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**Consulting Tips from the Million Dollar Consultant:
Ten Techniques to Build Credibility With Any Buyer**

By Alan Weiss, Ph.D.

Some suggestions to build credibility with a buyer during the initial meeting. (This assumes you're meeting with a true, economic buyer who controls the budget.)

1. Assume a peer mentality. Don't allow yourself to be cast in a "dog and pony show." (I suggest you never show up with visual aids for this very reason.) Adapt an attitude that the two of you are peers mutually exploring a working relationship. Either of you might accept or reject it.
2. Be patient. Don't barge into a silence and state, "Let me tell you about myself." You're not there, believe it or not, to get a sale. You're there to develop a relationship. That might require several meetings.
3. Use provocative questions to get the buyer to talk about him- or herself, or at least the company. Show an interest in the buyer and the business.
4. Do your homework. Learn the current stock price, the company history, the major competition, and the primary markets served. Become conversant in the client's business environment before you meet the buyer.
5. Push back. Choose your spots to disagree with the buyer. At least offer alternative view points. Relationships are based on honesty and candor.
6. Offer immediate value. Demonstrate some techniques or approaches that might be applicable. Don't wallow in theory and do not focus on your exceptional credentials. Instead, provide help.
7. Embrace the buyer. Use "we" and "us." Orient your conversation around how the two of you would partner, not what "you" would do to "them." Encourage the buyer to think about the two of you working in concert.
8. Focus on business outcomes. Spend as little time as possible on alternatives and input (e.g., training, surveys, retreats, audits), and emphasize results (e.g., market share, improved teamwork, higher profits).
9. Ensure that your image is professional. Dress well, even in a business casual environment. (Expensive casual clothes are indicative of successful people.) Make sure your grooming is appropriate. Use the language perfectly.
10. Take the initiative. Ask about and reaffirm the meeting time frame and the agenda. Suggest next steps. Summarize what you've heard. Act like someone accustomed to working with high level people.

You won't close every deal or charm every buyer, but at least ensure that it's not because you're your own worst enemy.

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