

February 2006: How 3 minutes and a plastic bag can win clients

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I was having a conversation with a friend recently, about how she and her husband selected an architect to design their new home. Since our new home was built only two years ago, I was curious as to how they made their decision.

It might seem trivial, but one factor stood out as the clincher. At the end of the interview, the architect reached for a microphone connected to a Dictaphone machine. He then dictated a summary of the previous hour's conversation into it, using his written notes as a guide.

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He covered the main points in terms of what they were looking for, what had impressed them in some of the pictures they had seen, their timeline, special features they wanted and action points from the meeting. Most of the time as he did this, he looked at the clients both for their approval and confirmation of what he was saying and to maintain eye contact.

Within around three minutes the architect completed the dictation and turned off the machine. He then asked them, "is that an accurate summary of our conversation?" To this they both nodded, very happy that he had completely grasped what they were after.

The architect told my friends that a transcript of the tape would be 'posted' to them in a couple of days, along with some more information about his charges and a flow diagram of the process he followed. The following day, a small pack arrived by *courier* and it contained the information and transcript inside. They read the transcript and decided immediately to engage that architect.

What had impressed them enough to choose this architect? Did he design nicer houses? Possibly. Would he look to keep the cost down for the client? Perhaps. But even though these are the two most critical issues at the end of the day, they are not what won the client.

This works exactly the same for financial services. Many advisers believe that the quality and price of the products they offer are the factors that win the client, but that belief has been proven wrong! It's how you offer your service that makes the difference.

The idea of dictating notes to yourself in front of the client really works because then the client knows that you were listening. Having an adviser who 'listens and understands' is the really critical factor in a client-adviser relationship. Plus, as a bonus, you both get to keep a copy of the notes so at a later date there will be no possible misunderstanding by either party.

Holding back some less critical, but relevant, brochures and delivering them in a plastic courier bag with a copy of the dictated notes, is likely to delight your prospect. Interestingly, the dictated notes were the main thing my friend talked about. Once again, it's the little things that make the biggest difference.



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Testimonials

Dear Brian,

Thank you for the time we spent working together.

Your skills in marketing and promotions have helped my business grow.

Sales are up and profit has never been better.

Your key points of cash flow, profit and staffing has enabled my business to prosper and develop into a highly sort after practice.

Thanks Again

Victor