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Surveying the Surveyors

I just finished piloting a survey for the Returns to Business Management Consulting project, and was often in awe of their abilities. A good surveyor can say nice to meet you, shake your hand, and five minutes later have you saying things you wouldn't share with a spouse. When I first started here, I often thought my surveyors knew a respondent from their "schooling days" (as we say in Ghana) - but when asked, their response was invariably, "No, I've only just met him."

It can be both a blessing and a curse to be surrounded by a bunch of smooth talkers. It's a blessing any time you want to buy... anything at all, really. And it's a curse when you try to negotiate their own contracts, and they throw their full powers of persuasion at you.

One example: in a taxi on the way to the field, we decided to change our destination mid-trip to someplace closer. The surveyor in the front started negotiating a lower rate:

"I should give you two because now you will be able to pick someone else and earn more money. And I am not just saying this. My mouth has power. When I speak, you know it to be true. So I will give you two, and you will earn more. Can I hear an amen?"

Guess how much we paid?

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