

## Do I have what it takes to ghost?



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By [RICHARD HIGBY](#) // FEBRUARY 24, 2022 02:46 PM ET

Many BD and sales professionals complain about having a great meeting with a prospect and then never getting calls or messages returned. Often it's because of the wrong preparation for that first encounter.

### CONTRACTS



The conversation started out well, discussing what he could do to help me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions; most of the answers were direct, but some were not.

He then ended the conversation with, "Here's what I want to do, if you have more questions or need more answers, will you agree to give me a call?" The only answer I thought I could give was, "Well, sure." He then added, "If I have a question for you, I want to make sure you have my number in your phone. Can I call your mobile and will you answer it knowing it's me?"

The rules, rights and responsibilities of our relationship were now established. I can also tell you; I received a follow-up email thanking me for my time and with a gentle reminder to put his mobile number into my phone's directory.

Ghosting is a recent expression defined, in brief (urban dictionary), as a colloquial term describing cutting off all communication with another person without any apparent warning.

Ghosting is the most oft-cited opportunity in business development. It is cited not with the passion of those engaged in a process, but with the resignation of those who have become the victims of someone else's process.

They cite that they got the initial meeting, met with their prospect (or had a phone call in today's pandemic-induced isolation), presented their company and product line, and offered up a few examples of profound savings.

Then nothing.

They were ghosted on all follow-up attempts of contact. In these situations, the salesperson is mystified by what he or she interprets as the apparent lack of professional etiquette on the side of the prospect.

I offer an alternative analysis: The salesperson is behaving true to form and has simply presented his or her wares to a disinterested prospect waiting to get through the presentation so they can get on with the important and consequential tasks of their job.

A business development professional might have taken a different approach.

In a first contact with a prospect, the BD professional knows they must state the purpose and goal of the visit. He or she must put themselves in

the position of understanding what is important to the prospect, what causes them job-related stress, and how the BD professional can help the prospect succeed in their career.

The rules, rights and responsibilities of the prospect and the BD professional need to be explicitly stated in this first meeting. A mini contract is formed that allows there to be further communication as needed to advance the objectives of the prospect (and not the professional).

There is another side to this coin. Training in professional business development is not as widespread as most prospects would believe. They assume the sharply dressed individual before them MUST know what he or she is doing, given the appearance of success their wardrobe and grooming bestows upon them. This is, rarely the case.

In my role as someone else's prospect, I encourage the same behavior as what I teach to nascent business development professionals. That first encounter is key. I will state my purpose in meeting with them. Typically, I need a technical understanding of how their offering may or may not align with my apparent need. I will state my goal as forming a relationship, assuming the purpose aligns, that will be mutually beneficial to both of us in achieving our professional objectives.

Finally, I will lay out the rules, rights, and responsibilities of how we will interact going forward, including the frequency and method of contact. Often, say in 75% of my inquiries, there is misalignment between us as to purpose. I recognize that not only will my needs change, but so will their ability to help me. I always offer a check-in at a specified date six months after that first interaction.

The check-in allows me to evaluate if this is a professional interested in being an asset to me, or is simply, and regrettably, an amateur salesperson. Do I have what it takes to ghost? Yes, if the salesperson is not following the agreed rules, rights, and responsibilities, then their credibility as a solution provider to my pain has ended our relationship.

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