


# STEVE YASTROW'S NEWSLETTER

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## Meeting a Potential Customer for the First Time

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You meet someone in a social setting. Maybe it's the person next to whom you are seated at your cousin's kid's wedding. Maybe it's the person you meet at a friend's party. Maybe it's the person you meet at a networking event.

As you are talking to this person, you begin to notice that he should be your customer. You learn that he has just received the go ahead from his board of directors to build a new office building... and you are an architect. You learn that this person has a group of employees trying to organize a union... and you are a labor and employment lawyer. Or, you learn that he just inherited a lot of money but doesn't know what to do with it... and you are a financial advisor.

What can you do?

Well, you could ask for the order right there, as the bride and groom are having their first dance, but that probably wouldn't work very well, would it?

So let's ask another question. What do you want to accomplish from this conversation (beyond the pure joy of conversation)?

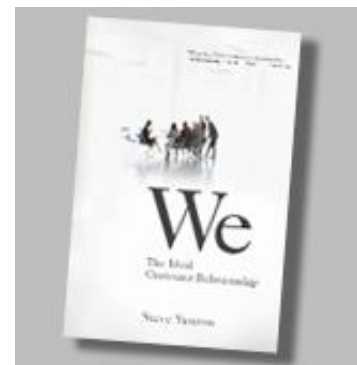
The answer is clear: Your goal in this conversation, if you want this person to become your customer, is not to make him your customer today, at the wedding, party or networking event. **Your goal is to build enough of a nascent relationship with him during this first conversation that you interest him in a follow-up conversation.**

The best customer relationships are built in stages, one relationship-building encounter at a time. To turn a chance

“When Steve Yastrow writes, I pay close attention.”

-Tom Peters

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**Buy Steve's book, We:** The Ideal Customer Relationship

Learn how to start and sustain profitable customer relationships. Read We: The Ideal Customer Relationship.

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**Praise for We**

meeting into a lasting business relationship, you must use this opportunity to create a relationship-building encounter.

As outlined in my book We: The Ideal Customer Relationship, and in my free ebook Encounters, if three things happen during this first conversation, you will begin to build a relationship with this new acquaintance:

- You are both fully-engaged in the conversation.
- It is a true conversation, not a trading of monologues.
- It is a unique, unscripted interaction between two unique people.

Ensure that these three things happen, in the context of a fluid, natural, person-to-person encounter, and you have a very good chance of leaving the wedding with a business card and permission to set up a follow-up conversation.

It sounds easy, right? But what are the challenges to doing this?

If you are talking as food is being served at a wedding or as drinks are being served at the networking event, it is, of course, challenging to keep someone fully engaged in the moment with you. **So set your expectations in line with the situation.** Engage the person in conversation, but be very alert to his level of engagement, cautious not to burden him with your attention while so many other things are going on around you. It's possible to carry on the conversation in short bursts, punctuated by various breaks, re-engaging as it seems appropriate.

Another challenge is ensuring that you create rich, genuine dialogue. It is very important to resist the temptation to spend too much time telling this potential customer about yourself. The sad truth is that the other person doesn't really care that much about what you do for a living, and if you start monologuing about it, it won't mean much to him. Remember that **he is much more interested in his own problems and issues, and you will be much more effective if you focus on creating a conversation about him and his issues.** As this conversation unfolds, you will spot opportunities to weave in small nuggets about yourself, but always be careful only to talk about yourself in terms of the potential customer's situation.

Creating the feeling of uniqueness is also critical, yet challenging in this kind of situation. There are two key elements to creating this feeling of uniqueness:

- First, demonstrate to the other person that you recognize what makes him and his issues unique. If, during your conversation, he tells you something that is particularly important to him, reference this issue later in the conversation. If he tells you about a specific strength or

"When Steve Yastrow writes, I pay close attention. He is at once a wonderful storyteller, a sophisticated purveyor of ideas, and an effective change agent. I think *We* is a superb book-and I am mesmerized in particular by Yastrow's critical differentiation of 'experience' and 'engagement'. Bravo!"

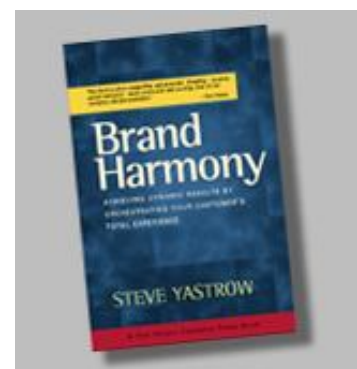
- Tom Peters

"This is a fundamental shift in thinking that offers up a what's-next-beyond experience marketing."

-Tim Sanders, former Chief Solutions Officer at Yahoo and author of *Love Is The Killer App: How To Win Business and Influence Friends*

"Steve Yastrow is at the forefront of the next evolution in marketing"

-Mike Depatie, CEO, Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants



Steve's book, *Brand Harmony*, explains how to create compelling and complementary interactions with your customers... and how

weakness of his company, bring that into the conversation at appropriate times.

- Second, uniqueness depends on creating the feeling that this is a fresh, spontaneous, natural encounter, and that you are not just rehashing a well-worn script that you have pulled out in the past for use in similar situations. **It is imperative that you ditch the pitch and create an encounter that has that one-of-a-kind-never-before-happened-in-the-history-of-the-universe feel.** You may have had 1000 similar conversations before, but it needs to feel to your potential customer that you are creating this encounter on the spot, just for him.

Throughout the encounter, there are a few other things you'll want to accomplish:

- Figure out if this person has a chance to become a good customer.
  - Be willing to discard your early assumption that this person is a good prospect for you. During the conversation you may discover, for one reason or another, that you don't want to work with this person. Consider that realization a valuable accomplishment - now you won't devote your valuable time to following up. (Unless, of course, you find that the person won't make a good customer but would make a good friend.)
- Determine what you want to remember about this person.
  - Look for the person's "spices," i.e., the details that help you understand what makes this person or his situation unique. These are the elements you want to remember, so you'll be able to incorporate them in your follow-up.
- Be memorable, so the person remembers things about you.
  - Make sure to leave the person with crisp, clear, tangible moments that he can remember from the encounter. The most memorable moments, for him, will not be things you say about yourself but things you say about him or his situation.
- Get agreement for a follow-up.
  - You are not trying to close the sale in this initial encounter. The only close you want from this encounter is agreement for a follow-up conversation. The follow-up could be an agreement for a phone call or an in-person meeting.

### **Notice**

Pay attention to how other people handle this kind of situation. Inevitably, you will be the "other person" that

this affects your bottom line.

"I had to buy two copies [of Brand Harmony]. The first one is so dog-eared and underlined I couldn't read it any longer."

- Seth Godin

Buy Brand Harmony at [yastrow.com](http://yastrow.com)  
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### **Get More Steve**

#### **Tear up your elevator**

**pitch:** Tear it up into little pieces, but don't throw them away...

#### **Multitasking is a**

**Myth:** The New York Times reports on our inability to multitask, and Steve applies this news to your business.

#### **The Relationship**

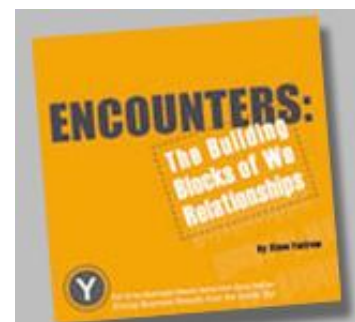
**Threshold:** How to reach the next level in your relationship with customers.

#### **Everyone Can Sell:**

This includes you!

#### **Ditch the Pitch:**

Eschew the sales pitch for the sales conversation.



someone sees as a potential customer. How does this person interact with you? Do you get the hard sell? Does he seem unsure about what to do? Or does he ditch the pitch and create a natural, human, relationship-building encounter?

### ***How do you compare?***

How does your style and effectiveness compare to others? Can you learn what to do - or what not to do - by witnessing how other people handle chance encounters with potential customers?

### ***Try this***

Practice the "encounter habit." The next time you are at a wedding, a networking event, sitting by the pool at a resort, or meeting new people at a dinner party, put the principles of a relationship-building encounter into play. Download my free ebook, [Encounters](#), or refer to Chapter 2 in my book [We](#), and just start doing it. Like any skill worth having, practice improves your ability.

I meet many people who say, "I'm not a natural born sales person. I don't know what to do if I meet a potential customer." The secret isn't jumping into "sales mode." The secret is creating a natural, human encounter that interests the person in a follow-up with you. That's all.



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For more tips on achieving success during the first encounter with a potential customer, read Steve's free ebook, Encounter. Download it here: [Encounters: The Building Blocks of We Relationships](#)

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