

GIVING YOUR CONVERSATIONAL PARTNERS WHAT THEY WANT MOST (Hint: It isn't Money!!!)

Have you ever wondered why it is we hit it off instantly with some people and never seem to click with others? Why is it that there are some people we feel as if we've known forever and others we can't seem to relate to even after years of contact? When we truly connect with others, we become actively involved in our conversations. We give attention to others and in the process learn what others need and how to meet these needs.

If you and I are conversing and I feel as if you're concentrating on me and only me—that what I'm saying is of the utmost important to you—I feel validated. When I know I have your attention, I don't feel I have to compete with any outside interference. I feel like you've given me a gift.

Think about it. Do you know people that you prefer to be around more than others? Why is that? I would guess that these people show you in a number of ways that you matter to them. One important way is by giving you the attention you deserve. We all know people whom we'd define as "attention seekers". Why do you think people are starving for attention—because they rarely get it! You and I have the potential to bond with almost everyone we meet if we consistently demonstrate to them that they're the only people that matter at the moment.

Let's talk about some simple ways we can demonstrate to others that they have our attention: Do you make eye contact with those you talk with? If you're looking at me while I'm talking, I'm thinking to myself, "This person is really listening to what I'm saying." I feel good being around you because I feel you have my best interests at heart. All this just because you're looking at me in conversation.

If you think this might not be true, try the opposite behavior. When someone of importance is talking to you in the next day or two, look away from their eyes or down at your lap. Be sure to tell them when the conversation is lagging or over that you've been conducting an experiment and would like to know how they felt when you failed to make eye contact. You can be sure that your partner will tell you they either felt slighted or ignored. Warning: Only conduct this experiment with a small account or with someone you know well!

How about these people who tell you they're listening to you while they're staring at a computer screen? I'm sure there are some people who can do more than one

activity at once, but I haven't met many who can do them well. If you want to improve your relationships immensely, either turn off the equipment or schedule another time to talk. We shouldn't have to compete for someone's attention, especially if we're competing with an inanimate object.

If you really want to win brownie points with your customers or colleagues, try asking them questions about what their opinions are on a given topic. Be genuine in your approach. By looking at a situation from a variety of perspectives, you'll learn to provide solutions and assistance in ways that are meaningful and relevant. Until we understand others' thought processes and what makes them tick, we run the risk of presenting inappropriate responses.

Bottom line: Small businesses often become big businesses. If growing your company or improving your job satisfaction is your goal, remember to attend to others. The old adage, "I don't care how much you know until I know how much you care" is alive and well today. Keep your priorities straight!

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To Contact the Maixner Group

Phone: 503 722-8199
E-mail: KMaixner@TheMaixnerGroup.com