

INVESTMENTS & WEALTH MONITOR

A reprinted article from July/August 2024

Earn a Prospect's Trust, Win a New Client

By Mike Byrnes



INVESTMENTS & WEALTH INSTITUTE®

Earn a Prospect's Trust, Win a New Client

By Mike Byrnes

A lack of trust is a deal breaker. An advisor who loses a client's trust loses a client. An advisor who never earns a prospect's trust never wins the client.

In the research our firm has conducted over the years with wealthy clients we've often asked, "Why do you work with this advisor?" Trust, likability, and empathy almost always bubble to the very top of the answer list, with "trust" usually being at the top.

Here are some ways to focus on improving that all-important condition, trust.

MAKE A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION BEFORE MEETING

When prospects get referrals, they don't rush directly to the advisor's office for an in-person meeting. They do some research. They Google the advisor. These are steps we all take when making decisions about purchasing products or services—we look for publicly available information. Google calls this the "zero moment of truth."

The more important the decision, the more online research individuals will do. I refer to this as the "purchase decision spectrum." On one end, think of a candy bar. It's an impulse purchase. Buying it may require no research and the decision to buy likely gets made in the checkout aisle at the store. Buying a new car, however, might involve many hours of research, so it is on the other end of the spectrum. Buyers who do the research show up at the car dealership already knowing what they want.

If a prospect's purchase decision depends on trust, how does an advisor convey trustworthiness online at the "zero moment of truth"? If a prospect sees "Trust Me" online, it has the opposite effect.

If buying a car takes hours of research and costs less than \$100,000, how much research will a prospect with \$1 million or more put into choosing the right advisor? Every prospect is different, but prospects likely spend more time online researching an advisor than car-buyers spend researching new cars.

If a prospect's purchase decision depends on trust, how does an advisor convey trustworthiness online at the "zero moment of truth"? If a prospect sees "Trust Me" online, it has the opposite effect. Instead, trust needs to be earned via the internet the same way it's earned in person. Here are some examples.

WEBSITE

Is your website the same as every other site? Does it have the classic stock photo of the grandparents walking on the beach? Or maybe the multi-generational version, with the parents and grandchildren included?

Such images let the website visitor know what the typical client might look like, but that's not enough. Humans want to work with humans. Bio pages on advisors' websites are top-ranked by tools such as Google Analytics because prospects want to research the human they

are hiring. To build trust through your website, the human elements must be front and center. Show individuals and the team in professional and maybe even personal images.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook does not get a lot of respect in our industry, but it does connect people. Because it is personal in nature, it shows a side of professionals that allows prospects to feel like they are getting to know the person. So rather than run from the social network, embrace it.

Facebook friends of Stephanie Carreras, vice president and senior wealth advisor at Calamos Wealth Management in Miami, Florida, see pictures and videos of her, her family, her friends, her dogs, and more (see figure 1). They can easily get insight into who Carreras is and what she cares about. In this way, Carreras creates a stronger relationship with prospects.

Instagram, possibly X, and maybe even LinkedIn also give prospects a look into an advisor's life. Besides business, what brand image should shine through? What does the advisor care about? What would resonate with the target markets interested in hiring a firm?

Figure 1

MAKING SOCIAL MEDIA WORK FOR YOU

Stephanie Carreras (top) and Jeff Bradanini (bottom). Sharing a glimpse into your personal side can help foster human connection with clients.



VIDEOS

When humans are on camera, they can show their likability, their expertise, and so much more. By watching videos, prospects can really feel like they get to know people before ever meeting them. That builds trust.

Which videos would help make connections with prospects? Should videos all be work related, or are there other ways to make connections? Who should be in them? What tone should they be? What length? Build a strategy that earns the viewer's trust.

Videos showing the personal side can help make a human connection. Jeff Bradanini, a financial advisor with Heger

& Bradanini Wealth Advisory Group of Janney Montgomery Scott LLC (Member: NYSE, FINRA, SIPC) in Glastonbury, Connecticut, recently raised money for charity by participating in a Dancing Under the Stars event in support of the Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut (see figure 1). The webpage information and video of Bradanini and his partner make a virtual connection with prospects, especially those that are philanthropic, that is much stronger than anything text can accomplish.

SHORTS AND REELS

Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok are seeing an explosion in the popularity of short, to-the-point messages. These brief videos, also known as shorts or reels, can give quick glimpses of who a person is. If viewers are interested, they can digest a bunch of them, one after another. Prospects might even follow a person and, over time, the short videos may win them over.

What should the content be? Should there be a theme? What personality should show through? What is the right frequency? Where should these videos be shared? Avoid randomly creating these videos. Create a plan to build trust.

For example, Matt Peterson, president of Make It A Great Day, Inc., which owns AdvisorFlex® Websites, explains how important branding and marketing are online. "When a prospect lands on a website, it has to deliver a great experience in seconds," Peterson said. "If not, a prospect will just bounce off."¹

TRANSFER OF TRUST

Our industry depends on referrals to grow because friends, family members, colleagues, and others want a transfer of trust before they take action. Some will contact a stranger directly, but it seems like the vast majority still want an introduction.

When an existing client says, "You should work with my advisor," a prospect

knows that the client has learned to trust the professional through a good experience and wants the prospect to have a similar experience. The underlining message is, "I trust my advisor, and you can too."

Clients have experienced the services offered and they've had pleasant interactions with the staff. Strategic alliances have different experiences with an advisor, but they also provide a transfer of trust when giving referrals to their own contacts. Imagine a center of influence giving a client a bad recommendation for a financial advisor. It could backfire in a big way. The thought then is that the referral can be trusted, because the strategic alliance has a lot to lose if the advisor isn't to be trusted.

This is why the best referrals are made in person. Trust is stronger when a person can see the two parties involved.

If growth is an important business goal, advisors need a concerted plan to get referrals. Advisors should not just hope referrals happen. Focus on the trust aspects to improve landing leads.

GETTING PUBLICITY

Most prospects are not in the industry, so they really do not know the difference between option A or option B. If two advisors are similar, but one gets positive press and the other does not, the prospect will pick the one with the good public relations.

In reality, an advisor who does not get press may be a better option, but prospects might not come to that realization on their own.

IMPROVING IN-PERSON TRUST BUILDING

An advisor can naturally win over prospects with charisma and other personality traits. But here are some other examples of ways to win business-building trust:

Continued on page 42 →

EARN A PROSPECT'S TRUST, WIN A NEW CLIENT

Continued from page 16

Be honest. A simple way to show honesty is to be open about weaknesses. This openness can outweigh the negatives of showing a vulnerability.

Be transparent. The more details in the open, the better. Prospects will appreciate the openness.

Demonstrate expertise. This will help, but it cannot be done in a manner that comes across as condescending.

Put the client first. If a business can put the client first over the organization, clients will be life-long clients and advocates. When prospects see this client-centric approach, it will absolutely build trust.

Be a nice human. An advisor who is kind, patient, and caring will quickly gain a client's trust. 🟡

Mike Byrnes is the owner of Byrnes Consulting, LLC, where he helps advisors expand their success. He earned a BS in business administration from Saint Michael's College and an MBA from Boston College Wallace E. Carroll Graduate School of Management. Contact him at mike@byrnesconsulting.com.

ENDNOTE

1. Personal communication, July 17, 2024.



INVESTMENTS & WEALTH INSTITUTE®

5619 DTC Parkway, Suite 600
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
Phone: +1 303-770-3377
Fax: +1 303-770-1812
www.investmentsandwealth.org

© 2024 Investments & Wealth Institute®. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.

INVESTMENTS & WEALTH INSTITUTE® is a registered mark of Investment Management Consultants Association Inc. doing business as Investments & Wealth Institute. CIMA®, CERTIFIED INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT ANALYST®, CIMC®, CPWA®, CERTIFIED PRIVATE WEALTH ADVISOR®, RMA®, and RETIREMENT MANAGEMENT ADVISOR® are registered certification marks of Investment Management Consultants Association Inc. doing business as Investments & Wealth Institute.