



learningmaterials

# Relationship Building and Selling

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## 1. RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

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***“You've got to be success minded. You've got to feel that things are coming your way when you're out selling; otherwise, you won't be able to sell anything.”***

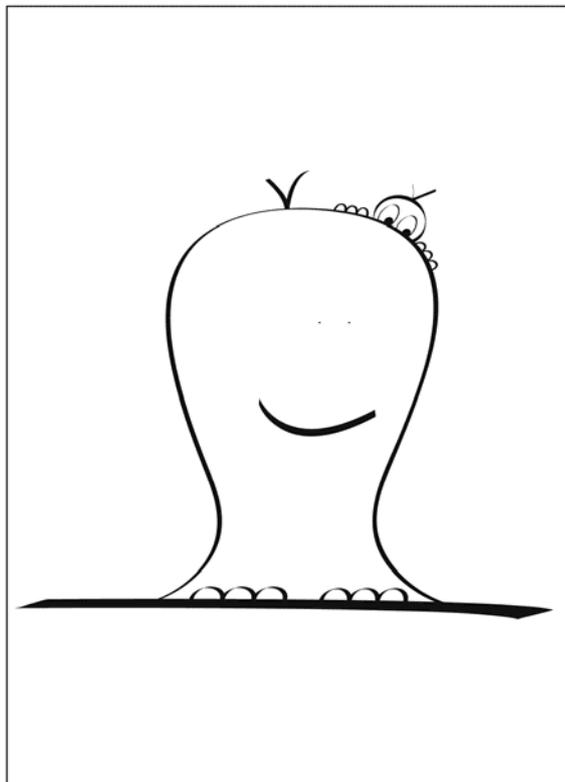
***Benjamin Jowett, 19<sup>th</sup> Century British classical scholar***

In today's fast-paced business world, when you are looking to generate more business, the ability to develop and manage deep, long-lasting relationships (internally and externally) is vital; it is quite simply the lifeblood of successful businesses. Whether you are developing new business leads or looking to increase your breadth and depth of services with existing clients, relationships are the key. Great relationships with mutual trust, respect and a genuine liking for working with each other can move you from being merely a provider of a commodity, to becoming a preferred supplier, and then a trusted advisor and business partner.

So how you relate to, how you connect with and how you are positively perceived by others really does matter.

While hard facts, experience and technical ability are essential components of a successful business relationship, the emotional dimension always plays a significant role. Nietzsche said that our emotions are a huge blind monster that goes wherever it wants, and our intellect a tiny sighted being sitting on our emotions shoulder, justifying everything the emotions do.

So what other non-technical skills, attributes and behaviours do you need to demonstrate?



Well, these are in fact quite diverse.

On the one hand managing your client relationships requires that you be supremely focused and exceptionally well organised and, on the other, intuitive, creative, dynamic and a good communicator. Some of these skills and behaviours are as follows:

- Emotional Intelligence skills and competencies (see appendix)
- Listening, empathy, rapport, assertiveness
- Optimism, resilience, confidence
- Good - or even great - oral communication skills (word-pictures, non-technical language, influencing skills, making the emotional connection)
- Reliability, consistency, delivering on promises
- Credibility and authenticity
- Persistence and organisation

Client contact covers a huge range of situations and events, from the formal black tie dinner or boardroom discussion, to the after work social or catch-up telephone conversation....and a myriad of other situations in between. They all help build and manage relationships and can help you get the best out of every interaction with your clients.

The following are some essentials for building great business relationships:

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## 1.1 Building Rapport: Listening and Empathising

***“It is the disease of not listening, the malady of not marking, that I am troubled withal.” William Shakespeare (Henry IV)***

In the Encarta English Dictionary, “**Rapport**” is defined as “an emotional bond or friendly relationship between people based on mutual liking, trust, and a sense that they understand and share each other’s concerns.”

Creating rapport at the beginning of a relationship is important but working relationships are forged over the long term, with that rapport built on over time to become something more substantial in terms of mutual trust and respect.

Never underestimate the human dimension in business. Rarely does everything come down solely to the financial or technical aspects.

Listening to people and empathising with them are key ingredients in creating and maintaining rapport. Communication is a two-way process. It’s like a contract between the speaker and the listener, and it can be easily broken by the listener not fulfilling their listening role properly.

One such listening breach is “**passive**” listening where the listener is there physically and hearing what is being said, but offering very little in the way of feedback. This makes the person speaking feel that the listener has little or no interest in what they are saying.

Another way to break the contract is through “**selective**” listening. This is a common trait: the listener will ‘tune out’ of bits of conversations, look disinterested or be easily distracted, jump in to change the subject or ask a self-interested question at the earliest opportunity.

We are all selective listeners at one time or another. We all ‘tune-out’ for short periods and come back again. The result of doing this at the wrong time, though, is a feeling by the other person that you have more interesting things going on elsewhere and have no time for them.

What is really important is not only that you listen to a person but that *they* feel that you are listening. It’s called “**active**” listening. How frustrating is it when someone you are speaking to appears to be distracted by something happening elsewhere in the room, or looks like they want to be elsewhere?

However, some people have the knack of making you feel that you are the most important person in the world for the duration of the time you are with them. People like being listened to, feeling that they matter and that you're really interested in what they have to say.

The essentials of active listening are to:

- Employ positive body language by facing the speaker with open posture and gesture
- Ensure you maintain good eye contact
- Use animated facial expressions to show your interest
- Make affirmative noises ("uhuh", "oh", "really", "yes" etc to confirm that you are listening
- Ask appropriate questions to show that you want to find out more
- Every now and then, summarize and recap on what they have said to demonstrate that you have been following

One word of caution in relation to listening. It is said that we have two ears and only one mouth for a reason, and that these should be used in proportion. While this is a laudable sentiment it simply does not work in all situations.

For example, if there are only two of you in conversation there will be some fairly long embarrassing silences if both of you try to employ this tactic. If there are more than two of you, but someone is monopolising the conversation, you may need to exert some influence over the direction of the chat. This cannot be done by remaining silent, but rather by being assertive.

**Empathy:** Empathy does not mean just agreeing with what someone else says. Empathy is about listening with the intention of trying to understand the other person's point of view, rather than listening simply with the intent of replying.

How important is it? Well, if our most basic need is survival - food and shelter - then next in line is psychological survival: our need to feel that we matter. We help others feel that their thoughts and feelings and opinions matter by listening to them, understanding them, appreciating them and validating them. And we need to do that even if we do not share their opinions and beliefs.

Key principles for empathy:

- Seek first to understand, rather than be understood
- Do not rush to judgement; Do not rush to evaluating the situation
- Do not rush to offering solutions
- Listen, even (or especially) when you neither agree with nor like what you are hearing
- Acknowledge the feelings of others when they are speaking to you, and after they have finished
- Summarise and reappraise how you see the situation from their side of things

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## 1.2 Assertiveness

***“The conversational overachiever is someone whose grasp exceeds his reach. This is possible but not attractive.” Fran Lebowitz***

### **Assertiveness**

Assertiveness is a form of behaviour which helps you to communicate openly, directly and clearly. It also helps you stand up for your and other people's rights.

There are a number of reasons why people do not use assertive behaviour, often deeply rooted in our minds from our cultural references or early childhood (our parents spend the first 5 years of our lives teaching us how to walk and talk and the next 12 telling us to sit down and shut up). At the outset let us look at the difference between aggressive and assertive behaviours. It is extremely important to know the difference, as some people will adopt a passive approach in many situations for fear of being seen as aggressive, or assume someone they are in discussion with is being aggressive, when what they are doing is simply stating their case.

**Aggressive behaviour** is characterised by very blunt language and harsh tones that seeks to bully the opposition into their way of thinking. It is often accompanied by intimidating body language such as pointing and casting up of old scores. There is very little two-way conversation or listening and the protagonist seeks to push their own agenda at the expense of all others.

In effect it is about putting your needs ahead of everyone else's. Someone behaving aggressively is effectively saying to the world my needs, my feelings, and my opinions come first, deal with them and I don't care about the consequences for anyone else.

Aggressive behaviour is disrespectful of other people's rights.

**Passive behaviour** involves putting other people's needs ahead of your own, denying your own right to have needs and to express them. Some people will adopt a passive approach for 'an easy life', to please others, in an attempt to be liked, or because they fear conflict if they assert themselves.

People who exhibit passive behaviours often appear to be lacking in self-confidence, have low self-esteem and can come across as timid and nervous.

You may find that some people's behaviours don't seem to fit neatly into either of these categories, yet they are not being assertive.

**Passive-aggressive behaviour** occurs where on the surface someone appears to be behaving passively, perhaps putting themselves out in some way, but actually they are using a form of emotional blackmail to get their own way.

Imagine you asked someone to help you with a report and they said 'yes', then went on to mention that it was going to be another very long day, they have so much work to do, and they need to call their friends to cancel dinner tonight. You might start to feel bad about having asked them to help. You might even tell them not to worry about it you'd get someone else to do it.

Often people displaying passive-aggressive behaviour want to say 'no' but don't feel able to. Instead, they look for ways to get you to say 'no' for them. This may not be something they are even aware of.

**Assertive behaviour** is direct without being blunt or rude, with the appropriate language expressed confidently and firm in tone. Conversation is two-way, with the other person's views listened to and discussed.

Body language is open and relaxed and there is an open mind towards working together to find a solution in conflict situations. Here are some examples of aggressive, passive and assertive behaviours which will give you an indication of what to look for in yourself and others.

<b>Aggressive</b>	<b>Passive</b>	<b>Assertive</b>
Shouting	Squeaky voice	Calm / controlled voice
Pointing	Wringing hands	Relaxed posture
Staring / arms folded	Downcast eyes / stooping	Direct eye contact
Wild gestures	Shuffling feet	Open hands / upright

You might have noticed that some people are very good at flipping straight from passive to aggressive.

This is often because having responded passively to a situation we can feel put upon and believe that our needs are not being considered, leaving us annoyed, frustrated or angry. But who are we really annoyed, frustrated or angry with in such circumstances?

Most of us would tell ourselves it's the other party for not considering our needs when we've thought about theirs. But actually we have no right to be irritated with anyone but ourselves! It is our passive response which has led to the situation we find ourselves in.

What's worse, if someone has been behaving passively for a while, all the time silently seething under the surface and building up resentments, then when they finally do let rip it tends to be pretty explosive. It is far healthier to learn to express yourself in an assertive manner.

Assertive behaviour does not come easily to many people. Our natural response in any situation which we find difficult is 'fight or flight', in other words aggressive or passive. Being assertive at such times requires self-awareness and the ability to take a moment to choose how you want to respond before jumping in.

Now, that's all very well in theory, but in the heat of the moment when temperatures are rising and you can see the red mist coming down it can be tough to acknowledge to yourself what's happening and quite deliberately choose to take a different path.

Emotions are powerful things. That's why as a society we talk about so-called "crimes of passion". We might not be willing to excuse the criminal act, nor is there any such defence in law, but by using the label it suggests that we understand that it's possible for someone to be so completely overcome with emotion that they would commit a crime, and that a crime committed in this way is somehow less deserving of punishment.

It is however possible to recognise emotions as they occur and to take responsibility for how you want to respond in any given situation. Like any skill though it takes practice.

It is important to re-programme our minds and replace old unassertive, or aggressive, values and beliefs with a more positive philosophy. Assertive people are aware of both their strengths and weaknesses and accept that they will make mistakes (it also takes an assertive, self-confident person to admit to them). Assertive behaviour therefore is the most successful kind of behaviour for most of our everyday interactions.

## Here are our **Top Ten Tips for Being Assertive**

1. **Self-Awareness is key** – know how you typically respond in situations and decide whether or not that response is the most appropriate one. If it's not, change it. Work on recognising your responses as they occur, this will help you with the next tip.
2. Accept that **you always have a choice** in terms of how you respond. It may not be easy to control the feelings that boil up inside you when someone cuts you up at the lights and you're running late for your next appointment, but you do have a choice. If your blood pressure rises who suffers, you or the person who cut you up?
3. **You have the right to express your wants, needs, feelings and opinions.** Doing so in a clear manner and taking ownership of what you are expressing is essential if you wish to be assertive.
4. **Show respect for the wants, needs, feelings and opinions of others.** As you have the right to express yourself, so do others.
5. **Everyone's wants, needs, feelings and opinions are equally valid.** Putting your needs before those of others is aggressive – don't confuse such aggressive behaviour with being assertive. When you are being assertive you are sharing your own needs whilst having respect for others' too.
6. **Take responsibility for your actions and behaviours.** At the end of the day, you are responsible for what you say and do, nobody makes you do anything. If you get angry in response to something that a colleague says to you, you are responsible for that response, not them.
7. **Perception is reality.** How do people perceive you? As the doormat who never says no, the emotional blackmailer, the intimidating, forceful type, or the person who is clear and direct in their communications about what they want whilst also recognising and respecting the wants and needs of others? Who would you most want to do business with? The perception that people have of you will affect your success in business, so it's worth considering how you want to be perceived.
8. **Being assertive doesn't mean always getting what you want.** It does mean asking for what you want and not expecting others to be mind readers though!

Whether or not you get it will depend to some extent on the other people involved and your ability to negotiate.

9. **You are not responsible for the feelings, attitudes and behaviours of others.** Just as you are responsible for your own feelings, attitudes and behaviours, so are other people responsible for theirs.
  
10. **Behaving assertively is important for your self-respect and self-esteem.** At the end of the day, you might not care what anyone else thinks of you, that's your choice, however you do have to live with yourself.

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### 1.3 Being Organised: Having a System

***“The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing”. Walt Disney***

There are many different contact management systems that you can use to help you keep track of your contacts - who you met, when, where and what you spoke about. You may well work in an organisation that has an all singing and dancing CRM (customer relationship management) system. That's great – provided you learn how to use it and then do actually use it. What matters is how you use any system to strategically manage your future business development activities.

If you don't have access to such a system then you need to create your own. It's important that you find one that works for you and suits your personal and business lifestyle. Your system doesn't have to be complex, or even computerised. The most important thing is that it allows you to locate easily the details of people you've met and with whom you'd like to try and establish more of a relationship. Knowledge is power, but this is only so if you can actually find what you are looking for.

An alphabetical index of business cards is a good starting point. It's a simple, quick and effective way of keeping all your contact details in one place (and you can always transfer the information into a computerised CRM system at a later date).

Remember that a useful technique for recording details of your contacts and initial meetings with them is to write notes on the back of any business cards that you pick up: where you met, their interests outside work, family details, and perhaps any physical characteristics that might help you bring their face to mind at a later date (note: be very careful what you write – just in case that card gets into the wrong hands!).

If you do opt for the simple business card index approach then you'd be best to combine this with using some sort of diary to keep track of subsequent follow up and future meetings but at least having details of all your contact details in one place is a start.

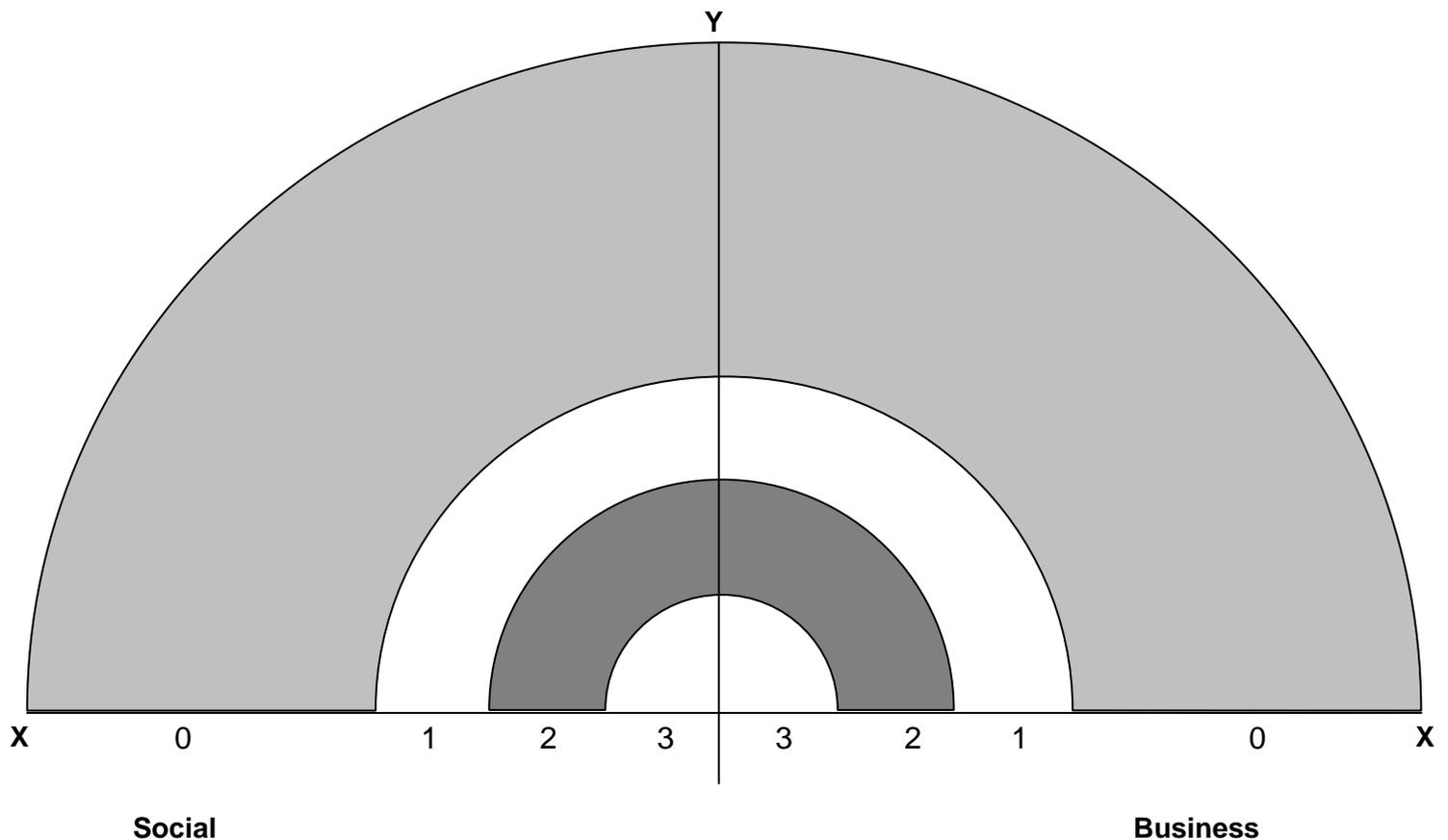
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## 1.4 Assessing Your Current Contacts

*“The only reward of virtue is virtue; the only way to have a friend is to be one.” Ralph Waldo Emerson*

We suggest that you actually take a moment (right now would be good) to list your existing contacts and networks and review how they are working for you, and you for them. The outcome should be that you will set some goals in respect of how you relate to who you know. Have a look at the following “Circles of Influence” diagram. It’s designed to get you to think about your existing social and business networks, how you relate to them and which ones you should develop.



### Key:

- 0 – Outer space:** Known only in passing and you may exchange a hello on a good day
- 1 – Outer Limits:** You could get a coffee/ meeting/ lunch if you asked. Passive
- 2 – Grey Zone:** Meet regularly and have open lines of communication. Useful
- 3 – Red Zone:** Fruitful, productive and mutually beneficial relationship. Active

The Circles of Influence diagram is designed to get you to think about your social and business networks, how you relate to them and which ones you should develop.

The left side of the diagram is for your social contacts, so someone you know only socially would be positioned on the relevant point along the X axis on the left. Likewise for your business contacts, on the right.

Those you know in both business and social spheres are on the Y axis in the middle. As you place your contacts in the relevant sector you can review whether it may be productive to pull them towards the centre - the red zone - and if it would be beneficial to swing them towards the Y axis.

If you are an established networker with thousands of contacts this may seem a trivial exercise, but try choosing ten people at random and see where it takes you. For those of you seeking to nurture and develop your skills, list your networks, choose your ten best contacts and go through the following list of questions.

- Who are your 10 best business contacts?
- Where are they on the degrees of association diagram?
- What have they done for you in the past year?
- What have you done for them in the past year?
- Through which network did you first meet them?
- Have you met anyone else through them?

Go back to your ten contacts and review where they are on the diagram. Now that you have reviewed the whole picture, where would you like them to be? What action could you take to try to move them into the zone you'd like them to be in?

As mentioned before, it is not what you know or who you know, but how you relate to who you know that really matters. And ideally, you should have a range of both business and social contacts that cover the entire spectrum of the diagram: having too many eggs in one basket is not a good idea.

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## 1.5 Following Up on Your Networking: Making the Call

*“There are two reasons for making an appointment. Either there was nobody else; or there was somebody else.” Lord Norman Brooke*

### 1.5.1 Facing Your Fears

Lots of people find it hard to make that call or write that e-mail to follow up with a new contact they've met. A common excuse is lack of time. Of course it's very easy to use time as an excuse for not following up. If you're serious about your networking and relationship building activities then you will see them as an integral and important part of your work (because if you don't, then you might not have any work!).

The other reason people often don't follow up is because they're scared of rejection. They're scared that their request for a meeting or coffee or lunch might be turned down. We have two suggestions:

- a. get permission and set the expectation for your follow up when you meet someone who you'd like to meet again - it's a lot less scary to call or e-mail when you know that the other person is expecting you to do that and has already given you permission to do so.
- b. learn to cope with rejection – to love “no” (which for reasons explained below can actually be very good).

### 1.5.2 What's Your Point Caller?

What outcome should you actually be aiming to achieve when you do follow up and get in touch with that new contact? It's important that you think about this before you lift the 'phone or start tapping out an e-mail.

We think that in the main your aim should be simple. You should be trying to get a face to face meeting with the person; to get half an hour of their time one-on-one. In 99% of cases that's all you should be trying to achieve. Nothing more; just to get a meeting (unless of course you discussed some alternative with the person when you met, and got their agreement on that).

Our advice of course presumes that you're not involved in one-off transactional tele-sales of goods or low value services to people who you never expect to see again, and with whom you don't want any on-going relationship.

If you're involved in selling high value goods or professional services, and do need to try to develop long-term relationships then, with the best will in the world, you cannot hope to sell anything to anyone over the 'phone.

### **1.5.3 Making The Call: What To Say**

The most important thing is to prepare properly for the call. You need to plan in advance what you're going to say assuming you get hold of the person. So before hand, you should have worked on a form of words with which you feel comfortable. The exchange of words that is to follow may indeed lead to a lovely conversation but you need to be business-like. There is a balance here between being friendly and open, and being over familiar. We do not like people we've never met before asking us if we've "had a nice weekend?" as though they already knew us well!

Assuming you get through to the person, thank them for taking the call (they are busy and you should acknowledge the fact; it would have been a whole lot easier for them to get their secretary to fob you off). Introduce yourself: name; organisation. Remind them where you met. Tell them why you are calling i.e. to ask for 30 minutes of their time for a face-to-face chat (this will be a lot easier if you set their expectation for this when you first met them and agreed you'd call up to arrange a date to meet).

Now, you need to be assertive here. If they start asking you about your organisation and your services, then it's easy to get into a sales pitch over the 'phone. Remember, at this point it is simply the appointment you want to sell. You want 30 minutes of this person's time: that's it.

If you get a "yes" then, great, set up an appointment. If you get a "no" then read on below.

#### **1.5.4 Send Me A Brochure**

In the course of making your follow-up calls, it's possible that you'll get someone who isn't keen on agreeing to meet you immediately and asks you instead to send them your brochure or some other written information. It is of course possible that this is a fob off, and that they're simply not assertive enough to refuse your request for a meeting and tell you that they're not interested in meeting you. The important thing is to stay (and sound) positive. You could try saying something like:

**“Sure, that’s no problem, which service that we offer are you most interested in?”**

The answer they give to this question could give you more valuable information and that's all to the good.

As well as agreeing to send whatever it is you're going to send, tell them you'd like to call in a week's time, once they've had a chance to have a look at your brochure and make sure to diary to do that.

Don't regard a request for a brochure or other information in writing as a failure. It's not. Far from it, this is a foot in the door. Don't forget that this is a process, not an event. Here's where you get a chance to let the person see your brochure or other snazzy corporate materials, learn more about your products/services, get your business card (if they don't have it already) and see what kind of person you are. And when you send your promotional material out, make sure that it goes with a personal letter signed by you, saying when you will next call. It's vital that you tell the person what you intend to do next. Again it makes the further follow up a lot easier if you've already set up their expectation for it.

#### **1.5.5 Learning To Love “No”**

There are of course other possible outcomes of your follow-up call. The person might tell you that they really are not interested in meeting you now or even at some later date, and that there's no point in you contacting them again. Actually getting that “no” is helpful in that it saves you wasting any more time on that particular contact.

Appreciate that when you're trying to progress towards being in a position to sell to someone, "no" hardly ever actually means "never". It simply means "not at the moment". The door is usually open for you to get back in touch sometime in the future. In our experience, most people who get involved in business development tend in their early efforts to give up too early and too easily. Here's an example of a possible way of handling a "no, we're happy with our current providers/suppliers":

*"OK, that's fine. I'd have been surprised if I'd contacted you at exactly the same time as you were thinking about changing providers, but I'd like to keep in touch because circumstances might change or perhaps they won't be able to help you out with a particular problem one day. So when's best to give you a ring again? Six months? A year?"*

You'll usually be able to get their agreement to get in touch again at some future date. Diary that date and when it comes, get back on the 'phone and start the whole process over again.

In the meantime of course you might want to seek their agreement to put them on your mailing list if you send our regular updates/newsletters or invitations to seminars/events etc.

### **1.5.6 Top Tips For Following Up By Telephone**

Some tips to remember when you are making your next follow-up call:

- Remember that your objective is simple: a 30-minute meeting.
- Small talk is important in building rapport: try and make links to something you discussed if you have already met them, or find some other common ground if possible as you chat.
- But only if the other person wants to talk: they might be really busy and not have time for small talk, which doesn't mean they don't like you or want to talk to you or meet you. It's just not the right time for them at the moment.
- You need to listen and sense their mood.

- Just because they are really busy and don't have time to meet you in the immediate future doesn't mean they won't meet you in a few weeks or months time when they're quieter - so don't miss the chance to check if it's OK to call them in a few weeks/months to see if they're less busy and want then to meet.
- They might really not want to meet you again and might refuse your offer of a meeting – get over it – it happens – learn to love “no”!

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## 1.6 Staying Front of Mind

*“If you don't see me, I don't exist.” Robbie Williams*

If you want to form and maintain good business relationships, visibility is key. If you are not visible you are invisible. Invisible people cannot build relationships with anyone.

Every time you are at a client's premises there is an opportunity to learn more about their organisation, by stopping, looking and listening. And client meetings are sometimes attended by individuals from many sectors of the client's organisation, and many levels. Listening and remembering is key here, as is getting permission to give someone a call in the next few days, if appropriate and useful.

Events can be hugely useful for getting to know the main players and they take many forms:

- **Your own events:** regular lunches, seminars or social functions from the very formal to the relaxed. Use them effectively and look for outcomes. Take the opportunity to introduce others in your organisations to key individuals.
- **Client events:** go to them, and find out as much as possible before you do (including dress code!). Delegate lists and the like give you information that will have you arriving more confident and relaxed, if nothing else.
- **Corporate events:** the big events in the corporate calendar are expensive but are opportunities to meet many people. They are also a way of having you present in your clients' minds (we all look at who is there).

- **Conferences:** two days in the same building as many of your targets and clients, provided you are at the right event. Morning, noon and especially night are great opportunities to meet existing and new clients, and to arrange to see people either on your own or with a key colleague... e.g. “would you mind if I introduced you to Colin, our business development manager, during the afternoon coffee break?”
- **Networking events:** can be a waste of time. If they are, you are in the wrong organisations and/or going to the wrong events. If you are in them, be active in them, support them and expect outcomes from them within a reasonable period of time.
- **Golf events:** like it or not, whether a corporate day or simply four of you out on the course, it is a great environment to develop client relationships.
- **Drop-ins:** if you are in the area, simply arrange to drop in with no agenda. Have a chat, have a coffee, take along a few cakes or some small squares of caramel shortcake. It doesn't have to be lunch, which can take a few hours all told, just a half-hour and then get out of there.
- **De-briefs:** at the end of every project when you sweep up the debris you should be aware that the relationships can cool after that period of frantic activity. Make a date then to meet soon, or get permission to call in a week or two.
- **Travelling:** make a point of travelling with your client if you need to go somewhere in the course of your work. Make it easy for them to say yes to this, and difficult to say no. Now you may see the travel as an opportunity to be on your own and get the chance to get some work done, but a few hours on your own with a key decision-maker is more precious than a few quid. Make sure you have plenty to say that is not work related, too.

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## 1.7 Keeping in Touch

***“Have you considered that if you “don’t make waves”, nobody including yourself, will know that you are alive?” Theodore Isaac Rubin, MD***

Calling up or e-mailing someone to ask for a chat over coffee or lunch is all very well, but there are only so many coffees and lunches you can have before you get indigestion. Try thinking more creatively about the various ways in and reasons for which you might keep in touch with your contacts and clients. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Invites to non-work events:** charity and trade dinners; theatre and comedy shows e.g. the Fringe in Edinburgh has something for everyone (and it’s an excuse to visit Scotland if that’s not your home country); sporting events – golf, tennis, horse racing, motorsport e.t.c; music – from classical to rock concerts.
- **Send appropriate gifts:** possibly as thanks for their input/help; chocolates and flowers on appropriate personal occasions; business books you know would be of interest to them.
- **Invites to work related seminars:** brief breakfast seminars; evening seminars with drinks afterwards; lunchtime seminars possibly coupled with debates on a business topics.
- **Research:** ask for their input on your benchmarking research and ask to meet to share the results with them afterwards.
- **Send interesting information:** copies of articles/websites etc that would be of specific interest to them.
- **Ask for favours/help with something:** e.g. input to format of brochure
- **Private dinners** with a limited number of guests.
- **Post sale/deal de-brief meetings.**
- **Personal notes:** send handwritten notes and thank you cards instead of e-mail.
- **Speaking at your events:** ask them to come and speak on their topic of expertise.
- **Call them up just for a chat.**
- **Lunch, coffee, dinner** to talk about specific issues or just because you enjoy their company (tell them that).

- Call, write or meet to **discuss information to benchmark them on your sector knowledge.**
- **Newsletters, or e-mail bulletins:** send them your news to keep them up to date.
- Call or write to **comment on something about them/their organisation that's in the press;** call or write to **comment on a trade publication article they've written or been quoted in.**

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## 2. THE FOUR CLASSIC MISTAKES

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*“Some people fold after making one timid request. They quit too soon. Keep asking until you find the answers. In sales there are usually four or five “no’s” before you get a ‘yes.’” Jack Canfield*

There are four classic mistakes that people make when trying to build relationships and sell high value goods and professional services. The best relationship builders and sellers know how to avoid making these mistakes:

### 1. Building Relationships is a Process.... Not an Event

Have a look back at the diagram in the Business Development Process section of these materials. You can see that there is a stage (networking) which has to take place to find people to whom you might be able to sell what you provide; then the creation and nurturing of relationships (relationship-building) to get to the stage where you might be able to do business with them; and then the process of moving towards closing the deal (selling).

And, as mentioned before, each of these stages can take weeks, months or even years. It’s important to realise that building relationships takes time, and generating business and selling high-value services is very rarely an event. So, make sure that with each contact or client, you know where you are in the process, and take action to keep pushing forward with your relationships to develop them to the point where you can appropriately ask for some business.

### 2. Never Hard Sell

The idea of the hard sell conjures up an image of the pushy double glazing salesman pressing for a signature on a contract the first time you meet him/her. We all tend automatically to kick against the hard sell.

In the high value goods and services arenas where the clients tend to be more sophisticated, there’s simply no place for the hard sell. But, that doesn’t mean that you don’t need to be persistent (because you do).

### **3. Using Too Much Logic**

We all make buying decisions every day based on emotion and justify them later on fact, intellect and reason. And this includes the purchase of expensive goods and complex professional services.

Professionals tend in particular to worry too much about fact, intellect and reason – technical ability - and don't pay enough attention to the emotional side i.e. how they behave with clients and potential clients; appealing to people's emotions.

We are not saying your technical ability isn't important, but in a hugely competitive marketplace, technical ability is taken as read. Clients are now looking for the extra 'wow' factor and that has to be all about you. And the old adage that people prefer to do business with people (that they like) tends to be true.

### **4. Concentrating on Positions or 'Wants'**

If you just try to satisfy superficial positions or "wants" without digging down and uncovering real interests or "needs", then you will never get to the core of the client's real challenges and therefore never be able to offer the best solutions for them. Unless you understand both wants and needs, and the difference between the two, you will be unlikely to get to a happy conclusion. Let's define them in simple terms:

"Wants" are simple demands. "Needs" are the underlying interests that drive someone to express their "wants" – they are what the person is really interested in achieving. "Needs" rather than "wants" are what you must get to, as they are the foundation stone upon which you will build the future relationship. It is crucial to unlock the needs of any prospective client.

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### 3. THE EMOTIONAL CONNECTION: WHY PEOPLE BUY [Go To Contents](#)

***“Internalize the Golden Rule of sales that says, ‘All things being equal, people will do business with, and refer business to, those people they know, like and trust’.” Bob Burg***

Friedrich Nietzsche (19<sup>th</sup> Century philosopher) said *“Our emotions are a huge blind monster that goes wherever it wants, and our intellect is a tiny sighted being sitting on the emotion’s shoulder, justifying everything the emotions do.”*

It’s tempting to think that people buy products and services based on logic, fact and reasoning, however, you only have to start looking around your own home to realise that Nietzsche’s observation is perhaps nearer to the truth than you might like to admit.

Here are some reasons why people buy products and services:

- For status
- For recognition
- To exert authority
- To feel better
- To justify their position
- For survival

The vast majority of us will, at some point, have been in to a shop to buy something and been served by a less than helpful individual. Someone that perhaps neglected to listen, wasn’t really interested in being at work in the first place, or simply didn’t know anything about the product. Chances are you knew what you wanted from the shop and were just there to make sure you were getting the right thing by asking the assistant a few questions. However, their attitude of indifference, coupled with their eagerness to flog you a five year maintenance contract, put you right off and you walked out.

This is a perfectly natural reaction and yet it’s illogical. After all, the unhelpful assistant wasn’t going to get your money: the shop was. Their indifference had no bearing on the quality or performance of the product you were about to purchase. In fact, other than perhaps retrieving the item from a stock room, the assistant had minimal impact on the entire

transaction. So why did we find ourselves walking straight out of that shop, right into another and buying the same product for exactly the same price, or perhaps even for a little bit more, just so that we didn't give our business to the unpleasant person next door?

The reason is simple: people buy from people or, more accurately, people buy from people they like! And whether it's a £50 shirt, a £50,000 piece of new factory machinery or a £500,000 piece of legal work, this general rule holds true.

Never underestimate the human dimension in business. The ability to communicate with, listen to, build rapport and make an emotional connection with people are all essential skills for anyone in the business of generating sales.

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## 4. PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

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*“If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six sharpening my axe”*

*Abraham Lincoln*

Imagine that your networking and relationship building skills have enabled you to get half an hour of time with a potential new client i.e. you have now arranged your first business development meeting with this person. It is absolutely vital that you know what you want to get out of this meeting and that you prepare effectively for it... because you might only get one chance.

There is a huge amount of work to be done to prepare properly for the meeting. Clearly you have to balance this with the resources that you have available...there are only so many hours in the day after all. But, if this is a potentially important client, then you really do need to commit to spending several hours preparing to have the best possible chance of getting the best possible outcome.

Here's a list of some of the key points you need to consider as part of your preparation:

- If you've met the person before, dig out any notes that you have on them (you did remember to scribble as much as you could recall about them on the back of their business card, didn't you?)
- Find out if anyone else in your firm has had any contact with the person or organisation
- Ask other contacts you know if you think they might know something about the person or organisation
- Check out their website: “recent news” and “visions/values” pages are always worth a look
- Think about whether you should take anyone else with you to the meeting
- Do you want any brochures/newsletters etc with you?
- What are you going to wear: very smart; more casual? What did they dress like when you met them? What sort of organisation are they?
- What's your small talk going to be? What interesting things have you been up to recently? If you've met the person before, what clues have they given you as to their interests outside work?

- Do you have any mutual contacts that you might want to mention, to establish credibility?
- What questions do you want to ask them? What information do you want to find out?
- What things do you think you'll want to tell them about your services?
- Are there other clients in their sector that you act for? Would it be a good idea to mention that at some point?
- Are there cases/deals/transactions that you've been involved in that you think would be relevant to what they do?
- Can you think of any "objections" (reasons to say "no") that they might come up with? Put yourself in their shoes – why might they not do business with you? What could you say in response to their objections?

The above list is clearly not exhaustive but it's a good start. We suggest you make up your own more detailed check list appropriate for the type of work you do, and the type of potential clients with whom you have business development meetings.

There's one more vital element that you must include in your checklist. You need to think about what you're hoping to achieve from the meeting. What would be your best outcome?

And always consider whether there may be other possible outcomes?

For example:

- Are there any commoditised products or services that you offer (e.g. data protection audits, employment contract checks etc) for a fixed fee as a way of getting them to try you out in some small way?
- What seminars do you run that might interest them? This is a great way to get them along to meet other people (preferably other satisfied clients), showcase what you can do, and impress them if you feel that you're not yet at a stage in your relationship with them where they're likely to agree at the meeting to start actually giving you work.

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## 5. THE FOUR PHASES OF A BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MEETING

*“Straws upon the surface flow. He who looks for pearls must dive below.”*

*Francis Bacon*

While of course every meeting will be different, most business development meetings will generally have four phases.

(Click on a phase of the meeting to go straight there)

Phase / Aim	How?
1. <b>Building Rapport</b>	Engage in Small Talk
2. <b>Uncovering Needs</b>	Ask Questions & Listen
3. <b>Demonstrating Capabilities</b>	Reveal Relevant Features & Bespoke Benefits
4. <b>Closing</b>	Handle Objections Get an Advance Ask for the Business

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## 5.1 Building Rapport: Small Talk

***“We should be careful not to make the intellect our God. It has of course powerful muscles but no personality.” Albert Einstein***

So now that you've managed to arrange that business development meeting, just how do you go about interacting and engaging with your client or potential client? How are you going to create some feeling of rapport and present yourself in the best possible light? The key here is small talk and here's a quick reminder of why it's so important to engage in some small talk to build rapport with someone with whom you'd like to do business:

- Because people buy from people and small talk allows you to show that you are a real person.
- Because if they have a choice, people want to do business with people they like.
- Because you should never underestimate the human dimension in business.

Small talk is quite simply the cement that binds the bricks of a relationship together. It's not fancy, it's not technical and there are no algebraic formulae to be mastered. It is through the exchange of small talk that you can learn about others; about their likes and dislikes, their hopes and aspirations; about their personal life, their interests and their character.

It is small talk that will allow you to discover what you have in common with the person you are talking to, whether you share the same interests and concerns. In short; it's how to forge an emotional connection, through which rapport is built.

Whether you are going to visit a potential client, or whether they are coming to see you, a little small talk whilst you pour the coffee, get your paperwork together and allow everyone to get settled and comfortable, is an absolute must if you want things to get off to the best start possible.

Of course, everyone is different, and sometimes you meet people who clearly just want to get straight into business chat and don't have time to or want to engage in much if any small talk. You need to sense that and adapt your conversation accordingly.

However, be aware that sometimes the people who don't want any small talk at the start of the meeting and who want to get straight down to business actually loosen up by the end of the meeting and are quite happy to have a non-work chat with you then.

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## 5.2 Uncovering Needs: Asking Questions & Listen

*“The interesting thing is when we design and architect a server, we don't design it for Windows or Linux, we design it for both. We don't really care, as long as we're selling the one the customer wants” Michael Dell*

It's absolutely vital that you take time during the meeting to really try to understand a potential client's needs. What is it that they're really looking for – both in relation to any particular deal/project in question and in relation to their service providers.

What is it that they really want? This requires you to ask intelligent, interesting questions and then to listen carefully to the answers given.

There are a number of different types of questions that you can use and there are various questioning techniques that you should be able to employ in business development meetings.

### Types of Questions

**Open questions** encourage people to talk and impart information, i.e. about themselves, their organisation, their product or services, or their thoughts on particular issues. With 'open' questions, your respondent will be more likely to develop their train of thought and articulate a wealth of information that will be helpful to you and perhaps also others in the meeting.

Open questions that start with the following usually do the trick:

How....? What...? When...? Who...? Why...? Where...?

**Specific questions** will allow you to make progress towards your goals, and that is why you are there. Asking relevant, specific questions shows that you have been listening and taking in what has been said. No-one likes their needs, wants and opinions to be ignored, so homing in on some specifics will assure the other person that they are being heard and their opinion valued.

**Reflective questions** can confirm feelings, wants or needs and also show that you understand exactly what is required. For example: ‘Starting late October, and allowing for maybe a week or two slippage over the four month planning phase, takes us nearer Christmas than might be comfortable for you. Can we start in mid-November and still get a meaningful run at it before the festive break?’

### **Questioning Techniques**

Here’s a simple approach to the order in which you might want to consider asking different types of questions in business development meetings. We suggest that you start with the “so what?” questions, move onto the “what’s up?” questions, get to the “what if...?” questions and finish on the “if only...” ones. Here’s what we mean:

**So What? Questions** are general questions at the beginning of the meeting that can help to settle you both down, get the other person talking and generally set a positive environment. Questions like:

- How many staff do you employ?
- Where are your various offices situated?
- Who are your main customers?

We call them “So What?” questions not because they necessarily start with the words “so what” but because at some point the person of whom you’re asking these questions is going to think “Can we get to the point please!” or worse still they might think that you’re asking questions to which you should already know the answer: “Didn’t this person do any homework on us before coming to meet me?”

So there’s nothing wrong with asking some “So what?” questions to get you started, but not too many and certainly don’t let the meeting get bogged down in those sorts of questions.

**What's up? Questions** are the type of questions that actually get you information and give you a greater understanding of the challenges facing your client or potential client. Ask good ones and listen carefully to their answers.

Here are a couple of suggestions:

- What are the main challenges facing you in the coming year?
- How does the current state of the market affect what you do?
- Who are your main competitors and how are they responding to your latest initiatives?

**What if.....? Questions:** Now that you have an idea as to what's up from their point of view, you might be in a position to offer some suggestions as to what might be done, in a "what if...." fashion.

Note that you can only usefully start to offer "what ifs..." once you know "what's up"! Don't try to solve all their problems too early. Here are some examples of possible "what if" questions (again note that they don't actually have to start with the words "what if").

- What if there was a way to cut that time frame in half?
- How would it help you if you were able to get that information on your intranet site?
- Could we look at implementation on all three sites simultaneously?

Of course, you're going to have to work out for yourself appropriate "what if...?" questions for the specific services that you offer. Can you see now why we said that you need to spend so much time preparing for one of these meetings, and why we said that one of the things you should do as part of that preparation is think about the questions you might want to ask?

**If Only...? Questions:** If you've asked the right "what's up?" and "what if...?" questions then hopefully your client or potential client is now starting to reflect on what solution would really make their life easier and work for them. Again your "If only..." questions don't actually have to start with those words, and in fact they might be less like questions you'd ask them and more like questions they'd ask you. They may even just be statements summarising what it is that they really need, and either you or they can supply those!.

- If only we could find a supplier who could create and print the materials for us and also deliver them.
- Being able to know immediately on our system every time that happened would be a great help.
- If only we could find a provider who really understood our market.

**Final points to be aware of when asking questions:**

1. If you feel that the prospect/client could deliver more information that may be useful, keep the questioning process going; probe as far as you feel is appropriate.
2. To avoid doubt in any area and to confirm details - ask again, this time phrasing the questions differently.
3. The reason questions are so important is that if they are the right questions, and you phrase them correctly and listen to the answers, then you will learn all you need to sell effectively because you'll know how your product or service can satisfy their needs and wants.
4. And, of course, you must actively listen to the answers to your questions, to gain information, to enable you to empathise and understand needs and feelings, and to enable you to frame further questions where necessary. Listening actively –being seen to listen by the person who's talking – is vital. After someone has been heard they need to know that they have been understood. In fact, you also need to know you have the right end of the stick!
5. Put yourself in their shoes and ask yourself: Why would they use us?; Why would they *not* use us?: Why would they not do business with us right *now*?

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### 5.3 Demonstrating Capabilities – Features and Benefits

***“Customers buy for their reasons, not yours” Orvel Ray Wilson***

Once you have asked the right questions and listened carefully to the answers, the time should come where it’s right for you to say something about what it is that you are offering to sell...and that you think will match your potential client’s needs.

In a fairly informal business development meeting of course your “pitch” is not going to be a formal, stand-up affair (and please, please, please tell us that it won’t involve any PowerPoint!) but you still need to be focussed and say the right thing. We believe that your pitch should reveal “relevant features” and link those to “bespoke benefits”. Let’s explain what we mean:

It’s not possible to consider the subject of selling without looking at the concepts of “features” and “benefits”. If you pick up just about any book on sales there will be at least one chapter devoted to this.

**“Features”**, in sales lingo, are the facts, data, statistics, characteristics of your firm or service, offering or product (e.g. – we’ve got offices in x, y and z cities; x number of employees; our clients include x, y & z; etc).

**“Benefits”** are, from the perspective of the buyer, the benefits to them of the various features.

Many gurus on the subject of selling will tell you to steer away from “features” and to concentrate on “benefits”. Their reasoning is that “features” tend not to be persuasive in terms of influencing people to buy services from you. And they have a point.

Think about it for a moment. Why do you think it’s a good idea to tell a potential client, for example, that you already act for X (a company which operates in the same field as your potential client)? Presumably, if you took the time to analyse this, you might conclude that this feature would lead your potential client to presume that there would be a benefit to them i.e. they would conclude that you are likely to have knowledge and experience of dealing with the same sorts of issues as they encounter in their own business, and this would enable you to provide them with a better service.

The first danger is that your potential client might not make that link. They might hear the “feature” and not perceive any benefit to them in you acting for the other company. So, make sure that you think about whether you need to be more explicit about the benefits of the particular features you mention.

The real danger however is that they might actually regard the feature as negative: they may worry that you might run into conflicts of interest in trying to act/deliver for both the other company and theirs, or worse still they might be concerned that their commercial secrets could be leaked to their competitors. Try to think about things from the potential client’s perspective. Might they regard any of your wonderful (in your eyes) features as actually being bad for them?

We suggest you concentrate on “relevant features” and link those to “bespoke benefits”. Here’s what we mean:

**“Relevant Features”**: Before you go trotting out a list of features, ask yourself whether those features are actually relevant to that person, to their business and to their needs - as identified by you having asked relevant questions and listened to the answers. It’s all too easy for your sales pitch to turn into a litany of irrelevant features.

**“Bespoke Benefits”**: Let’s take the discussion on “benefits” a bit further. It’s not very personal to the particular person with whom you are looking to work to just look at the general benefits of using your company/firm/team/you (complete with all your wonderful features). It would be far more personal and powerful if you really thought about what benefits were actually relevant to that person and to their company. You also need to make a clear link between your relevant features and the bespoke benefits that the person will enjoy if they use your service/buy your products.

Remember that it’s only once you know what someone is really looking for that you can reveal “relevant features” and link those to “specific benefits”; find out what they really need before you pitch.

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## 5.4 Closing: Handling Objections and Asking for the Business

***“People get caught up in wonderful, eye-catching pitches, but they don't do enough to close the deal. It's no good if you don't make the sale. Even if your foot is in the door or you bring someone into a conference room, you don't win the deal unless you actually get them to sign on the dotted line” Donald Trump***

### 5.4.1 Closing Techniques; Applying Pressure

If you pick up just about any book on selling you'll read a lot about “closing”. You'll be told about all sorts of fancy closing techniques, many of them with the most ridiculous names – the “Colombo”, the “Snoopy Dog” etc.

The ones you'll recognise (because you've almost certainly been on the receiving end of them at some point in your life) would include:

- The assumptive close – assuming that you've agreed to buy when you haven't yet decided (“so when would you like us to have the draft contracts finalised for?”).
- The alternative close – offering alternatives, again making the assumption that you've decided to buy even though you haven't (“so would you like us to draft the purchase/sale agreement or the security documentation first?”).
- The standing room only close (“if you can't decide right now whether or not to instruct us to act for you then we'll have to go and act for the other party to this deal, who're pressing us to be their advisers”).
- Last chance saloon (“if we can agree the fee at this meeting then it'll be £500K but if you won't sign until tomorrow then it'll go up to £600K”).

Some of these classic closing techniques might have their place in one-off sales of low value consumer goods. They tend to speed up the decision making process by pushing the client into making a decision. Assuming the decision in question is not particularly significant there is a tendency by the client just to make up his or her mind, accept the product/deal on offer and buy the item in question.

Applying pressure when you're selling high value goods or professional services, where there's almost certainly going to be an on-going relationship with the client, will have completely the opposite effect. As soon as you start applying pressure, potential clients will back off.

This accords with the general psychological rule that pressure is more effective with small decisions, and less and less effective the bigger and more important the decision becomes.

#### **5.4.2 Closing Sales of High Value Goods and Services**

Of course, all of these gimmicky sales techniques have absolutely no place in selling high value goods or professional services. If you tried these closing techniques on a prospective client you'd probably be thrown out of their boardroom.

Does that mean you shouldn't seek to "close"? No, clearly not. If you never closed then you'd never get any business. So somehow you can't be seen to be trying to close and yet somehow you always need to be closing. The answer is to make sure that you always keep trying to move things forward towards a close.

Realistically, when we're talking about big deals, complex contracts or large anticipated spend on professional fees you're not going to get a close immediately. It's going to take time and there will be a number of stages before you'll get the work in the bag. The important thing is to try to get some sort of **advance**, and **keep control** over the next stage in the process

This ties back to the preparation stage where, before any meeting, you need to try to anticipate and prepare for the possible outcomes – getting a further meeting, an introduction to someone else in the business, an opportunity to get into a formal tender process etc.

You should always be looking to obtain some sort of advance or commitment to a further action. We'll come back to this very important issue shortly.

### 5.4.3 Learning to Love 'No'

We believe that the reason a lot of people, particularly those in professional services, are bad at closing is two-fold. Firstly, they're scared that they'll get a "no". They fear rejection. Actually, while of course getting a "yes" is better, getting a "no" can actually be quite useful (for reasons explained in a moment).

Secondly, they associate closing with being pushy and they think of pushy salesmen trying to sell dodgy goods to a person who really doesn't want to buy. Of course you mustn't be pushy – as we explained above in trying to sell high value complex goods or professional services, the more you apply pressure, the more a potential client is likely to back off. But, you absolutely must be persistent.

Unfortunately, because of the fears of rejection or of appearing pushy, many people are simply not persistent enough and they give up too soon.

In sales, "no" very rarely means "no – *never*". It usually means "no - *not at the moment*". Getting a "yes" is great, but a "no" is actually very helpful, particularly if you manage to find out the reason for it. Then you might have a chance of dealing with the reason for it (in sales lingo, the "objection").

And if it really is a "no- *never*" then at least you know where you stand and won't have to waste any more of your valuable business development time on that particular person. As W. C Fields said: *"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Then quit. There's no point in being a damn fool about it"*

Bear in mind that there are very few products or services that are genuinely new to the market, which means that in 99% of the business development situations in which you find yourself, your potential client will already have, or be receiving, goods or professional services from another supplier. And they might even be happy with those products/that service (but of course that might not remain the position for ever).

So don't be despondent if you don't walk out of every business development meeting having closed the deal and obtained a firm order or instruction to act. You also need to bear in mind that "no" simply goes with the territory if you're trying to sell. Don't take it personally and don't fret about it. It doesn't make you a bad person!

#### 5.4.4 Handling Objections

You might remember that we said earlier that as part of your preparation for any business development meeting you should think about any possible objections that might be raised. Why might you get a “no”? What possible reasons could they have not to do business with you? What would you be able to say in response that might convince them that their objection is unfounded?

Of course during the business development meeting itself, if you asked the right questions at stage 2 (uncovering needs), and listened carefully to the answers given, then you should have a pretty good idea of any possible objections that might be raised in response to your attempt to close and get the business. And in fact your “pitch” should have subtly addressed those objections.

But let’s say that the person does raise an objection that you had not anticipated: what do you do? Well, you go back to basics and ask questions again. For example, in response to the objection – and it’s a common one – “You’re too expensive”, you might want to ask the following questions:

- To what are they comparing your price?
- What’s the current price they pay?
- Have they had any other quotes and for how much?
- Are the products/services being offered comparable with yours? Is the value add the same? Are they really comparing like with like?
- What price do they have in mind?
- What’s their budget?
- When does their financial year end?

Once you know the reasoning behind the objection then you can remind them why your product/services costs more than your competitors and the additional benefits that using you can bring them. Most products or services that are more expensive than those of competitors are that way for many reasons. Maybe it’s the quality of your offering, maybe the exclusiveness of it, perhaps your delivery times are quicker or maybe you offer a more comprehensive after-sales service?

If you want to be properly prepared for business development meetings then you really must make your own list of the most common objections that you're likely to encounter in trying to sell your particular products/services. You also need to consider what the appropriate response would be.

Imagine how much more confident you will feel in business development meetings if you know that you're likely to have thought in advance about any objection that is raised, and to have thought about an appropriate response?

To get you started, we have listed in the table on the next two pages the most common objections you're likely to encounter, along with some thoughts on possible further questions that you need to ask them (or perhaps yourself) in order to deal effectively with the objection.

***“Every sale has five basic objections: no need; no money; no hurry; no desire; no trust.” Zig Ziglar***

<b>OBJECTION</b>	<b>FURTHER QUESTIONS</b>
<b>Happy with existing suppliers</b>	At the moment; might not be for ever; might get them to try you out on a small specialist job where their existing suppliers can't help, or if their existing suppliers run into a conflict and can't help
<b>Not convinced why you should get the work</b>	Ask more questions – why not?; do you need to work on your “pitch” and sharpen it up?
<b>Doesn't like your offering</b>	Ask more questions. Have you really uncovered their needs?; does your offering actually meet those?; could you adjust your offering; is this the wrong type of client for you?
<b>Doesn't like you personally</b>	Is there anyone else at their end that you could deal with and with whom you might get along better? Is there anyone else at your end with whom they might get along better?
<b>Doesn't believe you have the required specialist knowledge</b>	Why not? What would convince them? Would they try you out on a small job? What about doing a “freebie” to convince them? Are they actually right? Do you need to develop your technical skills further? Could you buy in the required expertise from elsewhere?
<b>No need for your services</b>	At the moment. Could this change in the future?
<b>History: bad previous experience with your firm</b>	Could you do anything to sort out any previous mess? Is an apology required? Tell them that you're different and you'd like a chance to demonstrate that.
<b>No budget</b>	At the moment. Might that change? When is their year end?
<b>Concerned you're conflicted (e.g. you act for competitors)</b>	Are you? How could you convince them that their concerns are unfounded?
<b>Changing providers would be a hassle for them</b>	Would it? What could you do to make it easy for them to deal with you?

<b>OBJECTION</b>	<b>FURTHER QUESTIONS</b>
<b>You're an unknown quantity: haven't used you before</b>	They'll only know if they try. Would they try you out on a small job to give you a chance to show how good you are? Are they just not yet at the point where they'll buy from you? Do you need to build your relationship with them further before you try to sell?
<b>Don't have the authority to engage you</b>	Who does? Could you get to meet them? What do they need from you that might help them to convince the person with the authority?
<b>You're too big</b>	Are you? Why do they think that? Do they think your service would be impersonal? How could you convince them it wouldn't be? Would you be their personal point of contact? Would you be able to promise to remain personally involved in delivery of the product/service?
<b>You're too small</b>	Are you? Why do they think that? Compared to whom? What is their concern about your size? How could you convince them that their concern is unfounded?
<b>Your offices aren't in the right place geographically to suit them</b>	Aren't they? Should you open one? Could you offer to travel to their office regularly so it wouldn't matter to them where your offices were located?
<b>You're not on their panel of approved advisers</b>	How could you get on the panel? What are the criteria? Who makes the decision? Does the work go out to formal tender? When is it next up for tender? How could you get a chance to pitch?
<b>You're too expensive</b>	Are you? Compared to who/what? Is the comparison fair? Are they comparing like to like? Do they really want the cheapest supplier? What price did they have in mind? What's their budget? What are they charged at the moment? Have they had any other quotes? From whom and for how much?
<b>You're too cheap</b>	Are you? Have you pitched too low? Compared to whom? Are they comparing like to like?

If you've read the list of common objections above and our thoughts on handling those then we hope you realise now why we said earlier that "no" nearly always means "no – *not at the moment*" as opposed to a "no - *not ever*".

We hope that you also now appreciate why we said that you really do need to allocate a chunk of your preparation time to handling possible objections. A brainstorm session in conjunction with some colleagues could prove invaluable for this.

#### **5.4.5 Buying Signals**

During any business development meeting, you should be watching out for indications that the potential client is interested. This is another reason that the ability to listen is so important, because without listening properly you will miss out on clues and signals that the person is thinking about doing business with you.

Here are a few clues – or "buying signals":

- "How much would your fees be for this piece of work?"
- "Would everybody within our organisation be able to access your training services?"
- "I'd like to get one of my colleagues to meet you and discuss this further."

If a person is not interested in buying your products/services, ever, then they don't care how much they cost, who would be able to access your training seminars, and they certainly wouldn't waste their time getting a colleague involved. Remember to look out for buying signs.

#### **5.4.6 Outcomes: Keeping Control and Getting an Advance**

As we said above, if you're in the business of selling high value goods or complex professional services then realistically it's very unlikely that you're going to get a "close" at your first business development meeting with a new client. It's going to take time and there will be a number of stages before you'll get the work in the bag. The important thing is to try to get a positive **outcome**, some sort of **advance** in the business development process, and to **keep control** over the next stage in the process.

In the same way as we said that to be properly prepared for business development meetings then you really need to think in advance about possible objections that you might encounter, you should also consider in advance what the possible outcomes of your meeting might be. If a sale isn't on the cards immediately then what other outcomes might you be able to achieve that would actually be advancing you towards the possibility of a sale?

Again, on the following page are some ideas to get you thinking, but you should make up your own list as appropriate to your business and the products/services that you sell.

<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>KEEPING CONTROL; GETTING AN ADVANCE</b>
<b>Loads of work</b>	That would be nice, wouldn't it! (but unlikely every time).
<b>Another meeting</b>	Agreement to meet you at a later date (with or without another person at their end) to discuss your services/offering in more detail. Be specific. Get them to agree mechanism and date.
<b>An internal introduction</b>	An offer to introduce you to another person within their organisation who may be interested in your services or with authority to buy. Be specific. Get them to agree mechanism and date.
<b>An external introduction</b>	An offer to introduce you to one of their contacts in another organisation – someone they think may be interested in your services. Agree the best way for that introduction to be effected. Be specific. Get them to agree mechanism and dates
<b>The chance to pitch for the panel</b>	Opportunity to make a formal pitch to be on their panel of legal advisers. Obtain as much information as you can to assist you.
<b>A small test</b>	An instruction to do a bit of work (a 'taster') to see how you perform.
<b>A cross-selling opportunity</b>	You identify a need for other services offered by your firm and agree to make an introduction for one of your colleagues. Get their permission for your colleague to contact them. Better still – set a date. Should you be there as well?
<b>Written proposal please</b>	Interested in what you offer and wants a proposal in writing. Agree when you will get the proposal to them - and when, and how, you will follow up with them to discuss your proposal (call or meeting).
<b>Not at the moment thanks</b>	Try to ascertain the barriers (see "objections" above) and set timescales for you to revert with possible resolutions to those. At the very least get agreement that you can contact them again on specific later date to review situation.
<b>They'll attend future event</b>	They agree to come to one of your training/information seminars on a specific date, or to accept your invitation to a business/social event.
<b>No - never</b>	Next please! Move on. Get over it.

The important point is that you really must have in mind some specific possible outcomes. Otherwise there's a real danger that you'll have a nice little chat, and then have no idea how to progress from there. The relationship will fizzle out before it even begins. Either that, or you'll end up having a succession of meetings (and perhaps even develop a good relationship) but never actually progress into the selling zone.

#### **5.4.7 Sometimes You Just Have to Ask!**

That's pretty much it actually. Sometimes you do just have to ask for the business. You can read many books about sales techniques, skills and psychology but sometimes you do just need to decide whether you've reached a point in your relationship with someone where you can, and should, ask. Find your own choice of words but here's a suggestion:

*"It sounds like what we can offer you is right in line with what you need. I'd really love for us to get the chance to do some work for you. How could we make that happen? What job would you try us out on?"*

So, you've now got right through to the end of the sales process. And maybe you have won that piece of business with the dream client you have always wanted to work with. If so, well done. If not, remember 'No' rarely means 'Never'. And, if it really does, just move on.....next please!

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## 6. CROSS SELLING: SPOTTING WIDER OPPORTUNITIES **Go To Contents**

***“The way to get things done is not to mind who gets the credit for doing them”  
Benjamin Jowett, 19<sup>th</sup> Century British classical scholar***

In the course of your business development activities, opportunities will present themselves for you to cross sell to existing contacts/clients of your organisation, and for you to assist colleagues within your organisation to cross sell their related services to your contacts. You need to be always on the lookout for those opportunities.

Cross-selling requires a free-flow of information between different departments or areas of the business. It also requires a willingness for the heads of different departments or divisions within the business to ‘share’ clients.

Any professional with a specific role will find cross-selling a challenge. It’s simply not the way that they are trained to think, nor in many firms is it an activity for which they will be financially rewarded. Unlike a business development manager, whose role is specifically to develop contracts and contacts and who will be well rewarded for that – very often on a commission basis – others within a firm or organisation are often there primarily for other reasons such as to provide specialist advice, client account management, or to provide other internal functions such as HR, financial management etc.

Developing your skills in this critical business development function can be distilled down to one thing: clear, honest, open lines of communication. Those with little experience of cross-selling, or indeed any type of selling, may think that they have to know everything in order to be effective: in other words to be a top-flight sales person as well as a specialist in another area. This is not the case.

In a situation where your prospective or existing client has a need which falls outwith your own specialist area, your job, to assist both the contact and your organisation, is to be able and willing to facilitate a meeting between a relevant colleague and the prospect or client.

Here are some key tips::

- You need not know every detail of what other sections do, but you do need to know the important names, the key services they provide and you should be able to deliver a brief “elevator” pitch on these.
- That knowledge will include technical expertise and “fit” with the client organisation (you have to know your colleagues!).
- You need to stay around for long enough after introducing your colleague to ensure that the fledgling relationship is developing well.
- You have to be there if things go wrong, even if it’s not your role.
- Be pro-active in ensuring that others in your organisation know what is going on with your major accounts (if you have a database, it has to work and it has to be accessible to everyone).
- You are willing to ask for help from your colleagues when you feel you need it.
- Foster inspiration and motivation around selling and cross-selling rather than constructing elaborate sets of rules.
- Learn from the best, and if you are the best, teach others.
- Encourage face-to-face communication in a variety of forums.
- Celebrate and reward success.

It’s important to appreciate that whenever you recommend and introduce a colleague to one of your existing contacts, your own reputation goes with your recommendation. It follows, then, that you must be confident that the account is managed effectively from all aspects: there is little point in planting a number of acorns hoping some will turn into saplings – as they undoubtedly will if you have the right strategic goals – only to find out the oak tree you have been nurturing for a very long time has been felled.

So you must have the utmost confidence and trust in the ability of your colleagues to deliver a level of service that keeps your reputation intact.

How can you sell someone else if you do not have explicit and implicit trust in their ability to deliver? Simple - you can’t. Trust is not about knowing that they have the right letters after their name, or that they have many years of experience. Of course these things are important, but to trust someone you have to know them and have professional respect for them.

If you are considering introducing a colleague to a client for whom you act, or for whom you are the account manager, and who generates a significant amount of your annual fee income then you have to be sure that the personal and professional standards being imported are every bit as high as your own.

Here are some of the signs and signals around trust that you should be aware of in yourself and others:

<b>Good signs</b>	<b>Bad signs</b>
Shows genuine interest in colleagues and the services that they can offer	Is only interested in telling colleagues about what they offer
Offers help to colleagues: even when busy or it is inconvenient	Asks colleagues for help but does not offer to help them
Delivers on promises	Makes excuses for poor delivery, or simply does not keep promises
Shares problems and challenges (we all have them)	Never does anything wrong (or at least so he or she thinks!)
Acknowledges strengths and weaknesses in their service delivery	Will devour any work on offer, no problem, without a second thought
Cites specific successes in past work	Speaks in general terms about what they offer

So those are the principles, and the following gives you a steer on how you can get some credit in the trust bank and nurture your internal networks:

- Your internal network is as important as your external ones.
- Be open and honest (without being naïve).
- Engage fully in office social events, seminars and the like.

- Do not have assumptions or preconceptions about individuals, make up your own mind.
- Do not use aggression, and practise empathy, rapport and assertiveness.
- Arrange meetings with colleagues as you would with clients; over coffee or lunch.
- Do this with everyone who is relevant, not just those you like best.
- In fact, make a point of doing it with those you find more difficult.
- Be inquisitive generally: know what is going on in all areas of your business .
- Go the extra mile for colleagues.

Here are some questions that you may ask colleagues in order to develop trust. Don't assume or interrupt when you are talking with them, you're unlikely to learn that way, just listen:

- Can you describe what you do day-to-day?
- Who do you work with, and who would you like to work with? Give examples.
- Who is typically a good contact for you in a target organisation
- What problems do you go in to solve/issues do you typically face?
- What size of job is of interest and what things might I ask to get a clue about needs?
- Who are your competitors and what differentiates you?
- Is there anything specific I can do to help?
- What do you do when you are not working?

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