



Timely Information for Personal Success

Old-Fashioned Follow-up is Still Best

By Russell Trahan

“**B**ryan, we appreciate your proposal submission, but we have decided to go in another direction. We require more consistent interaction from our business partners, and while we scheduled today to finalize our decision, we had yet to hear from you in the interim. We wish you the best of luck.”

The email hit Bryan like a freight train. He had avoided a formal follow-up process in fear of seeming overeager or pressuring his prospect, but had maintained casual connections through his LinkedIn and Facebook accounts to keep his name “out there.” While Bryan assumed the company would appreciate his distance while they were in the process of making their decision, it actually became the nail in his corporate coffin. They were awaiting traditional methods of follow-up, and his lack of correspondence instead conveyed that he was not the right man for the job.

In an ever-expanding digital business landscape, Bryan’s story is all too familiar. Many working professionals are exchanging established means of follow-up, such as phone calls and face-to-face meetings, for quick messages over social media or email, and it is impacting their business relationships and bottom-lines. As it turns out, when it comes to follow-up, the best practices are the traditional ones.

Social Media is for **BUILDING** Business Connections

Social media can prove invaluable when creating connections, but maintaining them — as is the objective when conducting follow-up on a potential deal — should always be reserved for traditional modes of correspondence. Anything less borders on lazy and unprofessional.

Avoid “Are We There Yet?” Thinking

Establish an agenda when touching base with your prospects, and ensure that each subsequent call or meeting occurs under the umbrella of providing new information.

There should be a concrete reason for picking up that phone, and a distinct benefit to the individual on the other end of it.

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Healthy Recipe: Lemon Salmon Fillets

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 six-ounce salmon fillets
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- Juice of one lemon
- 1-1/2 tablespoons olive oil

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

Calories per serving: 244
 Protein: 34 g.
 Carbohydrates: 1 g.
 Sodium: 585 mg.
 Fat: 11 g.
 Saturated fat: 2 g.

DIRECTIONS:

- 1 Season salmon fillets with salt, pepper and lemon juice, drizzle with olive oil.
- 2 Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 3 Place an oven-proof sauté pan large enough to accommodate all the fillets *on a stove* over medium-high heat.
- 4 Add salmon and sear fillets for 3 minutes per side.
- 5 Place *in oven* to finish cooking, about 5 to 10 minutes more, depending on the thickness of the fillet.

Serving size: 1 six-ounce fillet.

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Questions and Answers

Business Travel Tips

Q: *I travel a LOT on my job as a sales rep. Many people think business travel is glamorous, when in fact most of us can't wait to sleep in our beds at home and eat a home-cooked meal. What advice do you have to make my trips more enjoyable?*

A: I have a number of recommendations. They include:

❖ **Book early morning flights** – If there is a delay or cancellation you have a better chance of getting on a later flight and still arriving in time to fit your schedule. Plus you don't blow a whole day in the air and you can be more productive after you arrive.

❖ **Get outside** – You can beat jet lag by getting out in the sun as soon as you land. It helps to readjust your clock. Drink lots of water as well and go easy on the booze when you fly.

❖ **Work out** – Even if it's just a little. Try some push-ups, sit-ups, walking, whatever gets your heart pumping. You will feel great. ■

Source: Jim Koza, a senior in sales and marketing, and frequent business traveler.

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Any parent can describe the maddening, constant cries of “Are we there yet?” from the back seat. That same irritated feeling occurs with continuous follow-up calls. There is a distinct difference between being attentive and being annoying.

It Takes Two to Tango

Give the other person the freedom to *lead* the interactions. Allow them to dictate follow-up by inquiring into their timeline and preference for the next call or meeting, and set a date.

Whether your next meeting is two weeks or two months away, your sales prospect has provided an appropriate date and time for your next meeting to occur. The onus is now on you to stick to the plan and pick up the phone.

Set Your Calendar and Stick to It

Let your calendar hold you accountable. Prior to the end of a meeting or call, be sure to pencil-in an appropriate time to follow up with your prospect, and stick to the date on the calendar. Keeping things casual may maintain pride, but it does not promote sales.

Bryan was remiss with his follow-up practices, and because of that, he lost out on an important deal for his company. Lessons are often learned through unintended or unwanted consequences, and his silver lining exists in that going forward, Bryan will make sure to devote a large amount of energy and attention to the manner in which he follows up with prospective clients. ■

Russell Trahan is President of PR/PR, a public relations agency specializing in positioning clients in front of their target audience. For more information, visit www.prr.net.