

# HOW TO LAND HARD TO GET MEETINGS

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**Deliver something of value.** Here's your chance to stand out, to be audacious, and to create a meaningful connection. The objective is not to attempt to bribe someone to meet with you, but to deliver something that makes a difference to the recipient. It should express your brand personality but contain absolutely no pitch. Your first mission is simply to create a connection, to establish yourself as someone they'll want to listen to. While you might use search results and social media postings to try to determine an executive's specific challenges and desires, there are also some simple assumptions you can use to open doors, based on universal desires shared by most business leaders.

We all want more success, recognition, and income, but we also want to do the best job we can and leave a mark. For example, I'm a cartoonist, and I've found that my cartoons can touch upon all of these markers in a very personal way. Sending a personalized cartoon, like the one below, has become a can't-miss way for me to connect with virtually anyone, but anything that recognizes the recipients' desires, helps them do their job more effectively, or enhances their business in some way can be highly effective.

**Offer something of further value.** As your request for contact is received, it's a good idea to include something additional as a reward for taking the proposed meeting or phone call. Some campaigns split a gift in two — a remote-control model sent with a note explaining that the withheld control unit will be delivered during the meeting, for instance. Although this has reportedly worked, it can come off as being too pushy. A far better approach would be to offer relevant research, a white paper, or a free audit of some aspect of the target executive's business when the meeting takes place, as a way to provide the incentive you may need to actually get the meeting. The point is to continually add value to the connection building between you in a way that helps the executive do their job more effectively.

**Include the executive assistant.** Many sales reps do their best to avoid, circumvent, or trick the executive assistants they encounter, but that is a fatal mistake. Don't think of assistants as gatekeepers; think of them as talent scouts, always on watch for extraordinary opportunities their executives would otherwise miss.

Once they've rendered assistance, be sure to thank them with a modest but meaningful gift. If an assistant has been helpful to me, I often send a card with one of my cartoons personalized in their name and a handwritten note of thanks. Whatever you send, don't make it look like a bribe; a dozen roses is way too much, but a gift card for a few lattes is perfect. Just make sure it expresses your appreciation for their help.

**Secure the meeting.** Arranging a call or meeting can be painfully tedious as all parties attempt to coordinate openings in their schedules. You can either suffer the details or use one of many productivity tools on the market to get your meeting on calendars, such as Outlook calendar or Google+.

**Connect, don't pitch.** Once you've gone through the trouble of arranging the meeting, it would be a waste to ruin it with a misguided pitch of your company's product or service. So don't do it. Instead, be ready to have an exploratory but informed conversation about an issue by researching news stories or mentions in their social media feeds. Share other cases in which you've helped companies in their industry gain new competitive advantages, but never start the meeting assuming your offer is right for them. Be human, explore, and have a conversation.

*By: Stu Heinecke*

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