

APPRECIATIVELY SPEAKING

The Business Case for Positive Feelings

Do you sometimes find yourself enjoying "feel-good" interactions you're your clients (for example, sharing a funny story, or asking them what they most enjoy about their spouse, or inviting them to envision leading a very fulfilling life) and then, suddenly, you hear that little voice inside your head saying *"Forget this touchy-feeling stuff and do some real work!"*

Guess what? There's good scientific support for this "touchy-feely" stuff. Positive Psychology is a relatively new branch of psychology which investigates healthy lives, marriages, organizations, and communities. Recent research in this area has shown that persons experiencing positive emotions (joy, satisfaction, happiness, contentment, etc.) also experience a significant increase in these important factors: creativity; flexibility in thinking and actions; effective decision making; close connections with others; and psychological resilience.

Therefore, it makes good business sense to create positive emotions in your clients - as well as in your associates and in yourself. Unless, of course, you'd rather not ...

- have closer and more enduring relationships;
- collaborate on more innovative decisions, plans, and problem solutions;
- gain greater client commitment to their plans; and
- have clients stick with the plan in times of adversity.

So, like the old ads which said "Milk: It's Not Just for Breakfast Anymore," good feelings are not just for break times and off hours anymore - if they ever were.

I recommend starting every meeting with an "appreciative" question. Instead of asking, "How have you been?" ask a question like "What's going well in your life?" or "What's one thing that's made you happy lately?" or "Brag to me a little about your son (or daughter); what have they done lately that's made you proud?" When they tell you the answer, say "Wonderful!" and then take a turn sharing your answer to the same question. It's a great way to jump

start almost any kind of meeting and get it off to a positive, optimistic start. Try it, you'll like it ... and things will go better!

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