



## **No Sex With Clients On The First Date!**

By: David V. Lorenzo

PO Box 800509  
Aventura, FL 33280

(888) 692-5531

[www.RainmakerLawyer.com](http://www.RainmakerLawyer.com)

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**Written by**  
David V. Lorenzo

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Remember back in the days when you were young, dumb, and running around like an alley cat in heat?

Remember how you only had one thing on your mind?

You were boy crazy, girl crazy, or basically just sex crazy. Remember when that was the only thing you could think about?

If you say it wasn't, you're either kidding yourself or hormonally challenged.

Just thinking back to those days can make your heart beat a little faster.

Many people still have that feeling, and if you don't, I'll tell you how you can revive it and use it to build your law practice.

No, I'm not talking about using sex as bait to get people into your office.

I'm talking about the way many attorneys treat their new clients.

They rush to close the deal and they rush to bill the client as many hours as possible on the first engagement. Unfortunately, these eager attorneys attempt to maximize the immediate dollars at the expense of what could be a wildly profitable lifetime relationship.

The key to building a successful practice is to keep the big picture in focus while looking to maximize profit. You are in a dating relationship with your client, and you should not be looking for the immediate gratification of the one-night stand.

Here are four ways to grow the relationship and help clients feel that you are with them for the long term:

**First, discuss the client's desired outcome before discussing your fee.**

It is natural—almost instinctive—to want to talk about your fee early in the client interaction. After all, you want to find out if the client can afford you. You need to make sure that you are not wasting your time with him. Remember the old expression: “Time is money.”

This is partially true. Ultimately, if you have positioned yourself properly, your prospective client will understand that you are not the cheapest attorney on the block. If you have done your homework, you will also know exactly who is sitting in front of you. Hopefully, this will calm your greed hormones and allow you to take your time and build the relationship.

Rushing into a money discussion is the equivalent to introducing yourself to a new date and then asking if you can have sex right now, in the backseat of your dad's car. It didn't work then and it won't work now—and if it did, well, it only led to trouble.

You need to show the client that you care about his issue. You need to demonstrate the ability to meet his needs (solve his problem). And you need to make sure the client understands and believes that you will stick with him when things get tough. Once you have discussed the client's issue in this manner, you have earned the right to talk about money.

**Next, you should stay in contact with your clients between issues.**

If you only speak with your clients when they need your services, you will probably miss out on several opportunities to be of assistance.

Just like a “booty call” in the middle of the night, an opportunistic relationship is doomed. The relationship ends when the client finds an attorney that can meet her needs all the time.

**Third, remember to patronize the client's business if possible and appropriate.**

Loyalty is a two-way street. If you currently have a need for the goods or services that a client sells, you should, when possible and practical, buy from your clients. Do this even if it is only once in a while.

Clients like to see that you have an interest in some type of reciprocal relationship, even if a monogamous relationship is not possible. It does not matter if you are going to make far more money from them than they will ever make from you. The client only wants to know that you have made an effort to use their services when possible and practical.

In business just as in life, it is often the thought that counts. While monogamy is the preference in relationships, and it goes a long way in business, a single provider relationship is often not possible. Using your client's services, at least on occasion, is a great way to show her that you value the relationship you have with her.

**Finally, ask your clients about their goals beyond your work together.**

Go out of your way to help them achieve these goals when possible. Once you get to know your clients and understand their needs, you can offer other services—outside of your practice—on a referral basis.

Many attorneys have referral relationships with CPAs and financial services professionals. Some attorneys get into real estate development or other ventures. They follow the needs expressed by their clients. They cultivate relationships and work to provide services or referrals for their clients' benefit.

No matter how you look at it, practice growth comes down to one fundamental point: Putting the client relationship first is the key to long-term growth and sustainability.

If this sounds like an unfamiliar concept, then maybe it is time to jump out of the backseat of your parents' car, take a cold shower, and start thinking about a long-term commitment.

Dave Lorenzo teaches attorneys how to make MORE MONEY with LESS EFFORT.

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