

Legal Business Development: Take On Responsibility

August 2, 2011 by [Paula Black](#)

Some people wait to be invited, appointed, begged or cajoled into signing up for a project. They sit in the back of the room hoping they won't be called on... does it sound familiar?

What most people don't realize is there is far more to gain when you take responsibility for a project. Some people see this crystal clear. What sets them apart? Here are a couple of examples...

Last week I was working with a client in British Columbia, Canada, and it was so enjoyable that when I returned to Miami I had the feeling that I was coming home from vacation. Yes... VACATION! Why? Because I had the most fabulous time working with a team of TRULY engaged people. Lawyers AND staff, that volunteered to spearhead initiatives... a team that saw clearly that business development is EVERY ONE'S priority. NOBODY was sitting in the back of the room hoping they wouldn't be called on... they were contributing ideas that could move business development forward and create RAVING FANS of the clients they already have. How can you make this happen around you?

Hire like-minded people with positive attitudes... that see possibilities... not impossibilities.

Recognize that everyone from receptionist to top lawyer is equally as important to the success of your firm.

Care... yes care about what every team member has to contribute. That doesn't mean you have to act on every idea... as a colleague of mine says... everyone has to love every idea for 5 minutes. (This is a powerful concept, try it.)

At the other end of the spectrum is an individual lawyer that I coach and it just so happened that he was my first appointment when I returned from "VACATION" in Canada.

He is a young partner in a national firm who has made a commitment to business development and creating a focus for his practice like no one I have ever seen. In about a month here are some of the things he has accomplished...

Created a handout for this new focused practice... defining what it is and how it will help their existing clients. He also listed colleagues in other offices that have experience in the area.

Made a presentation to the partners of his firm in the local office, distributing the handout.

Revised his on-line bio to reflect this initiative.

Joined a committee of the ABA and has taken on a leadership role which he will undertake at an upcoming conference.

Requested and been granted a slot at the upcoming firm retreat to make a presentation.

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His new blog is in the works and he has already written several blog posts.

Made a proposal for two speeches and will be contributing an article for the local Bar.

These are just a few of his accomplishments. Would you say this guy is committed? Absolutely! He could have come up with lots of reasons why this couldn't work... but no... he found all the reasons why it COULD work! He is making it happen in a big way.

What sets these people apart from others? It's passion and commitment, with a drive to succeed. And taking on responsibility to contribute to the greater good of the team. What do they get out of it? They will all learn much more by taking on the responsibility and gaining hands-on experience. THAT my friends is invaluable.

So... I ask... are you sitting in the back of the room hoping YOU won't get called on? Stand up and take on responsibility... it will pay dividends. I can hardly wait to see what these people will accomplish in a year's time... and I am honored to have the privilege to work with them.



Paula Black is a legal branding expert, author, consultant and coach. She has advised individual lawyers and law firms around the globe on everything from powerful and innovative design to marketing strategy and business development. She is the award-winning author of "The Little Black Book on Law Firm Branding & Positioning," "The Little Black Book on Law Firm Marketing and Business Development," and the Amazon-bestselling "The Little Black Book: A Lawyer's Guide To Creating A Marketing Habit in 21 Days."

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