



Relational GPS™

The Road Map to Outstanding Business Relationships
Ed Wallace

Identifying your core relationships is the vital first step you must take in shifting how you perceive your role in any business.

Instead of just wishing that better business contacts would magically appear in your professional life, you must drive the business contacts you've already established to more productive and rewarding levels. The initial step of pinpointing your core relationships will lead you toward participating with an actual person rather than with a digital line in a CRM system, or on LinkedIn.

A process, however, for driving your core relationships to success, is also vital. I call this process understanding your contact's Relational GPS™.

Driving a car equipped with a GPS (that is, a Global Positioning System) has become a way of life for us as we travel, taking much of the guesswork out of following directions that our parents' generation struggled with. Global positioning systems rely on satellites that orbit the Earth at more than seven thousand miles per hour, synchronizing coordinates and time and then sending signals to the GPS device in your car. It amazes me how accurate these directions are even in construction zones. They are the new road map to travelling successfully—getting where you want to go.

Correspondingly, the major part of getting where you want to go in business—the road map to our success in developing outstanding business relationships—is to understand the Relational GPS™ of each of your clients. If your clients believe that you can help them deal with their goals, passions, and struggles on both a professional and a personal level, you can advance through the sales cycle much more meaningfully and successfully. The challenge, of course, is that clients—who are people, after all—are generally not inclined to share their goals, passions, and struggles with anyone they do not deem as credible or competent.

The key then (using that road map) is to navigate through the process of launching your relationship and starting to work together. But until clients begin to share their goals, passions, and struggles with you, the business relationship is parked in neutral.

What is Relational GPS™?

Business relationships do not begin until your client or prospect shares a goal, passion, or struggle—everything up until this point is like driving cross-country without a map. People often look at me in confusion when I ask them, “When do business relationships begin?” Their responses include, “When I take them to lunch,” “When we meet for the first time,” and, “With our first conversation.”

If business relationships are about each party achieving mutual goals, then how can one begin without one party or the other sharing what matters most to most humans—a goal, a passion or a struggle?

Every one of a client’s needs will fall under these three categories:

- 1 » **Goals** – personal short and long term business objectives
- 2 » **Passions** – business and personal causes people care deeply about
- 3 » **Struggles** – obstacles or commitments that are holding them back

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Why are you worthy of a client's money?

In the words of bestselling author and successful sports attorney Ronald Shapiro, "People are sizing you up in every business interaction, intuitively and decisively determining if you are worthy of their interest, trust and money."

How do you get in gear and move forward? Build the skill of turning the act of asking questions into client identified attributes, like listening and remembering, sharing relevant information, and keeping commitments. After your contact begins attaching these attributes to you, they will share more and more about their needs, and your business will flourish.

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Now think about the success of your business relationships in terms of interpersonal connectedness: Why would anyone deem you worthy of helping with their goals, passions or struggles if they did not believe you are credible?

Only after our clients deem us credible will they begin to ask us to do things for them that align with their goals, passions, and struggles. Keep in mind that you want to continue to observe and learn more about each client's Relational GPS™ because it is a dynamic process; individuals shift their interests and priorities over time.

Relational Currency: Credibility

When a client begins to share these with you, then you are advancing the relationship. It all begins by developing credibility through the questions you ask your client or prospect. This is where most client-facing professionals make a huge mistake. They ask a question or two and then launch right into how their solution can solve the client's problem. It is very difficult to fully understand a client's problem after a few questions. It is almost disrespectful on your part.

Your credibility and believability will shine through based on the questions you ask. Even if you have asked these same questions to other clients and they have become routine to you, they are fresh to this client. In this person's mind, they are the only client that matters.

Programming Your Relational GPS™ System

To practice asking questions without offering solutions, try this action point exercise. I call it Relational GPST™ Lite.

Sit down with a young child that is playing with a puzzle. Try asking them questions on their activity for five minutes without offering much in the way of instruction or advice. If you can stay focused on this for that amount of time, you are on your way to developing the skill to work with adult clients!

See, the big issue client-facing professionals have is “resisting the urge to offer solutions” too early in the process. Remember, your new client or business contact doesn't care about your solutions yet. They are still determining if they like you, trust you and believe what you say—in other words, find you credible. Your company, brand and solutions have no relevance yet.

The questions they have at this point are:

- » Do they like you
- » Can they trust you with their team?
- » Will you embarrass them?
- » Will you come through in the clutch?

Be aware that when you can identify a goal, passion or struggle, the relationship is just beginning to advance. Continue to explore each one, and keep in mind that your client does not expect you to have all the answers and solutions to their problems at this early stage of your relationship. Asking questions and learning about their Relational GPS™ assures them of your intellectual honesty. Your ability to admit that you do not have all the answers and need help from them on various topics helps advance your credibility.

If your client believes that you can help them deal with their goals, passions and struggles on a personal and professional level, you can advance through the sales cycle much more meaningfully and successfully.

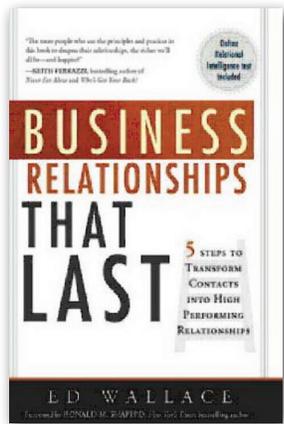
Only after our clients deem us credible will they begin to ask us to do things for them that align with their goals, passions, and struggles.

Keep Driving

Once you've programmed your Relational GPS™, don't stop. People reveal themselves slowly. You can practice your worthy intentions by learning more and more about that individual's Relational GPS™—their higher goals, stronger passions and deeper struggles.

When you understand your clients' Relational GPS™, you'll know which relationships are working and which ones need work, as well as exactly how to go about it. You will have a system and a roadmap for navigating the roads to stronger, more successful, and deeper business relationships.

You'll feel like you are no longer leaving business relationships—the most important aspect of your business performance—to chance. 📍



BUY THE BOOK

Get more details or buy a copy of Ed Wallace's [*Business Relationships That Last*](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ed Wallace founded [The Relational Capital Group](#) so he could bring his relationship-building principles to corporations and their client-facing professionals. The firm provides professional development and consulting services to help organizations and individuals develop the key relationships that most impact their business performance- leading to improved profitability and sustainability in the global marketplace. In his most recent book, *Business Relationships That Last* (Greenleaf, 2009), Ed illustrates his relationship-building principles through real-life stories, examples, and insights gathered from his success as a sales leader, and shows his readers how to establish and maintain successful business relationships.

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