

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PERSONNEL SERVICES

Independent Study Course Number 22

This independent study course is offered to certificate holders and members of the National Association of Personnel Services (NAPS). By completing this course, individuals can earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs) that can be applied toward the maintenance requirement that NAPS has instituted for individuals receiving the Certified Personnel Consultant (CPC) and Certified Temporary – Staffing Specialist (CTS) designations after January 1, 1995. All individuals will be required to complete the examination section of this independent study course to receive credit. Those achieving a passing score on the examination will receive the .2 CEUs associated with this particular course. In addition, .2 CEUs can be earned by completing the special assignment outlined on the last page of the course. Refer to the registration instructions on the last page of this study course for additional instructions.

BEYOND THE BASICS

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For individuals who have earned either their CPC or CTS, the basic staffing processes have been applied for at least two years. The “basic staffing processes” include marketing and recruiting; various support functions such as reference checking and interviewing; and, finally, the resulting placement, whether direct hire/permanent or temporary in nature. As NAPS certification looks to future continuing education, the on-going reviews of the basics are certainly relevant, in conjunction with timely updates regarding the ever-changing body of information on employment law. However, periodically, the emphasis will change to concepts or philosophies felt to be generally beneficial to individuals within the staffing profession. Therefore, the focus of this independent Self-Study Course centers on expanding and deepening client relations and the resulting benefits. (“Client” includes companies, both direct hire/permanent and temporary, as well as the candidate base for each.)

The planned development of our relationship with our respective clients is fundamental to long-term success. These relationships in turn lead to greater acceptance and appreciation. This increased acceptance and appreciation on the part of our clients serves three purposes:

- (1) it promotes the continuity of existing business
- (2) it lays the foundation for expanding business and services
- (3) it provides for a more understanding/accepting client when a “deficiency” in service occurs.

First, let’s examine the value of continuity within existing client relationships. In the current marketplace, deeper relations with our client companies better secure our position with “Key Accounts.” Key accounts are those clients who provide high quality assignments at full fee or high margin on a consistent/volume basis. For these reasons, these accounts are

obviously highly sought after by competitors. If a sense of real appreciation exists between the current staffing entity and the client company, then the resulting loyalty will tend to repel any advance made on the client by the competition.

As an example: Consider how often temporary firms have been requested to provide a bid or proposal to a would-be client company, only to be told after a substantial investment of time and energy, that the client company is retaining the services of its current service provider. This outcome is highly predictable where a high level of appreciation for the current services is in place.

From our (as well as our candidate/temporary employee's) viewpoint, a relationship built on trust with a long-term focus is equally as important as that with the client company. All of the recent articles published on the existing/impending shortage of qualified staff support the need on the part of the staffing industry to deepen candidate/temporary employee ties. Simply put, there will be fewer qualified candidates and temporary employees available to fill ever more technically challenging assignments. If the candidate and temporary employee honestly believe that their staffing representative has their best interest at heart, then the desire to stay in a relationship with that individual/firm is significantly improved.

Second, if a high value is placed on the relationship between the client and the professional staffing associate, additional business is more easily obtained. Clients prize the opportunity to praise or tout exceptional service. This praise can be internal (within the client company), resulting in an increase in volume and type of orders. Further, it can enhance the opportunity to service other divisions, locations, and subsidiaries. Praise, as a by-product of exemplary service, and its resulting benefits can also be external (outside the client company). This type of praise directly leads to the development of new business through referral. How often has the recommendation of an existing client resulted in an opportunity to service a new client? Additionally, as current hiring authorities migrate from one firm to another, they carry the staffing service who is most appreciated.

Clearly, when the concept of client includes candidates or temporary staff, external praise and goodwill will help ease the aforementioned candidate shortage in the years ahead. For that matter, our client company representatives and candidates can both provide a really valuable source of new candidate referrals. This benefit of enhanced client appreciation alone is worth any effort to that end.

The third and final advantage, and quite possibly the most important, promotes a "soft landing" when problems arise. The staffing business/profession is more art than science. Staffing professionals deal with people. People are clearly not one hundred percent predictable. So, when we as the professionals fail to listen or comprehend – or on those occasions, where temporary employees, candidates, or even client companies disappoint another client – the appreciation of the aggrieved client is critical in maintaining a good relationship. The foundation laid in a relationship of mutual respect can and will carry the respective parties over a no-show, fall-off, or low-ball offer, etc.

Having identified the three purposes of an appreciative client relationship, it is important to identify the building blocks to achieve such a relationship. Before going further, it is important to note that client expectations are forever evolving. What was seen as

exceptional service last year is in many cases seen as mundane today. Our quality competitors and our own clients will continue to “raise the bar.” The old adage “price, speed, and quality: pick any two” is being redefined. There is no doubt of an interdependency among these three, yet it is the challenge of the staffing professional to heighten quality and increase speed, while controlling price.

The client company simply wants and needs better means to increase profits, while reducing expenses. On the other side of the equation, client candidates and temporaries want to be recognized as individuals with unique desires and needs. These two parts represent both the good and bad news for staffing professionals in the upcoming years.

In order to deepen the relationship with – and the resulting appreciation of – our clients, concepts such as “consultative partnership” have been developed. The adoption of the concept of “consultative partnership” as the cornerstone leading to the support of client appreciation is fairly radical. Through this relationship, price, speed, and quality are supported while maximizing the benefit to all participating parties. In order to provide and sustain this level of relationship, the ability of the service provider has to significantly improve. A clear and broader understanding of the business of our client companies and a deeper appreciation of the needs and aspirations of our candidates and temporary workers is the beginning.

Conversely, the lack of knowledge regarding the true needs of our clients, or the failure to apply this insight, will inhibit maximizing the desired relationship. Before being able to stand as a consultative partner, the staffing professional must equip himself with knowledge of the client’s business, both on a macro and micro level. That is to say, staffing specialists will need to understand the industry/discipline thoroughly. Having an intimate knowledge of such things as trends and the client’s competition will be much more important than in the past. Secondly, an in-depth awareness of the strengths, weaknesses, and desires of the client is required. Truly understanding the challenges our clients face is necessary to achieve their appreciation.

Lastly, a proactive or preemptive approach to our client’s needs must be adopted. Historically, individuals/firms who offered staffing services responded to the pre-determined needs of their clients. They tended to react – not act. For the concept of “consultative partnership” to work, the responsibility for initiating creative problem solving is shared with the staffer.

With the three preceding points as support, the staffing specialist is now empowered to offer innovative solutions to the client. He has “earned the right” to offer an educated opinion. These solutions, if presented appropriately, are construed by clients to be both constructive and productive.

These solutions can and should address opportunities and eliminate potential problems as yet unseen or imagined on the part of our clients.

Examples of “consultative partnering” might include a recommendation to a client company that they hire a director for business development that has expertise with mergers and

acquisitions, or the outsourcing of the human resources function to include third-party evaluations and pre-employment testing.

From a candidate or temporary's perspective, offering "state of the art" education or training in areas not normally available (i.e., industry specific or advanced in nature) would constitute an example of consultative partnering.

In addition, the enhancement of our client relationship through the consultative partnership rests on our ability to effectively communicate and project our professional nature and abilities. It requires timely, reliable information that, in concert with the client, results in quantifiable results.

In conclusion, the professional staffing specialist of today must deepen the client relationship through a cooperative open process of problem solving, supported by mutual trust. Effectively, the client must know that the concept of consultative partnership is in play. Simply put – the dollars generated to the staffing specialists for services rendered are secondary to the successful advancement of the client needs. Then, and only then, can the relationship mature to its fullest.

CONTINUING EDUCATION UNIT (CEU) REGISTRATION

Complete the registration information below and forward this page, containing the independent study examination and your answers, plus payment to: NAPS, 3133 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22305. The processing fee for the continuing education units for each NAPS independent study course is \$10 for members and \$20 for non-members. Feel free to reproduce the registration and examination page to allow additional individuals to apply for CEUs.

Name: _____ Phone: () _____
Firm Name: _____
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Current NAPS member \$10 Non-member \$20

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

Multiple-choice and true/false questions. Circle the response you believe to be correct.
Be certain to answer all of the questions.

1. The planned development of our relationship with our respective clients is:
 - a. not relevant to the placement process
 - b. secondary to the interviewing process
 - c. fundamental to long-term success
 - d. the responsibility of senior management

2. Increased acceptance and appreciation serves to:
 - a. promote the continuity of existing business
 - b. lay the foundation for expanding business and services
 - c. provide for a more understanding/accepting client when a deficiency in service occurs
 - d. all of the above

3. "Key accounts" are:
 - a. long-term accounts
 - b. easily obtained and retained
 - c. of no greater value than any other account
 - d. provide high quality assignments at full fee or high margin on a consistent/volume basis

4. In the future, there will be fewer qualified candidates and temporary employees available to fill more technically challenging positions.
True
False

5. Expanded business and services can be ____ in nature:
 - a. internal

- b. retained
 - c. external
 - d. both (a) and (c)
6. One of the most important aspects of an enhanced client relationship is:
- a. it is more fun to deal with friends than acquaintances
 - b. they are inherently more profitable
 - c. they promote a “soft landing” when problems arise
 - d. access to insider stock tips
7. Client expectations are:
- a. Evolving
 - b. Diminishing
 - c. Irrelevant
 - d. Static
8. For the staffing professional to have a consultative partnership, he or she must have a thorough knowledge of the client’s business on a ____ level.
- a. macro
 - b. minimal
 - c. micro
 - d. both (a) and (c)
9. Within the concept of consultative partnership, the responsibility for initiating creative problem solving is not shared between the client and the staffing professional.
- True
False
10. The ability to effectively communicate in a timely manner with reliable information resulting in quantifiable results is supported by the concept of consultative partnership.
- True
False