

## Legal Business Development: Plan for the Unexpected

July 19, 2011 by [Paula Black](#)

**How do you know if you have arrived if you don't know where you are going? Well, you don't!**

A business development plan is essential to grow your business, or grow personally. Yes, a plan should be specific and measurable. But... **it's a plan, not a straitjacket.** It can't be so rigid that you can't handle unexpected opportunities... or react when life throws you a curve.

I just read an article in the [Harvard Business Review](#) by [Peter Bregman](#)... [Three Steps to Handling the Unexpected](#). He tells a great story and gives us this advice... In the face of the unexpected:

1. **Stop the boat.** If momentum is driving you to make decisions quickly, then... turn the bow toward the wind and let the sail go slack. If you are in a meeting take a bathroom break. In your office, get up and take a walk. In other words, do what we so rarely give ourselves an opportunity to do: think.
2. **Assess your actual options.** Don't waste time wishing things were different or trying to force-fit your previous plan to the new, unforeseen situation. Start with a blank slate: think about the outcome you want given the new situation, the information you have at hand, and the resources available. Then lay out your options.
3. **Sail.** Based on your new assessment, make a decision, and commit. Even if the decision isn't ideal, even if it's not giving you everything you hoped for originally, accept that it's the best under the circumstances and move forward without hesitation.

**We can plan and plan again but "life happens"... having the confidence and skill to handle whatever life holds is to your advantage.**



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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