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## Taking Business Development To The Next Level

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**Y**ou have set out on the path to becoming a rainmaker. Perhaps you have originated some business on your own. It may even be that your firm has wisely made an exception to its standards for engagement scope or fee in order to encourage your efforts. In short, you have some success under your belt. Now, where do you go from here?

A rainmaker is someone who is known by a greater number of fellow professionals than vice versa. This is a worthwhile definition to bear in mind as you continue on your path. Think about the rainmakers you know: You know their names and what they do. The people who can give them business are also aware of them. But do those master business developers know everyone who knows them? The answer points to a critical aspect of becoming a rainmaker—building one's visibility and credibility in the marketplace.

One often hears successful lawyers explain that they should market in a different way than others in their field because they obtain business through relationships. However, every professional generates business through relationships. The challenge is in creating the lead—the phone call or email from a prospective, former, or current client or referral source that gives you the chance to be in front of

someone new so you can begin building that relationship. The purpose of marketing is to generate those leads. This means that you need to cast a wide net, because only a small number of leads warrant converting or can be transformed into these opportunities.

Part of casting a wide net is establishing name recognition and a reputation in your market. If somebody is referred to you and your name is even vaguely familiar to him you are already miles ahead of the game as opposed to you being a totally unknown quantity. If a second, unrelated referral source also mentions your name, your advantage has just increased exponentially. Having your name on this list is essential to being a rainmaker, and it's precisely your goal.

To be a rainmaker, you must use multiple tactics to enhance your visibility and reinforce your credibility, establishing yourself as an



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expert in your field. Building your credibility does not mean you have to be—or claim to be—the leading expert in your field. It does mean you need to package what you know, at whatever level that is. Assemble and showcase your skills, education, and achievements in order to present a unified front in your marketing.

Familiar ways of climbing the expert ladder include publishing bylined articles, being quoted by journalists as a knowledgeable source, and giving presentations. You probably know colleagues who do this, whom you would not consider rainmakers. The difference is that rainmakers use other marketing vehicles to let their markets know about these activities. Rainmakers are masters at leveraging their visibility and credibility in order to generate leads.

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To get the maximum amount of mileage from your efforts, you need to “push” your marketing. The power in your published article or presentation is magnified when you let your markets know that objective third parties acknowledge you as an expert, otherwise, why would they distribute your material to their readers or have you speak to their members. You want to distribute information about these activities to your markets via e-blasts, e-newsletters, blogs, and other social media channels. That is why it is critical to have a database: a clean, up-to-date email and hard-copy distribution lists with current, prospective, and former clients and referral sources. A good database enables you to stay in front of these critical targets providing information of value while implicitly establishing your bona fides.

It also means harnessing all of the potential benefits of your marketing efforts, beyond the activities themselves. If you're going to be giving a talk, for instance, you should consider what you can do before and after the event to fully leverage it. Beforehand, you can publicize the talk through the news section of your website, your newsletter, an email blast, and LinkedIn. Afterward, you can write an article or white paper based on the talk, pitch a story about the talk's subject to the media, and send a recap to your database. Then, start thinking about a follow-up topic for your next presentation. Observe how much more marketing mileage you can get out of your talk than just stepping up to the podium and being done with it.

Another aspect of generating leads is building credibility online, starting with your firm's website. You can act on this whether you have complete control over the site or must work within firm guidelines. Start by revisiting your website biography and your LinkedIn profile. Do these bios showcase what you most want prospects to know about you? Web biographies are more viewed than many other parts of a site, yet they are often neglected and

outdated, failing to communicate what you want to emphasize today.

When prospective clients find you online, they must immediately see that you can resolve their legal issue. You need to demonstrate right away that you are a professional others regard as an authority via bylined articles, press quotes, and information about speaking engagements. Posting this content has the added benefit of boosting your website in search-engine rankings when somebody looks up your name or practice area.

Another credibility-building strategy to consider is creating your own marketing vehicle, such as a seminar or a webinar. When an organization invites you to speak or a media outlet publishes your article, they are implicitly endorsing you as an expert. But by the same token, you are writing or speaking on their timetable and on a topic approved by them. When you create your own marketing vehicle, there are no such limitations. And no matter how many people attend your seminar or participate in your webinar, there is marketing value just in promoting it; the promotion itself tells people who you are and why they should call you.

Blogging can be a worthwhile adjunct to all of the above. It supports your expertise, can be used as another medium for promoting your writing and speaking, and can increase your website's search-engine ranking. Blog posts also can be shorter than most articles have to be. However, unless you are willing and able to put a substantial amount of time and effort into promoting your blog, it is unlikely to get the number of eyeballs on your page you could get from a published article or generate the amount of buzz a presentation can. Additionally, blogging has to be done regularly and, more often than not, the spirit is willing but the time is sparse.

The key to successful marketing that leads to business is consistency. It's true that con-

sistent marketing takes time and effort, but inconsistent marketing takes more time and effort. Knee-jerk marketing requires repeated ramp up time and is discouraging. Keeping the momentum going is more efficient and creates better results. Make a commitment to consistent marketing and you will be making significant inroads into becoming the rainmaker you want to be. ■