

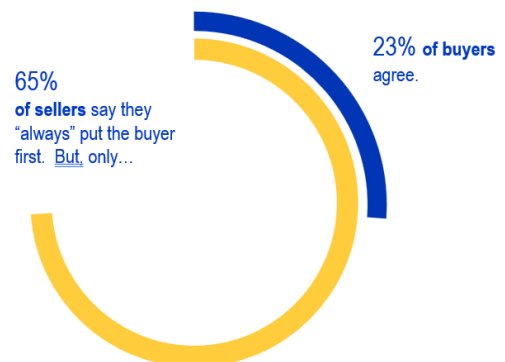
Purposeless Failure

By Richard Higby, PhD

Your call went well. You introduced yourself, launched into a presentation about your company – achievements, various products, and services, etc. – and your prospect was polite, even asking a few questions. You get back to your desk and complete your call report, leaving the opportunity value in place, and generally feeling pretty good. Your call was, in fact, a business development failure and wasted a significant opportunity, not to mention your and your prospect’s time. You missed the opportunity to state your business development purpose and to treat the prospect with the level of respect owed to anyone who may or may not represent a business opportunity for your company.

Your purpose in business development cannot be general, vague, or commonly understood. It must be specifically stated, laser-focused, and agreed with the prospect. “The purpose of my meeting with you today...” is a good start, as is, “The reason for today’s discussion is...” or “I am here today to...” All are explicitly stated introductions as to your purpose for the meeting that is happening now. What is your purpose? In professional business development, it is quite simple. Your purpose is to help your prospect figure out what problems they have and what solutions are available. Your personal and background knowledge before the call allows you to ask questions relevant to your goal and determining whether your organization can benefit from the relationship. How important is a clear statement of purpose? It sets the professional tone for the relationship and positions you as a resource for your prospect.

A 2021 report (LinkedIn State of Sales 2021) disclosed that 65% of sellers say they “always” put the buyer first. Only 23% of buyers agreed. Why the gap? A portion of the misunderstanding can certainly be overlapped with the 35% of sellers who admit it is all about them, not the buyer. A larger portion can be attributed to a lack of communication between “seller” and “buyer,” meetings without purpose, and a failure to plan, practice, drill and rehearse the call. The seller has done all the talking and the buyer has done all the listening. We are fortunate, coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, to be able to schedule virtual business development calls with the richness of video sharing allowing face-to-face interaction. The bother of having to



travel to the prospect's office and the attendant loss of productivity are things of the past. What is lost in this newfound productivity is the 55% of communication through body language (Joseph O'Connor, John Seymour "Introducing NLP: Psychological Skills for Understanding and Influencing People"). With body language removed in our virtual world, it is imperative that communication become ever more explicit regarding purpose.

Those who are not well versed in the skills and knowledge of professional business development will be a talking head on the screen, working the time allotted to put their products and services on the table. This takes the place of asking questions that seek understanding from the prospect's perspective of their problems and working together to find solutions.

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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.

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