

Ten Great Excuses for Avoiding Business Development

By Mike Schultz

1. I'm booked for at least six weeks. I couldn't handle another deal if it landed on my desk.
2. My business development discussions, if I get into a good one, take an hour. I only have 45 minutes to make calls now so I should wait until I have more time.
3. This isn't a good use of my time. Somebody else should source leads and I should deliver work.
4. I'm not good at it so what's the use? (And I sure can't tell anyone this, so I'll make up another reason.)
5. In my business, leads only come through referrals. Proactive outbound business development, even networking, doesn't work. Why bother?
6. I'm deathly afraid of selling.
7. If I reach out to prospects, I will sound like a used car salesperson. Since I'm a professional, I can't set up that dynamic.
8. I know how to talk about what I do (I think). Yet, for some strange reason, the words never come out right.
9. I don't even know who to contact. I have the time and the will, but what do I do?
10. I hate selling.

Pick your poison: You're too young or too old. You're better in the mornings and it's late in the day. If you get into a conversation, you will need to get your boss on the phone, and she's not around. Dog ate your Rolodex. Regardless of your reason, the end result is the same; another day goes by and you don't work on business development.

#1 Reason Professionals Fail at Business Development

Full-time sales people spend all day selling. They show up to work, grab their Starbucks (or, if you live in New England, Dunkin Donuts), and start contacting customers. Maybe they start at the break of dawn and sell till midnight. Maybe they wait until the crack of noon and only sell until tea time. Regardless of the time commitment they put in, if they're working, they're explicitly selling.

Most CPAs (or technology consultants, or lawyers, or management consultants) show up in the morning and start doing accounting. They crunch numbers, manage teams, and take client meetings. Maybe there's an hour and a half window in their schedule in the late afternoon. Here's what most of them won't do with that time: business development.

That's right, 9 out of 10 professionals agree that engaging anything but business development in their open time slot is best to whiten teeth and freshen breath. The number one reason that professionals fail at business development: finding something else to do, or doing nothing, when they could be developing business.

Continued on next page

Nancy Reagan Says

You will not grow your practice or be as successful as you can be until you stop avoiding business development. Fortunately, the answer is simple: Start selling now. Unfortunately, it is not that easy to take a deeply imbedded behavior (not selling), flip a switch, and be able to do today what you did not or could not do yesterday.

Nancy Reagan's solution to drug addiction was, “*Just say no.*” For a few people, this might have been enough, but for the majority a greater effort was clearly needed in order to effect change. It was probably no easier for an addict to just-say-no as it might have been for a homeless person to just-buy-a-house. It doesn't work like that. And it doesn't work like that for professionals who want to develop business. You can't “Just Say Go!” and magically develop a hankering for dialing the phone. For the most part, it takes a robust personal change effort to make the transition from business-development-avoider to focused-client-developer.

Breaking the Business Development Avoidance Rut

If, indeed, you want to stop avoiding business development, remember:

- Respect the effort. Realize that it takes significant time, effort, energy, and sometimes resources to develop business and stick with it. If you do not have a healthy understanding and respect for the serious work of systematically developing business, you risk false starts. (This is akin to what Mark Twain said about quitting smoking: it's easy to do and he's done it a thousand times.)
- Leverage your team. Seek help if you are stuck in a sales avoidance rut. Breaking out of a rut alone is extremely difficult. You will find help in the form of a peer, coach, boss, or someone else. Whoever it is, involving the right people increases your chance of success.
- Develop an ongoing strategy. Before you engage ongoing business development, know what tactics you are going to employ and why. If you have a clear end goal, and know how each tactic you undertake helps to get you there, you will have the best chance of success. Business development is a mission. Make sure you know where you are headed before you set out.
- Just Say Go! Resolve to start developing business. Until you have a personal sense of urgency around business development, you will not start doing it. While just-saying-go is necessary in order to get you started, it is definitely not sufficient for success. Still, you need to first get going in order to have any chance of success. As Wayne Gretzky says, “*You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.*”

We make light of excuses for avoiding business development in order to raise the issue. Breaking the cycle of excuses and starting to develop business is never as easy as it sounds. But you can do it. Do what you need to do to prepare for success, know what you are going after, and then “*Just Say Go!*”

About the Author

Mike Schultz is President of RAIN Group, a [sales training](#), assessment, and sales performance improvement company that helps leading organizations improve sales results. Mike is author of *The Wall Street Journal* and *Inc. Magazine* bestseller [Rainmaking Conversations: Influence, Persuade and Sell in Any Situation](#) (Wiley, 2011) and publisher of [RainToday.com](#). He also writes for the [RAIN Selling Blog](#). He can be reached at mschultz@raingroup.com.

This article is reprinted from the September 2011 issue of the PharmSource PERISCOPE, a free monthly e-newsletter that provides valuable business insights for pharma vendors. The PERISCOPE is a companion publication to the PharmSource Lead Sheet (PLS), which delivers up to 70+ fresh, targeted leads to pharma vendors via e-mail every week. For more information, please call PharmSource at 1-703-383-4903 (ET USA) or visit us at www.pharmsource.com.