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Paula Black has advised law firms around the globe on everything from powerful and innovative design to marketing strategy and business growth. She is an award-winning, Amazon-bestselling author and the force behind **In Black & White** (inblackandwhiteblog.com), a blog dedicated to clear, straightforward advice and open discussion of legal marketing issues. For more information on Paula Black, her books and her company please visit **paulablacklegalmarketing.com**.

Legal Marketing Lessons To Learn From Your Associates

It may seem at odds with what you know, but taking a lesson or two from the associates within your firm can reap powerful rewards when it comes to marketing and business development. Where older attorneys rose through the ranks during the days where networking was confined to Bar events and firm marketing directors were a foreign concept, today's law school grads bring with them not only a technologically savvy attitude towards the law, but a genuine interest in business development. The world is changing and associates know that a book of business can be their greatest strength. So what lessons can you take from the younger set? Here are few ideas...

Learn about your firm.

Sure, you know what you do. But do you know what everyone else does? Tasking associates with learning about the firm not only helps them understand its inner workings, but also gives them a leg up on cross-selling multiple services. Seasoned attorneys would be smart to do the same. Stop focusing on your own work for a few minutes a day and look around. What cases are coming through the pipeline in other practice areas? New clients? Old clients with new business? Keeping an ear to the ground can open up opportunity within your own world.

Be accessible.

Heaven help the associate who's not reachable when a partner needs him. And those who pick up on the first ring, respond to email within the first 5 minutes and show up at the office early are sure to gain notice and praise. So why not apply those same standards to your own client service? Think of yourself in an associate role when

dealing with clients. Respond to their inquiries quickly and ask what else you can do to help them.

Stay in touch.

Between Facebook, email, Twitter and LinkedIn, today's young attorneys are never at risk of losing touch with friends and colleagues. These connections (and the ability to know exactly what others are doing and where they are working) can not only build business relationships now, but can reap referral rewards for years to come. Take a page from your associates and join one or more social networks, then reconnect with old clients and colleagues. It may not be as natural as it is for the younger generation, but make it a priority to reach out. You never know who might be in need of your services...make it easy to find you!

Seek out a mentor.

Much like younger associates are often paired with partners, find yourself a marketing mentor. Whether it's a friend or colleague who has innate marketing and business development skills, or an author or expert, finding someone to inspire you with advice and strategy is a great step in your business development journey. My suggestion? Subscribe to a few blogs or newsletters focused on legal marketing and see which advice (and whose voice) you relate to the most.

Find your passion.

Just as younger associates are figuring out what niche of the law they want to focus on, so should partners narrow their focus when it comes to clients. By this point in a legal career most partners have a clear specialization. Narrow it down even more. Figure out what you love to do and what you're best at and make a list of the clients who fit that criteria. Then go after them. Once you have a clear target audience it's easy to create marketing language and materials that speak directly to them.

Marketing and business development isn't inherent to everyone, most of us have to read, learn and put it into practice before it becomes secondhand. But for a new generation of attorneys, the ability to network and create marketing opportunity is as close as their Blackberry. Taking a few lessons from the younger set can only help influence, inspire and encourage your own marketing and business development journey.