

The Questions That Open Doors: Why Curiosity Still Wins in Business Development

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Business development professionals often feel pressure to have the right answers.

We prepare talking points before meetings. We anticipate objections. We think about how to explain what we do and how we can help. Experience teaches us to be knowledgeable and confident.

But some of the most productive business development conversations don't start with answers at all.

They start with curiosity.

Curiosity changes the dynamic of a conversation. Instead of focusing on where you want the discussion to go, you become genuinely interested in understanding the other person's perspective. What challenges are they navigating? What priorities are competing for their attention? What opportunities are they excited about that others may have overlooked?

Those questions often reveal more than a carefully crafted pitch ever could.

Curiosity also helps uncover context. A prospect who seems hesitant may not be losing interest at all. They may be navigating shifting priorities internally or dealing with pressures you can't yet see. The client who has gone quiet may simply be focused on an urgent issue that's temporarily taken precedence.

When we assume we know the story, we risk missing what is actually happening.

Just as importantly, curiosity often reveals opportunities to be useful.

You might hear a passing comment that reminds you of someone worth introducing. Or you may realize that what a person truly needs isn't your service at all, but a resource, an article, or another professional who is better equipped to help. Those moments rarely come from having the perfect pitch. They come from paying attention.

Some of the strongest relationships in business development are built because someone took the time to ask another question.

"How did you get involved in this work?"

"What has changed for your business over the past year?"

"What's taking up most of your attention right now?"

These aren't techniques designed to move a conversation along. They're invitations for people to share what matters to them. And when people feel understood, trust tends to develop naturally.

Curiosity has another benefit. It keeps us learning.

Professionals who remain curious are often better equipped to adapt because they aren't relying solely on what worked before. They continue asking questions, gathering perspectives, and challenging their own assumptions as industries evolve and client expectations change.

That mindset creates better business developers. It also creates better advisors.

In a world where expertise is expected, curiosity stands out. It demonstrates humility, respect, and a willingness to understand before responding.

The irony is that the more genuinely interested we become in other people, the easier it becomes to add value in meaningful ways.

Business development isn't about having all the answers. It's about being interested enough to ask better questions and generous enough to act on what you learn.