

# What "The Princess Bride" Teaches Us About Avoiding Business Development Pitfalls, Part 2

Successful business development (BD) requires focus, determination and perseverance. To stay on course, you need a strategy to steer clear of, and overcome, obstacles. In my last article, I discussed [the pitfalls of business development](#) through the lens of my favorite movie, "The Princess Bride." Let's continue navigating the quicksand, booby traps and fire swamps of BD.

## Pitfall 6: Measuring the Wrong Things

After kidnapping Buttercup, the bandits are chased by a masked man in black. Vizzini leaves master swordsman Inigo Montoyo behind and instructs him to finish off the man in black. Partway through the sword fight, it appears Inigo will be defeated, but then he reveals a secret: He has been holding his sword in his left hand even though he is not left-handed. Once he switches the sword to his right hand, he begins to achieve success and the man in black's sure victory evaporates.

In business development, opportunity abounds to measure success incorrectly. Nowhere is this easier to do than on social media. Social platforms offer metrics on the effectiveness of each post, such as likes, comments and shares. But these metrics don't tell the full story.

People often read a post and find it valuable without engaging with it by liking, commenting or sharing. If you focus exclusively on likes, comments and shares, your efforts will not seem worthwhile. You may not realize that most people on social media view your content passively and see you as a thought leader. It's better to [find out](#) how many people have viewed your posts.

The same is true with in-person events. Just because a [speaking engagement](#) does not result in immediate clients does not mean the effort was wasted. In that scenario, many people had the opportunity to get to know you better and learn about what you offer, so they might reach out to you if they have a need in the future.

Remember that business development is a long game. It is tempting to get discouraged when you don't see immediate results, but if you avoid measuring the wrong things, it will be easier to avoid discouragement.



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## Pitfall 7: Letting Your Personality Be a Trap Rather than an Asset

Realizing the man in black remains on the chase, Vizzini – the leader of the bandits – instructs his giant, Fezzic, to wait and kill the man in black with a boulder when he passes. Vizzini refuses, saying that is not sportsmanlike. Unfortunately, Fezzic's compassion results in his defeat after he suggests a fight without weapons and is outwitted.

Business development efforts must stay **true to your personality**. I am an **introvert**, so I don't like making cocktail hours part of my business development strategy. This inner resistance used to frustrate me – I felt I should just power through events I don't enjoy – but I've realized that writing and networking through social media are better uses of my time. It is critical that you enjoy the business development endeavors you select; if you hate something, it will be harder to stay consistent.

## Pitfall 8: Not Investing in Your Future Success

After defeating both Inigo Montoya and Fezzic, the man in black encounters Vizzini, who threatens to kill Buttercup. After a brief exchange, the man in black challenges Vizzini to a battle of wits in which he lets Vizzini choose which of two beverages is poisoned.

After a long and agonizing debate, Vizzini makes his selection, drinks and falls over dead. We learn that both cups were poisoned with iocane powder and the man in black had spent the last few years developing an immunity to it.

What does this teach us? There is no need to develop immunity to poison, but make sure you don't become stagnant in your skills. It is easy to focus on the day-to-day tasks of keeping clients happy, but it is vital to keep your skills current as your clients' needs change and technology evolves.

Opportunities abound to grow your skills, including, but certainly not limited to:

- Books
- Podcasts
- Conferences
- Lunch-and-learn sessions
- Professional associations

## Pitfall 9: Imposter Syndrome

At this point in the story, Buttercup and the man in black are together, and he reveals that he is the Dread Pirate Roberts. But he isn't. He is Westley. The real Dread Pirate Roberts retired years ago. Since then, several successors took the name and legacy.

In business development, and in life, we rarely have the luxury of making a clean break with our past. Even if only in our own heads, it is easy to compare ourselves to others. Social media makes this easier than ever.

Comparison can make us lose confidence. Wherever you are, focus on being better than you were yesterday. With [networking](#) and [personal branding](#), focus on your next small win. If you are going to compare yourself to someone, make it yourself six months or a year ago. Regular small improvements will result in huge gains over the course of months and years.

## Pitfall 10: Failure to Set Priorities

After the man in black reveals his identity, Prince Humperdinck shows up in pursuit. Westley and Buttercup escape into the fire swamp – a dangerous forest with many perils. They choose to focus on avoiding the three most dangerous perils: fire spouts, quicksand and R.O.U.S.s (rodents of unusual size).

Time spent on business development is similar. You will not be able to devote time to every endeavor that could lead to new business, so get clear on your most important things. Perhaps you want to expand your work for an existing client, or maybe you want to be known as the go-to attorney in a particular niche. Regardless, you must be clear on where you are going if you hope to get there. With the end goal established, make sure you prioritize your time and resources in a way that will put you on a successful path.

Be willing to end a habit that once contributed to your success. Maybe an organization membership used to result in lots of referrals, but doesn't anymore. Devote your attention elsewhere.

Delegate or outsource tasks so your limited hours can be spent on the best use of your time. Perhaps speaking is an important part of your BD strategy. It can take many hours to find and vet potential speaking opportunities, so outsource that research and focus on preparing and giving presentations.

The fire swamp is a formidable foe. Will Westley and Buttercup survive? Will Inigo get revenge? Find out next time as we continue to frame the discussion of how to avoid additional BD pitfalls through the lens of "The Princess Bride." Until then, consider which of these pitfalls are most likely to derail your business development efforts – and put a plan in place to avoid them.

If you need help with developing a business development strategy, please contact me, Chris Moyer, at [cmoyer@jaffepr.com](mailto:cmoyer@jaffepr.com).