

Creating great client chemistry, right from the start.

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We all know that first impressions count. They can make or break a business relationship, so how do you create great client chemistry from the very first touchpoint?

Take the call

Managing Director of Elixir Consulting Sue Viskovic CFP says relationship building begins from the first phone call. “I know that advisers often use their client service manager or receptionist to take the call and book in new clients, but that’s a lost opportunity for advisers,” she says.

“I’ve seen great success where advisers will take that first call. And it doubles as a business management task. There’s the chance to check that the client is appropriate for the business or the adviser and refer them elsewhere if necessary.”

Be clear

Before the first appointment, follow up the call with an email that provides the address and where to park, remind them of the information to bring, and a detailed outline of when and if fees will be payable.

“A lot of people are a bit fearful when they go to see an adviser – so just help them relax by helping them to understand exactly what you’re going to do and what you’re not,” says Viskovic.

Have a break

In the five or 10 minutes before the meeting, put down what you’re doing and think about what you know of the client, says Viskovic.

She also suggests a five-minute meditation or even just three deep breaths to help clear your mind. “It may sound a bit strange but it can help you to be totally present with the client rather than rushing from one job to the next. Most advisers’ skill set and personality allows them to connect with people, but they can lose that connection if their head is too busy and their mind is in too many different places.”

Find a way to connect

Look for a way to relate to and empathise with the client without it being unnatural, advises Viskovic.

“A lot of those old-fashioned ways of building rapport (such as a shared interest in an activity) feel a bit contrived. If you naturally have things in common, great, talk about it. But the first meeting is not about

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creating a friendship. That will happen over time,” she says.

“The first meeting is more around what’s going on in the client’s life and having a conversation that is beyond what’s on a fact find.”

Watch your language

The language of goals and objectives might be your bread and butter – and necessary for compliance – but it’s likely to be uncomfortable for your client.

“Most people, when they’re chatting about what they want to do in life, don’t talk about goals and objectives. It’s a much more relaxed, natural conversation,” says Viskovic.

“So, connect on that level: ‘Talk to me about what’s happening in your life at the moment. What are the things that you’d like more of and less of? What do you want that to look like in five years’ time or longer?’”

“The templated questions might make it easy to create a Statement of Advice (SOA), but clients don’t care about that. They want to know you’ve connected with them on a human level; that you ‘get’ them, you empathise with them. And, most importantly, that you’ve got the skill set to help them fix whatever challenges they’ve got,” Viskovic says.

Put it in writing

Giving clients some reading material to take away from the meeting is helpful for those who like to do extra research or who haven’t yet made their minds up, she says.

“Investing in advice is a big buying decision and many clients are anxious about it,” says Viskovic.

Background material about the firm and the adviser is a good start, along with information that spells out what you’re going to do next and what will happen then. “All of those things really help them understand the process,” says Viskovic.

“We find that when advisers slow down their process and have good quality time with their client, not just talking facts and figures, they actually uncover more information and more opportunities to be able to support them and make better decisions”.

“It’s about helping them to get closer to what’s really going to achieve more of what they want in their life, because the adviser is actually making a big difference in their lives,” Viskovic says.

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