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The Law of Trust

“I’m not upset that you lied to me. I’m upset that from now on I can’t believe in you”- Friedrich Nietzsche

Sometimes in October, I received a call from a former client who had been out of the country for almost a year.

He is not a Nigerian but had just secured an appointment with a company. His first statement was “Bayo, I need to pick your brain on this because with you I know where I stand. I know you’ll not deceive me”.

After our discussion, he told me he had already informed his Chairman that their banking relationship had to come to me. I’ve signed it on since.

I’ve had cause to reflect over his statement many times since then. Here was a man whom sometimes I had very difficult conversations with. I’ve had to tell him no when I knew his requests were not possible. Sometimes, the relationship was stormy.

I never fail to tell my colleagues that the major currency for transaction is integrity and this will only be sustained in an atmosphere of trust. Never lie to customers in order to make a sale.

We are all under pressure to make a big sale but do not capitulate to making false claims about your products or service. You may make the first sale but you won’t make repeat sales. In all my years selling, I know that the first sale is neither the biggest nor the best.

Tell your customers the truth even if you have to lose that particular sale. I prefer to lose that sale than lose the customer. You lose the customer when they walk away and never come back because they found what you told them to be false.

I agree that it’s not easy to have difficult conversations with customers. However, when you lie so as to make a quick buck or find an easy way out, you destroy your reputation and that of your organization. Lying can only work short-term and is never a long-term strategy.

When you lie about what your products or service can do, it's called mis-selling and is criminal in some climes. Don't create a false impression about what you can do. Once your clients find out, they'll never come back. You can only sell a bad product once.

If you deceive me once, shame to you. If you deceive me twice, shame to me. Once bitten, twice shy.

So how do you build trust with your customers to such a level that they find you reliable and are comfortable with you?

1. Don't create a false impression about your products or services. If you're on social media, use the right pictures of your products. Don't put the picture of bone straight hair and supply something else. Give the proper credits.

Be honest. If you don't offer a certain service, be truthful about it- even if it hurts.

2. Honour commitments. Be a 'talk and do' person- and not 'talk no do'. Go out of your way to honour your commitments. Walk your talk. Be a credible person.

I've had an Igbo customer call me 'Ekwueme' before. It was later I learnt that the name means the person who does what he says. Psalm 15:4 calls that kind of person ' one who sweareth to his own hurt'- 'who makes firm commitments and follow through even at great cost' (TPT)

The Amplified Bible says 'he keeps his word even to his own disadvantage and does not change it for his own benefit'. The Contemporary English Version says 'they keep their promises no matter what the cost'.

3. Be responsive. Respond to your customers requests immediately. The same thing applies to emails, letters, phone calls and text messages. When you respond, you actually let your customers know you value them.

4. Refer your customer to another client when you cannot offer what they want. Many think this will make you lose the customer. Not true. This will actually make your customer understand you have their interests at heart. They will come back to you for sure when you're helpful.

5. Be consistent. Maintain your standards at all times. Don't be a yo-yo.

No one is going to buy from someone they don't trust.

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