



## **Slow down your approach with new prospects**

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If you're finding it difficult to build long-term partnerships with new clients you may be going in "too fast and too early", according to Majer Recruitment director, Suzie Majer. She says that's one of the two main mistakes recruiters make when attempting to get new business.

### **Get off email and onto the phone**

Recruitment is becoming too email-oriented, according to Majer, whose [company](#) recently won a SARA award for being Australia's favourite small generalist recruiter. She says consultants should get back to phone and face-to-face contact if they want to build strong relationships with clients.

When she began in recruitment nine years ago, the industry was very much telephone-based and this enabled better communication with clients and stronger relationships, she says. Now, she worries that "these relationships aren't being formed."

Majer says: "We're all guilty of that - people are busy, and emails allow them to respond at their own convenience.

"But while it might seem faster and easier to communicate via email, a two-way conversation allows you to get more done. It also suits recruiters, who are generally quite persistent and tenacious."

Just make sure you have a good reason to make the call - whether you've seen them mentioned in the paper, or you're aware of a project they're doing, or something their competitor is doing, she says.

### **Be respectful and patient**

Don't just launch into your planned spiel or assume your prospect has time to listen when you call, Majer says.

Always preface calls by asking whether it's a good time for them to speak - "recruiters have a tendency to launch too soon into their 'big thing'".

If it's not a good time for your prospect, establish when is, and schedule a time to speak so everyone is relaxed and focused, she says.

As well, be really patient at the start when you're attempting to form a relationship, Majer says.

Don't push to get client visits straight away - "expect to have to make a couple of calls before you can request a visit".

## **Focus on the relationship, not the job**

It's crucial not to focus on getting a job from the prospect, Majer says. "Focus on the bigger relationship."

She says this can be difficult to remember when the pressure is on to meet targets, but "look at the light at the end of the tunnel instead of focusing on the small picture - be genuine in trying to understand and get to know clients".

Majer says it can take six to 12 months of persistent effort to actually get a job from a new prospect, "but often the longer it takes, the more fruitful and beneficial the relationship, because it's built on trust and rapport".

She says: "The more calls you make, the more at ease the client will feel. People like to do business with people they like."

Plus, once you have built a strong relationship, your clients are likely to retain your services as they move from job to job, she says.

## **Be honest**

While it's important to build rapport before expecting work from a prospect, you also need to be honest and straightforward when the time is right, Majer says. You can simply say something like, "Do you think you'll be happy to work with me at some point?"

When she was new to recruitment she'd meet with a certain HR manager every couple of months and it wasn't until she asked "are you going to give me some work?" that he did.

There's a fine line between building rapport and asking for the opportunity to have their business, she says.

"Appreciate that if they have an existing relationship then they're probably loyal to that - you'd like to think your clients are loyal. Don't force yourself on them but instead, be their back-up for when their supplier doesn't have a candidate, or they make an error - don't launch in and try to take over."

She acknowledges that there will be cases when a client isn't loyal to their existing supplier and "the last person to do a marketing call will get it".

## **Biggest mistakes**

Majer says the two most common mistakes recruiters make when trying to build relationships with prospective clients are going in "too hard and too early", and "not listening".

She says consultants all aim to secure visits to clients early in the piece and use the same lines to attempt to do so, but really they should back off and wait until after a few phone calls to build some rapport.

The other main mistake is "not listening" - recruiters are often so focused on the spiel they want to give that they don't listen to what the client wants, "and it drives clients crazy". It also does a disservice to all recruiters, she says.