

The Human Factor: Four Timeless Traits of Top Sellers

by Taylor Crook



When I was just starting out in sales at a large company, a client shared a piece of wisdom that has stayed with me ever since. Over a simple conversation, he laid out a framework for building a successful partnership, one that has guided me through countless client relationships. He told me that to work effectively with him, I needed to focus on four key pillars: likability, credibility, value, and trust. These attributes have become the cornerstone of how I approach business development, and I believe they can help client-centric sellers forge meaningful, lasting relationships too. Let's dive into each one and explore how they can shape your approach to starting new partnerships.

1. Likability: Be Someone They Want to Work With

The first pillar, likability, is about showing up as someone your client genuinely enjoys working with. You can't make someone like you, but you can create the conditions for connection by being authentic and approachable. In my experience, likability starts with servant leadership—a mindset where your goal is to help your client succeed. Here's how you can embody this:

- ✓ **Listen actively:** Show genuine interest in your client's needs and challenges. Ask questions and let them share their story.
- ✓ **Be willing to share:** Have a clear point of view and don't be afraid to express it. Clients respect professionals who bring perspective, not just questions. Let them into how you think, what you believe, and why it matters—insight is part of the value you bring.
- ✓ **Show humility:** Center your client in every decision, letting their goals and challenges guide your approach. Prioritize their success above your own agenda, and demonstrate that you see them as a partner—not just a prospect.
- ✓ **Be generous:** Offer value before expecting anything in return, whether it's a helpful insight, a resource, or simply your time.
- ✓ **Embrace authenticity:** No one is perfect, and clients connect more deeply with people who are real—not rehearsed. Let your personality show, share your journey honestly, and don't be afraid to admit what you don't know.

As Simon Sinek says, “Authenticity is about imperfection. And authenticity is a very human quality.” When you lean into who you truly are, you invite others to do the same—and that's where real trust begins.

***Reflect on this:** Are you showing up in a way that invites connection? For business development professionals, likability is the first step to opening the door to a partnership.*

2. Credibility: Prove You're Worth Their Confidence

Once you've established a connection, the next lever is credibility. Clients need to believe that you and your product or service can deliver. But here's the catch—credibility isn't about boasting or presenting a polished, perfect pitch. It's about demonstrating real experience and vulnerability. Here's how to build it:



- ✓ **Share your journey:** Talk about how your product or service has evolved, including challenges you've overcome. Clients appreciate honesty about adversity—it shows resilience and relatability.
- ✓ **Highlight your growth:** Share your personal story. What have you learned along the way that makes you better equipped to serve them? Your experience adds to your credibility.
- ✓ **Demonstrate expertise and capability:** Clients want to know you've walked this path before. Share relevant examples, case studies, or insights that show how you've helped others solve similar challenges. But go beyond the résumé—connect the dots between your experience and their specific context. True credibility comes not just from what you know, but from how well you apply it to their world.
- ✓ **Avoid overpromising:** Don't claim perfection. Instead, focus on how you strive to meet your clients' needs and adapt to challenges.

Credibility comes from showing that you're grounded in real-world experience and committed to their success.

Ask yourself: How can I share my story in a way that builds credibility without sounding like a sales pitch?

3. Value: Make a Positive Business Impact

The third pillar, value, is where the rubber meets the road. Clients want to know: Does your product or service solve my problem, and what's the tangible benefit? To establish value, you need to deeply understand your client's needs, wants, and expectations. Here's how to approach it:

- ✓ **Do your homework:** Through discovery conversations, identify their specific challenges and goals. Tailor your solution to their unique situation.
- ✓ **Quantify the impact:** Be clear about the outcomes your product or service can deliver. Can you save them time, reduce costs, or drive revenue? Use data or examples to make it concrete.
- ✓ **Measure what matters:** Identify the business outcomes your client values most. Collaborate with them to define meaningful metrics upfront, then align your solution's impact to those targets. The more clearly you can

connect your value to their success indicators, the more durable—and measurable—your partnership becomes.

- ✓ **Be honest:** If your solution isn't the right fit, say so. This builds trust (more on that later) and shows you prioritize their success over closing a deal.

For business development professionals, value is about aligning your offering with the client's priorities.

Take time to ask: Have I clearly articulated how my solution creates meaningful impact for this client?

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4. Trust: Follow Through with Integrity

The final trait, trust, is what solidifies a successful client relationship. Trust is earned through consistent actions and honesty. Here's how to build it:

- ✓ **Keep your promises:** If you say you'll follow up, do it. If you commit to a timeline, meet it. Small actions build confidence over time.
- ✓ **Be truthful:** Answer questions honestly, even if it means admitting limitations. Integrity matters more than a quick win.
- ✓ **Give them an exit ramp:** Showing that you prioritize their best interests over forcing a deal demonstrates true partnership.
- ✓ **Take ownership:** Own the outcomes of your commitments — good or bad. When mistakes happen, acknowledge them quickly, take corrective action, and communicate openly. Clients trust leaders who take responsibility followed by immediate corrective action.

Trust is the glue that turns a transaction into a long-term relationship.

Reflect on this: Are my actions consistently building trust, even in tough moments?

Putting It All Together

The adoption of all four traits—likability, credibility, value, and trust—form more than a foundation; they create the connective tissue of enduring client relationships. Though often labeled “soft,” these attributes are anything but vague—they are observable, measurable, and most importantly, developable. At Match Vertical Partners, we believe these human factors are essential to high-performance sales, which is why we’ve built a system to track, reinforce, and embed them across client engagements. When practiced with intention and discipline, these traits transform everyday interactions into genuine trust-based relationships.

A Lesson That Sticks

I may not remember the client’s name, but I can still see the moment clearly—an ordinary office, a quiet conversation, and a senior leader whose insight reshaped the way I build relationships. His words have stood the test of time, reminding me that the strongest business outcomes are born not from transactions, but from trust. These four human traits still guide how I work, lead, and partner—and I invite you to consider how intentionally they show up in your own client interactions.

Who is Taylor Crook?

Taylor Crook is an accomplished sales executive and business consultant with over 28 years of experience in strategic business development, sales leadership, and revenue growth. Read his full bio [here](#).

Who is Match Vertical Partners?

MATCH VERTICAL PARTNERS is a sales transformation organization led by industry experts, dedicated to creating sustainable growth for our clients. We empower sales leaders to build high-performing teams rooted in integrity, value, and service, through a holistic, bottom-up approach. We provide business development and sales consulting, technology solutions and vertically aligned sales strategies designed to accelerate your revenue growth.

For more information contact us at (866)-501-5196 or contact@matchverticals.com

