

Stopping the Disease of Misdiagnosis, Asking Questions

By Richard Higby, PhD

I was sharing my own recent medical experience (broken leg) with a friend and telling him how my treatment was the antithesis of what is proffered in “How Doctor’s Think” (Jerome Groopman, 2008). If you haven’t read the book, I can highly recommend it before you go to your next doctor’s appointment. If you have read the book, read it again in the context of business development. In my telling to my colleague, I fell, my leg broke, a resident orthopedic surgeon at the University of Virginia received the opportunity to practice his art on one of the top five most common orthopedic repairs. While I would not want to undervalue the education, skill, and professionalism of my treatment team, it was a very routine repair. Groopman starts off his *NY Times* Bestseller with the story of Anne Dodge. Anne had seen many physicians (internists, psychologists, psychiatrists, endocrinologists, orthopedists, hematologists, and more) over 10+ years before landing in the office of Dr. Falchuk. Falchuk had been asked by a referring physician to confirm Anne’s diagnosis as described by so many. Falchuk elected instead to listen to Anne’s story using short phrases like “uh-huh” and “go on.” His Socratic approach led to a diagnosis of Celiac disease. Anne had been misdiagnosed with anorexia nervosa for over half of her 30-year life and that misdiagnosis had nearly led to her demise.

Replace Anne with one of your customers, and the many doctors with the specialty business consultants that abound in today’s climate, and you have an excellent parallel for business development by algorithm. Using an algorithm, business development becomes a pure numbers game. If you make X calls you will get Y opportunities and our business will grow by Z percent. The professional who doesn’t hit his call metric is turned out on the street and replaced by another. The reward is set on activity over productivity. There is an alternative and it is the one used by Dr. Falchuk. By listening to your prospect, understanding what has gotten them where they are today, asking questions, and using your powers of deductive reasoning, you can uncover opportunities for business that were previously unknown. More importantly, you will uncover how your product offering can uniquely address the pain being endured by your prospect. You can end decades of thinking by your prospect that if they simply endure enough sales calls, they will eventually stumble upon a solution. It is your turn to be the compassionate “doctor.”

It is true that many less complicated opportunities continue to be fully met with supply houses (think Grainger, Walmart, Amazon), but if the need had indeed been fully met, would you be having the conversation with your prospect today? Business development by algorithm is analogous to business consulting by cost cutting, rather than growing revenue by having an effective business development team. To use Groopman’s terms, does your prospect want the genius surgeon with a dispassionate bedside manner or the compassionate but incompetent general practitioner? The answer is the business development professional must be the total package. The professional must be the door opener,

understand and use the skills of compassionate business development, and be technically knowledgeable about the product.

We all have towering strengths in our respective organizations. Some know everyone (door openers), others know product (subject matter experts) and process (program managers), and a few are unconsciously competent in business development. Door openers have gained their strength through institutional knowledge and awareness, perhaps from a prior career or long tenure in an industry. Program managers are educated in their art and likely certified to it on a periodic basis. Business development professionals are often attributed to the group of folks with commonly perceived “sales” skills (good looks, nice clothes, smooth talker) but in fact, excellence in business development is a learned and studied skill. To be good at business development requires constant study of the reasons prospects buy, established through an understanding of behavioral psychology. Regrettably, few universities teach *Business Development 101*.

I am thankful for the skill of the surgeon and a healthy leg repair. I am also appreciative that no other underlying ailments were uncovered related to my balance, fragility of my skeletal-muscular system, or ... but of course, no one asked or looked.

Mastering Business Development, LLC achieves an understanding of your business using proprietary methodologies and comprehensive, diagnostic assessments to identify the real BD issues limiting your revenue growth. For over 40 years our clients have come to rely on MBDi's flagship Mastering Business Development® workshops with intense dialogue and role-plays, along with our advanced HUMINT® Customer Engagement Process (CEP) implementation program that helps nascent BD professionals perform at a higher level. They learn the thinking, process, discipline, and skills necessary to succeed in the role of professional business development.

About the Author



Dr. Richard Higby is the lead instructor and an Executive Member of Mastering Business Development, LLC and is resident in Richmond, Virginia. He has over 30 years of business development experience in service-based organizations where he has held executive leadership roles in operations, marketing, and national sales. Richard can be reached directly at richard@mbdi.com.

© 2022 Mastering Business Development, LLC • All Rights Reserved • www.mbd.com

MBDi LLC promotes an engaged Business Development process following the 7-steps of Mastering Business Development, coaches professionals on successful habits in business development, reviews the behavioral psychology of understanding client behavior and more in its workshop program. If you feel your team's success is at risk given all that they are dealing with, please let us know how we can help.