



Relationship Stagnation

“You can discover more about a person in an hour of play, than a year in conversation” - Plato. Maybe this is the reason so many advisors claim the golf course as their central prospecting and meeting location – their office away from the office. Like most of our relationships, those with our retail clients will ebb and flow. The question always remains; how do I ensure each of my relationships is as fun and impactful as the first week we worked together? In Robert Sternberg’s *Triangle Theory of Love*, Sternberg identifies three elements that must coexist in a successful relationship. Sternberg was mostly discussing intimate relationships with our loved ones but we believe the theory can be universally applied.

The first element is *Passion*. When we start a relationship with a client we have a strong passion - passion for obtaining their business and a strong desire for success in doing the right thing. The second element is *Intimacy*. Again, Sternberg had other things in mind here but we argue all financial professionals must have intimacy with their clients. The deep drive to be close to our clients and to care in a way that even some of their own family members might not. After all, we are managing their money, retirement and in some cases planning for their families post demise. The third element is *Commitment*. This tends to be the easiest of the three when it relates to financial services. Each of us would argue we are committed to our clients and do all we can to serve them.

With the three elements comprehensible, why then is it easy to lose track of relationship progress and allow key relationships to ebb and flow, or worse fall apart? One major factor is time. We do not have the time to dedicate the same energy as we did when we were courting. We have to save this time for new prospects, reviews and outlier needs that clients present. The second factor is human nature. Over time, relationships slow. It is a fact and occurs with our spouses, friends from college, and even our parents and children. We should not assume our clients are any different.

Although we might not have the same urge to relationship build as we did the first day on the golf course or the first week of working together, there are three simple steps we can use to remain *in love* with our clients. Surge identifies this as the ACT model. The first word is *Always*. Always be in thought in and on your business for ways to interact and display your care for clients. This could be via an appreciation event or even a simple phone call wishing them a happy anniversary as a client of yours. The second is *Communicate*. Truthfully this applies to all relationships but, let’s remain on business. How often are you communicating with clients? What are you communicating to clients? Ensure your communication is intentional, periodic and consistent. The last is *Technology*. We cannot leave our homes without our devices and your clients, young and old, are no different. Review your technology offering including the major; social media. Use technology to your advantage, it is simple, effective and inexpensive.

We all agree it would be delightful to have the same spark in our relationships as if it were day one. What if there really was a Groundhog’s Day for our relationships? Creating a strategy to add fun back in to relationships and kill relationship stagnation will retain and draw you closer to clients, and at the same time allow you to add excitement to prospecting.

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