

Habits of Successful Rainmakers

By Kimberly Alford Rice

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The New Year has rung in and it's time to plan for a prosperous year. To start off with a bang, listed below are productive habits of highly successful rainmakers I've observed over the years:

1. **Planning is key.** To write down your goals, vision, and plan to grow your practice is likened to having a GPS or map to reach your destination. There is no better time than now to write down your 2014 business goals with concrete steps to accomplish them. Successful rainmakers focus on clarifying what they are trying to accomplish to help them create a plan so they can guarantee a higher level of success than most. Many lawyers lack clarity in what they want to accomplish and often allow the year to “just happen” without concisely claiming their goals. Make a commitment to be clear and thoughtful in your marketing activities this year. Write it down.
2. **Develop a marketing mindset.** Successful rainmakers are always on the lookout for opportunities and asking how they can help. Scheduling time into your busy schedule to take consistent action towards growing your network, learning more about your colleagues' business, and getting face time with your current client contacts are imperative to building a successful business. Successful rainmakers understand that marketing is as much about mindset as it is time management. The billable requirements never stop but thinking broadly about your long-term practice and taking a few extra minutes every day to do something about it (even if it's an email or two to recent business acquaintances) will yield dividends down the road.
3. **Follow up consistently.** We are in the relationship-building business and the only way to foster relationships is to reach out and follow up consistently. Schedule it into your daily schedule. If you've met someone new who could be a client and/or refer you to someone who could, then you want to maintain some regular communication with them. Develop a system with your team to

make this happen. It could be a face-to-face, a regular blog post, an e-blast, even a phone call to check in. Whatever the form of communication, you must make it happen to be successful.

4. **Actively listen.** Lawyers are trained to solve problems and to provide answers. These are productive skill sets in business development *after* you actively listen to understand the problems of potential clients. Successful rainmakers take the time to ask appropriate questions (how is this problem impacting your business; what is it costing your business; what is the cost of doing nothing, etc.). Only after clarifying a client's needs do successful rainmakers present their services.
5. **Measure your progress.** Often, lawyers engage in marketing activities with wild abandon and random acts of lunch, attending an event despite having no strategic objective in doing so. To track and measure concrete results (making 3 solid contacts at targeted networking events, following up consistently which leads to new business) is the only way to know the activities in which you should continue to engage and which yield tangible results.
6. **Perfect the close.** Actually asking for business can be a natural progression of relationship building. Once you understand what the prospect's needs are and how you (and/or your firm) can help him/her, it will become comfortable for you to say "what do you see as the next step?", "when would you like to get started?" When your primary focus is on helping others, these questions will emanate from a place which will be comfortable to you. Practicing "the ask" language can be a very effective exercise in gaining confidence for perfecting the close.
7. **Enjoy the journey.** Building a practice will be a lifelong journey including meeting interesting new people, and continuous learning. The sooner you become comfortable with the planning, the process, the follow up and the "ask", the more you can actually enjoy the feeling of taking control of your career and guiding your destiny to success. Today is not too soon.