The Bridge Talk™ Guide

Introduction

"So, what do you do?"

It can be one of the most challenging, yet critical questions you are asked, and unfortunately, many advisors don't respond in a way that's relevant, compelling or even comfortable. The result is that it can create conversation avoidance, shut down opportunities that could have been interesting, and potentially reinforce limiting thinking or behaviors. In short, it's not good.

Having an effective first impression is an essential step in getting clients and potential clients to move closer to you. Whether at a networking event, engaging future clients, or opening new doors, starting strong has a lasting impact. But starting too strong can end things before they begin, so how we do this, matters.

Research indicates that it takes many additional interactions to begin to change the first impression you make on someone, and often times it cannot be altered at all. So it's important that it's done well. Even worse, it's tough to know when you've actually made a first impression. Your first contact isn't necessarily your first impression. That first impression may have happened before you even knew it.

In order to help a potential client make the first decision, the decision to meet with you, you first need the ability to bridge from a social conversation to a business conversation. To do that, we use a tool that is cleverly named, the Bridge Talk™.

In this section, you will learn what the Bridge Talk™ is and the fundamentals in creating one that's right for you.

This section consists of:

- The Bridge Talk™ FAQs
- The Structure and Design for the Bridge Talk™
- The Bridge Talk™ Script
- The Bridge Talk Builder™

<u>The Bridge Talk™ FAQs</u>

What is the Bridge Talk™?

The Bridge Talk™ is one of the most important conversations that you will have with a potential client. It responds to the question, "What do you do?" It is the no-notes, no-illustration, simple response you give when you are making the bridge from a social conversation to a business conversation.

What is the goal of the Bridge Talk™?

The goal of the Bridge Talk™ is to create some disarming interest and open a conversation a little further. Its purpose is to open up the opportunity for a business relationship, but not to "close a deal." It does this by creating casual interest.

To do this, you have to distinguish yourself and be intriguing enough that they want to learn more about you and your firm.

It's important to keep in mind that people buy from people they like and trust, when they're ready. That means that many people who ask you what you do, won't be ready to work with you. They're just making conversation. A great Bridge Talk™ won't make people want to work with you. It will help people who are in your niche, and who *may* be ready to work with you, to show more interest.

What should I avoid?

There are a few things that will interrupt, undermine or sabotage a good approach talk. For example, if you start talking about a product right away, it may bring the conversation to an end. Avoid talking about product.

It's also important to use language your prospects understand, rather than industry or technical jargon.

We also want to avoid common labels and descriptions, which may play into stereotyping. When people think they know what you do, they tend to close themselves to further information so you should avoid industry job titles such as Financial Planner, Investment Manager, Insurance Advisor, Estate Planner, etc. because they lead to preconceived perceptions that can immediately dampen interest.

How do I create interest?

A good Bridge Talk™ will create permission marketing. Permission marketing is a strategy by which you are getting the prospect to inquire more about what you do with interest. Your opening sentence needs to help them recognize themselves in some way so that they become interested enough to ask you more. By doing so, you aren't pushing information on to them; you're kindly answering their questions.

Effective Ambiguity

Effective ambiguity addresses two issues. The first stems from understanding that when many people ask "What do you do?", they aren't actually asking so that they can get into a discussion to understand the details of your work and hopefully buy a product or service from you; they are just being polite.

In North America especially, a common way that strangers get to know one another is to talk about work. It's often just an easy way to break the ice, relieve awkward silences or just pass the time.

With that in mind, we use effective ambiguity as a simple test to see what kind of conversation we might be in.

The second, as mentioned earlier, is to create some ambiguity that supports your conversation by not naming your role, or a product, or your company name, while still providing some information about what you do. It's a bit ambiguous, but it helps the discussion move forward without being pigeonholed.

<u>The Structure and Design for the Bridge Talk™</u>

The Bridge Talk™ has a very simple, but very specific design. It is composed of two elements:

[The Niche You Help] + [What Problem You Solve for Your Niche]

In a bit more detail, it would say: I help [these people] [solve these kinds of problems].

The Bridge Talk™ is structured this way for a few very important reasons:
1. It's easy to remember.
2. It's easy for your team to remember.
3. It's easy for clients to remember.
4. It's easy for Active Promoters to remember.
5. It is casual in tone, and easy to say.
6. It provides effective ambiguity.
7. If the prospect is in your niche, or knows someone in your niche, they'll be able to quickly recognize himself or herself or someone they know.
8. If the prospect has the kind of problem you describe, or knows someone who does, they'll be able to quickly recognize himself or herself or someone they know.
9. If they are not in your niche, do not know someone in your niche, do not have that problem or don't know someone with that problem, you won't unnecessarily spend your valuable time with someone who is not an optimal opportunity.

Simple Example:

Prospect: So what do you do?

Advisor: I help business owners keep what they've built.

Prospect: How do you do that?

This is permission marketing. The prospect is giving you permission with interest to tell them more about what you do.

How do I get a prospect to ask me what I do?

The easiest way is to ask them what they do. Everyone likes to be heard, and this is your first opportunity to show that you have a genuine interest in them. Reciprocity generally requires that they return the question and ask you the same.

IMPORTANT: If you're not genuinely interested in them, they likely won't be genuinely interested in you.

How can I get my Introduction Sources to use my Bridge Talk™ when introducing me?

It's important to repeat your Bridge Talk™ when you're meeting with existing clients, centers of influence, strategic partners, etc. An easy way to help others say it is by consistently reminding them of it.

Early in most, if not all of your meetings, you can simply say, "As you know, I/we help business owners keep what they've built, and today…." It reinforces who you are, and gets them familiar with your language so they will describe what you do to their networks of friends, family and clients.

We recommend asking your existing clients and centers of influence if you can share with them how you'd like to be described, and at the same time ask them if they think it's a true representation of what you do for them.

<u>The Bridge Talk™ Script</u>

Below is an example of a basic Bridge Talk™. This is being provided in order to give you a sense and feel for how long it should be and what it should include. Following this example is some follow up language to prompt ideas of what you can say when they actually show some interest.

Example

Prospect: What do you do?

Advisor: I help business owners keep what they've built.

Prospect: How do you do that?/What do you mean by that?

Advisor: Most business owners put everything they have into building their company and usually face a bit of risk along the way. We help them make sure that they get the payoffs they should from all that risk.

Prospect: That's interesting. Tell me more about that.

Advisor: We developed a system that helps our clients get laser clear on the goals they have for the proceeds of their business, how they want to use the wealth they create and how they want to protect it. Then we help them put a plan in place to keep it!

It's a pretty powerful approach and I'd be happy to show you how it works if you'd like to.

How do I use the Bridge Talk™ when I already know the prospect?

In this scenario, imagine yourself with a potential client that you know, but who doesn't currently do business with you. You have no more than 5 minutes with the prospect and therefore can't engage them into a deep dialogue.

Prospect: Hi John, how have you been?

Advisor: Great Joe, it's good to see you again.

Prospect: What are you doing these days? (OR) Are you still in the insurance/investment business?

Advisor: I have actually broadened/expanded/focused my services/work at the request of some of my best clients.

Prospect: What do you mean?

Advisor: I help business owners preserve what they built.

Prospect: That's interesting. Tell me more about that.

Advisor: We developed a system that helps our clients get laser clear on the goals they have for the proceeds of their business, how they want to use the wealth they create and how they want to protect it. Then we help them put a plan in place to keep it!

It's a pretty powerful approach and I'd be happy to show you how it works if you'd like to.

The Bridge Talk Builder™

Discovery Questions:

What types of clients do you help?

How would your best client describe you and your services?

What types of problems do you help your clients solve?

What differentiates you from others in your industry?

How do you currently highlight these differentiation points to motivate prospects to make an appointment with you?

What is the most common objection you hear from prospective clients?

Do you have a response that typically overcomes the objection? What is it?

What are the ways in which you are better and/or different than your competition?

What is the core value proposition(s) that your clients receive from you?

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

List any words that you do not want to use when describing what you do.

List the words that you want to use when describing what you do.

Practical Application:

Review your answers to the questions and circle the thoughts or phrases you feel are most compelling and consistent with what you want to communicate.

Fill in your answers to, "We help *(these people)* with *(these types of problems)."*

As you select words and phrases and think about the above statement, consider whether they accomplish the primary goal of the Bridge Talk™.

Succinct – two to four sentences at most
Intriguing without being too obscure
Motivates the recipient to ask for more information
Natural to deliver
Differentiates you from your competition

Try this exercise: Pretend you have to explain what you do to a fifth-grade elementary class. Use no jargon or fuzzy words -- just simple talk. Then increase the grade level while keeping the simplicity.

Write your Bridge Talk™ here:

Initial Structure: "We help *(these people)* with *(these types of problems)."*

So they can: *(What change do they experience by working with you?)*

Test Marketing:

The next step is to test market your Bridge Talk™ on several prospects, clients or Active Promoters. Choose 5 people who know your marketplace well and ask them to be an informal focus group for you. Listen to their feedback and make modifications as necessary.