How to Identify Client Needs

Executive Summary.
1. Why identifying clients needs correctly is critical
2. Five suggestions to do so

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How to Identify Client Needs

I’m often asked as to how to identify and better understand clients’ needs. It’s a really critical aspect of gaining and retaining clients, as a recent H.R. Chally survey shows that understanding clients needs makes up 50% of the ‘wants’ by the respondents base. This respondent base was made up of middle and senior management, in B2B procurement in the US and Europe. This is more than double the next most important ‘want’, which is their desire that vendors take a personal interest in managing the outcome of their engagement/project.

Here then, are five simple steps that you may wish to consider, so that you and your team have a better appreciation of your clients’ needs.
Create a Client Panel
Rather than investing solely in leisure activities with clients, give some thought to a very different approach that creates value for both clients and your business. Often referred to as user groups, having clients from an industry together for a day allows you to learn a lot about the industry’s issues and your clients’ challenges. The peer to peer networking opportunities created ensure longer term relationships for all participants.

Invest Time to Get to Know Your Client
Request one on one conversation with senior and middle management to allow you to get a more comprehensive view of the challenges in their business. What is keeping the management team occupied? How could your solutions or services possibly assist?

Talk to Your Clients’ Clients
This approach will give you very useful insights into their needs, new opportunities and competitive trends. You’ll also learn about the challenges they have in working with your client. This approach will give you a much better idea as to how to assist your client in addressing their clients’ challenges.

Use Comparative Benchmarks
Gain access and use industry analysis both globally and locally. Inform yourself of the trends, who are the leaders and conversely the laggards. What potential outside forces or influencers may have an impact on the industry and/or your client? Sharing industry information on an on going basis with your client will build credibility and trust.

Ask Questions
Create the opportunity for a business breakfast or lunch to keep up to date with the issues your client is facing by having face time to ask questions and open debate. This allows you to validate information whilst creating an avenue for new conversations around potential opportunities where you may be able to assist.

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