

Strategies

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Business Development

Building for Your Firm's
Future Growth



The Resilient Rainmaker:
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Trusting Your Attorneys:
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The Downturn's
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Ask the Authorities

THE QUESTION

I've been asked to help a lawyer in my office who still believes that our role is to help him get business and thinks his lack of success is because I did not get him the right speaking engagements, rather than it being his failure to follow up. How do I convince management that he just isn't worth their investment?

Catherine Alman MacDonagh, JD



You don't have a case — yet. You've been asked to help; do that first by delivering excellent support. Make sure you have invested appropriate time and effort with the lawyer before trying to convince management he is a failure. If you won't help, who will?

You already identified one of the lawyer's issues: failure to follow up. You must demonstrate that you have tried helping him with that or management may arrive at the conclusion that it is YOU who is the failure. Establish and communicate a process for speaking engagements at your firm. Clearly define roles, responsibilities and a tracking mechanism with agreed upon metrics. Of course, management must support the approach you are taking and agree to hold lawyers accountable for proper use of firm resources.

Next, ensure that lawyers have training and coaching as to what to do before, during and after these opportunities. Finally, report marketing successes and challenges to management on an ongoing basis. If, after all this, this lawyer still fails to live up to his obligations, then you are much better prepared to successfully bring your case to management.

Catherine Alman MacDonagh is a recovering lawyer, author and law firm marketing and business development professional who serves on the 2012 LMA Board of Directors. She is a founder of The Legal Mocktail™, The Legal Lean Sigma® Institute and the Legal Sales and Service Organization (LSSO).

Michael Blachly



Firm culture, available resources and the level of support you get from management must all be weighed. My suggestion? Before taking any drastic steps, work with the attorney to educate him on what truly makes a client development activity successful.

I find that the most common cause for failure in client development is not allowing enough time to the activity. In the case of speeches, dedicate time to developing the speech, developing the PowerPoint (which SHOULD

NOT be the speech; rather, it should support the speech), practicing the speech, arriving early to mingle with the guests, giving the presentation, staying after to mingle with the guests and, finally, following up with those connections made while at the event.

Most people develop a speech/PowerPoint, then arrive right before their speech and take off right after — not good! Share best practices with your attorney, including successes of others. It is much harder to argue with facts than opinions. Finally, if you are still getting resistance, consider bringing in a client development coach to talk with him (particularly if you have one on retainer). It might be worth the investment.

Michael Blachly is the director of client development for Looper Reed & McGraw, a Texas-based firm with more than 100 attorneys. He is the secretary for the new Texas chapter of LMA.

Jay Wager



Every partner is worth a business development investment. How much and what kind of investment is the issue. Categorize this partner to help you prioritize your efforts.

Is this partner a *rainmaker*, *rising star* or *latent potential*? Most rainmakers are motivated and take responsibility for garnering new clients and leveraging business development managers. Rising stars are motivated but need help developing and executing a plan.

Latent potentials need education on best practices and need to have their assumptions debunked. They need goals, short-term objectives and structure to make good use of their business development time. Your efforts are best spent with the rainmakers and rising stars. Share your priorities with management so they will support you when a latent potential complains that you are not delivering for him or her.

If this partner truly expects help in getting business, have him or her put some skin in the game and hire a coach. Have both management and that partner contribute to the fees. That partner now has a dedicated resource, will be motivated and will get the education and structure he or she needs. There are two outcomes with a coach: success and the partner becomes a rising star, or status quo and it reinforces to management that your priorities are correct.

Jay Wager is a business development manager at Edwards Wildman and was president of LMA New England in 2011. He works with his partners to boost relationship development and opportunity assessment campaigns that build trust, identify needs and deliver new clients.

Stewart Hirsch, JD, a business development and leadership coach for attorneys, produces and edits this monthly column. Contact Hirsch at s.hirsch@strategicrelationships.com or 781/784-5280 to be added to the Authorities Panel, or to submit questions for the column.