



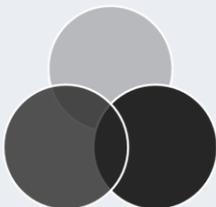
# Continuum



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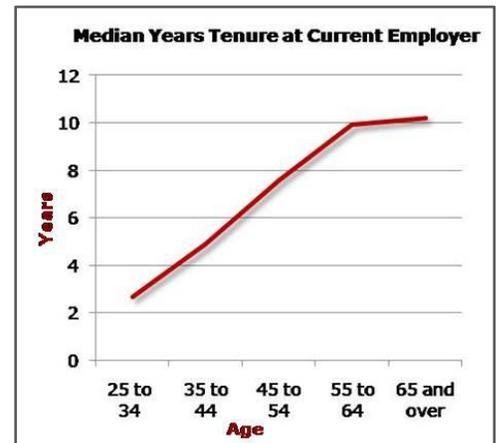
**“...relationships that really thrive are better characterized as mutually respectful partnerships, where both parties understand and embrace each others’ objectives...”**



## The end of an era

The era of the career employee is long gone. This is rather unfortunate, but here we are. Factors including ease of transition, savvy and greatly expanded networking, and the fear that comes from the current state of our economy seem to have brought us to a time where employees at all levels often find it easier to just jump ship rather than make a more concerted effort to “make it work.” After all, it’s not like we are married to our employer, right?

Yet so many of us do derive significant enjoyment, personal and professional growth, and other tangible and intangible rewards from the relationships that we build while on the job. And in today’s super-connected and ever-shrinking world, it’s important to recognize the value of those relationships, choosing to preserve them, even if we sever the relationship with our employer.



Source: U.S. Department of Labor  
<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.toc.htm>

## Taking proper care

At Gartner, the sales team frequently underwent a special kind of training called, “The Proper Care and Feeding of an Analyst,” since we often brought our rock star analysts along to help close business. Yet, all too often sales people would ignore the training, scheduling a grueling day of meetings with the following results:

- Analyst gets hungry + you didn’t leave time for lunch = angry Analyst
- Analyst wants to wow the client + you didn’t provide any prep or background = angry Analyst
- Analyst has weak stomach + you drive like a NYC cabbie = car sick (and angry) Analyst
- Analyst won’t return your calls + your big quota = well, you get the picture

The real learning here is not about doing the bare minimum to keep an analyst happy; it’s that the sales/analyst relationships that thrive are better characterized as mutually respectful partnerships, where both parties understand and embrace each others’ objectives – ultimately realizing their joint goal. Not only does this result in more frequent success, it often creates new friendships! Now that’s a model we can learn from.

Enough waxing poetic - let’s bring this closer to home, for you, my network.

## Securing client relationships

At BearingPoint, I was fortunate to have talented marketers as teammates and predecessors who helped me to secure respectful, productive, advisor-like relationships with many of the consultant teams I supported. Though we were part of the internal marketing team, we did something that helped our efforts: we viewed the colleagues we supported as *clients*.

A very smart, former colleague of mine once gave me a simple way to think about securing client relationships, which I've applied frequently in both my internal and external sales and marketing endeavors. To secure a client relationship you must overcome three major humps:

1. **Relevance:** Is the proposed action directly related to the client's most important short and long term goals?
2. **Value:** Is there a strong business and personal reason why the client should act on your advice?
3. **Trust:** As a result of steps 1 and 2, is the client convinced that you understand their goals and have the ability to execute? Is there a less quantifiable but more human aspect of the relationship that needs help?

It makes a lot of intuitive sense. In my experience, marketers and clients who ask themselves (and each other) questions that address each of these issues, have dramatically better relationships. Perhaps start by asking yourself where you want your relationship to be on a continuum that looks like Figure 1.

**Fig. 1: The poles and roles of marketing**



Source: My Brain

## Mutual responsibility

Ultimately, the burden is twofold: (1) Marketers need to remember that whether or not the business leadership has a "favorable view of marketing," we need to focus on relevance, value and trust to build truly productive relationships. (2) Simultaneously, business leadership needs to embrace these principles equally well, treating their marketing colleagues with respect, and giving them a true chance to succeed, which may often mean providing tough feedback.

Relationships bred from this type of partnership are easy to attain if everyone believes in them. And with the kinds of business results you can realize, what's not to believe in?! 

*Venn for yourself. [Circular logos](#) have a long and rich history, not surprising given the many symbolic meanings and practical uses of the shape. The Venn diagram, in its many forms, is also an incredibly versatile tool. I created (well, chose) this simple logo as a symbol of the interconnectedness that defines our generation, the relationships that I treasure with many of you, and my belief that life's important answers are usually not black and white, but lie on scales of many variables and shades of gray.*

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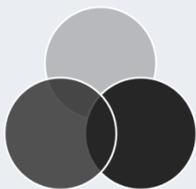
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