

Putting your prospects to work



Your conversations with prospects may often end with the prospect agreeing to next steps that you (the professional) will take. You'll succeed more often though if you also get the prospect to agree to do some work.

Prospects might agree to collect some data and send it to you, to set up some interviews with other people you need to meet, or to talk with other important players and summarize those discussions for you. Generally prospects are well-suited to collect information from within the organization or to provide access to the organization.

Having the prospect actively working with you on advancing the process achieves several goals, in addition to getting you information that you may need.

It puts both of you on the same side of the table

Working with you shifts a prospect from being *a judge evaluating you* to being *a partner working with you*. This nascent partnership will increase your likelihood of being hired for the project; it improves your standing vs. competitors, and it gets the prospect started on doing the work, reducing the chance that the prospect will decide to either "do nothing" or "do it themselves."

It maintains the right focus – on their problem, not on selling

Your goals in the business development process are to help them identify their issue, to help them quantify the value (in \$, ROI, risk reduction or whatever is most important to them) of successfully addressing that issue, and to help them figure out how best to address it so that value is obtained. You want to be seen all along as working together with them to achieve their goals, not as a vendor trying to sell something. Nothing says "working together" better than working together.

It provides options for addressing push-away responses

Giving prospects work to do positions you to deal with a major business development challenge. In the business development process, you simultaneously develop a relationship and demonstrate that you provide value. Relationships, sadly, don't tend to only get better, even if you do everything right (for more on relationship building see ["How to systematically develop relationships"](#)). Many prospects may respond counter-intuitively to the high quality help you offer and push you away: they may become critical, focus unduly on price, raise last minute objections, and push you away with

similar responses. The most challenging push-away responses occur *between* personal interactions, because you cannot respond when you are not there; often, these reactions show up as the prospect ceasing to communicate.

Giving prospects work to do provides you with openings to proactively maintain communication without pestering them. You can:

- Call to check to see how they are progressing on their work and to answer any questions they may have
- Call to share with them an idea “you just had” that could make their task easier
- Contact them to see if there’s something wrong if they don’t respond to your communications

Something to try this week

Think about a forthcoming discussion with a prospect and what work you might propose during that conversation that he/she do.

What are these tips?

These monthly tips are intended to help professionals create more business and enjoy their work more. We focus on how to start relationships, how to build relationships, and how to convert those relationships into sales.

Can you answer my questions about business development?

We'd be delighted. Please send any questions you have to questions@bridgewellpartners.com and we'll do our best to help you out. Or call us at 312-863-3489. Or visit www.bridgewellpartners.com to learn more about how we coach and train professionals to be better at business development and to enjoy it more.