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## Let's Be Clear: Developing New Business Is NOT About Selling

by Kimberly Alford Rice

### (Part 2 of 2)

In our first installment of *Let's Be Clear: Development New Business is NOT About Selling*, I dispelled the myth that to develop new business (i.e. get new clients), lawyers must engage in a process which is perceived to be distasteful and underhanded.

Outlining one of five principles which will lead to new clients, I asserted that principal #1 – *building rapport* and genuine relationships with people who are in a position to retain your services is a much more effective path to follow.

In this second installment of two parts, I will outline the remaining four principles for lawyers to apply in their quest of building a healthy book of business.

### Principle Two – Explore the “Action Imperatives/Demand Triggers”

Once you have established rapport with a prospect, and this involves real time and commitment on your part, you will want to initiate a business discussion (not to be confused with a “pitch”) which clearly and specifically outlines the prospect’s business problems and opportunities which is prompting her to purchase legal services. You want to initiate the discovery process of learning what issues the prospect may have and how you may help.

In this conversation, there are some very important rules to follow:

- ◆ Think and behave as an equal, not as a salesperson or vendor
- ◆ Utilize your empathy skills to “put yourself in your prospect’s shoes”
- ◆ Ask probing, open-ended questions which illuminate the prospect’s true business “pain points” which he needs to rid himself of.
- ◆ Employ highly-tuned active listening skills and really focus on what the prospect is and is not actually saying.

With every problem (i.e. “demand trigger”) you discover, the more fully you can explore the real impact it has on the prospective client’s business. Often times, one demand trigger leads to uncovering others which builds a sense of urgency for purchasing your services.

An element that lawyers sometimes overlook in business discussions with prospective clients is that absent any

real business problems which may be an action imperative to purchase legal services, there are opportunities a prospect may not be thinking of to grow or improve his business. For instance, if a prospective client has a solid computer services business which has grown steadily over the past seven years, one should ask what needs to happen to develop the business online or expand the scope of services he provides, to develop a franchise or open a new location, etc.

Since you have colleagues who concentrate in this particular business sector and have worked with clients in similar situations, and because you know you can deliver superior client service to this prospective client, you may ask “What is keeping you from realizing your business (revenue, profit, or other) goals?” This is a very effective way to zero in on quantifiable issues which will help you move the conversation forward.

### **Principle Three – Probe for “Action Busters”**

Now that you know the action imperatives – business problems which must be solved and/or business opportunities which should not be missed or overlooked, you are in a prime position to find out how tangible, urgent, and personal the demand triggers are which were described to you.

Let’s face it, we only make decisions when we absolutely must. Business owners are no different.

To move the conversation forward, you need to know how motivated and/or committed your prospect is to either solving the problem he articulated and/or to act upon business opportunities which may enable his company to grow, expand or improve. Is he ready to open his checkbook? If not now, what is your prospect’s timeframe?

The second part of probing for “action busters” is answering the question “what is the cost of doing nothing?” What will happen to your prospect’s business if the problem isn’t solved or steps are not taken to grow his business? The answers to these questions will provide insight into how close (or not) the prospect is to actually making the decision to work with you.

With these answers, you can quantify the tangible impact of doing nothing. Will it cost the prospect a lot in litigation fees if the business problem is not resolved quickly? Will she lose competitive advantage if she does not take steps to grow her company? Will she risk a promotion or even her position if company revenues do not grow?

The more astute you are at clarifying the “action busters”, the more likely it is that you will be asked to help solve the problem or exploit the prospect’s business opportunities.

### **Principle Four – Learn Decision-Making Process**

While you may have clearly established the cost of doing nothing for your prospect and created a sense of urgency for retaining your services, you don’t know where the prospect is in the decision-making process of actually purchasing legal services. He or she may not be the only decision-maker. A question such as “What needs to happen in order for us to move forward?” or “What is the best way I can help you?” should provide some sense of the prospect’s process.

You may also want to know where you stack up among competitors. A question like, “How will you make a selection based on equal competitors?” will provide insight into the factors the prospect is considering in hiring new legal advisors.

### **Principle Five – Define the Look of Success**

Confirm that you and the prospect are on the same page regarding desired outcome. What will success or victory look like? How will you know when it has been attained? Don’t assume anything.

At this point, it is essential that you clearly communicate both qualitatively and quantitatively the benefits she will realize by working with you. Create a compelling picture of the solution and the value it brings. For example, by working with you, the client may:

- ◆ avert a hefty tax bill of \$250,000
- ◆ increase profits by 23% or \$1.6 million by leveraging its new patented technology
- ◆ generate 15% more revenue by strategically acquiring a two-person sales team

### **Key to Developing New Business**

As we have learned, developing new business is not about being pushy, persuasion, coercion or flat out sales. It is about bringing real solutions to new relationships which satisfy business needs by following a prescribed set of activities. When you understand what motivates someone to take action steps and how committed they are to changing their current situation, you are in a good position to facilitate a process of moving towards the right answer and the right action.