

The Calibration Period: Plan for Patience



Executive Summary

New business relationships do not come free of humps and bumps. Work through these challenges to develop lifelong partners.

The need for others.

Whether you are a business owner looking for employees, or a front-line manager looking to get a project built, you cannot do it all on your own.

You need employees who are competent, honest, and efficient. You need suppliers and subcontractors who show up, do their work, and clean up on their way out.

I need or want a new relationship.

No relationships come “shovel ready” as you hear our Government say. Or “plug `n play”. The theory in these expressions being that just hire the guy or the company and you’re off and running. This is rarely the case. There’s a period of time for two new partners to learn how each other works: strengths, weaknesses, skillsets, et cetera.

The Calibration Period

This period is when you have hired a person or a firm to be on your team and you make a commitment to yourself to allow a period of time for the relationship to esh. The period can be as short as a couple minutes (in the case of a dating calibration at a coffee shop) or as long as years (say you switch pipe suppliers in your Pacific Northwest region).

Calibration Period – The Steps

The steps within this period follow:

1. Lower your expectations (this is good newlywed advice too by the way).
2. Expect to question the other party’s behavior. Question the other party’s behavior from an understanding point, not from an accusatory one.
3. Allow time for the relationship to mesh.
4. Don’t forget you made a conscious choice to partner with this person/company – there must have been an intended benefit.

5. Communicate. When things aren't going well, don't give up. Take a 'time out' and ask what the problem is. The time and cost of restarting another relationship is likely far more than you continuing to calibrate the current one.

My Story

I didn't make up this term, I stole it from a friend of mine who hired me and my firm. Although I had known him for almost twenty years at the time, there was, and still is three years later, a *calibration period*.

When I worked for another construction company years ago, I went in one Saturday morning and complained to the Owner about how bad the deliveries and billings were with our pipe supplier. The owner listened, but quickly brushed off my complaints as he was unwilling to go through the calibration period with another supplier.

He was right. He knew that these mistakes I complained of were common in this area with this type of supplier and it was a better to know the supplier's weaknesses and work with them than to start all over with another supplier.



A calibration period with a new employee sounds better than a probationary period. Calibration sounds like a relationship which will be fitted to the Company, while a probationary period sounds like it desires to be punitive.

Work Safe!