

Six Mistakes That Kill BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

HOW TO AVOID THEM AND WIN CLIENTS.

WRITTEN BY MARTHA M. NEWMAN

IF YOU ARE DEDICATED TO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT but not landing new clients, you may be making crucial mistakes that wreck your chances of success. Make the most of the valuable time you spend on business development by thinking about which of the following mistakes you want to eliminate.

Mistake #1: Having great ideas, but no business development plan

Mental planning without a written blueprint outlining your goals and specific action steps you will take to achieve those goals hobbles your business development from the start. Organization produces accountability and follow-through.

Solution: Move your planning from your brain to a written document containing a schedule of what you are going to do each week to generate business.

Mistake #2: Being modest

Modesty will *not* make you memorable, and it is often the reason lawyers resist telling stories about their successes. *“I don’t want people to think I’m bragging.”*

Solution: At networking events and during one-on-ones, start recounting interesting stories (without bravado) about cases you have successfully handled. By doing that you are building credibility and creating a reason for that person to trust you. Stories function as indirect, free testimonials. Good success stories remain in people’s minds and cause them to think of you first when a problem arises.

Mistake #3: Amassing contacts without building relationships

Networking gets you visibility and the chance to make a favorable impression on prospective clients. However, adding more and more people to your contact list without cultivating connections with those people is pointless. Establishing relationships yields new business.

Solution: Profitable relationship building means being strategic in choosing organizations and activities that will allow you to interact repeatedly with ideal clients and referral sources with whom you have common interests.

Mistake #4: Letting contacts languish

Failure to follow up on a regular basis with potential clients or referral sources thwarts your business development and makes time spent networking a waste.

Solution: Establishing a follow-up system

ensures your networking produces business results. You can use contact management software or a simple Excel spreadsheet to record names and useful data about relationships you want to pursue. Then set aside time on your calendar to reconnect with four to five people each week.

Mistake #5: Talking about yourself instead of the client

We human beings favor the word *you* above all others, along with our own names. For many of us, a great conversation is one in which we get the chance to talk about ourselves and our interests.

Solution: Afford your contacts the opportunity to be heard by asking questions and resisting the impulse to step on stage yourself. Listening 80% of the time and talking 20% will build rapport more than focusing on yourself.

Mistake #6: Staying out of touch with past clients

Lawyers who make a habit of staying in touch with former satisfied clients are doing business development the easy way. No time-consuming networking. No starting from scratch to build relationships. All they are doing is exchanging pleasantries and asking questions that prompt clients to talk about problems that may need legal solutions. New matters are a whole lot easier to garner than new clients.

Are you hampering your business development by making any of these mistakes? If you are, decide now to stop doing those things that stymie your success. You have a much better chance of growing your business if you step out of your own way. **TBJ**



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