

Don't waste the time and resources of small businesses

Yesterday I went to visit a Prospective Client in Newbury, some 100 mile round trip from Windsor, equating to Best Part of a Day out (say 4 hours Conservatively) and £50 in Petrol and wear and tear on the vehicle.

If, as our management accountant recommends, we give those hours a value of say £50 per hour, we're looking at a total of around £250 + VAT for a morning out of the office.

In my early sales career I learned to qualify calls as you don't want to be shleping across half the country if those you are visiting are not serious about what is on offer, so I figured I'd qualified on the phone. I said I was happy to come over and discuss the opportunity assuming we'd be moving the dialogue forward... not specific enough.

When I arrived a meeting was already going on in the main office so we had to make do with a communal kitchen shared by a number of other businesses. So no thought had been

given to the meeting space, made me feel really wanted! On starting the discussion it was clear that they had done nothing since our previous conversation and it was if we were starting from the beginning!

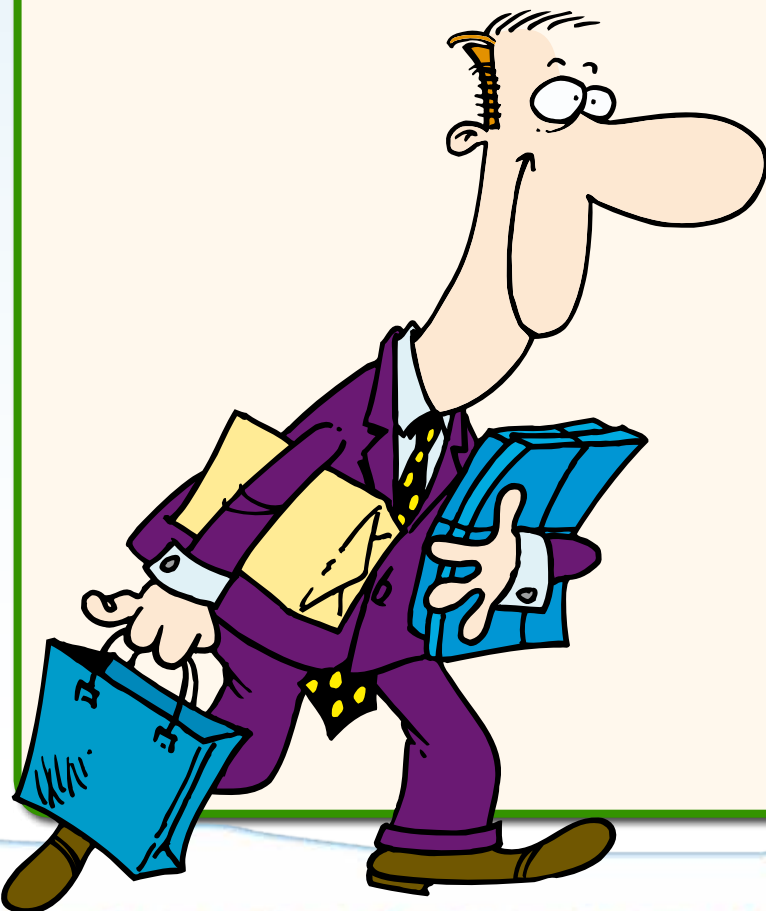
I think the biggest problem here was that I was talking to an employee of a company, someone who is being paid a salary, whatever the upshot of the conversation. So their NEED to come to any decision on that meeting was not significant enough. "They would need to do more research."

Not good enough! We'd had a conversation where they said yes in the right places and since they were looking to promote a technology solution I ASSUMED we were on the same page. Big mistakes all round.

I'm thinking I need to:

- Firmly establish that the person I go to visit can make a decision on the day, or else they can come to me for 30 minutes. I'm so used to dealing with small businesses where the decision maker may want time to think but can make the decision and usually does.
- Get those I am going to visit to complete a brief survey to see if they understand the conversation we have just had, prior to making the appointment. I know a man that does that and I appreciate why now! Shows they have given it some thought and are serious about the offering... I must complete his form soonest!
- Think of 3 very good, simple reasons, that everyone on the planet can understand, for why you should have one of our micro sites. Do you need butter on your bread type stuff. If the answer is yes we need to talk through your needs in more detail. If no, "it's been nice talking, see you around."

It's not the employee's fault that I wasted £250 today. It's my fault for not tightening my processes in these testing times. Lots of T's, I can think of another one perhaps you can too! Furnish the missing letter... "What a t*t!"



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