

From the very beginning of law school we found ways to make it through. Whether it was forming study groups, joining your law-school student government, writing for the school newspaper (or if invited, law review), joining the school's local ABA chapter or one of many other organizations available through your school, you found it valuable to have people to turn to to get you through contracts, sales, secured transactions or wills & trusts.

Now that you're practicing law, either as an associate with a firm or as a solo practitioner, networking is more important than ever. The things you don't know can be your demise before you even get started. What do the judges in your community like (or not like)? What local court rules are in effect? Which judge should you hope for (or equally, should you dread)?

These questions are just the tip of the iceberg. I trust that you will find a mentor, and we will talk about that later in the book, but the main focus of this book is to teach you how to build your business through networking and word-of-mouth referrals. Did you know that approximately 1%-2% of cold calls result in closed business? Compare that to a closing rate of approximately 80% for a referral? Forget about your state bar implications regarding direct contact by an attorney (which is not allowed), think about much time and money is spent pursuing leads that only produce a 2% return on investment (ROI)!

What if there was a way to start your law firm and begin receiving referrals almost immediately? What if there was a mechanism whereby clients will start coming through your office door, legal issue and retainer check in hand? What would that do for your new business? Sound like something you'd be open to? If so, this book that you have in your hands is your key to success. The goal of the book is to take the information this author garnered the hard way, package it into a handy reference guide and give you the ability to see more business than you would have gotten merely relying upon Yellow Page ads (which are expensive) and cold calls (which don't work).

What's the Value of Networking?

WHY WE NEED IT

We need human interaction. Most attorneys become attorneys because they like dealing with people. Sure, there are a few "desk people" that prefer to draft contracts, research legal opinion or write agency regulations, but chances are they're not reading this book. We practice law because we want to offer a positive outcome in someone's life and we use the law as our tool to ensure our client's success.

But little good it does to have a passion for drafting wills & trusts or protecting a client's civil liberties if we don't have any clients. How do we get those people to walk through our door? How do we get those people to even know we exist and have a door to walk through?

EXPENSIVE WHAT WE DO

Most people who may be in need of an attorney won't hire one simply because of the cost associated with hiring a lawyer. Sure, there are public interest groups out there that get paid by a governmental agency to offer legal services at free or basement-price reduced fees. But those would never have hired you in the first place. So how do we get those folks to do have the financial means to hire you and convince them that they should they pick you specifically? Unless you're in a very small town in the middle of nowhere, the likelihood is great that the yellow pages in your local phone book has more

attorneys listed as restaurants, car repair and plumber combined. Your ad (if you have one) gets lost in a sea of legal ads. If, however, you had someone out there saying they know you, like you and trust you, don't you think that will get the potential client in your office better than any radio ad ever could? It's one thing for you to say how great you are in your ad, it's a whole other experience to have someone unaffiliated with you say that about your legal acumen.

PERSONAL WHAT WE DO

The legal profession is a highly personal business. Be it a divorce, drafting a will, suing a corporation for an injury you suffered, or any number of other legal slights, we offer extremely personal services. For that reason, it helps to build the rapport between attorney and client if we make our first contact not because a client needs our services but because we have some level of relationship with the person already. Furthermore, due to the level of personal service we provide, it's considerably easier to hire an attorney if referred by someone you know, like and trust to someone the referral source knows, likes and trusts. That's where you come in. If someone needs to talk to an attorney about a bankruptcy, it can be a whole lot more comforting to speak with someone who comes highly recommended, than simply opening up the Yellow Pages, closing your eyes, pointing and hoping for the best. That personal connection is what will take your new practice from "finding anyone who will pay your fees" to turning down work because you're too busy.

NEED FOR INTERACTION

As previously mentioned, most attorneys are social creatures by habit. That need for human interaction is what separates our species from the most of the animal kingdom. We crave the back-and-forth that a conversation entails and we can satisfy that need to communicate through networking. Going out and meeting new people does a lot more our business than adding dollars to our bank accounts. Even if you don't get a new client or a referral to a new client, you may meet your next racquetball partner, casino poker buddy or future ex-girlfriend. Just because someone may not seem like an immediate paycheck, never under estimate the power that human interaction can provide and why it can do wonders for your business and personal life.