

Three Fears That Sabotage Client Loyalty

From *Getting Naked: A Business Fable* by Patrick Lencioni (2009)

The Three Fears

At its core, “naked service” is the willingness of a service provider to be vulnerable — to embrace uncommon levels of humility, selflessness, and transparency for the good of the client.

This kind of vulnerability can feel uncomfortable. It involves risk. Most people naturally avoid that discomfort, which prevents them from building deep trust and long-term loyalty.

The three fears that sabotage client relationships are:

#1: Fear of Losing the Business

#2: Fear of Being Embarrassed

#3: Fear of Feeling Inferior

Shredding the Three Fears

Overcoming these fears requires deliberate behavioral choices that prioritize the client relationship over personal comfort.

Addressing the Fear of Losing the Business

Always consult instead of sell.

Turn sales conversations into service opportunities.

Offer advice and value before a client agrees to hire you.

Give away the business when appropriate to build trust.

Keep fees reasonable while establishing the relationship.

Tell the kind truth, even when it risks discomfort.

Enter the danger — address difficult issues others avoid.

Confront clients with hard-to-hear news when necessary.

Present counsel with kindness, empathy, and respect.

When service providers prioritize honesty and service over self-protection, they deepen trust rather than weaken it.

Addressing the Fear of Being Embarrassed

Ask “dumb” questions — no question is too obvious.

Remember that if you don’t understand something, others likely don’t either.

Clients value candor more than flawless appearances.

Respectfully uncover unseen problems and opportunities.

Admit mistakes and take responsibility for errors.

When in doubt, err on the side of responsibility rather than defensiveness.

Clients are paying for objectivity and clarity, not ego preservation.

Addressing the Fear of Feeling Inferior

Do not shift attention to yourself or your expertise.

Allow clients to discover your accomplishments organically.

Take an active interest in the client's business and customers.

Uncover potential moral or ethical risks that need attention.

Humbly do what is needed, even if slightly outside your defined scope.

Admit general weaknesses rather than covering them up.

Focus on your strengths instead of exhausting yourself trying to prove competence.

When service providers operate with humility and selflessness, they earn loyalty and gratitude.

Final Thought

Building client loyalty requires vulnerability. It means choosing service over self-protection, truth over comfort, and relationship over transaction. The very risks most professionals try to avoid are the ones that create enduring trust.