

## You Do Have the Time

*What you're already doing presents more marketing opportunities than you might realize.*

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### Business Development

**W**hether you call it business development, practice development, sales, or marketing, most attorneys are hard-pressed to find the time to do it. Fortunately, in most cases, the secret is not finding more time, but discovering new ways to use the time you already spend on business development. Here are some ideas:

- **Change your definition of business development.**

Too many attorneys think that business development means giving pitches and presentations. But it's much more. Business development is the process of making contacts, building a reputation, and creating positive relationships. It's about being ever mindful of the need to help people in your network, both inside and outside of your firm. Try to see your business development efforts not as added responsibilities, but as part of the fabric of what you're already doing.

- **Focus on your existing client base.**

Despite knowing that existing clients are the best source of new business, many lawyers spend a disproportionate amount of their practice development time attempting to win business from new clients and responding to formal partnering overtures from clients they don't know well. This counterintuitive behavior is due to the way firms reward, recognize, and account for business development efforts, and to the simple fact that the thrill of the chase is more fun.

Unfortunately, acquiring new clients is many times more costly, time consuming, and less profitable than acquiring new business from clients you know well. If your time is limited, focus first on your existing clients, not on generating new clients. Your relationship management efforts should give you

top-of-mind status and make you the first resource when the next need arises.

- **Treat every client interaction as a marketing opportunity.**

Every time you send a client a draft, every time you have a phone conversation, every time you send an e-mail, the client has an opportunity to come in contact with you and your firm and, as a result, form an opinion. Use these interactions to your benefit. Make each one of them count. They're happening anyway, so extra time is not necessary.

Think about all of your client contacts over the last week and the business development opportunities they presented. Did you interact with a client in some way? What did you do during that interaction to deepen your relationship with that client? Did you come in contact with an opposing counsel who could someday refer business to you? How did you capitalize on that encounter? Start looking at each opportunity in this way and you'll find that a tremendous number of marketing moments present themselves every day.

- **Get the most out of every marketing effort.**

When you take the time to write an article, give a speech, or plan a seminar, look for ways to increase the impact of your activities beyond the individual marketing act. For example, if you plan to write an article about a new issue in your practice area, why not propose a joint authorship to a client who is deeply concerned about the issue? Not only will you have the opportunity to talk to this client about their business, you will also have a chance to work with the client in a new way, on a deeper level.

Once you've written the article, look for other ways to use the work you've done. Does the article address a topic on which you could speak at an upcoming event? Would it make a good seminar for other clients? How about internally—would it help your firm's cross-selling efforts if you presented a program on this topic to your colleagues? For every marketing

effort, there are at least three new ways to leverage it. With a little creativity, you can make the most of what you do.

- **Conduct post-engagement meetings.**

If you don't conduct post-engagement debriefings to assess your performance on a particular matter or transaction, start now. If you're already doing this, give the meetings a marketing twist. Client debriefings provide an excellent forum to nip problems in the bud, demonstrate your value to the client, and link the current engagement to future business opportunities. Failing to make these meetings part of your regular practice means missing out on a wonderful opportunity to transform your current activities and relationships into profitable long-term partnerships.

- **Learn to delegate.**

Nothing steals more business development time than the inability to delegate. Every time you do work that another, less experienced lawyer could do, you're cheating yourself, your client, and your subordinates. Take a close look at your workload. Identify projects and tasks that could be done by more-junior people, and spend the time to get them up to speed. You'll create valuable learning opportunities for other members of your firm while freeing yourself to focus on high-value business development activities.

- **Be selective about every conference you attend.**

Most attorneys attend at least two or three conferences a year. Most of them last for more than one day. This is a lot of time to commit when you don't have time to spare. Before registering for a conference, ask yourself a few questions:

*Will any of my clients or potential clients attend this conference?*

*Am I interested in meeting any of the speakers?*

*Are the topics of value to my clients? Will I learn anything that will help them?*

*Is the conference in a city where I already have clients? Can I visit*

*those clients while I am there?*

*Would it make sense to plan a dinner for some selected conference participants?*

If your answer to these questions is yes, then go. If your answer is no, take a pass.

- **Walk the halls.**

Whenever you have the opportunity to visit your client's office, walk the halls and get a sense of the client's culture. Introduce yourself to at least two people you haven't met before. Learn what they do and how their job fits into the client's structure and business. You're already there—capitalize on that.

Employ the same strategy at your office. We all take breaks from our daily grind. Why not spend yours meeting colleagues on the floor above you? By far the biggest obstacle to cross-selling in most firms is lack of knowledge about the other attorneys and practice groups. Be the first in your firm to overcome this obstacle. Find out what your colleagues do and for whom they do it. It's much easier to cross-sell services and people you know.

Lack of time is no excuse for not developing your business. Every day you're presented with several opportunities to build relationships and engage in activities that are actually business development opportunities. Start looking at your day through the business development lens and make the most of what's right in front of you.

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