

PUBLICATION

Back to Basics: Crafting a Business Development Plan that Works for You

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In my experience, the number one factor in professional success lies in the ability to become self-sufficient by generating your own work. Often, that involves the creation of a comprehensive business development plan that keeps your goals visible and helps you stay on track. Here are my basic rules for creating a business development plan that actually leads to results:

- **Plans should be in writing.** I use post-it notes to manage "to-do" lists that keep me accountable.
- **Plans should be specific.** Include key items that you will work on in the coming year.
- **Goals should be realistic.** Attainability is a factor, and reaching goals keeps you motivated.
- **Self-awareness is a key component.** Know what your own strengths and weaknesses are and how best you can capitalize on them.
- **There is no one "form" plan.** Your plan should be a recognition of what works for you. Plans that are styled exactly like one created by someone else likely won't work.
- **Plans are fluid.** If you create a plan and fail to ever review, revise, or refer back to it, you'll accomplish very little. For example, if a target company is acquired, your steps to getting that company's business should also change.
- **Revise your plan annually.** But, understand that revisions will continue throughout the year.
- **Style your plan organically.** Use the business development process to craft your plan as you move through the following sections: 1) existing clients, 2) new clients, 3) client visits, 4) personal productivity goals, and 5) civic activities.
- **Client visits are key.** Visits are the most important way to build relationships and generate new work. Often, you leave meetings with a better understanding of at least two or three additional client needs.
- **Personal productivity matters.** Clients want hard workers. Your productivity speaks to revenue, but is also a place to note your commitment to the number of hours that you will spend to client development.
- **Civic activities raise your profile.** Volunteering on non-profit boards and membership in civic clubs and organizations help other leaders know what you do – and can lead to additional business development opportunities. Be intentional with your community outreach goals.
- **Set goals for existing clients.** You have built-in credibility with existing clients. Ask your client what their total legal spend is each year. What is our portion of that spend? What types of work should we be doing for them? What are the very next steps to get that work?
- **Include specific credentialing goals.** Everyone should have an elevator speech, but what will that speech include in ten years? What do you specifically need to do to get there? Identify the publication, the deadline to write the article, and its focus to keep yourself moving forward.

Although business development plans are personal, there is value in sharing them. Find a trusted sponsor or mentor that will review your plan with you and provide meaningful feedback. Then, use your plan as a roadmap from where you are in your business to where you want to be.

Editor's Note: Our ongoing "Back to Basics" column will focus on simple business development and marketing tips for women. Steve's thoughts on creating a business development plan are invaluable and proven by his success in developing new business.

