

Episode 68 – Keeping Up with Client Needs (or Demands)

“We see our customers as invited guests to a party, and we are the hosts. It’s our job every day to make every important aspect of the customer experience a little bit better.” ~ Jeff Bezos

There may be days that you don't know which way to turn your head or what which direction you should go with the project as your client may have ever changing demands and needs. Before you feel like you're going off the rails, remember that you are a client to others as well. Think about the expectations you have when you work with someone. Are they any different than what the client expects of you?

They hired you because they trust and have confidence in your abilities to deliver on what you said you would deliver. You are the one who listened, and remembered important timelines, and made a point to genuinely care about their results. Their results are ultimately your results.

If you feel like your clients' needs or demands are unreasonable, consider the system or process you used to enrol them to get started with you. Did you set out expectations of yourself or your clients? Sometimes when clients are unsure of expectations or feel like they're missing some information, they may come across as demanding as they are concerned about how it affects them. They chose you because of how they felt when they interacted with you. You need to reassure them by following through on meeting the emotional needs and outcomes they expect from you.



Here are some tips to help you keep up:

Create an experience. How your clients feel while they are working with you is important? Make them feel important because they are. Make their needs your needs and be genuinely interested in their success. You need to continue to build and nurture client relationships even after they have hired you.

Validate your client's concerns. Take time to acknowledge your client's concerns. There is often much to learn about how they see the ideal situation. Don't use the word "but" to explain why you're not reaching your client's concerns. It sounds like an excuse and dismisses their concerns. You may think about saying, "I want to acknowledge _____ and share with you _____"

Communicate regularly and provide updates as they arise. Clients do not like to be left in the dark as to results and expectations. If important decisions need to be made, don't wait until the last minute to share information with them. Ask them how often they would like to be communicated with. Follow-up with a handwritten card or an e-mail to thank them for a conversation or follow-up meeting.

Keep them engaged. Clients like to be involved in the decision-making and how it impacts them. Don't forget to set boundaries so that you can have down time outside of the work that you deliver.

Know your client. If you haven't already done so, you should do your research and understand what is important to your client and what their needs are? What do they value?

Ask for feedback. You never know how you're doing if you don't ask. Ask questions to learn more about how old the service you are delivering is meeting their needs.

Anticipate their needs. If you have done your homework and have taken a genuine interest in getting to know your client, you will be able to anticipate some of the needs that they have. What a better way to impress them is to provide the need is an option before it's needed. This demonstrates that you are paying attention and that they matter to you.

Under promise and over deliver. Many people run on deadlines and if you can beat a deadline with high-quality work you impress your clients and they will keep coming back for more.

Provide solutions. Your client came to you so you could fulfil their needs. Document and clearly articulate how you are meeting their needs.

There may be times when you need to release a few of your clients if agreements and expectations cannot be met or are violated. Always do what is right even when there is no one to witness it.

What are you doing to ensure you are meeting your clients' needs?

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