

TURNING CLIENT MEETING FAILURES INTO WINS

If you are actively engaged in business development, there will come a time when you will feel like you botched a conversation or lost the pitch. These experiences can be demoralizing. Many people focus on the one point in the meeting where the conversation seemed to turn, amplifying the negative implications of that single point in time. As a result, either consciously or unconsciously, many retreat from proactive business development activities including direct client contact. That's not good.

Failures happen to all of us. We all say things we wish we hadn't. The key is in how one deals with the failed meeting. New research suggests that re-imagining the meeting leads to a more constructive understanding of what transpired and can change your view of the meeting- and with it your willingness to engage in other meetings.

The research, conducted by [Professor Ed Watkins](#) at the University of Exeter is surprising because typically running over troubling events, or ruminating, is linked to worsening depression and feelings of anxiety.

According to Professor Watkins, "this method of re-imagining is different because it is constructive."

We know from research that rumination about upsets and losses is a big factor in getting and staying anxious and depressed. And that this can lead to less motivation to engage in those uncomfortable situations in the future.

DWELLING ON THE PROCESS AS OPPOSED TO THE PRESUMED OUTCOME.

So how does one do this 're-imagining?' The trick is to focus on the specific sensory details, context and sequence of the meeting rather than on the meaning or implications of the meeting.

In professor Watkins' studies, people were trained to focus on the sensory details of an upsetting experience. By doing this, they rewired their brains to learn from experiences rather than ruminate about experiences.

For example, after the meeting take a moment to review the sensory details, context and sequence of the meeting. Think about the sensory details such as the client's tone of voice or their facial expressions and body language. Review the context of the discussion by thinking about the exact words used by each of the people in the discussion. Then consider the sequence of the discussion. What was discussed beforehand and what was discussed afterward?

The mind has a tendency to jump to the implication and meaning of the discussion, often times before the implications are even known. It is the primal 'flight or fight' reaction we have to stressful events or stimuli. Examining the details of the discussion immediately following the meeting however focuses your mind on ways in which the meeting might have been improved. This gives you a greater sense of awareness and control that can be used in the next client meeting. Focusing on the potential negative outcomes and applying a meaning to actions and words gives you a distinct sense that you are not in control which leads to rumination about the negative potential consequences.

Lack of control is why many people shy away from business development. Business development can be uncomfortable and foreign, feelings that are reinforced when the meeting doesn't go well. Re-imagining helps you regain that control, focus on the positive aspects of the meeting and give you the tools to positively influence the outcome of your next meeting.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eric Dewey is managing principal of Group Dewey Consulting. He focuses his practice on business development coaching and training, strategic planning and lateral growth strategy advice. He is co-author along with ALM Legal Intelligence of the seminal report on lateral partner hiring performance entitled, *Surmounting the Lateral Partner*



Group Dewey Consulting

Hiring Challenge, Lessons Learned, Best Practices and Tools for Success. He is the exclusive provider of marketing and business development training and coaching services on Quimbee.com. He can be reached at eric@groupdewey.com.

