confirms your interest and demonstrates the importance you are attaching to the interview.

Some of it you will use to build your database of information on your clients and prospects.

One of the best questions you can finish such an interview with is “Now, how can I help you?”

So manage trust carefully. As they say it can take a lifetime to build and a moment to lose. And the simplest way to manage trust is to be **trustworthy**.

## **Number 2**

### **Build Credibility**

Sounds simple doesn't it? And it is if you follow some basic steps.

1. Do what you say you will do – always. There are no exceptions to this rule. If you say you will be somewhere at a certain time – be there. If you say you will do something - do it! It really is as simple as that.

A classic example of this was the speaker who was scheduled to speak at a BNI Directors Conference in Long Beach, California in November 2005. He had spent the previous 3 days in bed in the hotel courtesy of a virus he had attracted. Yet he got out of his sick bed and delivered his presentation because he said he would. Immediately he had finished he went straight back to bed.

How do I know this? Because I was that speaker!



Would I have been entitled to cancel? Most definitely!

However, how much more did I gain because I showed up and delivered?

To start with there was a speaking engagement at a conference in Kuala Lumpur that came out of that presentation simply because one person in the audience noticed my commitment.

So ask yourself, do you always do what you say you will do? Always?

2. Have a return phone call policy and stick to it.

Unreturned phone calls are a great way to destroy credibility. I am sure you know someone who has not returned your phone call. And how did you feel when that happened?

I have a voicemail message that ends by saying.....

....."please leave a message and I'll get back to you..... GUARANTEED"

... **and then I do.**

There is not much point in having policy like this one.... and then not implementing it.

This has paid handsome dividends in establishing credibility. So much so that quite a few years ago when an old answering machine in my office malfunctioned and I did not get a message that was left by a client I was contacted by that client to ask if I was OK. It seems that they had reasoned if I did not return their call I must be sick.

Such was my credibility in their eyes.

3. When circumstances conspire to derail your efforts to do something by a certain date or time, talk to the client and let them know. Most people will understand if you let them know in advance.... particularly if you already have a credible reputation for being reliable.

And therein is an example

I recently had the need of a service organisation to make a house call and repair my washing machine. They said they would be there at 10.30 am one morning.

Did they arrive on time? NO!

Was I upset? NO!



Why?

Because the serviceman phoned at 10.15 am to let me know that the previous repair had taken longer than planned and that he was running late.

And then he asked me if it was OK or would I like to reschedule?

So he built credibility for three reasons...

- (i) he rang in advance as a courtesy which respected my time as being valuable
- (ii) he was demonstrating that he made sure the problem was fixed, even if it took longer than originally estimated
- (iii) he respected my time enough to ask if it was OK to be late

So make sure that everything you do both establishes and protects your credibility.

Start by making a list of the things you already do and, secondly, the extra things you could now start doing.

One of the best ways to do this is to ask some trusted friends what things they see in your actions that demonstrate your credibility.

### **Number 3**

**Treat people the way they want to be treated.**

Sounds simple doesn't it!

Yet it is probably the least understood of all the ideas about relationship mastery.

You see many of us treat people the way **we** want to be treated.

Let me explain here!

For the sake of this report, I am presuming that you would say that you know the people with whom you have relationships.

And if you do, you will know what things they like. You will know what gifts they appreciate. You know what holidays they like. You will know what goals and dreams they have. You get the picture.

Yet, so many of us confuse familiarity with knowledge. Just because we have had a relationship with someone for years, we think we understand them and know them.



Let me tell you that nothing beats knowledge in this area.

I clearly remember a BNI® chapter where the members were resisting some training in getting to know each other better.

Statements like the one from David where he said “I don’t need any training to get to know John. He and I have been members for 6 years” were quite common.

So I asked them to indulge me by each of them writing down one thing that they were passionate about.

When I asked John to share what he had written he said “I am restoring a vintage Alfa Romeo car and that is my passion”.

At which point David said “You’re kidding! I am the local President of the Alfa Romeo Car Club. I didn’t know you were into Alfa Romeos”!

John and David had been meeting with each other at BNI® each week for 6 years and didn’t know something this important about each other.

They had confused familiarity with knowledge.

Needless to say they quickly agreed to the training on getting to know each other better.

So, the lesson for us here is that we need to spend quality time in getting to know our relationships and understand **how they like to be treated**.

Find out what things they like. What gifts! What hobbies! What community interests! What holidays they take! What makes their heart sing!

Then we need to do something about it.

Again these are things that you would add to your database for future reference.

Remember.....knowledge without action is just that – knowledge.

#### **Number 4**

#### **Make a habit of acknowledging people.**

Look for things that people do well.... and acknowledge them for it.

There are numerous ways you can do this. Let me give you a few ideas.



1. Simply say so. Say to someone "well done" or "that was a great job" or "thanks for helping".

Nothing beats face to face acknowledgement. And invest a little time here. This is not a throw away line as you pass by. This is where you stop, look the person in the face and say "I appreciate what you did"... **and** wait for their response. I was in a restaurant recently where the waitperson stopped by our table to ask how the meals were and was walking away before we had finished responding. Needless to say we did not feel her sincerity and this is definitely not the way to acknowledge people.

2. Send them a card. There are numerous cards on the market from serious to hilarious that all achieve the same aim – that of letting someone know that they are important. I use an internet service called SendOutCards – [www.sendoutcards.com](http://www.sendoutcards.com) - that mails beautiful cards with my personal message for less than the cost of me buying a card, a stamp and going to the post office.

In the days of electronic this and electronic that, a physical card arriving in the post with your words written on it is far superior to any email or sms you can send. And the best part is they can show it – either to friends and family or just have it sitting on their desk for everyone to see.

3. Send a gift. And here again is where knowledge becomes so important.

Send them a gift that they would like, not one that you would like. In the book Truth or Delusion the authors describe this as the Platinum Rule.

Now here is where we need to invest some real time.

Get to know your relationships and know what they like. The best way to do this is to listen.

Know in advance so that when the opportunity arrives to send them a gift you know what to send.

A friend of mine is really good at this because she listens. When it came time to buy a gift recently for something a business associate had done to assist her she remembered that, months before, he had mentioned an interest in golf. Her gift? Two tickets to watch a championship round of golf later that year.

Make a practice of not only listening for signals like that but also recording them so that you remember when needed.



## **Number 5**

### **Remember important dates, events and significant happenings.**

Birthdays, anniversaries and special days are important dates to everyone – even those who say they aren't.

So establish a system that does two things....

1. records such dates for all your relationships
2. **reminds** you of all upcoming dates

Cards, phone calls and other messages are just so important here as they demonstrate the personal side of your relationship.

I clearly remember talking to a regular client one afternoon and I began the call by saying Happy Birthday to him. There was a distinct silence at the other end of the phone for about 5 seconds – during which time I wondered if I had the date wrong – before he came back in a haltering voice and said thanks. He then went on to tell me that I was the first person to wish him happy birthday that day. At that moment our relationship became much stronger.

## **Number 6**

### **Be prepared to invest time.**

This is almost a given yet, when I was involved in BNI® I regularly heard people leave after 6 months because, as they said, "this isn't working"!

Let me tell you about the connection that led me to being involved in BNI®. In 1998 I got involved in BNI® due to a connection that I had made in 1983 – some 15 years before.

15 years!

What would have happened had I not kept up that relationship? If I had said after 5 years, or 10 years or even 14 years that it was not worth it and stopped contact. I would have missed out on a great business opportunity.

So I smile when people give up after a short period of time.

Building relationships is not a "fast track process"! It takes time and you need to allow time in your schedule to do all of the things we have mentioned.



**So there you have it!**

Some tips that have worked for me in Mastering Relationships that turned into Results!

To further this process you could purchase some copies of the CD – Relationship Mastery - to give to your best clients and friends.

Details can be found on my website at [www.geoffkirkwood.com](http://www.geoffkirkwood.com)

While you are there make sure you register for my regular newsletter which will give you even more ideas on how to build your business.

And remember that just because someone says that is impossible it doesn't mean it can't be done.

I leave you with that thought – **Challenge The Impossible!**

Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Geoff'.

**Geoff Kirkwood – The Referral Master™**