

The Power of the “Next Best Result:” What to do when Your Prospect Says “No”

By [LawVision](#) on October 16, 2014

When preparing for a meeting with a prospect, don't forget to prepare your “next best result.” I credit Gary Quinnett, one of the best Sales Managers in the world, for constantly reminding me of the importance of the next best result. Simply put, your next best result is nothing more than your second favorite outcome; it's your back up, your insurance, your plan B. Why is it so important? Because when we finally come to the realization that the prospect is going to reject our proposal, we tend to put our heads down and walk out the door, hoping to fight another day. We forget that even if we can't do business with the prospect in the way we'd planned, there may be several other scenarios where working together makes sense. Preparing your next best result makes you ready to capitalize on those other scenarios.

Think of next best results in terms of how prospects might be able to work with you despite rejecting your first request. Here are some examples:

- I can't become your client today, but I can give you the names of three friends who I think would benefit from meeting with you.
- I can't let you run this big deal without first knowing more about you, but I can let you help me with this smaller transaction so we can get to know one another first.
- I don't have time to meet this week, but I can have you meet with my executive vice president, who can summarize the meeting for me.
- We selected other counsel for this deal, but I can get you on our preferred counsel list.
- We've selected another firm to handle this litigation, but your electronic discovery expertise may be helpful in another matter on which we are currently working.

Offering your next best result can be easier than your initial request. Psychological experiments show that people are more likely to agree to what they deem a smaller request after they have first refused a larger request.

Psychologist and author, [Robert B. Cialdini](#), in his best-selling book, [Influence](#), reported on an experiment he conducted. In the experiment, college students walking on campus were asked if they would be willing to chaperone a group of juvenile delinquents on a day trip to the zoo. 83 percent refused. A separate sample of students was then asked the same question after they were first asked for an even larger favor – to be a counselor to a juvenile delinquent for two hours per week for a minimum of two years. After the subjects refused this larger request, they were asked if they would consider the zoo trip request. The number of subjects willing to take juvenile delinquents to the zoo tripled. Cialdini calls this phenomenon reciprocal concession.

Not only is it important to remember your next best result so you can reach some agreement on terms before leaving, it is also psychologically the moment when your prospect is most likely to be open to coming to agreement with you.

Put your next best result on your prospect meeting checklist and don't forget to bring it out the next time a prospect tells you no.

