

# How to Be Persistent without Being a Pest

By Bill Cates, CSP, CPAE

Excerpts from Bill's New Book **Beyond Referrals: How to Use the Perpetual Revenue System to Turn Referrals into High-Value Clients** [www.BeyondReferralsBook.com](http://www.BeyondReferralsBook.com)

---

Sponsored by  
**GoToMeeting**  
by **CITRIX**

## Pest, pathetic or persistent?

How many times do you need to contact a prospect before he or she agrees to do business with you? That depends on what you sell; products and services vary in their sales cycle. It also depends on where the prospects are in their awareness of their problem and their willingness to make a change. Have you ever been introduced to a great prospect and had a conversation with them where they seemed at least somewhat interested, but they weren't ready to get started with substantive conversations? I'm sure you have—and if you haven't yet, you will eventually. So how do you stay in touch with these folks without coming across as a pest? It's a delicate balance.



One easy way to determine how to work with someone is to decide to simply not work with them. If the prospect isn't an A+ prospect, I elect to just move on. You can decide for yourself how many prospects you can stay in touch with in a quality way. Early in my sales career, I would never give up on a prospect, but my pitches weren't always on point. Looking back, I feel as if some of my calls consisted of little more than "Are you ready to buy yet?" I guess I had some success in spite of myself.

It finally dawned on me that I had to be value-centered in my follow-up. Every time I called a prospect, I tried to bring something new to the conversation—something the prospect would hopefully find helpful.

In many cases, one battle in our client-acquisition efforts is inertia on the part of the prospect. Changing products or service providers is not always an easy transition for clients. Sometimes the devil they know is better than the devil they don't, and you really have to distinguish yourself in the eyes of your prospects before they will contemplate moving their business to you. One way to do that is to keep providing them with value in the courtship process.

## Become professionally persistent

Here are a few ideas for you to consider in your efforts to remain professionally persistent and avoid being a pest:

- 1. Determine who qualifies.** You need to determine for yourself who is worthy of your professional persistence. The problem is that many sales professionals don't have any guidelines about who merits this persistence and who doesn't, and way too often they stay in touch with lower-level prospects merely because they don't have enough top prospects in their pipeline.
- 2. Build an inventory of value-centered materials.** Build an inventory of educational materials (printed and electronic) you can share with your prospects. Of course, a newsletter should be a part of this inventory, but it's usually not nearly enough. Be on the lookout for articles—printed or electronic—that you think your prospects and clients might find interesting and helpful. (Many salespeople are having great success finding and sharing content on LinkedIn.) The articles you save and share can be related specifically to your core product or service or just general interest. Your goal here is to show your qualification as an industry expert to build trust with your prospects and customers.
- 3. Work on the personal side.** I always encourage people to build business friendships with their prospects and clients—to get to know each other in ways that go beyond the business they do together. Don't be shy about allowing some of your personal interests to enter into your prospecting relationships. I know one small business owner who owns two show dogs, and his prospects and clients are always asking him about how they are doing in their dog shows. In turn, get to know your prospects' interests and hobbies. When you see a newspaper or magazine article that relates to one or more of your prospects, send it out with a short note demonstrating interest in your prospect.
- 4. Choose your mode of communication wisely.** It's a good idea to mix up how you stay in contact with your prospects. Most people these days receive too many phone calls and hate being interrupted. Consider asking a prospect to join a face-to-face online meeting instead of ringing them up on the phone. This will allow them to opt-out without wasting any of their time. To stay persistent without being a pest, use a combination of phone, email, postal mail and online video meetings to connect with both prospects and customers. And make sure you don't let all your prospecting relationships turn into cheap, low-touch methods such as mail and email. There is no substitute for a telephone conversation, an online meeting or in-person meeting with a prospect.



Bill Cates is the author of *Get More Referrals Now!* and *Don't Keep Me a Secret!* His new book, *Beyond Referrals*, is being released by McGraw-Hill in April 2013. Bill helps salespeople get more referrals and turn those referrals into new clients. Check out Bill's books at

[www.GetMoreReferrals.com](http://www.GetMoreReferrals.com). Contact Bill directly at [BillCates@ReferralCoach.com](mailto:BillCates@ReferralCoach.com).

## GoToMeeting

GoToMeeting is the extremely simple, extraordinarily powerful web conferencing service from Citrix. It integrates HD video conferencing, screen sharing and audio conferencing, allowing you to collaborate effectively online in a face-to-face environment.

Hold unlimited meetings for one low flat fee and attend meetings from a Mac, PC and mobile devices.

GoToMeeting will change the way you work – and perhaps a whole lot more. To learn more visit,

[www.gotomeeting.com](http://www.gotomeeting.com).