# Getting More Than Satisfaction From Your Relationships

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I want to ask you to look at a widely accepted business relationship from a little different perspective. As a decision-maker, you are constantly interfacing with numerous vendors who are requesting your time, attention, consideration, and ultimately, a purchase order.  Eventually, you must make decisions regarding the best possible value regarding equipment and services required to either expand or maintain operations at your facility. So, is it enough to simply have a satisfactory experience in evaluation, selection, purchase, and installation? What about through the start-up, operation, and maintenance experience? Consider for a moment that your experience goes beyond being just a satisfied customer, to the lofty level of total trust and mutual loyalty. What would this kind of a relationship look like?

**A One-Way Relationship**

Let’s take these steps of a traditional vendor relationship and examine them closer, with the ultimate destination of total trust and mutual loyalty between you and your vendor. You begin with the evaluation and selection process, where you would expect your specification review would be competent and complete. A quotation would be submitted to you in a clear and concise format, showing all items requested and clarifications or exceptions stated. You and your team evaluate the competitive quotations and, if necessary, a sample unit might be requested to answer some lingering questions.

With that process complete, a purchase order is ultimately issued to the successful

vendor. Purchasing issues the purchase order to your selected vendor via their local distributor. During this time you have most likely negotiated and coordinated the installation and start-up of the equipment. Now you watch the calendar and hope the delivery is accurate and on-time, and that start-up will go smoothly so your project can move forward without delay.

That probably sounds like the typical satisfactory process you've experienced in the past. But there's more to be found in the relationship than merely satisfactory collaboration.

### A Mutual Relationship

Let's now envision how this would look at a whole different level—a level that you should be able to expect—one of proactive attention, effort, and conversation.

Trust is developed when both parties look toward solving a common problem. A true partnership is tied together with mutual trust, where the evaluation and selection of a solution is determined by simply doing the right thing for the situation. The purchase is made during a relaxed transaction where there is trust that a competitive price is charged for an honest value. Details like installation and start-up are brought up by the vendor and distributor as an integral part of the discussion. If the start -up and operation phases of this effort are not smooth and timely, both parties are concerned, and both focus on solutions to get it right.

Items such as spare parts and peripherals should also be brought up in an effort to achieve ultimate success. This level of trust and loyalty in a partnership continues far beyond an initial purchase into continued operation and sustainability. This includes, but is not limited to, preventative or periodic maintenance tasks. Your factory automation partner should be suggesting ways to improve quality or reduce wear on your production line before an unscheduled shutdown can cause costly downtime. Increased efficiencies are realized and the true life cycle cost of equipment is reduced in these relationships.

This is not a wish. It can and does exist in many relationships in industry today. These relationships are forged over time and experience, where the customer, vendor, and supply chain can become true partners in striving for success. With business becoming increasingly competitive every day, a relationship based on mutual trust and loyalty will increase profits and reduce stress. Don't you want that in your work day?

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