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## **Some Principles to Guide Sound Statistical Consulting**

- **Be patient in building new relationships.** Relationships take time. Resist indulging in disingenuous schmoozing, as it can be a severe put-off. Instead, take the time to get to know your client, and share a little bit of yourself. Most importantly, remember that your work for your client is paramount in building a relationship. At the end of the day, no amount of personal connection can substitute for great work.
  
- **Get to know their industry and company.** Keep up with your client's company as well as their industry. You do not have to be an expert, but this will help you speak the same language as the client, understand what keeps them up at night, and cater your interaction and offerings accordingly.
  
- **(Really) Listen to the Client.** Make it your business to listen first and talk later. Listening is an interactive communication skill. You are challenged to gain an accurate understanding of the client and their project and in doing so ascertain what they truly need from their statistician.
  
- **Speak Easy.** Oftentimes clients feel uncertain in regards to technical details that are outside their sphere of experience. To some, technology represents a jargon-filled barrier that is impossible to cross. Consider your client and keep it simple. Avoid lengthy explanations and focus on simply explained positive outcomes.
  
- **Ask Questions / Encourage Feedback.** Questions provide an avenue for further clarification. Again, keep it simple. Aim to build client trust. Never over-explain when less is often more. Feedback helps to avoid dissatisfaction. This ultimately assists the process. Address each issue raised systematically with the client in a constructive manner.
  
- **Go the extra mile.** As you grow your business and your client relationships, there will be times that you will have to make a decision on when to adjust or expand your core offerings to cater to the needs of a client. Words of caution, though, if you are making a significant departure from your core offerings, ensure you have the time and desire to become proficient in the new procedures.
  
- **Treat every client as your most important one.** Simply put, happy clients are more likely to make referrals. Provide all clients with your best service, regardless of whether they are a large, well-known company or a small business. You never know whom your clients may know or to whom they will refer you. Just as importantly, when they switch jobs, either within their company or to a new one, you want to be the partner they recommend to their new team. Lastly, it is important to remember that today's small companies could be the big companies of tomorrow, and it is incredibly fulfilling to be a trusted partner fueling that growth.
  
- **Respond promptly.** When a client emails you, acknowledge the receipt of the email as quickly as possible, even if you do not have the answer they are looking for. You will give them comfort by simply acknowledging the receipt of their request and by communicating that you are on it. This may seem like a no-brainer, but I often see statisticians worry about having the right answer, and as a result, they forget to acknowledge that they are on the case.

- **Be more than an email address.** Despite its prevalence in business today, email communication can often be misconstrued, especially during stressful situations, if senders and recipients do not know each other well. Use other channels to help shed light on who you are. Consider a phone call, Skype or an in-person meeting to put a face (or voice) to a name. Often the phone gets a bad reputation (e.g. using it to 'get on the same page'), but if used for good news, a phone call is a great way to build a better relationship with your client.

- **Always summarize next steps.** No matter how quick or trivial a client meeting seems, always recap the conversation with next steps. Many vendors skip this basic step. You think you will remember all of the details, and maybe you will, but your client may not. Aligning on the same page with next steps prevents a lot of confusion down the road.

- **Focus on Results.** Define your end product. Explain your ideas in terms that the client can relate to. Everybody seeks a good outcome. People appreciate adherence to a deadline and the completion of a goal or project that clearly realises pre-defined objectives. When you consistently focus upon your client's results - your own results increase.

- **Relax and Be Yourself.** In seeking to make the client happy, you must find happiness yourself. Aim to enjoy all aspects of your work. People are part of the process.