



BUILDING TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships sit at the core of Murfett Legal's success. The best relationships are those where trust is the fabric that holds everything together.

In many ways our business and personal lives are getting more complex and impersonal. However, being a law firm, we understand the importance of personal interactions and strong relationships. They certainly require a great deal of trust.

Building trust is possible through a number of key behaviours that are fully aligned with the values of integrity, honesty and respect.

Drawn from our experience at Murfett Legal, there are factors that are relevant not only to relationships between clients and their legal advisers, but to all business relationships. Here are 8 key factors that assist the development of genuine trust:

1. Honest communication is key

Building trust begins with communication. It is important to ensure that there is open communication that is entirely honest. We have found that "plain speaking" with our clients rather than complicated legal explanations is valuable. In order for us to properly advise our clients, it is of the utmost importance that clients provide us with "the good, the bad and the ugly" information. Don't delay, sugar coat or make light of something that requires serious attention. The information clients provide us will always be treated as confidential in nature under the client legal privilege.

2. Listen, don't just talk

It is important to remember that communication goes both ways. It is a two-way street. Listening, rather than just talking and informing, ensures a deep understanding of the other parties needs and helps build relationships based on trust. We have found that listening is a skill that helps people to like, connect and respect each other. By being an active listener, the chance for breakdowns in communication is minimised. Our lawyers listen to the needs of the clients and thoroughly consider the information in view of providing the clients with the best possible advice.

Our clients are encouraged to both share information and to digest the information and advice provided by Murfett Legal. This will ensure a further strengthening of the business relationship.

3. Respond promptly

One of the key aspects of building trust is how quickly we respond to a person. Even if it is to let them know that we received their request and will get back with a deeper answer later, it is important to make it a priority to promptly acknowledge a question. When requested for instructions, it is in the interests of the client to promptly respond to us. The quicker we receive instructions, the quicker we can successfully conclude a matter for a client. We have found that the key to being responsive is to establish systems that help to remind you of what to do and to manage workflow. With so many emails to contend with in business, it is important to manage messages and ensure they are not buried and missed. Today most people expect replies to calls and emails within at least 24 hours and replies to texts in less than that.

4. Share, understand and manage expectations

Clients should be honest in discussing their desired outcome for a matter. At Murfett Legal, we carefully consider our clients' expectations, and, throughout the relationship, we continue to discuss and manage such expectations. By taking the time to discuss objectives and goals, writing down all of the expectations and negotiating them with the client we ensure they are clearly understood from the beginning. This clarity is used as the basis for a successful client engagement and delivery of service where trust sits at the core of the relationship. Psychologically, clients feel more secure when time has been taken discussing expectations as early as possible.

5. Respect their time

When building trust, the awareness of other people's time, personal schedule, and needs is critical. This translates beyond prompt responses to requests to ensuring that meetings start and finish on time and there is no wasting of other people's time. Treating client's time as you would expect yours be treated also ensures that our fees and client costs are kept in check. If unforeseen delays occur, it is important to be proactive and advise of any changes. Again, by providing us with honest and complete information, unnecessary time is not wasted which most likely will lead to a more expedient and cost-effective outcome for our clients. This is not only respectful, but shows you are dependable and honest, further building trust.

6. Understand their work style

Clients are unique individuals and vary in their work styles. For example, some are very logical and able to analyse a problem and tackle it head-on. Other people are detail-oriented and like a lot of information, with options to consider. Some clients are visual, others prefer written details. Some are risk-takers, others are risk adverse. By sharing your work style and decision-making preferences with us, we can adjust appropriately to ensure that trust can be built and better outcomes achieved.

7. Keep commitments

Being true to your word is one of the most fundamental keys to building trust. In the context of business relationships, when promises are thoughtfully constructed (and even tracked and measured) they turn into powerful tools for creating long-term relationships and successful outcomes. Promises are essentially commitments and often define how a client ultimately perceives the level of service delivered and the strength of the relationship. By not letting a client down, we remain true to our values of integrity and respect, clearly demonstrating that we care about them. In most instances, we formulate a plan of action or strategy for our clients. It is in every client's best interests to commit to and comply with such plan of action or strategy and to inform us if the client wishes to re-evaluate the course of action.

8. Deliver the best service possible

It has been said that most law firms define 'giving value' very differently from the way clients assess whether they receive it. At Murfett Legal, we are fortunate that our clients are very clear in how they define great service and value. It correlates with the development of trust-based relationships and the delivery of clear, agreed outcomes. We aim to change the way that clients view law firms by understanding the commercial and personal realities that our clients face and delivering the best results. These are usually measured by tangible outcomes that make or save money for our clients and gives them greater peace of mind.

At Murfett Legal, we take the above 8 factors very seriously and in doing so we strengthen each client relationship. We look forward to establishing relationships with new clients and encourage you to contact us on +61 8 9388 3100 if you require any assistance.

For further information or assistance contact Murfett Legal on [+61 8 9388 3100](tel:+61893883100).

Note: The above is a summary for general information purposes only. It is not intended to be comprehensive or constitute legal advice. You should seek formal legal or other professional advice in relation to your particular circumstances before relying on the content of this article.

Author: [Kelly Parker](#) (Director: Business Advisory, Commercial & Insolvency)

Email: kelly.parker@murfett.com.au

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