



## Building Relationships Through (Relationship) Farming Tips for Cultivating and Nurturing Business Relationships

BY TERRY BROCK

Relationship marketing is vital for your success in business. Successful people know that business is built on solid, mutually-beneficial, profitable relationships.

Establishing, building and maintaining positive, profitable relationships in business is very much like farming. Some say that business is war. They use analogies to combat, killing, beating the enemy, etc. I think that analogy is missing the point of what business is all about. War is about killing people and destroying things. Even if you win in war, you lose a lot.

Farming, on the other hand, is about creating and growing. It is about scientifically researching what is best. It is about studying the soil. Farming is about using the right tools to grow your crops. Farming is about being patiently persistent in doing the right things even if you don't have immediate results. Harvest comes after a series of doing the right things in the right way. In farming you're creating and providing necessary products. In war, you're destroying and killing. I like farming better. Business is more like farming, relationship farming, than about combat or war.

That is what relationship marketing is all about. Look at successful people that you know in business. Most will agree that successful business is about carefully cultivating and nurturing relationships. I have yet to hear anyone say that success in business is about killing others and destroying things. Relationship marketing is relationship farming.

### Email for Relationship Farming

As a successful relationship farmer, you use many tools. One of these tools today is email. Email is the most commonly used form of communication in business today worldwide. Used properly, you can get a better "harvest" employing email as a tool for farming.

Learn to create short, valuable email messages for maximum relationship farming. We're inundated with email today. Now more than ever we want personal contact, r(relationship)-commerce, to connect with people. I remember when email was a novelty. We actually looked forward to getting an email message. (Imagine that!) I even remember there were days when I sighed around 6:30 or 7 in the evening that I had only received a couple of email messages that day.

My, how times have changed! Today businesspeople commonly complain about too much email. That's why I'm suggesting an approach for relationship farming that works well. Carefully craft and mold creative, short (Please!) email messages that are always valuable for the recipient.

**Example of what doesn't work** — "Hi Bob. Hey, our new widgets are out and I wanted to let you know about them. In fact, they have a 50 percent discount if you act

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It's about cultivating and nurturing relationships over the long-term.

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today.... Blah, blah, blah." Even if **you** think Bob is interested in your product, you have to find out what **he** is interested in having. This "force them to hear about me and my product" approach is more war-like than farming-like. It would be better to think like a relationship farmer and consider what needs to be done to yield the best harvest.

**Example of what could work better** — "Hi Bob. I know you mentioned last time we talked that you thought about blue widgets for your marketing campaign this coming December. I just saw a new blue widget that is available and thought you might be interested. Here's the link for more information. By the way, they said they can get you a 50% discount for early purchases by next Wednesday. No pressure, but let me know if I can be of assistance to you on this one. Hope that Mary and the kids are doing well."

Notice the difference in tone between the two messages? The first is about me, me, me. The second focuses more on Bob and his needs. Guess what Bob is more interested in knowing about? Duh! This is not rocket science. However, this is farming. It is about cultivating and nurturing relationships over the long-term.

### Think Relationship Farming for a Better Harvest

Email is just one tool that you, as a relationship farmer, can use to cultivate and nurture business relationships. As a farmer would not use a high-powered fire

hose to water tender, growing crops, don't come on too forcefully in selling. Apply gentle, nurturing, valuable assistance to your prospects and clients so they grow. The harvest could, and usually does, take a while. However, long your "season" for selling takes, the long-term relationship farming is about caring for people, helping them and creating a better harvest all around.

This is what r-(relationship) commerce is about. Relationship farming requires work and persistent effort. But the yield at harvest time is well worth the effort. <sup>as</sup>  
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