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# POSITION

## Business Development Tips and Strategies from an Attorney and What It Can Mean for Coaches

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1. Create a presence and reputation in an industry and then continuously build on it. Deliver speaking presentations, write and publish articles, post content on social media, email out alerts on new developments, serve on industry boards and committees, attend industry luncheons, dinners, and receptions, hold in-person and virtual “lunch and learns,” host happy hours for clients and prospects, keep your website bio and social media profiles current and dynamic, and more. It does take a persistent commitment – I have given almost 150 speaking presentations (primarily webinars) over the past two years (although I don’t recommend that pace for your own mental health) and have been a frequent speaker on nonprofit legal issues for my entire 26-year legal career. It has paid enormous dividends in helping to make our two-year-old law firm a very recognized name in the nonprofit community and has driven hundreds of new clients our way.
2. Don’t be an island. However you do it, you need to network (as much as I hate that word) and get yourself out there to the greatest extent possible. Your prospective clients and prospective referral sources need to know who you are, what you do, and that you are very good at what you do. Take these people to coffee, breakfast, lunch, dinner, or drinks, stay in front of them electronically (both directly and via social media indirectly) with substantive, helpful content, and try to remain a constant presence without being an annoyance. So when the time comes that they are looking to hire someone – or are being asked for a referral – they will think about you. You always want to be top of mind with a top-notch reputation.
3. Do great work and don’t lose clients. It goes without saying, but it is virtually impossible to be a highly successful business developer if you don’t do great work. Great work keeps your clients coming back for more, causes them to speak highly about you to others, and generates referrals from them. Take great care of your clients, keep them happy, and try to grow the work you do for them and their colleagues. And then keep adding new clients. Growing work from existing clients means being able to subtly take advantage every time you are in front of or on a telephone or video call with existing clients and the dozens of “cross-selling” opportunities that arise daily; every attorney in our firm is trained to do this. Many lawyers focus solely on the task at hand, but many client matters offer an opportunity to develop additional work from that client. Sometimes you just need to listen closely and offer suggestions where appropriate. Our firm’s stable of active nonprofit clients – now at 500 after two years – keeps growing each and every week, and the type and diversity of work we do for them continues to grow as well.



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4. If applicable, involve others in your firm/practice in your business development efforts. If you have others in your firm/practice, involve them in your business development efforts, groom and mentor them, compliment them and prop them up, facilitate speaking, publishing, and other marketing opportunities for them, include them as co-panelists with you on speaking engagements and co-authors of articles and alerts, bring them to conferences and events with you and introduce them to others, support their ideas and initiatives, and let them share in your business development successes. In my judgment, there is nothing better than a group of practitioners working together collectively and collaboratively in business development endeavors.<sup>[P.]</sup><sub>[SEP.]</sub>

5. Get as much mileage as possible out of every business development endeavor. Don't publish an article or give a speaking presentation just once. (And don't assign away your copyright; that may be the topic for a future session!) Repackage it, dress it up in new clothes, add a new news hook, and do it over and over to and with new and different audiences. Utilize select industry trade and professional associations to reach large numbers of prospective clients in one fell swoop. Be sure to have your articles and presentations posted on your website, maximize search engine optimization (SEO), and push out the links to them on as many forms of social media as possible. For instance, post the invitation to a speaking engagement you are doing on your LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook accounts and then post the recording after the fact weeks later. Not everyone will register for the webinar or listen to the recording, but many more will see what you are up to and it will help to reinforce your brand. That has tremendous business development value. Even that old staple article from a decade ago is likely just as relevant today with minor updating – and to a new audience which has never read it before. Finally, a presentation you gave at a conference two years ago doesn't have to be just a two-year-old presentation. Post the presentation's details, along with the associated PowerPoint and recording (if available), on your website, push the links out on social media, and then weave that into conversations with clients, prospects, and others and share the materials with them. Our firm's is jam-packed with more articles, presentations, and webinar recordings than many big law firms. We add new content virtually every week. And this content lives forever and will repeatedly pop up in web searches; I can't begin to tell you how many clients I have gotten from people doing online searches, finding an article or presentation of mine from many years ago, and then reaching out to me.<sup>[P.]</sup><sub>[SEP.]</sub>

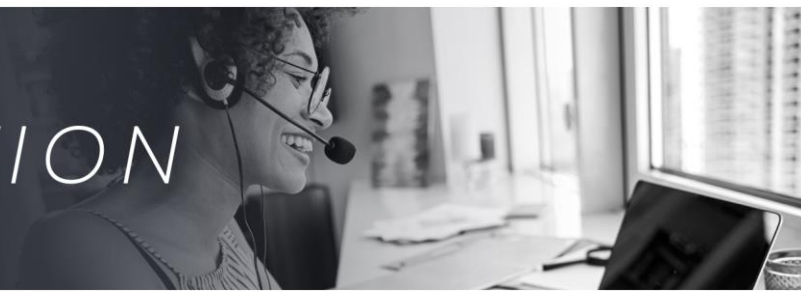
6. Don't reinvent the wheel and build off of your client work. Shortly after law school, I worked through the night for close to two years writing a nonprofit tax compliance book which was published by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). It's a real page-turner! While I do not regret having written it and have gotten a lot of mileage out of it, I will never do that again. I don't even have the time to write long articles anymore (just cocktail books!). Capitalize on the client work you are already doing to spin off short, relevant articles that are timely and appeal to your clients and prospective clients. Do as many as you can. In my judgment, it is better to publish five three-page articles than one ten-page article – and then have it published in five places instead of just one. Build off the work you are doing for your clients every day.

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7. Get quoted by the media. While this may be easier said than done, it can be hugely valuable. Learn the art of giving succinct, catchy quotes to reporters and writers, grow a reputation as a reliable source on issues in your area, and develop a strong network of media contacts. And then – as I recommended earlier with articles and speaking presentations – post the media coverage on your website and push out the links on social media. I have been doing this for most of my career – from mainstream media such as The Washington Post and The New York Times to industry publications such as ASAE’s magazine – and it continues to deliver consistent business development benefits.

8. Learn from others who have already been successful in your field. Everyone should have business development mentors – either up close or from afar – and it should be those who do it in a style and manner that works well for you. Everyone has a slightly different approach to business development; there is no one-size-fits-all approach. I believe I have taken and incorporated a little bit from each of the best business developers in the nonprofit legal community over the last 26 years in a manner that suits me best.

9. Never give short shrift to a potential client – no matter how big or small – and never burn bridges. The lower-level in-house attorney at a non-client may well become the outside counsel decisionmaker at a prospective client in a few years. Even someone who never becomes a client can become a great referral source. I never say “no” to an initial lunch, coffee, or Zoom call with someone who asks to pick my brain, who calls or emails with a quick question, or who wants career advice. I have done it several times this year already, in fact. While you have to carefully allocate and budget your time, people never forget someone who is giving and unselfish. It all comes back around.

10. Really get to know your clients and their industries – beyond the legal issues. Try to identify legal and non-legal trends and changes in direction and work hard to stay ahead of that curve. Our firm’s four attorneys are constantly doing that – by listening to our clients, taking into account broader trends, drilling down into the core of their business, and identifying new opportunities with our clients. The pandemic has given us no shortage of opportunities to do this. We then attack those opportunities with targeted articles, presentations, moderated online forums, and the like. It works. 500 clients and growing in just two short years (and during a global pandemic, at that).

11. Be patient and persistent. Business development takes time and requires a long view of success. If your measure of success is signing up a new client every time you give a presentation or write an article, you will be sorely disappointed. It takes time. But I assure you that if you are consistent, persistent, and patient, it will pay off down the road.

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