

Anatomy of a Strong Business Development Skills Training Program (part 1)

By Kimberly Alford Rice

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Tailored Curriculum

Regardless of a law firm size, developing a formal training program can effectively address a broad range of topics imperative to a lawyer's success. Typical program topics may include:

- Developing personalized, practical business development plans
- Step-by-step marketing plan execution
- Learning the art of effective networking
- Developing and communicating a personal brand
- Harnessing the power of active listening
- Increasing business development success rates
- Expanding existing client relationships
- Identifying potential new clients and referral sources
- Improving client service skills
- Becoming more effective in potential client meetings

The best learning occurs in which there are interactive activities such as role play, video presentations, performance critiques, and use of other learning tools to better engage the attorney participants and to optimize peer-to-peer learning. Attorneys need to process their training in an integrated manner to develop new habits which are imperative to their success.

The most effective training programs are customized to the specific lawyer audience (associates versus partners or specific practice groups, for example) are practical, and are focused on getting tangible results. Tangible is not always measured only by "new client retentions" but also by lawyers developing positive disciplines and habits to integrate into their everyday lives which will pay dividends throughout their careers.

Ideally, each training session is scheduled in digestible modules and around the fact that attorneys' billable requirements do not allow for large blocks of time away from their offices. During the interactive sessions, lawyers will learn practical skills and useful tools that can be applied immediately to increase the regularity and success rate of their marketing activities. At the same time, they will begin to craft customized plans that identify individual business development opportunities.