The Start of Something Big: 8 Best "End of the Year" Business Development Ideas

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Preparing to Originate

1. *Deliver New Year's voicemails to your best clients*
2. *Send business books or magazine subscriptions to your best clients*
3. *Prepare an annual business case and schedule Q1 check up meetings with your top clients*
4. *Review your annual scorecard with your top professional allies and referral sources*
5. *Develop case studies on your best and most marketable matters for 2010*
6. *Set your personal marketing goals and objectives for 2010*
7. *Meet with your mentor, practice group leader and managing partner*
8. *Take your "team" out to celebrate the year and thank them*

What comes to mind when you think about year-end business development? Getting your list together so that you can send out holiday cards? Going to a bunch of Christmas parties that you really don't want to?

Everybody does this and there is nothing wrong with it. But, it makes you seem like one of the crowd, provides no business value and often lacks a true personal touch.

Try something more ambitious this year. Here are some ideas to consider:

1) *Deliver New Year's voicemails to your Best Clients*: I got this idea from Jim Heimbuch, a senior partner at Bodman LLP and seasoned rainmaker. Jim has client relationships with some of the top senior corporate executives in Detroit. He is valued as a business advisor to these clients, but they are courted extensively by other competitors.

Here is what Jim does. On the afternoon of New Year's Eve, he takes a list of his top clients and blocks out time to call each of them. He leaves a voice mail that thanks them for their business, summarizes how much he values the relationship and defines the goals he has for the relationship in the New Year.

Often, his message is the first one that his clients hear when they get back into work mode. In most cases, they call back and get Jim on their schedule. It just goes to show that the personal touch works.

2) *Send business books or magazine subscriptions to your best clients*: If you do send something of value, we'd suggest a business related book or magazine. Also, include a personal, handwritten note. The reason this works – it positions you as a business thought leader and shows some personal attention and care.

3) *Prepare an annual business case and schedule Q1 check up meetings with your top clients*: Sit down and prepare a brief summary of the work you did for the client and the results produced. Give some thought to any upcoming urgent business issues. Create an agenda for a meeting to conduct a dialogue

with the client on their goals and objectives for the upcoming year. Send this to the client and follow up to schedule a meeting.

4) Review your annual scorecard with your top professional allies and referral sources: Identify your top professional allies, including both your fellow partners inside your own firm, as well as outside allies such as bankers or accountants. Sit down and identify how you helped them in 2009 and how they helped you. In particular, identify specific business opportunities that you sent them and vice versa. Consider how you can help each other in the upcoming year. Now, schedule business meetings with each and discuss your plans to co-market in 2010.

5) Develop case studies on your best and most marketable matters for 2010: Think about the matters you handled over the past year. Pick the ones that were successful and have potential for new business in 2010. Now, create the outline for a case study that specifies:

- The Business Context and Problem
- The Risks/Rewards the Client Faced
- The Approach to Solve the Problem
- The Results and Benefits the Clients Realized

Now, either draft the case or get a writer or marketing professional to help. Post the case studies on your web-site. E-mail them to your clients and contacts who would be interested.

6) Set your personal marketing goals and objectives for 2010: Set goals and objectives in the following areas:

- Overall goals for originations and chargeability
- Specific Q1 objectives in these same 2 areas
- Q1 opportunities with top clients
- Next steps with your top referral sources
- Target clients you will pursue in Q1
- Your game plan to be a visible leader in a client-rich business association
- Q1 lead generation actions

7) Meet with your mentor, practice group leader and managing partner: Everybody needs a business development mentor – one who is interested in you and committed to your success. If you don't have one, find one.

Then review your year with him or her – and discuss your plan for 2010. Ask for and schedule a progress review with them at the end of Q1.

If appropriate, have the same dialogues with your practice group leader and managing partner. Make sure that you follow up on their suggestions.

8) Take your "team" out to celebrate the year and thank them: Think about the colleagues who were instrumental to your success in 2009. Your team may include fellow partners, a few associates and your assistant. Make sure that they know that you appreciate their help. Get to know how you can help them to grow and succeed in 2010.

Why should you follow this advice? First, it will separate you from the attorneys that go through the routine end of year motions. It also provides that contact and personal touch that leads to results. Finally, you hit the ground running in 2010 and get a head start on your passive competitors.