



# WHAT I LEARNED FROM FOUR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GURUS.

**R**ecently I gathered four of the most talented new business salespeople I know around a table for a conversation. The main reason for bringing them together was to see if we could help some friends grow their business. But my secret second main reason for the meeting was to learn how to go out and bring in new customers and new revenue. It's one of the hardest and most-feared things to do in business, but it's also a golden ticket for those who can do it well. Good new business people are always in demand. And these guys are good: they seek out the excitement and the challenge and the satisfaction of winning new customers—and they succeed. So, what did I learn from them?



By  
Don Drews

---

**Bringing in new customers and new revenue is one of the hardest and most-feared things to do in business, but it's also a golden ticket for those who can do it well.**

---

## **1 The conversation is not about you, it's about them.**

Inexperienced salespeople arm themselves for battle with dazzling PowerPoint shows, glossy brochures and thick white papers. They prepare themselves to do all the talking, to “control the meeting.” They're either afraid of the customer or they're only out for the sale, so they design the meeting as a one-way conversation. That really doesn't work on the other side of the table. The real message delivered by all the highly produced sales materials is, “I've already decided what I'm going to say.” And that marginalizes the prospective customer right at the beginning of a new relationship. The experts told me that as quickly as possible, you want to get the other person talking—so you can listen. It doesn't mean you are unprepared for the meeting—these guys are always extremely well prepared; it's one of the secrets of their success—but after thoroughly mastering an understanding of what they have to offer, they let go of control and focus on making a genuine connection. The customer always feels the difference.

## **2 If you have earned the privilege of a meeting, you have permission to ask the important questions.**

I was surprised to see the Bus Dev experts didn't shy away from asking tough, direct questions that really got to the heart of the matter. It didn't make the customer uncomfortable; it showed that the experts were taking the conversation seriously. It upped the stakes of the meeting. Because they were sincerely interested and listening, the customer opened up and began to share their real concerns. And all of a sudden, real, meaningful opportunities were in play. At that point, the expert locked in like a laser on solving the customer's problem. They didn't start selling what they had in their bag, they went to work on finding the best possible solution to the customer's situation. They built trust.

## **3 Fear is a normal part of the process.**

In this particular conversation, the friends we were helping were afraid. They were afraid of the unfamiliar, and they were uncomfortable having a new kind of conversation with strangers. Very understandable. But the experts said that's normal. It's normal to fear giving the customer control of the meeting. It's normal to be uncomfortable with whether an opportunity will present itself or whether you can address it if it does. But courage isn't the absence of fear; it's the mastery of that fear and the belief in victory.

## **4 On the other side of fear are great rewards: confidence, pride and satisfaction.**

One of the things I admire most in all these experts is their confidence and belief in themselves. They know they can do this very difficult thing: go off into the uncharted jungle and come back with revenue. According to Ralph Waldo Emerson, a great part of courage is having done the thing before, and that is certainly true. But the lesson I learned is that the personal rewards on the far side are enormous, and they are worth the discomfort, the anxiety and the occasional failure.

## **5 Start a new relationship with a small, safe first bite.**

The last lesson was a practical one. The experts revealed the magic key to getting things started with a new customer: make it safe for them to try you. Trying something new, or changing vendors, or doing things differently creates risk for the customer. Uncertainty creates resistance. The trick, the knack, the beauty of what these new business experts do is listening to where the risk is for each individual customer. What form it takes. Then they create a unique, specific solution that minimizes that risk. It's a very powerful form of listening, and it's irrefutable proof to the customer that they are heard and understood. When you understand the customer's problem and minimize the customer's personal risk, resistance melts and the stage is set for a successful outcome. You're underway.

Thanks Greg, John, Larry and Mike. You were generous and kind to share your hard-won wisdom.

---

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Don Drews is President and Founder of Courageous Marketing. Courageous Marketing helps established companies accelerate growth and new ventures enter the marketplace with momentum.

This article originally appeared as a guest blog post on [1to1media.com](http://1to1media.com).