



How to **Create Clients from Prospects**

All of a sudden it happens! A potential client has responded to your email, article, talk, or has heard about you through a mutual acquaintance and it is time to have that first conversation about working together. What do you say to establish your relationship and get it off to the right start? How do you take an interested person and turn him or her into a client?

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First Conversation

You pick up the phone and hear the following: “Hi, my name is Linda. I have a friend, Susan Wright, who said you were a big help when she decided to become an author, and I’d like to talk to you about doing the same for me.”

This conversation might also take place in person at a networking meeting or a writer’s conference.

This is your opportunity to make a great first impression and gather some information that will make it much easier to know what to say in a second, more specific conversation. You might respond to Linda like this: “Linda, it is so great to talk with you. I really appreciate Susan sending you my way. Tell me something about your book and how I can help you.”

Most of this conversation will be about listening and taking notes. Feel free to be encouraging and interested, but resist the temptation to say, “I can do that!” Instead, listen for what the client is looking for – help with preparing manuscript to send to a publisher, help with self-publishing or help with marketing a completed book.

To wrap up the conversation, it would be great to say, “Linda, would you be comfortable sending (or giving) me your book (or the first chapter, or an outline or table of contents)? I’d like to spend some time with it before I tell you specifically what I think I could do to help. I’d like to set up a time to talk in more depth next week and in the meantime, I’m going to send you some general information about author’s assistants and how we might work together.”

This will give you time to prepare for a second conversation you hope will end in a resounding “Yes, I want to work with you. Let’s get started!”

Sending a Follow Up Email

As soon as possible, but at least within 48 hours, send the potential client a follow up email which should do three things:

- Confirm or set the time for a more substantive conversation
- Give information about what you do (Send *What a Virtual Author’s Assistant Can Do For You* and links to your web site)
- Confirm what you heard she is looking for in an author’s assistant

While you are educating the author on what you do and what to expect in your working relationship, you want to continually listen and evaluate the opportunity to truly help this author and whether this is the right client for you or you should refer them elsewhere.

Evaluating Client Potential

At the end of this second conversation, while you are hoping the client will feel positive about going forward, you will also have to evaluate whether this is the right client for you. If you answer “yes” to these critical questions, then you should take the next steps in helping the author become a client:

- Is this a person who could become a paying client? (Or were they calling for free advice?)
- After your conversation, does this person understand how you might work together and does he or she seem to value our potential work together enough to pay for it? (Or do they have such a limited budget that they expect a lot of work for free?)
- Do you have the right chemistry to work well

