

If 80 percent of
success is showing
up then 20 percent is
following up

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



Woody Allen once said that 80 percent of success in life is just showing up. Now granted, Woody Allen also defended dating his adopted daughter by saying, "The heart wants what it wants," so holding him up as a paragon of sound judgment may not be my best move. But if Woody is right, then I (another man whose history of poor judgment and worse choices would give a prudent person pause) would offer that the other 20 percent of success is following up.

Entrepreneurs often fail on both these counts. Showing up is more than merely putting in a physical appearance. It's also intellectually showing up. When you show up intellectually it means you are truly listening to your customer's needs and pain points and crafting a solution to their problems. Instead, too many solution providers come into a sales call with a solution in mind and then expend copious amounts of energy trying to convince the customer that the prefabricated solution will fit the customer's needs. When you sell hammers, all you see is nails.

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I see a lack of follow up torpedoing more deals than a lack of showing up. Some vendors (and I admit I have been one) practically make you beg for a quote. They get busy, and I get that. They have bigger and more exciting quotes to write; I get that, too. But I have an immediate need, and if they aren't there immediately, well, there can be only two outcomes. Either I will get someone else to do fill it; or, I will realize that my immediate need wasn't all that immediate -- or indeed, even a need. I've seen more deals evaporate that way than ones that collapse. In fact, I have lost more deals

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because of a lack of follow up than I have lost to price, to competition, or to outbreaks of the plague (an admittedly low percentage of my losses), added together.

So why do we do it? Why do we fail to follow up to be responsive to existing or potential customers? The most common excuses are:

No time.

Saying you don't have time to follow up is ridiculous. It's like receiving atrocious service in a restaurant and being told with a shrug, " Sorry, we're really busy." Being the charmer I am, I usually respond by saying " that's the kind of problem that tends to solve itself."

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Not following up because you are too busy resolves itself in the same way that water finds its own level. Customers who don't want to get poor service or have inordinate wait-time go elsewhere, and you're left with a clientele that is the appropriate size for your capacity to deliver. Not exactly a solid growth strategy. You had better hope that this clientele size matches up with your ability to make a profit or you will " too busy" yourself into bankruptcy. Not having time to follow up is akin to saying you don't have time to be successful. You make time to be successful, and if that means biting the bullet and hiring more staff or weeding out the low performers, then that's what you need to do.

Too much on our plates.

Having too many things on your plate may at first seem to be the exact same condition on as being too busy, but it really isn't. How often do we find ourselves with hundreds of tasks that would take only a moment to complete, but we become so overwhelmed in the minutia that we don't get them done? Or we tell ourselves that because it will only take a minute we don't have to worry about it. The task gets pushed and pushed, and pretty soon the opportunity is gone. This isn't a case of being too busy; it's being too disorganized. This can be easily fixed either by delegating effectively, getting a highly organized assistant to nag you into getting things done, or training and discipline. But whatever you do it has to get done.

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Bottom of the pile.

Not all business opportunities are created equal and to treat a low potential or low yield opportunity the same as you would a game changing opportunity is just soft-headed. But you can't keep stacking "higher priority" opportunities atop the less promising leads, otherwise there will never be any follow up. Instead of piling on top of the opportunity that requires follow up, delegate the opportunity to a lower level worker -- it's a great learning opportunity and you risk very little by giving it to them. Remember those who cannot be trusted to handle small projects won't get the opportunity to handle large ones.