

Getting Naked

First things first, I'm not going to try to hide my disappointment after reading this. The title is very misleading! All that aside, this fable provides a pretty solid framework for those in the service industries. Framed around the life and times of a consultant who is flummoxed by the success of a smaller firm, the book develops a framework of client service that ignites a fierce loyalty.

In a past life, I would often have to deliver on large performance deadlines that involved months of planning, organizing dozens of volunteers, and the completion of details that kept everyone in the loop so that they knew exactly what to do at go time. Since then, I have a recurring dream in which I haven't planned anything and it's the moment of truth. That's bad enough, but to top it all off, in this dream I'm in my, uh...underwear. The feeling is visceral and I'll wake up very disturbed. The feeling of being essentially naked is exceptionally uncomfortable. Plus, no one wants to see that!!

Some of this discomfort is what Lencioni is pointing out in **Getting Naked**. Seemingly counter-intuitive, Lencioni points out that often what we worry about; losing clients, looking foolish, or being wrong are things that we should not protect so aggressively. Don't get the thesis wrong, there's no room for incompetence in the service of clients. But there is room for transparency, and there's a freedom from fear that will unleash one's ability to do what's best for their clients. And therein lies the rub; doing what's best for clients.

When putting clients' needs above our own, clients see a consultant/service provider who cares more about how things go for the client than they do for their own needs. It means helping clients before a contract is signed, and the risk that comes with that; that they might use your advice and leave you behind. Though in the end Lencioni points out that the client who would do this is probably not a client you wanted anyway.

Lencioni points out the three fears to overcome in order to be vulnerable to clients, while providing the best service and relationship they could ever ask for.

- *Fear of losing business*
- *Fear of being embarrassed*
- *Fear of feeling inferior*

Lencioni develops each of these fears and demonstrates the freedom for service providers when these fears are balanced with vulnerability and utmost service to clients. We live in a culture obsessed with image and façade. Social media provides unmistakable proof of this phenomenon. But ultimately, the building of true relationships with clients provides for steadfast loyalty and trust. It seems backwards, but pursuing this model for providing service to clients is more likely to result in a better bottom line for you, even though it's not your sole focus. Imagine the freedom of working like this. If you provide services to clients, this book should definitely be part of your library.

(Credit to Patrick Lencioni, Getting Naked, Jossey Bass, 2010)

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