Three Ways to Get Prospects to Like You More

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by Dan Solin

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If one of your New Year’s resolutions is to increase your assets under management in 2016, you would be wise to focus on your likeability.

As a former trial lawyer, I was acutely aware of how my “likeability” increased my success in court.

There’s ample evidence that credibility is directly related to likeability. The data is nicely summarized in this blog by Laurie Kuslansky, a Ph.D. and the managing director of a jury-consulting service. Trial lawyers rely on these services to assist them in selecting a jury that is more likely to be sympathetic to their clients’ position.

The services of these firms, however, go beyond jury selection. They also counsel lawyers and witnesses about how to come across as credible and persuasive.

Here are three tips from Kuslansky’s blog and other resources on how to be more likeable:

Search for common ground

We tend to like people with whom we have something in common. Affinity fraud is so pernicious because we are predisposed to trust people who are in the same religious group, country club or profession or who share our passions, hobbies or activities.

The evidence also shows that people are more inclined to like those who look and act like they do.

Many advisors waste the opportunity to establish common ground. They launch into a presentation that sets forth the merits of their offering instead of trying to get to know the prospect as a person. You will be amazed at what people will tell you if you give them an opportunity to talk about themselves.

One of my coaching clients, another financial advisor, told me this story. He asked a prospect to tell him about his transition from high-powered executive to retired life. The prospect confided that –
despite his success – he never enjoyed the business world. He had always wanted to be a teacher, and he was now serving as a volunteer mentor to disadvantaged children. By coincidence, the advisor was doing something similar in his own community.

The advisor told me he felt a "seismic shift" in the tenor of the meeting when they began discussing how much satisfaction each of them derived from mentoring.

The prospect became a client.

**Attractiveness**

Life is not always fair. There are a number of studies finding that physically attractive people of both genders are assumed to be more sociable, happier, more competent and more successful than unattractive people.

Other studies (summarized here) demonstrate "attractiveness bias" in teacher evaluations of students, voter preferences, jury judgments, character portrayals in movies (more attractive characters are portrayed more favorably than unattractive ones) and employment decisions (attractive applicants are more likely to be hired).

While advisors can’t all look like Brad Pitt or Jennifer Lopez, we can maximize our perceived attractiveness through our choice of clothes, attention to good grooming and by smiling more often.

**Compliments**

The genuine use of compliments plays an important role in increasing your likeability. Some advisors are so focused on the information they are conveying that they ignore the power of compliments.

Imagine you are meeting with a prospect who is at or near retirement and whose portfolio demonstrates admirable preparation. Not only does she have adequate funds to maintain her quality of life, but she has a well-thought-out plan for her legacy.

In this situation, you could compliment her as follows: “I review a lot of portfolios, and it’s clear to me you have done a wonderful job preparing for your retirement.”

What do you think the impact of making that statement will be on how the prospect views you?

**The takeaway**

While the public perception of lawyers is generally poor (often unfairly, in my view), consultants have been successful helping them increase their likeability, which enhances their credibility.

As an advisor, you can take a page from their book. A focus on likeability could have a disproportionate impact on your ability to generate more assets under management in 2016 and beyond.
Dan Solin is the director of investor advocacy for the BAM Alliance and a wealth advisor with Buckingham. He is a New York Times best-selling author of the Smartest series of books. His latest book is The Smartest Sales Book You'll Ever Read. He limits his sales coaching practice to advisory firms that advocate evidence-based investing.